



Beyond Town and Gown:

WORKING TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE OXFORD





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This report is co-authored by Professor Alexander Betts, the University's Local and Global Engagement Officer, and Callie Kanim, Project Officer in the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

We are grateful to our colleagues from across the collegiate University – especially the members of the joint **University-College Local Engagement Working Group**, co-chaired by Baroness Jan Royall and Prof Alex Betts, and made up of staff from across the colleges, divisions, departments, GLAM, Continuing Education, and the central University – who generously shared details about their work across Oxfordshire and provided feedback on the report.

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Cover photos Top row: Andrew Bailey; Centre row: Ian Wallman, Keith Barnes; Bottom row: Saskia O'Sullivan, Andrew Bailey
Photo opposite (credit): Ian Wallman

Foreword by the Vice-Chancellor

Professor Irene Tracey, CBE, FRS, FMedSci

Strengthening the University's positive impact on the city and county is one of my greatest priorities. Having grown up in Oxford, I am immensely proud to lead my hometown university, but I am also aware of the many challenges facing our region, and the role we can play in solving them.

The University has been integral to the city and county for over 800 years. We have grown together, and our success is inextricably tied to that of the wider community. When the University is successful, it contributes to economic growth and development across the region through employment, spinout companies, procurement, and tourism. We support more than 28,000 jobs and contribute billions per year to the UK economy, a large part of which is within Oxfordshire.

This is a region with incredible potential, and when the University works effectively with partners across our community, we can achieve remarkable things. Through our research, innovation, and world-class teaching, we are eager to collaborate with local businesses and local

government to create opportunities for all. Oxfordshire has the capacity to be one of the leading innovation ecosystems anywhere in the world. We have a wealth of cultural and historical assets, including our great museums and gardens, that bring millions of visitors to the city and county every year.

However, I am mindful of the shocking inequality within the city and the county, including in terms of income, health outcomes, and educational attainment. This particularly affects young people. We are committed to finding ways to support inclusive growth, ensuring that everyone across our community benefits from living close to one of the world's leading universities.

There has been a historical 'town and gown' divide, and its legacy endures to the present day. I come from both town and gown, but understand that for too many people, the high walls of our medieval buildings are unwelcoming, and the University feels removed from their daily lives. Many young people across the city and county have never been to the University, and many of our students still rarely venture beyond Magdalen Bridge. We want to turn the page on that town and gown separation, and become more relevant and welcoming to residents of all ages and backgrounds.

We know that lasting change will take time, but we are taking important steps. One of my first actions as Vice-Chancellor was to create a new post of Local and Global Engagement Officer, who is working closely with me and a small team to strengthen our relationships across the city and the county. We want to be part of the wider community, and for people across the city and county to feel proud of the University.

This report explains some of the ways in which we are sharing our resources and collaborating with local partners to shape a more positive future for Oxfordshire. We hope it will be just the beginning.



Introduction by the Local and Global Engagement Officer

Professor Alex Betts

I believe that universities are places that can change lives, especially when they are integrated in their wider community. I grew up in a single-parent household with a mother who left school with few qualifications. As I was growing-up, I watched her go to our local university to study and witnessed first-hand the opportunities it created for her and our family. It inspired me to want to attend university, and ultimately work in a university.

I first came to Oxford as a student more than two decades ago. I loved it so much, I stayed on, and eventually became a professor. My own research has focused mainly on refugees and international development. I have always been interested in how research can make a positive difference, influencing policy and practice. Along the way, I have collaborated with organisations from large United Nations agencies to small grassroots organisations, and I have increasingly felt that the university's impact needs to not only be global, but also local. We need to be relevant here in Oxfordshire.

I did not grow up in Oxford, but like many of my colleagues, I now feel at least as much part of the city as I do the University. My children were born here, I have made East Oxford my home, and in my spare time I volunteer as a kids' football coach in the Oxfordshire Youth Football League. It is important to me, personally and professionally, that the University has a positive impact on the city and the county.

That is why I feel immensely privileged to have been appointed as the University's first Local and Global Engagement Officer. It is an opportunity to creatively shape our relationships with the city, county, and the community on our doorstep. The University has the most extraordinary assets, in terms of its research, education, people, and facilities. I am still inspired and awed when I walk into some of our buildings, from our colleges to the Ashmolean and Museum of Natural History, and when I hear stories of colleagues and students' achievements, from vaccine research to competing in the Olympics. I would like everyone across the city and county to be able to share in the benefits of being a stone's throw away from such exceptional resources, and to feel a sense of pride in the University's achievements, past and present.

