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# CITIZEN EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2025 – 2027

*For everyone that lives in, works in or visits  
the city of Oxford*



# Foreword

Every day, hundreds of Oxford's citizens interact with Oxford City Council—whether through accessing services, attending events, raising concerns, or contributing ideas. These moments of contact shape not only the Council's reputation but also the quality of life across Oxford's communities. That's why meaningful engagement matters. It's about far more than just a transactional relationship; it's about building trust, encouraging collaboration, and ensuring that everyone has a voice in the decisions that shape the city.

Over the past two years, the Council has made significant strides in delivering its Citizen Experience Strategy, remaining firmly focused on putting communities and citizens at the heart of how we work.

We've retained our externally assessed Customer Service Excellence accreditation with top-tier recognition in 16 areas, demonstrating the Council's continued commitment to learning and improvement.

We've strengthened the Council's feedback and engagement channels; re-launching the Residents Panel and introducing improved systems to capture comments, complaints and compliments so we can better understand and respond to citizens' needs. Council teams have also embedded customer service support directly into the community, such as in local larders and through targeted digital skills initiatives, helping to bridge the gap for those who need it most.

We have also worked hard to ensure a positive and inclusive experience for all. From the launch of a more accessible website and a new online Tenant Portal, to developing clear service and communication standards; we are helping residents access what they need, when they need it. The Council's work around inclusive access has re-engaged young people through the Youth Panel, and delivered tangible improvements like easier payments online, translation services, and improved Freedom of Information response times. Crucially, we are focusing on getting it right first time; empowering staff with better tools, training, and data to deliver joined-up, effective support from the very first interaction.

Together, these efforts are making the Council's services more responsive, more inclusive, and more citizen-focused than ever before; evident in our success measures, which show an increase of over 6,000 webforms submitted by citizens last year compared to the previous year, alongside rising customer satisfaction across the Council's face-to-face services, contact centre telephone calls, and website interactions.

We know there is still more to do. But with a clear vision, dedicated teams, and continued engagement with the communities we serve, I am confident that we are on the right path. This strategy is not just about improving services—it's about empowering citizens, embracing innovation, and making sure everyone in Oxford has the opportunity to thrive.



Councillor Nigel Chapman

Cabinet member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies

# Introduction

*In this strategy, “Citizens” are those who live, work in and visit Oxford. The outcomes and actions in this strategy also cover the Council’s relationships with businesses, communities and partners.*

This Citizen Experience Strategy outlines the approach Oxford City Council will be taking to provide a positive experience for all citizens in accessing its services and engaging with the Council as a provider of them. It will ensure that all of the Council’s services are in tune with the approach and are embracing other organisations and community groups to provide the right support for anyone living, working or visiting Oxford.

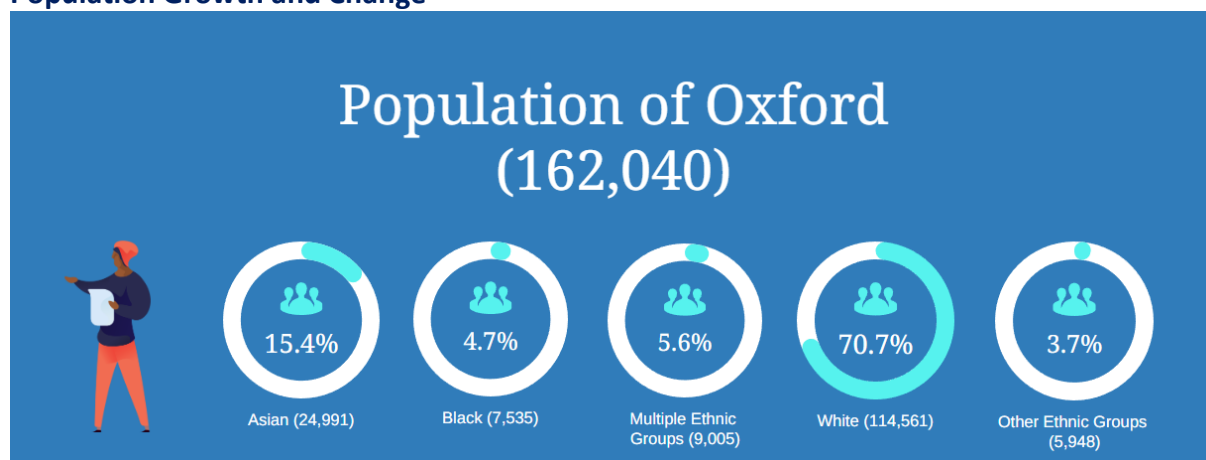
Since the launch of the Council’s original Citizen Experience Strategy in 2023, significant progress has been made in delivering a much-improved service. However, there remains much work to be done. To ensure continued progression and improvement, the Council has refreshed the strategy for the next two years, incorporating minor adjustments, updating data where possible, and revising the action plan.

