

To: Council
Date: 2 October 2023
Report of: Head of Corporate Strategy
Title of Report: Partnership report on the Oxfordshire Children’s Trust Board

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To provide members with an update on the work of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Oxfordshire Children’s Trust Board • Oxford City Council for Children and Young People in the city
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan 2020/2024

Recommendation(s): That Council resolves to:
1 To note the report

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxfordshire Partnerships Protocol
Appendix 2	Oxfordshire Children’s Trust Board representative members
Appendix 3	The Oxfordshire Education Commission findings, September 2023
Appendix 4	Oxford Community Impact Funded Organisations, 2022/2023

Introduction and background

1. The Children’s Trust Board (“the Trust”) brings together the public, private and voluntary sectors to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all Children and Young People (“C&YP”) who live in Oxfordshire. The Trust’s objectives are to ensure that agencies work together effectively and strategically across children’s services.

2. The Trust is a subgroup of the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board (“the HWB”) and as such is governed by the Oxfordshire Partnerships Protocol (Appendix 1).
3. The purpose of the Trust is to:
 - Oversee key areas of multi-agency strategic planning for C&YP.
 - 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 will improve outcomes for C&YP.
 - Champion the involvement of children, young people, parents, and carers in partnership working with senior managers and politicians.
 - Ensure that the HWB and other partnerships are sighted on the key challenges facing C&YP in Oxfordshire.

([Terms of Reference](#))

4. Chair of the Trust is Oxfordshire County Council’s Cabinet member responsible for children’s services (Councillor Liz Brighthouse), and the Vice–Chair is the Chief Executive Officer of Oxfordshire Youth (Jodie Lloyd-Jones).
5. Trust meetings are held quarterly each year - February, May, September, and November.
6. Trust Board representative members are shown in Appendix 2.
7. There are two district council positions on the Trust Board representing all of Oxfordshire’s district councils including Oxford City Council (the “Council”); the Council is the permanent holder of one, the other is held by one of the district councils on a rotating basis. The Council’s representative is currently Councillor Chewe Munkonge (Deputy Leader and portfolio holder for Leisure and Parks) while the district councils’ representative (since June 2023) is Councillor Phil Chapman (Cherwell District Council portfolio for Health and Safe Communities), who replaced Councillor Joy Aitman (West Oxfordshire District Council).
8. The City Council’s involvement and engagement in the Trust and that of the other Oxfordshire district councils is supported by the Council’s Policy and Partnership Team Officer.
9. The Trust has a vision of *‘wanting Oxfordshire to be a great place to grow up and have the opportunity for C&YP to become everything they want to be’*. To achieve this vision for C&YP, the Trust have four areas of focus:
 - be successful
 - be healthy
 - be safe
 - be supported.

([Framework for Multi-Agency Strategies Vision and Statement of Intent](#))

The work of the Trust

10. There are currently three Trust priorities:

- Early Help and Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Early Help & 0- to 5-year-olds
- Early Help and SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) Early Intervention.

11. Work supporting these priorities are set out in the [Children and Young People's Plan \("CYPP"\)](#), and in June 2023, the [Children's Trust Board Report](#) was presented to the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board. In summary:

Early Help update from partners:

12. Children's social care undertook a mock inspection in early January 2023. Actions arising from the inspection of the inter-agency elements will be taken forward to the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board ("the OSCB) to identify what next for partners and how to address the issues across the partnership in working together.
13. The Trust contributed feedback to the CYPP review ([2022 'You said, We did' summary](#)).
14. In February 2023, the Trust agreed that early help should be the overarching theme for the 2023/2024 CYPP and that partners would take a more inclusive approach for developing the plan.
15. The Oxfordshire Strapline was developed to demonstrate how the Trust work with Children and Families. This is the Trust a commitment to they want to work together to help children, young people, and families. ([Oxfordshire Strapline](#))

The Oxfordshire Education Commission

16. The Oxfordshire Education Commission was set up in response to the worsening attainment gap between disadvantaged children and other children across the Oxfordshire.
17. That gap is wider than the UK average, wider than our statistical neighbours, and has widened further through the COVID pandemic. Oxfordshire is in the bottom quartile.
18. The issue is particularly pronounced among children in receipt of Free School Meals, among children of black heritage, and among looked-after children. As six of the ten Oxfordshire wards with the highest Indices of Multiple Deprivation are in the city, this problem is particularly acute in Oxford. In addition, data shows that the attainment gap of disadvantaged children in the City of Oxford is relatively worse than that of equivalent cohorts in Banbury and Didcot. Across the county, this geographic imbalance isn't peculiar just to Oxford – disadvantaged children in Witney, Abingdon, and Wantage all do relatively less well than the equivalent cohorts in Bicester, Thame and Woodstock.
19. The Council made a formal submission to the Commission to highlight several concerns alongside, highlighting some of the Council's positive, mitigating

interventions. (Appendix 4 - the Council, South and Vale District Council's Education Commission submission, May 2023).