But for that to happen, I know we need to do far more to be accessible and relevant to people's daily lives. Rather than just inviting people to attend our events within central Oxford or visit our buildings, we need to take what the University can offer out to other parts of the city and county. It is important that we build deep and enduring relationships with community leaders, and work collaboratively

with local government and local businesses to address inequality and improve infrastructure. There is a lot to do.

What I have discovered, since taking on the role, is that a lot is already underway, even though some of it is under the radar. There are some truly amazing projects built on genuine collaboration between my colleagues, including our students, and the wider community. But we need to tell our own local engagement story a little bit better – to communicate what we are doing locally so that people within and beyond the University can better understand what we are doing and how they can get involved.

The aim of this report is therefore to showcase the diverse ways in which we are working with communities across the city and the county. Some of this work is longstanding, and some of it we have begun over the past year in order to pilot new initiatives and inspire staff and students to get involved. We also outline some of our ambitions for the future.

We have structured the report to reflect the themes of our current local engagement work – schools, sport, culture, sanctuary, research for local impact, and the inclusive economy.

We hope you will enjoy reading the report, feel inspired by it, and work with us to make a positive difference in shaping the future of our region. There is much more to do, and we welcome your feedback and, more importantly, your engagement.



ANDREW BAILEY

Our Approach

The University aspires to create opportunities for people across the city and the county. Working in partnership, we want to open doors, solve local challenges, and shape a brighter future for our region. We know that to do so, we have to build strong, collaborative relationships.

The University's relationship with the community has historically been characterised as a 'town and gown' divide. This divide has a long history, with riots between students and townsmen recorded as early as the thirteenth century.

For many people, the separation remains real. Many local residents living within a couple of miles of central Oxford have almost no interaction with the University, and may not feel welcome or included. Some of our students may spend years living in the city without venturing beyond central Oxford. The University's growth, support for science-related spin-out companies, and demand for student accommodation sometimes strain local infrastructure, with implications for housing and transport.

Oxfordshire is one of the most unequal counties in the country. Despite being a region with significant privilege and opportunity, it also contains some of the most socio-economically challenged wards in the country, mainly concentrated in East Oxford and Banbury. The city and county face vast inequalities in terms of educational attainment and health outcomes, and life expectancy varies by more than a decade between central North

Oxford and Northfield Brook, which are less than three miles apart. Around a quarter of children in the county are living in poverty, and in some areas, like Blackbird Leys, it is 45%.

The University recognises these realities and we are committed to working with local government, businesses, and community organisations to address these inequalities. We have made local engagement a priority for the University and we are taking an active role in expanding opportunities for people across the city and the county.

One of the historical challenges for the University and its relationship with the community has been the decentralised nature of the University. It is made up of some 40 colleges and private halls, and more than 30 academic departments divided into four academic divisions, all with significant levels of autonomy. This has often made it challenging for the University to act with one voice, and for 'the University' to appear coherent and approachable to the wider community.

Over the past year, we have taken significant steps towards developing a more integrated University-wide

Below: Mural on the now-demolished Blackbird Leys Community Centre.

Opposite: Professor Alex Betts and County Councillor Michael O'Connor in conversation during a Local Policy Lab Hackathon.



approach to local engagement. We have thought deeply about *what* we mean by local engagement, *why* it is important to us, and *how* we can most effectively make a positive difference.

What is local engagement?

The idea of the civic university has emerged over the past two decades, advanced in the UK by the Civic Universities Network. The concept has been used to highlight the important role that universities play within their cities and the places where they are based. Oxford is a global university, with staff and students from around the world, and our research covers themes with global relevance. However, we are also an integral part of the city of Oxford and the county of Oxfordshire.

For us, local engagement is about improving our relationships with the city, county, and community. We want to build strong, sustainable connections with communities, based on listening to the voice and perspectives of people across the county. It is then about collaborating with others to make a difference. Oxfordshire faces a range of challenges, from inequality to infrastructure, and the University has a role to play, alongside our partners, to shape a brighter future for the county.

