

Central Oxford Community Insight Profile

Summary

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1 Introduction

Oxfordshire is one of the most affluent areas of the country. However, this hides the fact that, as reported by the [Director of Public Health Annual Report 2019](#), there are 10 wards in Oxfordshire which include areas ranked in the 20% most deprived in England.

To better understand the needs and priorities of these communities, Oxfordshire County Council's Public Health team is undertaking a programme of work with local partners to create community insight profiles, providing an in-depth understanding both of local health needs as well as supportive community assets. The community profiles use local data and community insight that was based on an asset-based community development model (ABCD).

One of these areas previously fell within the Carfax ward but since a boundary change, now straddles the Osney and St. Thomas and Holywell wards.

After discussion with the local Community Insight profile steering group and based on local data, this profile is based on small areas that fall within the Osney and St. Thomas and Hinksey park wards - chosen because of their high rates of social housing and higher levels of household deprivation.

The aim of this profile is to:

- Understand what the experience is of those living in Central Oxford in relation to health and wellbeing,
- Outline the health outcomes and the factors which can influence these health outcomes and bring this to life through the voices of the community
- Present a series of recommendations that will guide action planning towards the improvement of the health and wellbeing of the community in this area
- Provide information that can be used by local organisations and stakeholders working in collaboration with residents to improve health outcomes in the area

Note that this report is a summary and highlights the key findings from two in-depth reports:

- *Central Oxford Community Insight Project Report* by Community Glue CIC
- *Community (data) profile of Central Oxford* compiled by the Public Health Intelligence team at Oxfordshire County Council

This summary contains quotes from Community insight gathering, these quotes have been edited to aid readability and identifiable information has been removed to anonymise the respondents.

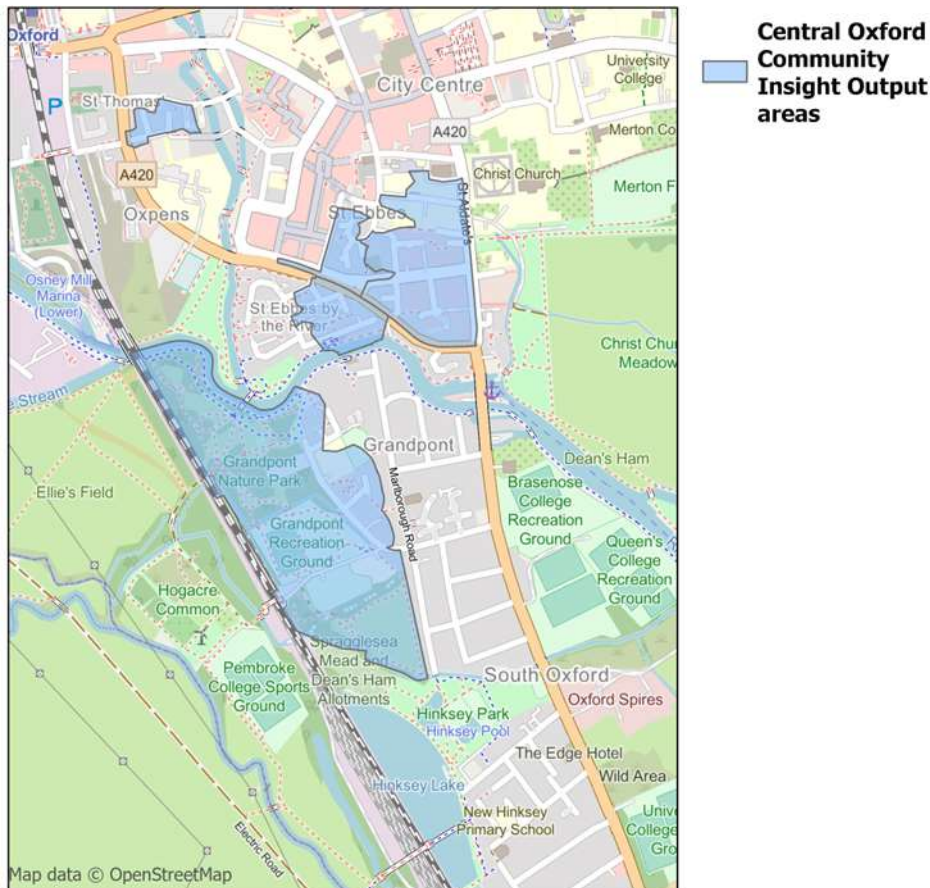
With thanks to Community Glue CIC, Oxford City Council and the Central Oxford Community Health Development Officer, the community researchers, the Central Oxford Community Profile Steering Group and the residents who gave their time to share their views.

