

To: Council
Date: 21 March 2022
Report of: Head of Corporate Strategy
Title of Report: To provide Council with the annual partnership update report on the Oxfordshire Children’s Trust

Summary and recommendations

Purpose of report:	To provide members with an update on the work of the Oxfordshire Children’s Trust and how the Council has supported it through its own activities.
Key decision:	No
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Shaista Aziz, Inclusive Communities
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving communities
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-2024
Recommendation: That Council resolves to:	
Note the report	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Children Trust Board Governance Structure
Appendix 2	Send Consultation Response
Appendix 3	Children and Young people’s plan

Introduction

1. The Oxfordshire Children’s Trust Board (“the Trust”) brings together the public, private and voluntary sectors to improve outcomes for all children and young people who live in the county.
2. The objectives of the Trust are to ensure that agencies work together effectively and strategically to deliver children’s services.

3. The Trust reports to the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board and influences and supports its work to improve outcomes for children and young people and their families.
4. The governance structure for the Trust can be viewed in appendix 1.
5. The Trust meets four times a year. The Trust has continued to meet virtually through the pandemic.
6. The voice of children and young people contribute to these arrangements through VOXY (Voice of Oxfordshire Youth), and their representatives attending the Trust meetings.
7. The voice of parents and carers is represented by Parent HealthWatch ambassadors

Background – membership and purpose of the Oxfordshire Children’s Trust Board

8. The purpose of the Trust is to:
 - Oversee key areas of multi-agency strategic planning for children and young people
 - Improve outcomes for children in relation to being successful, keeping safe, staying healthy, and being supported
 - Drive the integration agenda where there is evidence that integrated working between partnership agencies and members of the Trust Board will improve outcomes for children and young people
 - Champion the involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in partnership working with senior managers and politicians in the planning and delivery of services
 - Ensure the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board and other partnerships are sighted on the key challenges facing children and young people in Oxfordshire.
9. The Chair of the Trust is Councillor Liz Brighthouse (Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet member for Children and Family Services) the Deputy Chair is Jody Lloyd Jones (Oxfordshire Youth).
10. The two District Council positions on the board are held by Cllr Shaista Aziz (Oxford City Council) and Cllr Merlin Davies (West Oxfordshire District Council) both of these positions represent Oxford City Council and the other Oxfordshire district councils on the Trust. Oxford City Council and the other Oxfordshire district councils’ involvement and engagement in the Trust is supported by the Oxford City Council’s Policy and Partnership Team Manager.

Areas of work that have been reported on and raised at meetings of the Trust for 2021/22 are

11. In 2020-2021 the Trust priorities were:
 - Children missing out on education
 - Social and emotional wellbeing and mental health
 - Protecting children from domestic abuse
12. The priorities were agreed and supported by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, quality and performance data gathering across partnerships and youth engagement events across the county.
13. A series of workshops were held across the Trust partnership to review the performance, outcomes and impacts against each priority.
14. The main area of continued concern for the Oxford City Council was the continued poor performance against the “children missing out on education” priority through low attendance, and the significant attainment gap between disadvantaged children in Oxford and all other children. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was expected to have widened this attainment gap even further.
15. The most recent performance data sets support this concern, showing that in the period September – December last year nearly 1 in 4 children were persistently absent from school - twice as high as a year ago. There is a clear concern post-COVID that not all children are firmly ‘back into schools.’ To note: the levels of children that were electively home educated is also 40% higher than pre Covid-19. This figure was already rising before the pandemic.

