

well
together

WORKING WITH ANCHORS & HOSTS

Learnings from the programme

WORKING WITH ANCHORS & HOSTS

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Case studies and stories covering a number of activities funded through Well Together are available on our organisations' websites, along with news and updates from the team:

<https://ocva.org.uk/well-together-programme/>

<https://communityfirstoxon.org/community-action/community-health-wellbeing/wt/>

<https://ocva.org.uk/category/well-together/>

THE ANCHORS PILOT

Well Together is a place-based programme that brings people, communities, and organisations together to strengthen wellbeing from the ground up. Funded by the NHS BOB Integrated Care Board based on an understanding of the essential role that community, voluntary, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations play in addressing health inequalities at a local level, £1.3million was made available to support activities from grassroots groups and community organisations. This funding was accessed through a supported expression of interest application process and distributed alongside a two and a half year programme of community capacity building activity and events.

Two Anchor Organisations - Oxford Community Action and Oxford Hub - were brought on board at the start of the programme to provide support across Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys. From the ten Priority Areas across Oxfordshire, these areas were selected for this pilot due to the existing high level of community activity and the vast eco-system of groups and organisations already working in the area. This was demonstrated by the 81 Expressions of Interest we received for activity in the Leys (in comparison to 24 received for Caldecott, and 72 for all three areas in Banbury).

Due to the nature of the short extensions that the programme received after the initial two-years, the approach of working with anchors was not rolled out across other areas.



“

The relationship with the community was the key to unlocking the door.

Dolcie Obhiozele, Well Together Community Capacity Builder, Community First Oxfordshire

”

The role of the Anchors developed over the course of the programme but key responsibilities have included:

- Working with the Programme Manager and Community Capacity Builders to help promote awareness of the available funding in the relevant areas – signposting local organisations and groups to the programme launch drop-ins.
- Supporting local partners and groups to increase the depth and breadth of activities that provide a community response to health inequality, as defined by the CORE20PLUS5.
- Connecting Community Capacity Builders to groups that may need further support to meet the monitoring and evaluation requirements of the programme.
- Keeping in touch with the Well Together team, sharing concerns or areas where further support or follow-up may be required.
- Where applicable, to be a 'host' organisation for informal unregistered groups whose activity can make a vital contribution to reducing local health inequality.

OXFORD COMMUNITY ACTION (OCA)



OCA works together with community leaders, on a grassroots level, to address systemic and structural inequalities.

OCA was able to add value throughout the Well Together programme by harnessing already existing social networks through a strong web of relationships within the Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys priority areas. Their ongoing community-based initiatives (such as the OCA School Holiday Activities and OCA Community Bikes Project) support children, families and local groups to access health promotion activities within place-based facilities, such as the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre. Consistent delivery of OCA activities such as OCA's community-volunteer led weekly food redistribution service connects OCA on an ongoing basis to CORE20PLUS5 population groups, including ethnic minority communities and inclusion health groups such as vulnerable migrants.

OCA has close links with a range of activities and groups outside of its own direct delivery focus including Leys CDI (The Clockhouse), Agnes Smith Advisory Centre, Leys Social Prescribing Link Worker (The Leys Health Centre), and the Communi-tea Cafe (Holy Family Church). OCA is a key steering group member of the Owned By Oxford Community Wealth Building Partnership.

OCA plays a number of key roles in formal and informal coordinating, advocacy and signposting. Working with statutory and VCFSE sector partners they facilitate more inclusive community engagement with Global Majority-led local organisations and groups.

PHASE 1: NOV 2023 – OCT 2025

ANCHOR FUNDING: £10,000

PROJECT FUNDING: £8,000

HOSTED:

OXFORD SWAHILI COMMUNITY: £5,350

NIGERIAN COMMUNITY OXFORDSHIRE (NICOOX): £5,350

BLACK WOMEN IN MATERNITY PROJECT: £5,500

TOTAL: £34,200

PHASE 2: NOV 2025 - MAR 2026

ANCHOR FUNDING: £3,000

PROJECT FUNDING: £3,500

HOSTED:

OXFORD SWAHILI COMMUNITY: £2,000

**NIGERIAN COMMUNITY OXFORDSHIRE
(NICOOX): £2,528**

**BLACK WOMEN IN MATERNITY
PROJECT: £2,500**

TOTAL: £13,528

OCA received funding to resource the role it played as an anchor, to cover costs for their own project-based activities (hiking), and as a fiscal host to hold funds on behalf of informal or unregistered groups.



“

We don't close doors. We work together. We don't care whether you're a Muslim or not, or black or white or brown. If you have humanity inside you, come and join us and work together. If we're not working together, then we're not doing ourselves any favours, right?