2 Location

This profile is based on a bespoke non-contiguous area within Central Oxford, covering the areas of St. Thomas, St. Ebbe's, Friars Wharf and Grandpont, chosen because of their relatively high rates of social housing and high levels of deprivation.

The Central Oxford area included in the Community Insight is based on a geographical area built from smaller Output Areas (see Figure 1) and this area is referred to in the Community Insight profile as the Central Oxford area.

Figure 1 Map Showing Output Areas Selected for Central Oxford Community Insight area



Mapping by Oxfordshire County Council

3 Summary of population and health data

Population and housing

- The total population of the Central Oxford Community Insight area according to the latest data (Census 2021), was 1,178 residents.
- Compared with Oxford and Oxfordshire, Central Oxford has a much lower proportion of those aged 35 to 49 years and a much higher proportion of those from an Asian ethnic background.
- Between the Census 2011 and Census 2021 surveys, the resident population of Central Oxford increased by nearly double that of the average for Oxfordshire.
 - The largest increase was seen in those aged 0-19 years that was well above average.
- The proportion of social rented housing in Central Oxford was over four times the averages for Oxfordshire.

Health and Wellbeing

- For the wider Central Oxford area (this area is explained further in the data pack), 1 of the 32 local health and wellbeing indicators, is ranked as worse than the England average, with the remaining 31 indicators ranked as better than or similar to the average. The indicator highlighted as worse for the area was Hospital admissions for alcohol-attributable conditions.
- The rate for adults receiving drugs or alcohol treatment in the Central Oxford Community Insight area has remained much higher than the average for Oxfordshire since 2019.