A comprehensive review of this strategy will take place in 2027, in conjunction with an assessment of the Council’s Thriving Communities Strategy, to determine whether a unified strategy would best serve the interests of Oxford’s communities and citizens.

## Current Context

To ensure any strategy developed by the Council is relevant and impactful, it is crucial to understand the key demographics of the city’s citizens. Oxford is a dynamic and changing city, marked by increasing diversity, a growing population, and notable socioeconomic challenges.

### Population Growth and Change



Oxford’s population stood at 162,040 according to the 2021 Census. This number is projected to rise to 170,800 by 2031 (a 5.41% increase) and further to 176,000 by 2040 (an

8.62% increase). The city also has a significant number of private renters, contributing to the fluidity and diversity of its population.

Alongside overall growth, Oxford is also experiencing demographic shifts, notably an ageing population. In 2021, there were 8,881 residents aged 75 years and over. This group is expected to grow to 13,656 by 2040; an increase of approximately 53.8%.

### Health and Social Inequality

Oxford continues to face profound health and social inequalities. Several parts of the city are marked by high levels of deprivation. One area (Northfield Brook) ranks within the 10% most deprived areas nationally, and nine others fall within the 20% most deprived. These include The Leys, Barton, Littlemore, Rose Hill, and Carfax.

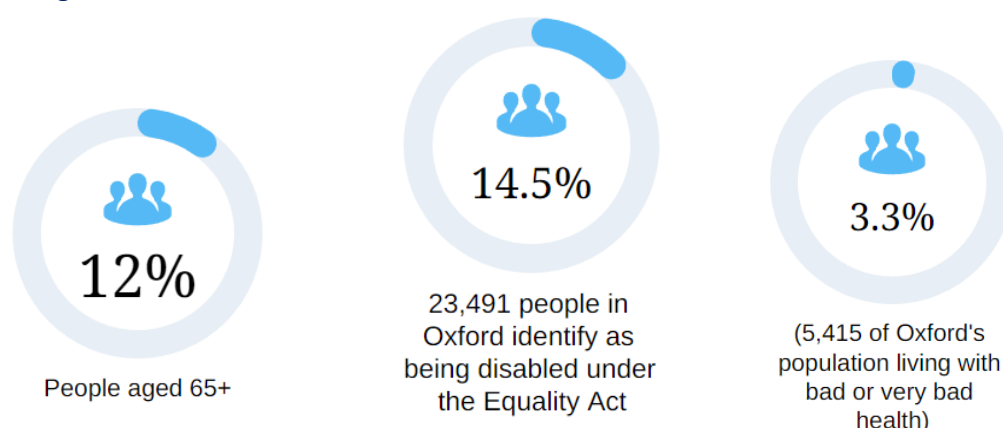
### Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Between 2011 and 2021, the number of Oxford residents born outside of the UK increased by approximately 13,500. Additionally, the number of residents who do not speak English, or do not speak it well, rose by around 1,000. These shifts reflect the growing cultural and linguistic diversity of the city.

### Digital Inclusion and Engagement

Digital access and skills remain uneven across the population. Nationally, 25% of UK adults are reported to have 'very low digital capability'. In Oxford, this digital divide is especially pronounced among lower-income households and minority ethnic communities. Age UK's own research also shows how older people can struggle and often feel 'offline and overlooked'.

Despite these challenges, digital engagement is improving. The 2024 Residents Survey found that 75% of residents now use online council services, up from 68% in 2023. Notably, increased usage has been observed among social renters, unpaid carers, citizens with health issues, and ethnic minorities. There has also been a 24% decrease in residents who reported not knowing how to use the Council's online services.