20. The Oxfordshire Education Commission published its findings in late September 2023, making 17 recommendations. At the time of drafting this report, Oxfordshire County Council was yet to publish a response to these findings. A copy of the Commission's report is attached as **Appendix 3**. The recommendations include – greater transparency and rigorous review of attainment data, increase active links with the city's universities, and work with City Council and district councils and employers to make Oxfordshire a more attractive place to live and work to support teacher recruitment and retention. It also calls for improvements to partnership working between schools and the County Council across what is an increasingly complex and fragmented educational landscape.
21. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks, together with officers, will have an opportunity to review and discuss the findings in more detail and feedback through the Children's Trust Board. Subject to that detailed review, Oxford City Council will work to support the implementation of the Commission's recommendations through its direct work, through the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership and through the Children's Trust Board.

Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection 2023

22. OFSTED together with the Care Quality Commission recently undertook an inspection of the Oxfordshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision, and found 'widespread systematic failings. Oxfordshire County Council and NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care Board ("BOB ICS") are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services (across education, health and social care) for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire. Both organisations have acknowledged the report findings and committed to focus on areas for improvement including the delivery of individual child Education, Health and Care Plans ("EHCPs") and securing the right help for at the right time for each child.
23. Oxford City Council has supported the new Oxfordshire SEND Strategy 2022-27, developed last year. However, Oxfordshire schools and parents have raised increasing concerns around the lack of progress in implementing the strategy, and the continued under-resourcing of Special School places needed in the county.

The Trust Focus for the year ahead

24. The priorities for the Trust are decided annually by the Board and contained within an Implementation Plan.
25. Trust members will be invited to attend a workshop in September 2023 to agree the 2023/24 CYPP and priorities, identify and commit to actions that are needed across the partnership to deliver on the plan, over the next 12 months.
26. The workshop is likely to include reviewing priorities in light of recent Ofsted Inspection (SEND) and the recommendations made by the Education Commission.

27. The Trust will also discuss how to effectively communicate the plan through the partnership and with the public.
28. Partners have been asked to incorporate actions and measures into their business plan, work plans, projects, and programmes of work.

The Council's contribution to the Trust, CYPP, and for C&YP living in the city

Thriving Communities Strategy

29. In December 2022, the Council adopted [Oxford's Thriving Communities Strategy 2023/2027](#) ("the TCS") as part of its policy framework. The TCS brings together leisure and culture, and the Council's work with communities to tackle inequalities.
30. The TCS also brought together four previous strategies that had overlapping outcomes (leisure, culture, community centres and the children and young persons' strategy) and used simple 4Ps framework to better align this work:
 - People - implementing our Thriving Communities principles – e.g. doing things with people not to them, and building on what works well
 - Pride - celebrating diverse cultural heritage, encouraging trust, and belonging and ensuring inclusivity
 - Place - inclusive spaces and places
 - Progress - a range of ways to demonstrate the impact of our work and continually learn.

Educational Attainment – Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership

31. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership ("the OIEP") is a countywide group that brings together employers, business, education, community groups and local government including Oxford City Council. Its aim is to work together to create opportunities and benefits for all people within the county.
32. Four working groups have been established to deliver the OIEP's vision. One of the working groups is focused on educational attainment - looking on early years, educational attainment of GCSE English and Maths and better links between business and education to help shape career choices.
33. The OIEP Delivery Plan 2023-24 has been developed through a set of proposals drawn up by each of the working groups and includes supporting three projects focusing on:
 - School readiness – by expanding the Growing Minds programme
 - Voluntary action – by extending the ARCh, volunteer school reading programme
 - Parental advocacy – by expanding the ParentPower programme
34. These are established programmes of work that require the support of the OIEP to amplify, build or extend their reach across Oxfordshire. All of these proposals require funding which will be linked to the OIEP Fundraising Strategy.

Youth Investment Funding

35. An opportunity arose in 2022 for the Council to submit an application to an external funder (whose identity is currently embargoed). The objective of the fund was to

create, expand and improve local youth facilities and their services to drive positive outcomes for young people, including improved mental and physical wellbeing, and skills for life and work.