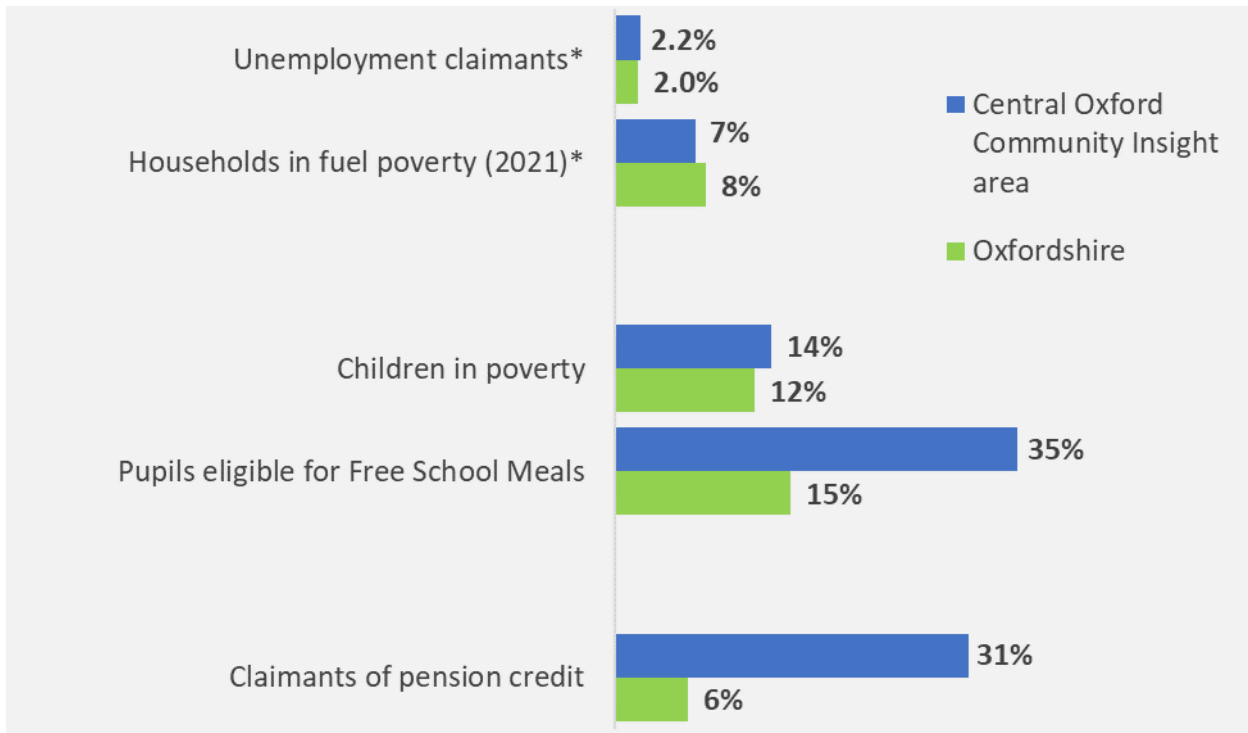
Employment

- The percentage of people who were economically active in the Central Oxford Community Insight area (Census 2021) was much lower than the rate for Oxford and Oxfordshire, with a lower proportion of people in full-time employment.
- The proportion of residents who were long-term sick or disabled in the area was over three times the average for Oxford.

Poverty and Deprivation

- The Central Oxford Community Insight area has a much higher proportion of households classified as deprived in one or more dimensions than the Oxford and Oxfordshire average.
- Compared to the average for Oxfordshire, a similar proportion of working aged residents in the Central Oxford area were claiming unemployment-related benefits.
- A slightly lower proportion of households in the Central Oxford area were estimated to be in fuel poverty to that of Oxfordshire.
- Rates of child poverty in the Central Oxford area were above the average for Oxfordshire.
- The proportion of children eligible for free school meals in the Central Oxford area was over double the average for Oxfordshire.
- The rate of older people in poverty and claiming pension credit in Central Oxford was well over the average for Oxfordshire.

Figure 2 Indicators of low income¹



*Note that the geography used for these two indicators is the two LSOAs Oxford 008B and 012C, and the other indicators use data at Output Area level.

Crime and community safety

- The overall rate of crime in Central Oxford was well above the Oxfordshire average.