Through our museums and parks, our lifelong learning and schools' outreach programmes, and our hospitals, our colleges and departments already make meaningful contributions to the local communities. Part of the challenge is to ensure that we tell our collective story a bit better. When people visit the Ashmolean or the Pitt Rivers Museum, access the colleges, or take a course with our Department of Continuing Education, it is not always apparent that they are engaging with the

University. Effective local engagement requires that we communicate what we can offer, and be open about what we can do better.

The University is an 'anchor institution' – a large, public-sector organisation tied to a particular location whose long-term sustainability is tied to the wellbeing of their communities. Within Oxfordshire, the University has participated in the early-stage discussions of an Anchor Institutions Network, alongside organisations such as Oxford University Hospitals and Oxfordshire County Council. Through these conversations, we are reflecting on how we can purchase locally for social benefit, widen access to quality work, use our buildings and spaces to support communities, and reduce our environmental impact. Part of our responsibility as an anchor institution is to support healthy place-shaping, contributing to sustainable, well-designed, and thriving communities.

Why does local engagement matter?

One important question people ask is 'why engage?'. The University's core mission is 'the advancement of learning by teaching and research and its dissemination by every means'. We want to do so in ways that benefit society on a local, regional, national, and global scale. Engagement and partnership are key to achieving these longstanding goals. Working with government, business, and non-profit organisations, both near and far, is central to ensuring our research and teaching have the greatest possible impact.

There are three reasons why local engagement is central to achieving the University's core mission and its wider strategic objectives: interdependence, people, and values.

In terms of *interdependence*, the success of the University depends upon having a city and county within which



our staff and students can live and thrive. Our colleges and departments need to be able to recruit and retain high quality staff who live close to the University. To make this possible, staff need to live within flourishing communities, with good schools, hospitals, transportation, and other amenities. Much of our research also relies upon working collaboratively within local communities to co-design research projects, collect data, or run experiments. When spin-outs and start-up companies emerge from the commercialisation of the University's scientific and other research, those companies need to be part of a vibrant and successful regional ecosystem. The stronger the community and regional economy, the happier and more successful the University will be.

In relation to *people*, the majority of our staff and students live within Oxfordshire. They are part of the University and of the wider community. Staff and students want to be proud of the organisation that they represent, and it is important to many that they feel connected to and part of the local community. When we work with local schools or deliver exciting and inclusive cultural or sports programmes to young people across the county, we can offer our staff and students opportunities to be associated with work that makes a difference.

From a *values* perspective, effective local engagement aligns with several of our key priorities. It enables us to meet our civic responsibilities, deliver social and environmental impact, and support our equality, diversity, and inclusion strategy. We are especially committed to ensuring more equitable access to our learning and career development opportunities. We know that there is a wealth of talent among our county's young people, and we want to inspire them to consider studying or working in higher education.

How should we do local engagement?

The University can make a positive social contribution by sharing its research, teaching, expertise, facilities, and brand. Even before we started using the label of 'local engagement', there was already a lot of collaboration with local communities. Much of this has been 'bottom-up', based on the initiative of colleges, departments, or particular staff and student groups.

The University and many colleges have long provided small grants in support of community organisations. We have supported art, music, and drama across the city. We consistently support Oxford Open Doors and the Oxford Playhouse. Students have created community organisations that have evolved into critically important local organisations, such as Jacari and the Oxford Hub. Our gardens, libraries, and museums have long been open to the public. The Department of Continuing Education delivers lifelong learning opportunities to people across the county. Most college premises are open to local residents, even if the terms of access are not always as visible or as consistent as they could be, and many programmes have long been in place to support outreach and engagement with local schools.

But initiatives have not been joined-up and coordinated across the University. We are trying to change that by being more intentional and strategic in how we locally engage, and telling a more coherent story about our local engagement work and its impact. We want to create a culture within which our colleges and departments that values, supports, and celebrates collective impact.

Our local engagement work aims to contribute at different levels. At a macro-level, by supporting regional economic development. By committing to a thriving Oxfordshire

Below: Sport Leaders Programme participants from Greyfriars Secondary School.
Opposite: Illustrative overview of the collegiate University's local engagement activities.