Educational Attainment

16. To challenge and support the Trust Partnership, Oxford City Council has created a workstream focused on educational attainment within the Council-sponsored Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP), which was created in 2021, spun out from the Oxford Strategic Partnership Education Summit 2020.
17. The OIEP reports in to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and its Educational Attainment workstream includes senior educationalists from schools, further and higher education, employers and others. The Oxford City Council-sponsored Oxford strategic partnership (OSP) to convene and education summit, which was held in October 21. One of the outcomes of this summit was that an educational attainment working group would be developed as part of the Oxford Inclusive Economy partnership (OIEP) work plan.
 - The starting point was to focus on the Upstream work of OXLEP Skills Board/Skills advisory panel (esp. Skills Plan)
 - There are significant gaps in Oxfordshire around English/Match GCSE attainment as a Barrier to accessing Level 3 skills qualifications. Priority should be Level 3 as OxLEP’s skills plan does not concentrate on this area.

- Review relevance of successful initiatives from elsewhere and amplify/align existing initiatives and to identify areas for strengthened support
 - Range of empowerment tools to be shared with schools to enable this strategic Intervention
18. The working group used a design thinking approach and ran a facilitated design thinking session held at Activate in November 2021, the overarching design challenge set was: ***'How might we improve educational attainment in Oxfordshire so that more 16-year-olds are aspirational and level 3 ready?'***
19. Three sub group workstreams were developed as a result as areas for action:
1. How Oxfordshire can develop a mentoring scheme for young people so that we can promote identity, belonging and motivation
 2. How Oxfordshire can develop a framework to extend voluntary workforce to support learning and improve signposting to wider support
 3. How Oxfordshire can grow the parent advocate model activity, listening to more parents and carers and responding to their issues and insights

SEND Transformation

20. The Local Area receives funding from government to meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
21. The ambition is for all children and young people with SEND to have the right support and opportunities at the right time so that they go on to live rich and fulfilling lives at the heart of their communities.
22. Involving head teachers, Local Authority education, social care, health, parents and carers, a Local Area SEND Strategy has been co-designed and co-drafted and is currently out for consultation.
23. The draft Local Area SEND Strategy sets out four priority areas:
- Improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND
 - Developing a continuum of local provision to meet the requirements of children and young people with SEND
 - Good physical and mental health and wellbeing
 - Positive move into adulthood for young people with SEND
24. Oxford City Council with input from officers across the Council and members have responded to this consultation. The full response can be viewed in appendix 2.
25. Once the strategy is finalised implementation plans will be developed which focus on taking actions to reduce inequalities.
26. The Oxford City Council's Children and Young People's Strategy ("the CYPS") remains highly complementary to the work of the Trust. The CYPS shows how

the Council supports the delivery of its priorities. The CYPS also makes connections between work streams to ensure the most effective use of resource for the Council.

Council Achievements 2021

Youth Ambition

27. The aim of the Council's Youth Ambition Team is to build meaningful relationships with disadvantaged young people aged 11-19 years old, (or up to 25 if they have physical or learning difficulties), who are from Oxford's regeneration areas.
28. We have started to build back the in-person delivery when guidance eased from September 2021. This has included running 7 open access sessions such as youth clubs, work hubs and sports sessions within our most disadvantaged areas.
29. We have been linking more closely with schools and partners to ensure the right level of support is offered to young people and their families through the council's youth work programmes.

A couple of examples of our work with schools includes

- Supporting a group of 11-14 year olds in St Gregory the Great around making positive decisions, improving well-being and developing & improving their independent and social skills. We have delivered and facilitated a range of activities during which young people were able to explore their values, beliefs, ideas and issues in a safe space. In total we have reached 17 young people engaging them in informal activities, such as physical activity, arts & crafts and a range of team-building activities. The first group consisted of 6-8 young people who are at risk of NEET. Within our session's young people have demonstrated the ability to reflect on their own behaviours and identify the impacts these have and where they stem from. The second group consists of 8-9 young people and focuses specifically on positive-wellbeing, confidence & self-esteem and helping young people recognise and understand issues that are affecting them on a wider-level.
 - We also worked the Oxford Academy on a 10-week programme called Mind & Body and looked to explore the connection between mental health and physical health. Individuals were identified by the school using a number of needs indicators. Firstly the school used a base line fitness test to identify those with poor physical fitness or poor engagement with the school PE curriculum. This was then cross referenced with teacher observations about the young people in question regarding their presenting mental health within school and those who were presenting with low self-esteem and/or higher levels of anxiety were targeted to attend.
30. We have also been working with partners such as Oxfordshire Youth and Active Oxfordshire on the Life Chances Programme. Improving Life Chances is