That's how OCA started out - we brought together the leaders of all different communities and we said, "Look, this is our platform now. All of you leaders come together - let's share resources, let's work together".

”

Mujahid Hamidi, Director, Oxford Community Action

OXFORD HUB



**Working together to
build a better Oxford**

**Oxford Hub works to build a better
Oxford by tackling inequalities of
health, education and opportunity.**

Oxford Hub has been working in Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys for many years, previously based in the Blackbird Leys Community Centre. Their work is widespread, from supporting parents and families through the Parent Power project to providing social prescribing for socially isolated residents, based at The Leys Health Centre and the SEOxHA GP practices.

Through their programmes Oxford Hub includes those who are often most excluded; minority and marginalised groups, vulnerable migrants (through English language courses), people with special educational needs and disabilities and who are socially isolated (through Parent Power and social prescribing).

Oxford Hub has also been running Participatory Grant Making in Greater Leys. This process provided a unique experience in how to empower local people in decision making as well as increasing knowledge of new activities running locally.

Through their own projects they work in partnership with a range of different agencies, to improve the range of support and activities available to people locally. Now working out of the Windale Community Hub, at Windale Primary School, they have been able to provide accessible, low-cost (or free) delivery space to community groups and other agencies delivering local activities (including food larders, English language classes, infant- and breast-feeding support, and family fitness).

PHASE 1: NOV 2023 – OCT 2025

ANCHOR FUNDING: £10,000

PROJECT FUNDING: £5,000

HOSTED:

**BLACKBIRD LEYS FOOD LARDER:
£3000**

MESSY JAM: £3000

TOTAL: £21,000

PHASE 2: NOV 2025 – MAR 2026

ANCHOR FUNDING: £3,000

PROJECT FUNDING: £3,500

HOSTED:

MESSY JAM: £500

TOTAL: £7,000

Oxford Hub received funding to resource the role it played as an anchor, to cover costs for their own project-based activities (a programme of activities at the Windale Hub - including a range of sessions supporting healthy eating, skills and training development, creative arts, early years, and physical activity). They also acted as a fiscal host to hold funds on behalf of a local family-run dance group and a food larder.

Opened in 2023, the physical space at Windale Primary School enables Oxford Hub to build relationships with new and existing local groups, and offers support to help them develop their impact and grow their reach. Oxford Hub also creates opportunities for local residents to lead the changes that they would like to see.

“

The role of local incubator and connector is vital in communities where there are many actors, and little coordination of delivery.

”

Suzy Donald, Director of Community Development, Oxford Hub



THE WORK OF THE ANCHORS

ON THE GROUND NETWORKING

At the launch of the programme, the reach of both Anchor Organisations' large networks of local contacts helped us spread information about the programme far and wide. Both organisations supported with discussions with local groups and individuals about eligibility and how to register their interest in funding. Staff and volunteers, many local to The Leys, helped through supporting the distribution of flyers, and through word of mouth.

BUILDING ON WHAT HAD COME BEFORE

Oxford Hub contacted previous Participatory Grants applicants, who were completing their funded projects in summer 2024 and were therefore looking for continuation funding. Six groups that had been funded by Oxford Hub's Participatory Grant Making Project were successful in accessing continuation funding from Well Together - and another accessed funds for a new project. OCA had been working with small community groups for a number of years on a range of collaborative projects so were able to direct groups towards the funding opportunity, providing guidance where needed.

SUPPORTING DROP-INS

The Well Together programme team hosted drop-in information sessions across the 10 priority areas. In The Leys we were supported by the Anchor Organisations who encouraged attendance and helped to create warm and welcoming spaces for groups to air their ideas. This included a session at Oxford Hub's Windale Hub in January 2024 and a drop-in co-hosted with OCA at Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre in March 2024.

“

At the launch of the fund, at the start of 2024, Oxford Hub's team were a key part of promoting the Well Together opportunity to local groups. We were really energetic in our promotion of Well Together funding!

”

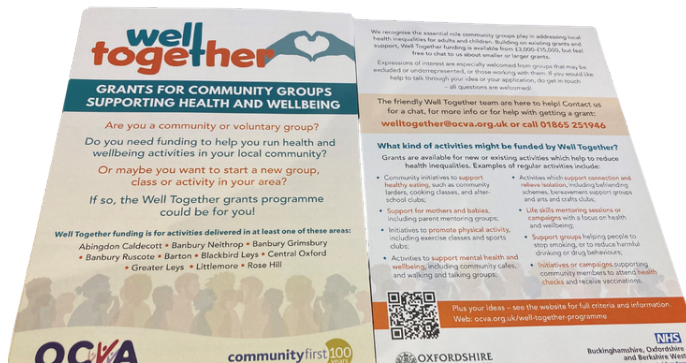
Suzy Donald, Director of Community Development, Oxford Hub



SUPPORTING GRASSROOTS GROUPS TO ACCESS FUNDING

We recognise that administrative challenges and eligibility requirements can prevent grassroots groups and community organisations from accessing funding. This is particularly the case for groups that are not formally constituted or that lack fully developed policies and procedures. To address this, Anchor Organisations provided support by acting as fiscal hosts - holding funds on behalf of such groups and distributing payments upon receipt of invoices.