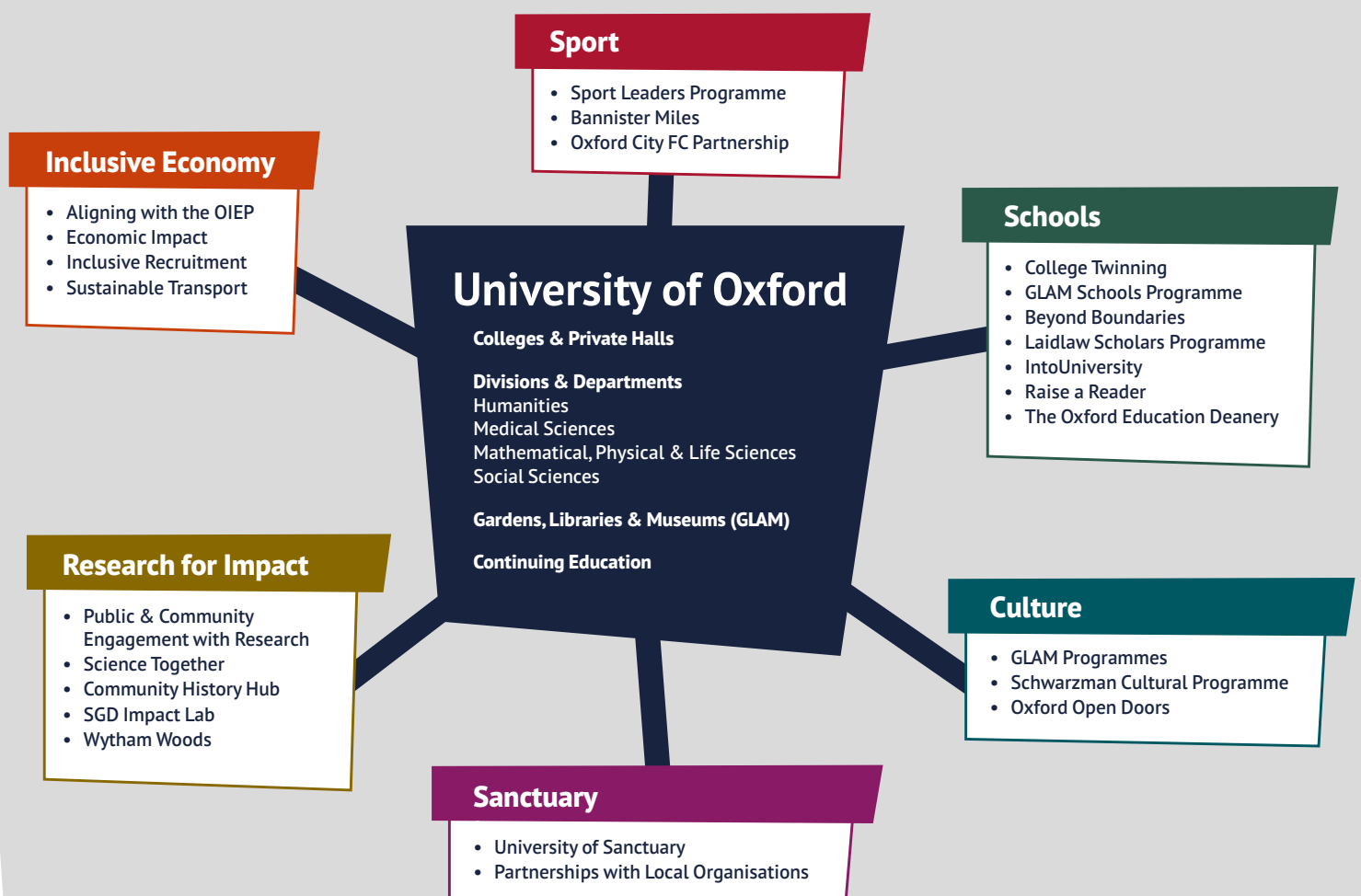
innovation ecosystem, creating jobs and training opportunities, and supporting spin-outs and start-ups, we can support a successful Oxfordshire. We also want to ensure that economic growth is inclusive growth. At a meso-level, this requires partnering for social impact, with the city, the country, and organisations that can make a difference. We want to be a good neighbour and partner to the many organisations doing important work across our region. At a micro-level, this means ensuring that people have positive everyday interactions with the University. We want to build bridges and improve access to the University and its facilities, moving beyond the perception of a gated community that exclusively serves its students and staff.