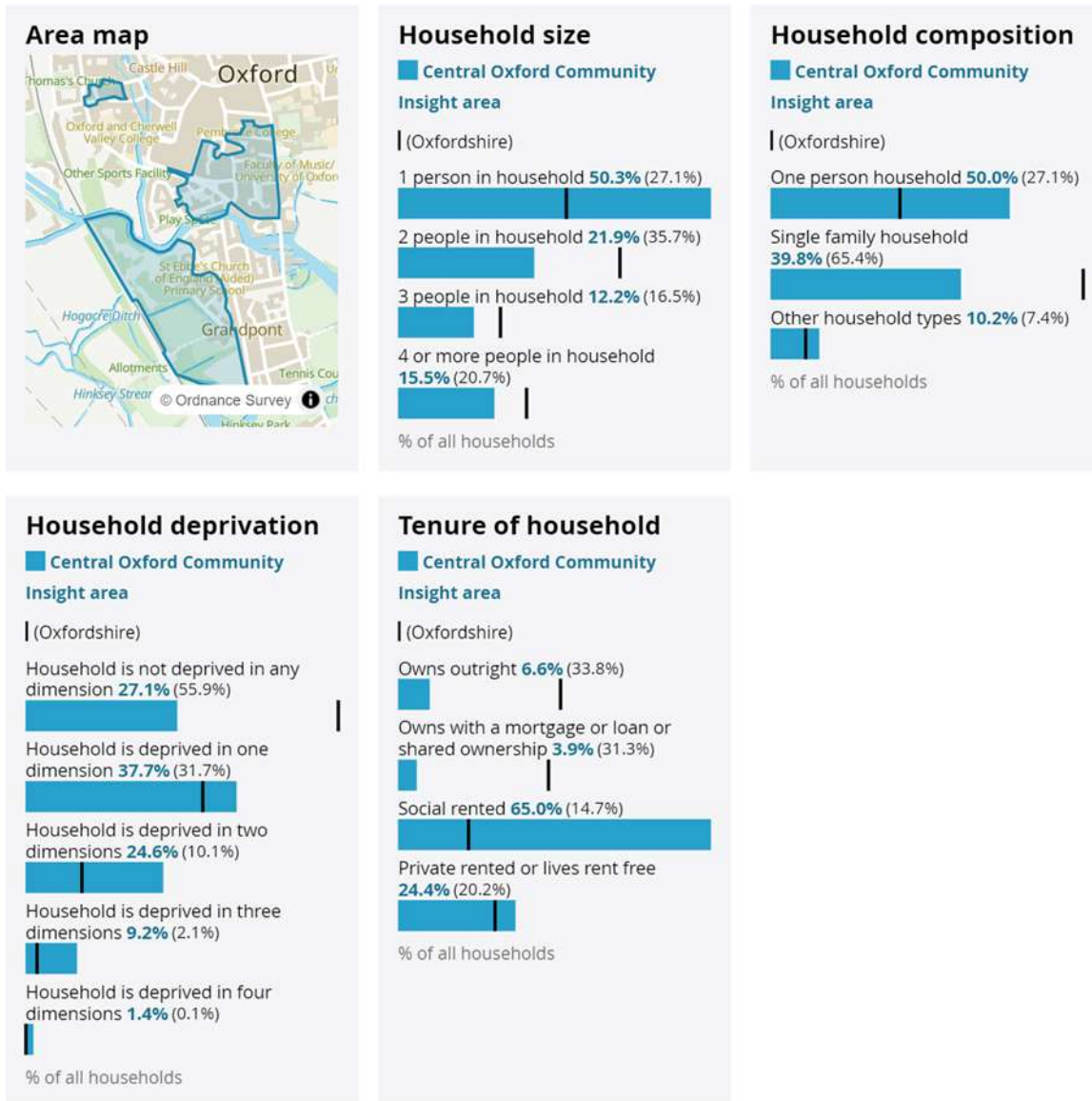
Access to green space

- The Central Oxford area is surrounded by accessible natural green and blue spaces including woodland, water courses, allotments, public parks, playing fields and other sports facilities.

¹ Sources: DWP claimant count October 2023 from nomisweb.co.uk, Claimant count is a measure of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed, based on administrative data from the benefits system; Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2021 Dept for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, fuel poverty refers to households living in a property with fuel energy efficiency rating of band D or below as well as households which after paying their energy bill to heat their home the residual income is below the official poverty line; Child poverty from DWP statXplore, children aged 0-19, 2021/22; FSM from January 2023 pupil census, Oxfordshire County Council; Pension credit from DWP statXplore as of May 2023.