36. The fund offered a capital element to improve facilities and a revenue element to help kick start youth activities. Confirmation has now been received from the funder that the Council in partnership with the Oxfordshire County Council has been granted £1,120,199 in capital and £223,907 in revenue.
37. Young people helped co-create a programme of youth work activities within the hub this includes activities such as cooking, climbing, music, technology, and many others.

38. Youth Ambition work with young people 11-19 years

- Open access youth club and sports sessions provide a safe and positive environment for young people to play, socialise and learn, and where staff build positive relationship with young people and ensure they have a sense of belonging by involving them in all aspects of the running of these clubs.
- Young people are informally supported early and therefore less likely to be prone to risky behaviours. Designed and delivered in quiet spaces at youth clubs where young people can offload to staff in confidence.
- The sessions serve as an early intervention to young people who may be struggling with issues including safeguarding, social and emotional challenges, and through participation and relationship building staff are able to support them.
- Summer 2023: Provision, [free and low-cost offers](#) were delivered in Oxford over the summer by both the Council and other providers.

39. School engagement:

- Engagement is delivered with young people in secondary schools who struggle to cope in formal settings through issue-based group work. This helps young people improve their behaviour and attendance and become less likely to be excluded from school.
- This includes raising awareness of the following topics: wellbeing, drugs, peer pressure, bullying and healthy relationships etc.

40. Youth worker - mental health:

- The Council has a youth worker who is the lead for the mental health work-strand, who helps ensures that wellbeing activities are happening in the sessions. Wellbeing packs are also put together for young people to help raise awareness for accessing other support opportunities.

41. Locality Working

- The Council is continuing to add family support through locality teams. As part of its localities work the Council is working with families to ensure they have the support in place when needed and have knowledge and understanding of community groups that can be accessed. The focus of this work is to develop stronger collaboration, especially around early intervention.

42. Oxford's work in the Community Impact Zone

- In 2018 Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police, and the local Primary Care Network linked to create a Community Impact Zone (“the “CIZ “) to tackle inequalities of health and education for those who reside in Oxford’s most deprived areas; Blackbird Leys, Greater Leys, Littlemore, and Rose Hill. Since then, the Oxford Hub has led the work of the CIZ working alongside the wider community, partners, and stakeholders. The CIZ has several initiatives in place that include:
 - Building positive trusted relationships with parents of vulnerable children.
 - Supporting to help children achieve at school, through additional English/ IT classes.
 - Increasing opportunities for children healthy lifestyle, including opportunities to learn to swim and ride a bicycle.
 - Funding local people to realise their ideas to improve the area where they live.
 - Spaces for people to connect with their community.
 - A growing network of peer supporters to support families to thrive, including Parent Advocates who support parents with connecting with the child’s school or local organizations, including attending parents evening.
 - Supporting parents to learn and develop through English classes, to support the child as they progress throughout the years of the school.
 - This his collaborative approach has resulted in c£600k of external investment into the CIZ.

Go Active Families

43. [Go Active Families](#) aims to provide families with all the information needed to be more active in Oxford.

YouMove

44. [YouMove](#) is an Oxfordshire wide programme to support families on lower incomes to access fee and low-cost physical activity. The offer brings children, young people, and their families together in Oxford to enjoy a range of fun activities. The current pathway is only for families with children aged 4+ and there is currently a proposal to the Integrated Care Board to extend YouMove and [Move Together](#) across Oxfordshire by 3 years. As part of this, the Council will be looking to extend the programme support to the 0 to 4 age group.

Leisure offers

45. In partnership with the Council leisure operator:
- [Free Swimming Sessions](#) for those 16 years of age and under living in the city (OX1 to OX4) continue to be provided across Oxford’s swimming pools.
 - Oxford’s concessionary [Bonus Leisure membership](#) continues to offer Oxfords’ most vulnerable residents (OX1 to OX4) significantly discounted access to Oxford’s three leisure centre, seasonal heated outdoor pool, and ice rink.
 - Leisure for All funding: A community focused small grant scheme to help reduce barriers for participation in Oxford’s three leisure centres, seasonal heated outdoor pool, and ice rink.

46. The Council's contract with its current leisure operator ends in March 2024. The procurement strategy for the new operator aims to make local leisure assets more focused on active wellbeing. Health inequalities has been an intrinsic part of and reflected in the tender. One of Council's key objectives is to increase the number of children leaving primary school who can swim 25 meters.