As the central University, our small local engagement team is supporting local engagement through the three Cs: championing, connecting, and convening.

First, **championing**. We want to be able to raise awareness of the good things that are happening and showcase the great work being done by colleagues and our partners across the community. By showing that we value and reward local engagement, we aim to improve it. Second,

connecting. One of the challenges we have is how people can get in touch with 'the University'. Just as former United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once asked: 'who do I call if I want to speak to Europe?', local residents face a similar difficulty of navigating a decentralised University made up of lots of different colleges, departments, and divisions. Third, **convening**. Where we think there are untapped opportunities, we will bring together members of the University and the community. By piloting new initiatives, and learning from them, we can begin to discover how the University can make the greatest difference, while building a positive culture of local engagement among our staff and students.

Across all of these areas, we want our local engagement work to be underpinned by a set of core principles: humility – drawing upon a spirit of co-creation, partnership, and respect for lived experience; sustainability – ensuring that relationships endure over time and are not short-term and extractive; evidence – designing initiatives that are either evidence-based or evidence-generating; or a combination of both.



Our partners include:

Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, District Councils, businesses, community organisations, other universities, and the NHS.

1

Partnering with Schools

Across the collegiate University, staff and students are working to tackle educational inequality. At the primary school level, this means making learning accessible and fun and planting the seeds of curiosity. For students in secondary school, we seek to deepen their interest in learning, raise awareness about the opportunities that higher education offers, and strengthen professional pathways, including through employment and apprenticeship opportunities within the University.

College-Primary Twinning Project

In January 2022, five Oxford University colleges – Somerville, Trinity, St John's, New, and Exeter – launched the Oxford College Twinning Project in partnership with the Oxford Hub, a local charity that works to bring community groups and people together to tackle inequality in Oxford.

To help bridge the educational attainment gap, University of Oxford colleges have been paired with local primary schools, providing young students with access to facilities, staff, and resources. Young students are invited to explore college grounds and engage in a range of learning opportunities, extracurricular activities, and tutoring, on college grounds, as well as in their own schools. In the first two years alone, 1,300 children participated in 20 enrichment activities organised and hosted by participating colleges, ranging from bio-diversity garden projects, to cooking lessons, visits to the University's Ashmolean and Natural History Museums, and science workshops put on by the Mathematical, Physical, and Life Sciences Division (MPLS).

Feedback from students and teachers taken during the pilot year reported that the project strengthened primary school students' academic performances by inspiring curiosity and increasing educational aspirations. In giving students and teachers access to colleges, the project has also fostered a greater sense of unity, community, and belonging for all participants.

In the 2023–24 academic year, the project expanded to include ten colleges and twelve primary schools. Trinity and Somerville Colleges also expanded their offerings to include a pilot programme in partnership with Assisted Reading for Children (ARCh), which supports students to reach their reading potential in their respective twinned schools. The pilot program concluded in August 2024. Pending the impact results, there are hopes to expand the project to further support reading and phonics attainment.

Beyond the Twinning Project and their collaboration with ARCh, Trinity College – led by the Head of Access, Hannah Rolley – has done extensive work with Oxfordshire schools, engaging with parents, teachers, and students to 'demystify' higher education. Prioritising outreach to students from under-represented backgrounds and schools with lower rates of university attendance, Trinity College staff have worked with students in Years 4–13 to address issues of access, connecting them with support tools and information about the range of higher education opportunities available. Trinity's work with Oxfordshire schools has been instrumental in strengthening our connections with local schools.

Below, left: Students from St Christopher's Primary School learning about university at their twinned college, Trinity;

Below, right: Twinned Primary School Science Day demonstration at Trinity College.

Opposite, top: Co-Curate display at Iffley Academy.

Opposite, bottom: MPLS Primary School Science Day.



Raise a Reader

Recognising that the COVID-19 global pandemic exacerbated language development gaps in early childhood education, Oxford University Press (OUP) launched Raise a Reader, a comprehensive three-year campaign to improve literacy and vocabulary in ten primary schools across Oxfordshire. The campaign was created based on the findings from OUP's annual Oxford Language Report, which analyses the 'word gap' – the incongruence between the vocabulary that children are comfortable and familiar with, and the vocabulary expected for their age or level of education. Bringing together schools, booksellers, parents, librarians, literacy partners, and reading experts, the Raise a Reader campaign helps primary school children develop the tools to become lifelong readers. In its first year, the Raise a Reader programme reached nearly 3,000 primary school children.