Prior to applying for funding, the Anchor Organisations supported residents at the early stages of project development, offering guidance on project planning and exploring options such as fiscal hosting. In some cases, applications did not progress due to external factors; however, they maintain ongoing contact and continue to provide support where appropriate.



“

We've been an anchor organisation since 2018, but recognition came from the Well Together programme. And what that gave us was: all these smaller grassroots community groups felt - now we have a grassroots community organisation that understands our voice, that we can come to if we have issues, and we will ask them if we need help. And that Well Together first year, we had nine organisations, smaller, individual community groups that are doing absolutely fantastic work in the city, but nobody recognised it and nobody gave them resource to do what they normally do.

Well Together enabled us to bring small money for that community - to feel independent, to have autonomy, and feel that they can do what they really want to do. And we were there to facilitate it.

”

Hassan Sabrie, Director, Oxford Community Action



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION

The Anchor Organisations supported the Well Together programme team at the outset to identify and develop conversations around key themes. For example, a specific discussion followed one of the initial drop-in events focussing on Early Years. Twelve interested organisations were invited to a themed meeting at the Windale Hub to network and explore partnership opportunities.

This emphasis on collaboration has continued throughout the programme, with the Anchor Organisations working alongside the Well Together Community Capacity Builders making introductions and supporting partnership working.

“We believe in having spaces and places where people can come together. Sometimes what's achieved by that is friendship or learning or better access to resources. Sometimes people develop ideas that go on to benefit the local community as a whole. All of those things have happened at the Windale space.”

Suzy Donald, Director of Community Development, Oxford Hub

Another key example was OCA's enthusiasm and support for a celebration event, co-hosted with Oxford City Council, in Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre in April 2025. This event brought together over 50 people representing over 30 organisations - including grassroots groups hosted by OCA. This event provided a warm and welcoming space for people to catch up or meet for the first time - and sparked collaborations amongst groups who may not have had the opportunity to connect otherwise.

SHARING RESOURCES AND FACILITIES

Oxford Hub have supported a number of activity providers with free or low-cost delivery space. Oxfordshire Breastfeeding Support, WeEmpowered and Proud to Be Me CIC have all delivered activities from the Windale Hub, either as part of their ongoing delivery or as part of refining and testing their offer.

Windale Hub is a space where grassroots groups can incubate ideas, particularly at a time when the Blackbird Leys Community Centre is temporarily unavailable due to re-development. The Oxford Hub team are generous in their management of the space giving many groups the opportunity to trial new activities and provision without them having to commit to a large financial outlay in terms of venue hire.

“The environment has to change - it is not just the money, it's the resource, the training, the information...”

Hassan Sabrie, Director, Oxford Community Action

THE WORK OF HOSTS

For other groups and organisations the support function of “fiscal host” was fulfilled by a number of other organisations. These “hosts” enabled other groups and organisations to access funding that would otherwise be unavailable to them due to their informal structure and lack of their own bank account, or due to their ineligible organisation structure.

In the case of Bee Empowered, Oxford Hub, made an introduction to AfiUK - for AfiUK to act as host while Bee Empowered progressed towards becoming a constituted organisation

Hosts generally provided assistance with holding funds only, however some also provided support with policies and procedures.

- * **AFRICAN FAMILIES IN THE UK (AFiUK) HOSTED BEE EMPOWERED (NOW WEMPOWERED CIC)**
- * **MAKESPACE OXFORDSHIRE HOSTED AFRICAN CARIBBEAN AUTISM FAMILIES SUPPORT GROUP**
- * **BARTON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION HOSTED OXFORD PARKOUR ACTIVITIES & DANCIN' OXFORD**
- * **ST MARY'S CHURCH, BARTON HOSTED MOTHERSONG**
- * **SOUTH OXFORD COMMUNITY CENTRE HOSTED MADDY BIDDULPH PT**
- * **JOHN HENRY NEWMAN ACADEMY HOSTED WHERE THE FRUIT IS**



THE EXPERIENCE OF A HOSTED ORGANISATION

Taiwo Oluwatuyi had already been working with Makespace Oxfordshire for a year when the Well Together programme launched. Although the organisation she founded and continues to lead, African Caribbean Autism Families Support Group, is registered as a Community Interest Company and could have applied independently, Taiwo felt the additional support from Makespace acting in a host role would be beneficial.