Figure 3 Census 2021 profile of the Central Oxford Community Insight area

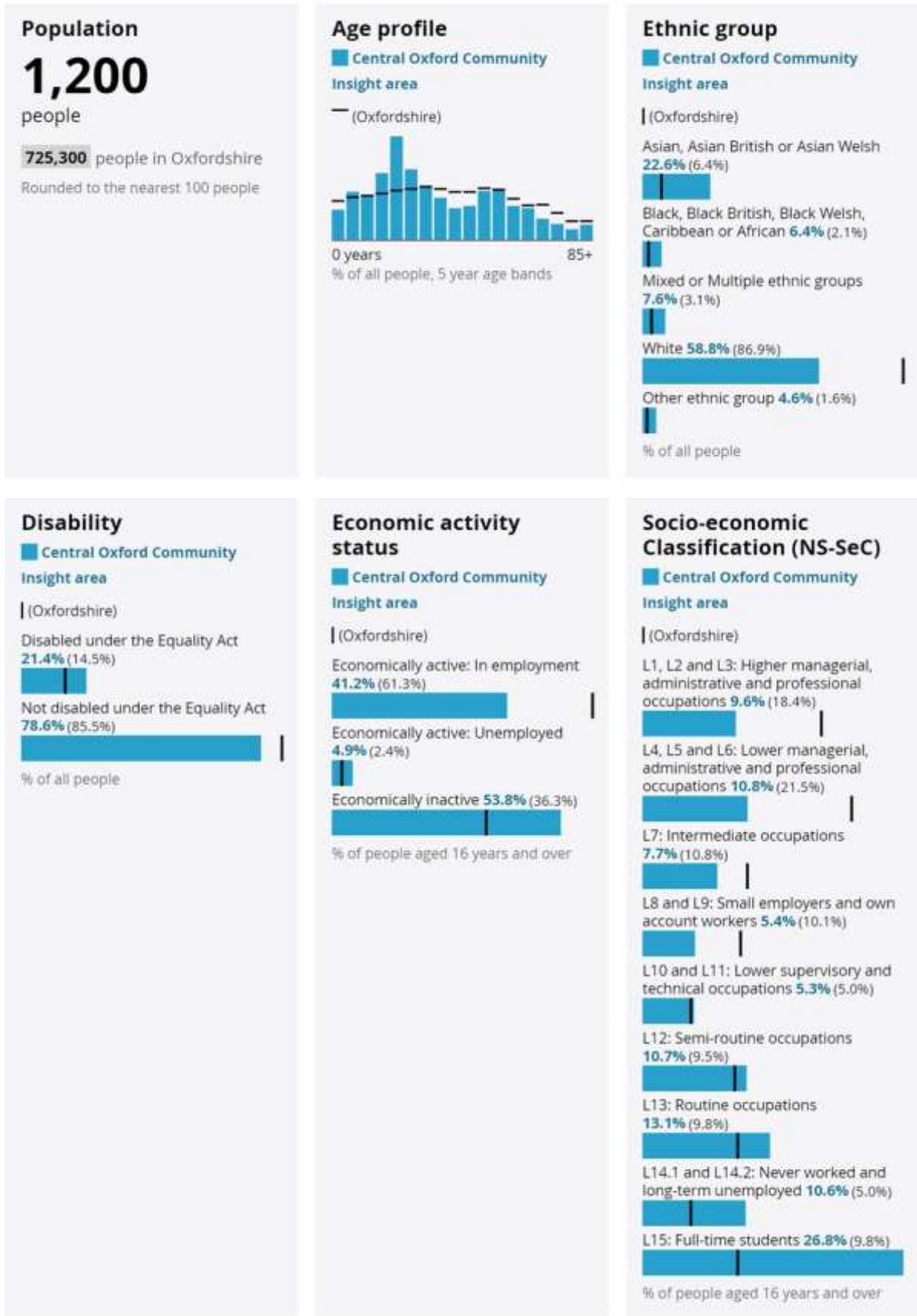
Central Oxford Community Insight area



From [Build a custom area profile – Census 2021, ONS](#)

Figure 4 Census 2021 profile of the Central Oxford Community Insight area continued

Central Oxford Community Insight area



From [Build a custom area profile – Census 2021, ONS](#)