In addition to donating over 5,000 books and furniture to create dedicated reading spaces in participating schools, the Raise a Reader Campaign has provided 22 teachers and administrators with strategies and specialist training to promote whole-school reading, and ongoing support throughout the school year. The programme has also provided parents and carers with a free Raise a Reader at-home pack, which offers tools and advice for how to supplement their child's reading journey at home. As of 2023, the Raise a Reader Campaign had expanded to include ten additional schools in Oxfordshire, including in Oxford, Banbury, and Whitney.

GLAM Schools Programme

Extracurricular activities and programmes that supplement classroom learning provide important avenues to inspire curiosity among young students. The University's Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) bring learning to life for thousands of school children across Oxfordshire. GLAM delivers a long-running schools programme for students aged 3–18, offering workshops and study days to supplement the curriculum at every level of schooling, with topics ranging from Islamic art and design to astronomy, dinosaurs, creative writing, biodiversity, and colonialism. In 2023, 99,100 children aged 3–18 took part in the GLAM schools' programme, including 63% of primary schools and 90% of secondary schools in Oxfordshire, either onsite or virtually.

To ensure that everyone can access and benefit from their collections and resources, the GLAM team has partnered with Iffley Academy, a Community Special Academy for Oxfordshire students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, to co-develop creative learning programmes. Launched in 2022, Co-Curate provides the opportunity for students from Iffley Academy to work with GLAM staff to curate items from the GLAM collection for display in a mini museum in the heart of the school. This past year, Co-Curate produced two exhibitions on the themes of 'Romans' and 'Play!', which were accompanied by 26 school workshops and eight GLAM visits. Staff from the History of Science Museum have also worked with Year 9 students from the Cheney School to create new displays on the theme of 'Technology through Time' to be displayed in the Rumble Museum, which is housed within the school. Featuring donations from the local community, the collection is displayed across the site and is accessible to the Cheney School's 1,700 students, as well as staff, parents, and the wider community.



This year, GLAM implemented a collaborative and structured approach to work experience, partnering with seven Oxfordshire state secondary schools – Greyfriars Catholic School, Oxford Spires Academy, The Swan School, The Oxford Academy, Cheney School, The Cherwell School, Gosford Hill School, and Didcot Girls School – to offer hands-on learning opportunities for Year 10 and Year 12 students. The Museum of Natural History hosts a number of opportunities for young people, including two summer programmes for Years 12 and 13. Every summer, the Natural Science and Heritage Scheme invites applicants from diverse backgrounds to learn more about the museum, particularly its public-facing roles and education workshops. Participants then have the opportunity to work with museum staff to devise, deliver, and evaluate activities for museum visitors. Students from under-represented backgrounds are also invited to take part in the two-week STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) Research Placement programme, which allows students to gain experience in a wide range of disciplines, supported by specimens from the Earth and Life collections.

Beyond Boundaries

Launched in 2018, Beyond Boundaries is a science-inspired school arts competition which aims to increase the visibility of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic researchers, and bridge the divide between science and art. Oxfordshire state school students in Years 5–8 are invited to create artwork inspired by the research and lives of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic scientists and mathematicians at the University of Oxford. The winners and runners-up receive prize money, and their exhibits are held for public viewing at the Museum of Natural History. So far, Beyond Boundaries has celebrated 24 scientist and mathematician role models from diverse backgrounds,

providing young people with the opportunity to see people that ‘look like me’ excelling in science. Over 500 children from 41 schools have participated, producing more than 460 works of art.

MPLS and its departments also host a number of other programmes that work to make STEM more accessible, and to inspire students who are interested in STEM subjects to pursue their passions. For example, the Oxford Maths Festival, organised by the Mathematics Department, is a free, two-day event, which uses board games, puzzles, family activities, crafts, and even robots to make maths accessible and fun for all ages. To reach a wider audience and encourage families to visit the University, the event is held in both Templars Square and the Maths building on St Giles’. In years past, the event has been attended by over 2,000 visitors from across Oxfordshire.