This extra capacity has enabled Taiwo to focus on the aspects of her work that she is most confident in leading, and has therefore also been able to expand collaborations with One Planet Abingdon. Alongside a programme of African dance classes in Abingdon and Central Oxford with Achi Afro Fitness CIC, basic sewing machine skill classes have had a positive impact on attendees' general wellbeing.



“

Coming to Makespace in 2022 has been a dream come true for me, because it helps me to give back to the community like I always wanted to do. It is a safe space for me to work, and a safe space for my adults, teenagers and children to come. It gives me a break from home, which is good for me and great for the people I work with.

The people at Makespace introduced me to other organisations and helped me to network, they introduced me to One Planet Abingdon, and we now work a lot together.

Makespace hosting the Well Together funding for me was so helpful - it saved me a lot of time instead of doing that all myself - I'm good at practical things, but when it comes to admin and all that, I normally struggle with that. They helped me with budgets and knowing when the money is running out. I am very thankful and grateful for their support.

”

Taiwo Oluwatuyi, African Caribbean Autism Families Support Group

REFLECTIONS ON ANCHORS AND HOSTS

THE POWER OF TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS

From the outset of Well Together, place-based Anchor Organisations have been critical to the programme's success. Their embeddedness and existing trusted relationships provided us with a springboard to reach large numbers of residents living in the priority areas of Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys.

“

With additional programme capacity, a place-based Anchor Organisation in Banbury could have strengthened local impact through deeper engagement with residents and grassroots groups. Drawing on trusted relationships and local insight, an Anchor role may have supported effective existing activity, nurtured emerging ideas, and improved coordination across the community - helping to build a more connected and resilient network that supports health and wellbeing in Banbury.

”



Assia Bibi, Well Together Community Capacity Builder, Community First Oxfordshire

A FLEXIBLE APPROACH

We were able to maintain a level of flexibility throughout the roll out of the programme meaning that some of the responsibilities that were originally envisaged for Anchors at the outset were not required as initially intended. This included feeding into what were referred to as “funding plans”. Once the team started to process the Expressions of Interest, a decision was made to part-fund all eligible projects rather than fully fund a smaller number of activities. As we were therefore not working to a “funding plan model” - input into such plans was not required.

SUCCESSSES

A real success of the anchor model has been the ability to balance supporting new projects against the need to sustain existing delivery. The depth of on-the-ground knowledge and long-term relationships means that the Anchors have a good understanding of the groups and activities that are having the most impact. Across the sector, we are then able to work with those with experience of delivering what works and offer support, where needed, to allow groups and organisations to fulfil their aspirations.

BUILDING ON THE APPROACH BEYOND WELL TOGETHER

Well Together builds on the long-standing role that OCVA and Community First Oxfordshire play as infrastructure organisations supporting communities, voluntary organisations and local partnerships across Oxfordshire. Both organisations work to strengthen community capacity, connect organisations with opportunities and resources, and ensure that the voices of local communities are heard within wider systems.

Well Together provided an opportunity to apply these established approaches specifically to tackling health inequalities through community-led prevention and wellbeing activity. The programme also reflects a broader belief shared by both organisations: that lasting change happens when communities are supported to identify and respond to their own priorities.

Independent research undertaken for OCVA and Community First Oxfordshire in March 2025 highlighted that the majority of Oxfordshire's voluntary and community organisations are small, volunteer-led groups that often struggle with issues such as funding, volunteer recruitment, partnership opportunities and having their voices heard. The Small and Mighty programme was developed in direct response to these findings, providing long-term infrastructure support, advice, mentoring and opportunities for collaboration through a four year programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. Community First Oxfordshire, OCVA, Oxford Community Action, Volunteer Link Up (West Oxfordshire) and Charity Mentors Oxfordshire have come together to enrich and boost existing support and advice for micro and small community organisations.

“ And now, when we are becoming a partner again, an equal partner working together [for the Small and Mighty programme] I'm really excited. A programme that our city needs - our smaller community groups need it. This will enable us to go around and learn fast what people are missing, what we can add to. We know what's already been working, and what we want to learn about it. We know how we can facilitate it, and the community feel they've been listened to.

Hassan Sabrie, Director, Oxford Community Action

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Many of the organisations supported through Well Together would be considered "small and mighty" organisations. The relationships, learning and trust developed through Well Together therefore provide a strong foundation for ongoing support through the Small and Mighty Support Programme.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate a shared commitment not only to funding community activity, but to strengthening the long-term resilience, sustainability and influence of the grassroots organisations that make such activity possible.