primarily aimed at young people aged 11 – 17 who are excluded or not attending school, have offended in the last 12 months, or are not in education, employment or training. It embraces the influences from sport, youth work and criminal justice sectors and is defined by a purposeful intention to change, rather than simply manage, young people's behaviour and lives.

31. The programme involves a combination of mentoring, physical activity, hard-hitting workshops, volunteering opportunities and accredited qualifications. We work with young people who are facing challenges in their lives and help them to engage with physical activity, education, and their local communities. The desired outcomes for young people engaging with chances are:
 - Increase attendance.
 - Achieve a qualification.
 - Zero offending whilst involved in the programme.
 - Completion of a three-month volunteering or 30 hour work placement.
32. The initiative will take place in the wards of Blackbird Leys, Barton, Wood Farm, Littlemore and Rose Hill. We encourage all schools, organisations, and agencies in Oxford City to discuss this opportunity with young people that would benefit from the programme, and to refer to us any young person who is interested.
33. The Children and Young People's Partnership, represented by schools, the Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, police, health, and the voluntary care sector, will discuss how to work better together and share messages through local channels.
34. The Partnership has met more frequently during the COVID crisis to share information and to join up our work to support children and young people. Over this period of increased uncertainty, the partners agreed it was essential to have a clear, straight forward shared aim, this was agreed as – *"We will work better together to support children and young people."*
35. The City Council have continued to work with the County, TVP and the Oxford Hub in the Community Impact Zone (CIZ). Our aims are to create more opportunities for children and families in the four key areas of Cowley Marsh, Cowley, Blackbird Leys and Northfield Brook.
36. We have also been working very closely with the County Council on key initiatives to help shape and focus the new resource that the County Council is investing in children and young people delivery across the City. What is key to note is that need within the City is greater than resource levels available.

Community Centres

37. There are 16 Community Centres in the city. Many host youth clubs, stay and play sessions, educational sessions and many more activities and events for young people.

Leisure facilities

38. The council funds a number of free swimming lessons for 5 to 16 year olds in receipt of benefits and living within Oxford City (postcodes OX1 to OX4).
39. Children and young people aged 16 and under and who live in Oxford swim for free during all general public and family swim sessions at Barton, Ferry and Leys Pools and leisure Centre and Hinksey heated Outdoor Pool (seasonal). A free swim card is required for these sessions, which can be applied for at one of the Oxford leisure facilities. Once signed up for the card can be used at any of the above mentioned facilities.

Oxford Town Hall

46. The Oxford Town Hall offers events spaces for hire, which can include events accommodating children.
47. It also subsidises some of these events including the FUNomusica, which is a family concert that we host on a regular basis.
48. There is a café area that welcomes families and children.

The Council's Cultural Education Programme –

49. The Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) is currently delivering the Feeling Safe project which is supporting the mental health of 1,940 young people via 41 schools and non-school settings over the next year. From January 2022 to date, 350 young people have engaged with artists in 10 schools and so far created over 300 artworks in a range of media and styles. The CEP raised £205K for this work from COMF funding and via Artwork and contributions from District Councils.
50. Part of the Feeling Safe project is running training and continuing professional development support for practising artists and teaching staff in schools. Throughout March 2022 we are delivering 3 x Mental Health Training courses (one for primary schools, one for secondary schools and one for artists and arts organisations). This is being delivered by Oxfordshire Youth. We are also embedding Mental Health training in to our wider network and will be delivering 2 x Mental Health first aid courses (which are longer courses) and offering these to youth leaders, artists and teachers. These will take place after Easter.
51. The Feeling Safe project is evaluating different approaches to engagement with C&YP about mental health including work with the MHST and will use the [UCL Toolkit](#) for evaluation. The Toolkit was produced by researchers from University College London (UCL) Museums & Public Engagement and funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC).
52. The Museum of Oxford has reopened and is running regular workshops for schools and holiday activities for hundreds of young people and their families. The official launch will be in the Easter holidays 2022.