### Economy and Employment

Oxford's economy is supported by 4,580 registered businesses within the city boundaries. These businesses provide approximately 113,900 jobs and rely on efficient, responsive engagement with the Council to support their success and that of the local economy.

## Tourism and Visitor Experience

Oxford remains a popular destination, welcoming approximately 7 million daytime and overnight visitors each year. Ensuring a positive experience for these visitors is essential to maintaining the city's status and economic vitality.

### Sources:

- *Office for National Statistics (ONS), Census 2021*
- *Oxfordshire County Council, Housing-Led Forecasts*
- *Greater London Authority, Trend-Based Population Projections*
- *English Indices of Deprivation 2019*
- *2023 UK Consumer Digital Index*
- *Oxford City Council, Residents Survey 2024*

## Current Service



*\* 56% customer satisfaction with the Council's website is the combined Good and Average scores from GovMetric and benchmarks well when compared with other Local Authorities.*

The scale of Oxford City Council's frontline operations remains significant, with a continued focus on delivering responsive, accessible, and customer-centred services.

### Commitment to Customer Service Excellence

Since 2013, the Council has held the Customer Service Excellence accreditation; a national quality mark that recognises organisations that consistently place customers at the heart of service delivery. In its most recent assessment (November 2024), the Council met all 57 assessment criteria and was awarded 16 Compliance Plus ratings. These commendations recognised areas where the Council was judged to be performing "above and beyond" standard expectations.



## Community Access and Support

The Council delivers face-to-face services from the Westgate Library three days per week. In addition, Customer Service Officers are deployed to support residents at Community Food Larders across the city; providing assistance where it is needed most.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council launched locality hubs to provide coordinated support and advice to communities. This approach has since evolved into a broader locality network model, where the Council are working to bring together Council services, statutory agencies, and community organisations. These networks aim to ensure residents can access the best possible support, wherever they live.

This community-based model is essential for addressing deep-rooted health and poverty inequalities. It also supports efforts to bridge the digital divide, which is increasingly recognised as a key factor in improving individual and community wellbeing.

## Inclusive Communication and Language Support

Recognising Oxford's growing diversity and changing demographics, the Council has invested in comprehensive language support services. These include:

- Telephone and face-to-face interpreting
- British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters
- Video interpretation services
- Document translation

These services are currently provided by Word360. In addition, the Council has launched a 'Translations' page on its website, enabling users to translate web content into dozens of languages using Google Translate. This helps make vital information more accessible to all residents, regardless of language proficiency.

# The Citizen Experience Strategy

The vision is to:

***'Put communities and citizens at the heart of how the Council work, ensuring they actively shape the Council's services and that the right support is available for anyone living, working or visiting Oxford.'***

**The Council pledges to deliver these simple and ambitious outcomes:**

### **Citizen Focused**

- 1. We will put you at the heart of how we work, and develop a learning culture to continually improve our offer to you**
- 2. We will listen, use insight and feedback to make sure our services are based on what is needed, and measure success in a way that is accountable to you**
- 3. We will use insight to spot trends where we are failing to meet the service standard and improve performance**
- 4. We will work collaboratively with our communities, and design services to meet your needs through a variety of contact channels**
- 5. We will develop a diverse and engaged workforce that is representative and in tune with our communities**

### **Positive Citizen Experience**

- 6. We will make sure the citizen experience as a whole is quicker, easier and better**
- 7. We will ensure our staff are supported to give a professional and helpful experience with access to the right tools and technologies**
- 8. We will take ownership for delivery and get the basics right**
- 9. We will set clear expectations, do what we say we will do and keep you informed of progress**

### **Inclusive Access**

- 10. We will deliver modern, accessible services that meet the needs of our diverse communities and promote our equalities objectives. This includes:**
  - 10.1 An easy-to-use website for information and guidance, accessible through a range of devices including laptops and smart phones**
  - 10.2 Self-service to access personal information and request services**
  - 10.3 Keeping updated with messages and alerts**
  - 10.4 Interactive social media**
- 11. We will deliver face to face and other assisted support, and help the most vulnerable people to ensure their complex needs are met and no one gets left behind**
- 12. We will make our services and information clear, concise and accessible to all using language that reinforces our values**
- 13. We will do all we can to reduce digital exclusion by improving our citizens skills and access to technology**