Parks and accessible play

47. Oxford has over 90 green spaces across the city, including parks and nature reserves. Eight of Oxford's parks are located within communities. Additionally, Oxford has [87 play areas](#) to suit needs for all.

Oxford Cultural Education Partnership

48. The Oxford City Cultural Education Partnership ("the OxCEP") works in partnership with arts and cultural organisations, schools, youth groups and young people to engage young people in arts and cultural activity across Oxfordshire.

49. Recent projects have included:

- A mental health and wellbeing Continuing Professional Development training programme for arts partners and teachers to support young people and encourage positive mental health.
- A partnership with The World Reimagined to train arts leaders and deliver a racial justice arts education programme with young people.
- Commissioned projects to specifically target young people and support their positive mental health with Cherwell Theatre, Mandala Theatre Company, Ark-T, Oxford Opera, Oxford Weaving, Fig, Modern Art Oxford, Film Oxford, OYAP, Justice in Motion and Body Politic.
- A partnership with the Children in Care Council with local artist Dionne Freeman to create artwork and an exhibition inspired by the young people's experiences of being Children We Care For in Oxfordshire.
- A Creative Futures careers event in partnership with Oxfordshire arts and cultural organisations.

50. Future projects include:

- Enabling young people in Oxfordshire to create resources to advocate for peer engagement with arts and culture and share the benefits of their experiences.
- A partnership project with The Story Museum working with teachers and pupils at 6 schools with multiple indices of deprivation to improve their emotional literacy and confidence in the classroom through art and creative performance.
- Developing a youth board and youth ambassador programme.

Museum of Oxford

51. The [Museum of Oxford](#) ("the MOX") delivers activity for children in Oxford through its services for communities, schools, [families](#) and under 5s.

52. The Council work in partnership with local communities to collect their cultural stories and share them in our museum through exhibitions and events, including by commissioning local cultural experts to deliver family activities.

53. MOX offers:

- A schools programme includes a range of handling workshops that are targeted to include specific areas of the curriculum including history, citizenship, art, and English, as well as contributing to the Cultural Capital agenda.
- Schools in areas of higher deprivation free pilot workshops, and work in partnership with them on specific projects, such as our recent Story Makers project with Wood Farm School, using museum collections and art therapy to support pupils with specific education and emotional needs.
- Work experience placements for young people and are currently developing a programme supporting T-level students.
- Tailored activities developed to support specific needs, e.g. touch tours for C&YP with visual impairments, Sensory backpacks are available.
- Free gallery visits for groups supported by optional worksheets.

Oxford Community Impact Fund

54. The Oxford Community Impact Fund has supported a number of organisations supporting children and young people with a variety of needs. (Appendix 5 - Oxford Community Impact Funded Organisations, 2022/2023).

The Council's safeguarding responsibilities

55. Oxfordshire County Council is the Children's Services Authority (CSA) for Oxfordshire. It has the principal legal responsibility for promoting and maintaining the welfare of all children in Oxfordshire.

56. Oxford City Council, as a district council, has legal duties under the Children Act 2004 to:

- make arrangements to ensure that in discharging its functions it has regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- ensure that where it makes arrangements with other people for the discharge of its functions, that those people provide the functions having regard to the need
- co-operate with the CSA and its relevant local partners with a view to improving the well-being of children in the CSA's area;
- co-operate with the CSA in budget pooling – a key provision that underpins children's trust arrangements;
- co-operate with relevant local partners in the making of arrangements to improve the wellbeing of children in the CSA's area.

57. The Children's Trust Board has a duty under the Care Act 2004 to prepare a children and young people's plan which must set out the strategy of the Board's members for co-operating with each other in order to improve the well-being of children and relevant young persons in the area.

58. The Council's Safeguarding Policy sets out how the Council fulfils these obligations and supports staff, Members, and volunteers in all aspects of safeguarding. The Safeguarding Procedures set out how staff and contractors should respond to safeguarding incidents.