53. During the summer and autumn of 2021 we worked with our cultural partners and young people in Oxford's localities to co-create the Christmas Light Festival 2021 in 6 neighbourhood hubs. Thousands of young people took part as organisers as well as artists and audiences.
54. Over 2000 young people and their families are involved in Dancin' Oxford's year round outreach programme 2021-22 including Fam Jam regular dance sessions for families in Rose Hill/Barton (365 participants), Early Years project for 48 families across 3 settings, Family Dance Party (355 participants) and the Spring Dance Festival.
55. The Spring Dance festival launch 2022 was held in the Westgate 2 days ago on Saturday 5 March so the film isn't ready yet – over 130 young people performed to hundreds of shoppers throughout the day.
56. In 2021 we created 2 Global Dance Films with dancers from Oxford and our twin cities with over 200 young participants.
57. In 2021, 30 young people from Oxford, 52 young people from Ramallah and many more online participants took part in the Artivism Festival which received over £40K funding from the British Council. The project was so successful, the British Council have just confirmed £70K funding to run 'Ultra Arts' International Youth Theatre Festival with 10 young people from Oxford going to Ramallah in July 2022.
58. On 26 March 2022 Oxford City Council are hosting the first Teenage Market in the city. The Teenage Market will be part of the weekly outdoor Oxford Gloucester Green Market and will be a fantastic opportunity for local young people to showcase their performances and sell their art, craft, products, and services.
59. Oxford City Council has been represented on the key sub groups of the Trust throughout the year. This has included influencing, challenging and helping to shape services.

The Youth Partnership Board

60. The Oxford City Council facilitates a Youth Partnership Board. This board is chaired by a secondary school head teacher and includes representatives from the City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, the health sector, business, Mind, Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) and young people. The Council's Cultural Education Partnership reports into the Youth Partnership Board.
61. The Oxford City Council is represented on the Learner Engagement Board, the Strategic Schools Partnership, the Domestic Abuse Strategy Group and the Early Help Starter Group. This enables the effective sharing of information to protect the safety of vulnerable children and young people.
62. The Council's Community Safety Team provides partnership oversight of anti-social behaviour, child exploitation and county drugs lines and modern day slavery and the Council has used the partnership to cascade and inform its own practice in relation to young people's pathways and access to services.

63. This work has supported the Council to achieve best practice in its safeguarding practice in relation to children this year.

Children's Trust Focus for the year ahead

64. The priorities for the Children's Trust are reviewed and decided annually by the Board

65. The priorities for the Trust 2022/23 are

Be Successful

1. Have the best start in life.
2. Access high quality education, employment and training that is motivational.
3. Go to school and feel inspired to stay and learn.
4. Have good self-esteem and faith in themselves.

Priority focus for 2021/22: Focus on children not engaged in education

Be Happy and Healthy

5. Be confident that services are available to promote good health and prevent ill health – early in life and before crisis.
6. Learn the importance of healthy, secure relationships and having a support network.
7. Access services to improve overall well-being.
8. Access easy ways to get active.

Priority focus for 2021/22: Focus on social, emotional, physical & mental well-being

Be Safe

9. Be protected from all types of abuse and neglect.
10. Have a place to feel safe and a sense of belonging.
11. Access education and support about how to stay safe.
12. Have access to appropriate housing.

Priority focus for 2021/22: Focus on domestic abuse

Be Supported

13. Be empowered to know who to speak to when in need of support and know that they will be listened to and believed.
14. Access information in a way which suits them best.
15. Have inspiring role models. Talk to staff who are experienced and caring.