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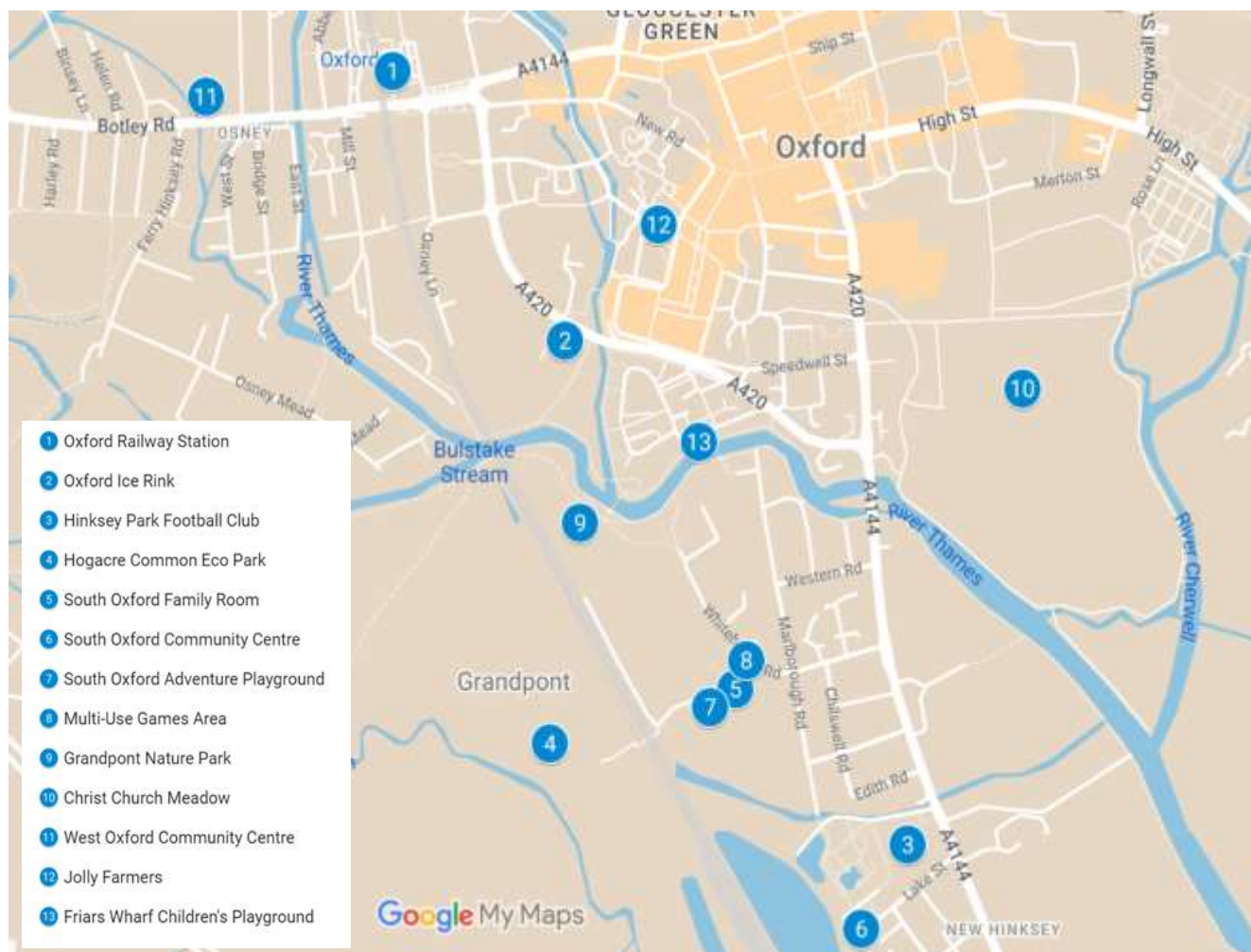
The electronic version of this document is the approved and most current. Any printed version is uncontrolled and may not be current. You can read the current, controlled version of the Central Oxford Community Insight Profile on the Oxfordshire Insight website.

4 Community assets and local groups

As part of the insight gathering process, an asset mapping exercise was carried out, and a range of local assets were identified which support and enable the health and wellbeing needs of the community in the Community Insight Profile area. This included activities based at local places of worship, community spaces, schools and colleges.

The map below shows a selection of the community venues within the Central Oxford Community Insight Profile area. A full list of community assets, including local groups, can be found within the *Central Oxford Community Insight Profile Report*.

Figure 5 Central Oxford community venues



Map Created by Oxfordshire County Council using [Google My Maps](https://www.google.com/maps)

5 Community Research

5.1 Research methodology and sample

The community insight-gathering process incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methodology and included;

- 30 semi-structured interviews with local residents,
- 28 semi-structured interviews with representatives from organisations active in the area,
- Additional qualitative data derived from free text answers from 20 respondents to the online survey and 3 unsolicited emails and texts,
- An online survey completed by 31 respondents

The research was carried out between September and October 2023.

The majority of respondents to the online survey were of white ethnicity (71%), female (45%) and the highest percentage of total respondents were in the 35-49 years age grouping (29%) or in the 50-64 year age grouping (29%).

5.2 Summary Findings

Work and Employment

Residents were generally unconcerned about access to employment and work-related training, despite economic activity data for this Community Insight area showing a higher than Oxford and Oxfordshire proportion of unemployment.

- Only 10% of respondents to the online survey cited job security as a barrier to wellbeing
- Around half of survey respondents (52%) reported having the skills and/or qualifications to find employment
- As one interviewee commented, Oxford is a high employment area
- Another suggested that there is not enough work in the city centre to support the people living in the proposed new residential developments
- Business owners highlighted that there was nowhere for people to start businesses locally, and a lack of social spaces meant there was nowhere for local entrepreneurs to meet each other

“You can almost feel the seeds in the ground, but you’ve got to water them”.