### **Get it Right First Time**

- 14. We will resolve your needs at the first point of contact where possible**
- 15. We will act swiftly to remedy individual service failures and communicate these actions to you**
- 16. We will work collaboratively with partners, agencies and community groups to ensure early intervention**
- 17. We will ensure our systems and processes reduce unnecessary contact for you, so your needs are resolved at the first time you contact us**

In summary the Council will:

- Deliver modern, inclusive and accessible services that embrace the benefits of technology to make the experience quicker and easier for everyone.



- Ensure no-one gets left behind, by providing a range of ways to engage with the Council with access to specialists for more complex enquiries.
- Make the most of data and insight, whether that is using citizen feedback to improve processes, involving citizens in service design, or utilising data to spot trends and support business policy and decisions to ensure services meet the needs of citizens.
- Strengthen support within communities and work together with partners, agencies and community groups to give holistic, right first-time solutions and advice to ensure the early prevention of issues.

## Updated Action Plan

The delivery of this action plan will be driven by the Citizen Experience Delivery Board, overseen by the Council's Change Boards with progress reported to the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders.

Outcome	Workstream	Start Date	Finish Date
<b>Citizen Focused</b>	Maintaining Customer Service Excellence accreditation	Next annual assessment date is November 2025	
	Reviewing the Council's corporate standards, key performance indicators and service offer to ensure they are fit for purpose	April 2025	November 2025
	Collecting and utilising Customer Satisfaction feedback more consistently across the organisation through use of an improved question bank	January 2025	November 2025
	Defining what excellent citizen experience looks like for each of the Council's Service Areas to support service planning	September 2025	March 2026
	Implementing the Low-Income Families Tracker to identify families with unmet support needs and connect them with the assistance they are entitled to reduce poverty and increase household income in a proactive way	April 2025	March 2026
Outcome	Workstream	Start Date	Finish Date
<b>Positive Citizen Experience</b>	Completing the website improvement project including developing new webforms and maximising automation opportunities	September 2024	September 2026

	Re-working how the Council captures customer satisfaction scores on the website to improve feedback	September 2025	March 2026
	Delivering process review projects to improve service delivery e.g. HMO Licensing	Continuous	
	Ensuring a more consistent approach to payments with online payment options more widely available	September 2025	April 2027
	Developing an Artificial Intelligence Strategy that outlines the Council's ethical and responsible approach to AI adoption, governance and integration.	April 2025	September 2025
Outcome	Workstream	Start Date	Finish Date
<b>Inclusive Access</b>	Supporting communities to have access to digital technology and better digital skills through various community initiatives	Continuous	
	Developing and delivering a Communications Plan to raise awareness of the translation options available for accessing the Council's services	September 2025	March 2026
	Expanding and encouraging wider use of Community Ladders by the organisation to support citizen outreach	April 2025	March 2026
	Driving wider utilisation of the Community Led Solutions database to signpost citizens to the right support	April 2025	March 2026
	Using video walkthroughs on the Council's Community Centre websites to show the facilities available and access options	April 2025	March 2026
Outcome	Workstream	Start Date	Finish Date
<b>Get it Right First Time</b>	Embedding a continuous improvement culture with staff through self-assessment tools and training in areas such as SharePoint and Artificial Intelligence	Continuous	

	Expanding the availability of online booking functionalities to make the process quicker and easier	September 2025	July 2027
	Completing call intent analysis to understand how Artificial Intelligence may be able to support service improvements for the Council's Contact Centre	May 2025	September 2025
	Implementing the Channel Management Plan to rationalise and improve use of the Council's contact channels	January 2025	March 2026
	Utilising data and insight from the new 3Cs system to improve services and inform decision making.	July 2025	Continuous

## Success Measures

The Council will be continuing to improve digital access to services for citizens and improving back-office automation that will mean less manual intervention by staff.

The Council will be measuring the extent and success of how citizens use these new digital processes.

It will also continue to measure customer satisfaction with its web, contact centre and face to face services. These will include stretching targets that sit alongside clear plans for improvement.

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