Priority focus for 2021/22

66. The full set of deliverables can be viewed in appendix 3. Children and young person plan.

67. The Trust has jointly met with the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) members this year to consider a joint set of 3 key priorities.

68. The three priorities for 2022-2023 for a joint focus agreed by HWBB are:

- emotional health and wellbeing
- 0-5s
- early help and SEND early intervention

69. Over the next few months, the Children's Trust Board will be looking at how we, as a partnership, can address those issues. Proposals are to be brought to the next CTB meeting in May.

70. Oxford City Council will participate in the proposal discussion on each priority.

71. With significant rises and demands on mental health interventions in Oxfordshire, members of the Joint Commission Executive and Oxford Health colleagues are trying to develop different ways of approaching the range of mental health needs.

72. A presentation was given by Kevin Gordon, Corporate Director of Children's Services, Oxfordshire County Council, along with representatives from Oxford Health about how we are trying to manage these demands.

73. It concluded going forward the Health Plan for Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing needs to try and provide services at an earlier point where young people need some of those clinical interventions.

74. A focus group with members of CAMHS, Voluntary Sector and wider strategic partners will be looking at key gaps and needs for children and young people and considering opportunities where improvements to the mental health services across Oxfordshire can be made.

75. The plan is to have a panel to evaluate the identified opportunities to come up with a short list for proposals and how we might fund it to make a real difference going forward.

76. The intention is to launch the strategy in May at the Youth in Mind Conference.

77. The Council's Policy and Partnership Team Manager has worked closely with the Director of Community services, Head of Communities, the Youth Ambition Team a HUB teams and the current portfolio holder to ensure that key priorities of the Trust and recovery plan objectives align with the Council's own corporate priorities for children and young people in Oxford. This has involved participating in task and finish groups over the last 12 month period to review the plan and over the next few months participating in key focus groups to consider how as a partnership we can develop and shape the deliverables against the priorities. In addition the role will ensure that opportunities are shared and explored in relation to the launch of the Health plan for emotional health and well-being in children.

Challenges for External Environment and Capacity

78. There are emerging issues from the impact of COVID-19, an increase in self-harm, mental health, home electively educated increase and an increased gap in attainment for vulnerable children. Issues children are facing are becoming ever

more complex and these will need to be supported within existing system resource.

79. The SEND transformation will need to be realised locally with limited increase in resource and there will be a need to work as a system to enable delivery and the best possible outcomes for our most vulnerable children.

Challenges for Culture

80. There are still some challenges ensuring that young people are everyone's responsibility and not that of just one agency and ensuring that all partners are engaged in the work delivery of the Children and Young People's implementation Plan. Oxford City Council remains one of the key voices in encouraging this to happen.

Financial implications

81. This report does not contain additional or specific expenditure commitments.

Legal issues

82. There are no legal issues associated with this partnership report.

Equalities Impact

83. All the work that Oxford City Council deliver through projects and programmes for young people have been through a thorough Equalities Impact Assessment. It has been undertaken in several stages – All to help inform the development of key areas of this work;

84. The initial scoping of the impact assessment was done via online focus groups, which were attended by a cross-section of members, officers, equalities ambassadors and community leaders with relevant protected characteristics and lived experience:

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Race Advisory Group – 14th September 2020
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women and Talent Development – 15th September 2020
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity and Faith – 16th September 2020
- Age, Mental Health and Shielding – 18th September 2020
- LGBTQIA+ – 25th September 2020
- Gender and Talent Development – 29th September 2020
- Young People and Mental Health – 1st October
- Disability, Race and Inclusive Governance – 2nd October 2020
- Refugee, Asylum seekers – 6th October 2020
- Migrant Communities – 8th October 2020
- Disability, Access and Talent Development – 9th October 2020

85. A wide range of additional available information was also taken into consideration including:

- Oxford's demographic statistics, including relating to protected characteristics

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