59. The Council is also required to complete an annual self-assessment of its safeguarding children's activities. This has been developed into a joint self-assessment audit between the [OSCB](#) and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board.
60. The evidence for each audit standard is assessed and given a rating:
- Green – Fully met and evidenced – Best Practice
 - Amber – the standard/compliance point is not met but work has begun, or work is underway but has experienced delays in completion
 - Red – the standard/compliance point is not met; work is not underway and there are issues with commencing work
61. Twenty two of 23 standards were rated Green with one standard rated Amber: Standard: *'How do you know that your organisation's complaints processes are effective and that children and adults with care and support needs are empowered to challenge services when expected standards/responsibilities are not met?'*
62. Although services such as Anti-Social Behaviour and Youth Ambition empower their users to challenge services and make complaints, it was recognised that formal processes for complaints reporting were under review and improvements such as reporting on specific safeguarding complaints, are underway.
63. The full self-assessment is available as a background paper to this report. ([The Councils Safeguarding Audit 2022](#)).
64. Officers undertook an annual review of the [Council's Safeguarding Policy](#) and [Safeguarding Procedures](#), and these were approved by Cabinet in July 2023.

Community Centres

65. There are 19 operational [Community Centres in Oxford](#), many of which are owned by the Council. Some Community Centres are managed by Community Associations made up of local workers and volunteers. Many host youth clubs, stay, and play sessions, educational sessions and many more activities and events for young people.

Growing Partnership working

66. Officers continue to explore opportunities with partners to work with the Council to deliver services such as youth work, by changing the way some services are delivered new sources of funding may be more accessible.
67. Officers are currently actively working with maternity services, health visitors and breastfeeding support groups to design ways in which the Council can co-locate services with our leisure centres and community centres.
68. The Council has:
- a Physical Activity Officer for Schools in post to support the development of physical education within a school setting and to assist in the development of extra-curricular opportunities
 - Four Community Health Development Officers (CHDO) in post who are supporting the delivery of Community Insight Profiles in (Barton, Rose Hill, Littlemore, the Leys, and the City Centre). These Community Insight Profiles and the surrounding work of the CHDO will help the Council address the

biggest health inequalities facing residents (including C&YP) and seek to reduce the inequalities.

69. The Council developed and facilitates the Oxford C&YP Partnership (“the C&YPP”). This partnership is chaired by a city of Oxford secondary head teacher and is made up from the:

- The Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- The health sector and business sectors
- Thames Valley Police
- Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action
- Young people.

The C&YP partnership provides oversight for the [Community Impact Zone](#), [Life Chances](#) and the [Cultural Education Partnership](#), with meetings held every 6-to-8-week period.

70. The 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.

71. 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 [Safer Oxford Partnership](#) to cascade and inform its own practice in relation to young people’s pathways and access to services.

Youth Employment, Education and Training

72. The Council currently runs the Youth Employment, Education and Training (EET) Hub at Rose Hill Community Centre. The Hub runs a variety of activities including. Wellbeing sessions, employment training, Job/CV club, 1-2-1 job support and regular employment fairs. The Hub is designed to arm young people with the correct knowledge, tools, and support to pursue achievable and sustainable employment in the future.

Engaging Migrant Families

73. Oxford City Council directly supports Migrant Families through a range of projects.

- A comprehensive package of support providing at least one-year person-centred intensive support to all families arriving in Oxford on the Refugee Resettlement Schemes. This is provided through a team of dedicated support workers and further includes provision for helping families navigate schooling such as working with teachers and pastoral care, accessing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or childcare funding, and providing interpretation and translation.
- Funding the School Advocacy project (currently to August 2024) to help refugee families navigate the education system.
- Promoting local and national initiatives to help refugee families in the community such as the Sure Start Maternity Grant temporary extension for

Afghan & Ukraine households, accessing cost of living support and discounted furniture via Emmaus.

- Progressing the Council's commitment to become an accredited Council of Sanctuary and be a welcoming place for households including with children, seeking sanctuary who are fleeing violence and persecution
- Funding additional therapeutic support via Refugee Resource for counselling for refugee's households who have been resettled in Oxford.
- Providing seed funding for an innovative Refugee Employment Support Programme (RESP) via Aspire and other partners to increase employability for refugees and their families.

Financial implications

74. There are no financial implications for Oxford City Council arising from this report.

Legal issues

75. The legal implications are set out in paragraphs 56 and 57 of this report.

Level of risk

76. There are no risk implications for Oxford City Council arising from this report.

Equalities impact

77. Under its public sector equality duty the council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

78. The Council discharges its public sector equality duty in relation to its safeguarding responsibilities through policies and key strategies related to C&YP - such as the Thriving Communities Strategy 2023/2027, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

79. Furthermore, the work by both the Trust and the Council is a positive contribution to the protected characteristic of C&YP.

80. The Council will continue to monitor equalities impact as programmes grow and develop.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

81. There are no carbon and environmental implications for Oxford City Council arising from this report.

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Background Papers: None

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