Money and Poverty

The effects of poverty were a prominent issue raised in the research, and this also shows in the corresponding data for the area that indicates a much higher proportion of households deprived in one or more dimensions compared to Oxford and Oxfordshire.

- In interviews, local service and support providers frequently mentioned unprecedented levels of demand for their services in a younger demographic, ascribed to a range of factors including COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis
- 23% of survey respondents reported cost and affordability as a barrier to their wellbeing
- Agencies providing support for poverty relief highlighted barriers in the restrictions of face-to-face support, particularly for those without mobile phones or internet access

“Life is hard: poverty is the problem”.

“The Co-op Bank shutting was a major blow – not having a face-to-face option is harder for poorer people who tend to deal more in cash. Post Office pay-ins don’t get processed that day. Online banking suits richer people. Changing bank just feels like yet another fight I don’t have the energy for.”

Access to Health and Social Care

People felt well served by primary care services in the area accessed through local GP surgeries and specialist surgeries in the area as detailed in the Community Insight report.

Health data relating to the area within which the Central Oxford Community Insight area falls has the 3rd highest rate of hospital admission for alcohol-attributable conditions in Oxfordshire and much higher than Oxfordshire rates for adults in alcohol treatment.

- Access to health care or a health condition was a barrier to wellbeing for 35% of survey respondents
- Older adults and disabled people who required out-patient appointments at hospitals said their access was limited by parking and transport costs
- There were concerns that people from some ethnic groups were not accessing appropriate care

Interviews highlighted that despite appearing to have a range of services for homeless people, many residents found it difficult to access drug and alcohol services or mental health support because of not fitting the criteria.

“People who are suffering [poor] mental health need help there and then. If the area is being developed there should be somewhere to just drop in.”

Housing and Homelessness

According to Census 2021 data, the proportion of socially rented housing in the Central Oxford insight area was four times the Oxfordshire average.

- Conversations with residents highlighted a dynamic relationship between social housing, homelessness and the poor health outcomes experienced by people in the area
- Interviewees living in social housing frequently mentioned problems with maintenance and services
- Those in privately rented properties or owning their own homes shared concerns about nuisance, waste collection, and transport with other residents
- Affordable housing (to rent or buy) seemed to be a specific concern for residents in the area

“I hate living here, I have damp growing in my kitchen. The housing association takes ages to do anything.”

Two of the ‘big three’ facilities for homeless people in the city centre – Simon House and Lucy Faithful House – were closed following planned budget cuts in 2015. Although not a current issue, there is concern about the future in relation to larger congregate hostels more broadly.

“I couldn’t believe it when they took down Lucy Faithful House. That was huge and so important for the area. They’ll come for O’Hanlon house next which will be terrible. It’s the only hostel around that will take anyone.”

Food and Nutrition

Food was an issue identified by both residents and those agencies providing support in the area. This is reflected in the poverty statistics for this area that indicate a much higher percentage of primary and secondary school pupils in the area eligible for free school meals than Oxford and Oxfordshire averages.

- 23% of survey respondents identified healthy and affordable food as a barrier to looking after themselves
- Those who could afford to do so were able to buy food, typically from one of the ‘local’ branches of the main supermarkets, or by travelling further to purchase more cheaply and in bulk
- Price was a common issue discussed, with some people being prepared to travel further to save money, but then transport often became a barrier

Transport and Access

Transport and physical access were frequent topics of discussion.

- 35% of survey respondents identified transport as a barrier to wellbeing, and five of these did report having a disability or long-term illness
- One comment stated that transport policies had been designed ‘in reverse’- for people living in other parts of the city and visiting the centre rather than the other way around
- Disabled people and frail older adults typically reported liking living in the area, which is flat and has good access to nearby amenities
- The ongoing closure of bridges over the river and under the railway line appears to have caused a lot of disruption, making it harder for people to access support and shopping in West Oxford
- Many spoke positively about access for bicycles, although some residents were concerned about cyclists using footpaths and going too fast

“It is a cycling city”

“There are buses to everywhere.”

“...the biggest inconvenience you could ever ask for.” (Bridge Closures)

Child Education & Childcare

From conversations with parents and analysis of survey responses, there appears to be a strong sense of value for early years facilities within the Central Oxford Community Insight Profile area.

Population data indicates that the Central Oxford Community Insight area has a higher proportion of young people aged 5 to 9 years compared to Oxford and Oxfordshire.

- Only 10% of survey respondents reported experiencing a lack of childcare facilities or schools as a barrier to wellbeing
- Some residents do not attend the local opportunities for pre-school activities because of cost and/or perceptions that they are not culturally appropriate
- Older children must travel further to go to secondary school
- No projects aimed at young people (16-18) in the area were identified, and there were no spaces in which they were explicitly allowed to congregate
- There are several play areas close by, but some are not well used, including the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) in Grandpont

“They use it [the MUGA] to store the equipment for repairing the pipe bridge. That’s about the only use [young people in the area] get out of it.” (local youth worker)

“... Grandpont Nursery School provided an excellent preschool education for my son with a heavy focus on outdoor play”.

Crime, Safety and Nuisance

From responses to the survey and conversations with residents there appears to be positive feelings of safety within the area. Conversely, police recorded crime data² shows that as of 2022, Central Oxford (MSOA) – within which the Community Insight area falls - ranked 2nd out of the 86 MSOAs in Oxfordshire on overall rate of crime and had the highest rate of Public Order crimes per 1,000 population.

- 45% of survey respondents reported feeling fairly safe during the night, whilst 42% felt very safe during the day
- There were some comments about drunkenness, noise and antisocial behaviour late at night, particularly around Park End Street and the railway station
- Some felt that the closure of the gas pipe footbridge (which crosses the river from Grandpont to Friars Wharf) left them choosing between a crossing perceived as unsafe (the old Gasworks rail bridge) or not crossing at all
- Some interviewees complained about ‘boy racers’ in the area, particularly at night

“What we need here is either an LTN or pedestrianisation, but I have been told the latter is impossible because of the need for emergency vehicles.”

Community

It was found that many people living in the area feel a strong sense of attachment to the area and to one another despite the complex history of the area as outlined in the Community Insight report.

² [Community safety Oxfordshire | Insight Crime Dashboard](#) with data from police.uk

- Parents of young children, older adults, people who were homeless or had recently escaped homelessness often had strong connections with one another, as did people living in social housing
- There were concerns about new developments in the area eroding precious green space resources, or re-purposing them towards tourists
- Residents often talked about the need to find cheap or free things to do
- Organisations and groups highlighted limited resources (both money and people) as a reason why outreach opportunities to connect with neighbours through community centres were ineffective
- It was found that there was a small and diminishing number of venues for locals to meet with one another

“The Adventurer” [Closed in 2018] was run by a lovely couple that lived locally. I used to go there. Then it was taken over by developers who had more money and now it’s not being used. It used to have a pool table - that’s where I met other local people. These spaces bring neighbours together, to get to know each other.”

6 Recommendations

The following is a summary of recommendations clustered by theme, that have been derived from the community insight.

Further detailed discussion of the recommendations is available in the full community insight report.

Community Advocacy

- Increased provision of health and social care services
- Improving affordability of and access to housing
- Better transport infrastructure and public transport
- Re-establishing liaison between agencies responsible for public safety
- Provision of Speech and Language Therapy locally
- Repairs to pavements and bridges that connect the area to West Oxfordshire
- Reviewing refuse collection arrangements

Coordination

- Improving coordination and sharing of resources between local groups and organisations around schemes timings, promotion and publicity, outreach of activities and volunteering
- Improved grant funding for development work
- Improvements to local enterprise support
- Availability of local and low-cost activities for people unable to work because of age or disability
- Improved money and welfare advice
- Coordination of the many projects aimed at reducing food poverty and food waste in the area
- Improved provision of leisure and outdoor pursuits for children and young people
- Use of volunteering to increase capacity for existing projects and as a strategy for improving accessibility of projects by diverse communities

- Using Local Area Coordination and Social prescribing to link people to informal support sources

New initiatives and development

- Bringing social housing tenants together to unite different elements of the community and to surface common issues
- Development of social spaces and recreation areas on the sites of some blocks of social housing
- Developing a community space for residents own use
- Support for local organisations to increase outreach and satellite projects
- Exploration of the availability of vacant spaces owned by Oxford University for community use