Recognising the importance of strengthening access for women in STEM, MPLS produces ‘Women in Science Day’, a free, one-day event hosted by Trinity, Jesus, and Wadham Colleges, which invites 100 Year 12 women and non-binary science-focused students from state schools to participate in workshops and lectures led by female scientists at the University. The Department of Physics also hosts a free, one-day event called ‘Marie Curious’ for girls aged 11–14 who are passionate about STEM subjects. The day consists of three 45-minute, hands-on workshops run by role-models from a range of scientific fields, as well as teamwork-oriented activities.

Laidlaw Scholars Programme

A new initiative funded by the Laidlaw Foundation, the University’s Laidlaw Scholars Programme is a selective undergraduate programme for students who are passionate about using their talents to have a positive social impact. Over the course of the 18-month programme, the selected 20–25 first-year students undertake two community engagement projects, one local and one global.

During their first summer, the students work with local schools to design and deliver extracurricular after-school clubs. Alongside this, they produce a research report on the influence of extracurricular activities on educational aspirations and attainment.

This year, Scholars worked with Year 8s and 9s at The Oxford Academy (Blackbird Leys), and Year 5s and 6s at three primary schools that feed into The Oxford Academy: Orchard Meadow (Blackbird Leys), John Henry Newman (Littlemore), and Rose Hill (Rose Hill). Across these schools they provided the following after-school clubs:

- **Sharing Our Stories** – a series of improvisation workshops where students tell stories and express creativity through poetry, music, and sketches.
- **Oxford Junior Debate Club** – a club to introduce students to the art of debating.
- **Mystery Makers** – a game-making club. Children work together to create a mystery-

Below: The 2024–25 University of Oxford Laidlaw Scholars cohort.
Opposite: Laidlaw Scholars



style game, using their imagination and creativity to develop a plot and corresponding props.

- **Alice in Wonderland** – an opportunity for children to create, produce, and put on their own pantomime through production, on-stage performance, set design, and directing.
- **Know your World!** – a club to teach students about active global citizenship by designing a constitution and participating in a mock parliament.

In the process of delivering the after-school clubs, the Laidlaw Scholars had the opportunity to connect with community organisations across Blackbird Leys, Littlemore, and Rose Hill, and learn more about the communities in which their partner schools are based. Scholars also spent time designing a multi-year research project to guide the delivery of future after-school clubs, including metrics to measure their impact. Through this research, the programme aims to inform government policy on the delivery of extra-curricular education.

IntoUniversity

The collegiate University offers a number of initiatives and collaborative projects that aim to reduce barriers to educational achievement and support pathways to higher education.

In 2014, the University and Christ Church College

partnered with IntoUniversity – a national charity that supports students from disadvantaged backgrounds to aspire to enter higher education – to open a learning centre in Blackbird Leys. Since it began, the centre has worked with local schools and teachers to offer academic support, mentoring, and guidance to young people in Years 3–13. Staff, students, and graduates from the University make up a large number of the centre's volunteers, and many go on to become permanent staff.

During the 2022–23 academic year, IntoUniversity Oxford South East worked with 1,474 students, including 777 primary school children and 697 students from secondary schools. 494 of those students had the opportunity to visit the University this year, and 250 were invited to visit Christ Church College. IntoUniversity's FOCUS Programme is designed to introduce students to the idea of higher education and to a range of possible career pathways from an early age. Starting in Year 3, children participate in workshops which introduce them to a variety of jobs and careers. Through topical workshops and trips, students in Years 5 and 6 develop a better understanding of what university is, and begin to explore the degree subjects that might be of interest. Students then have the opportunity to more thoroughly explore future pathways for post-16 education, and develop a better understanding of how their choices at Key Stages 4 and 5 impact their options. Support is provided for all students, regardless of whether they choose to continue on to higher education.



TEACHER AND PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAMMES



Recognising that teachers are among the most important influences for children during their formative years, the collegiate University has a number of programmes that aim to support teachers in their work.

Departments across the academic divisions, such as Chemistry; History; English; Modern Languages; and Physiology, Anatomy, and Genetics, provide free, online workshops and information sessions for state school teachers in their respective disciplines. Workshops include lectures on relevant topics, round table discussions, and skill development sessions, which offer teachers the opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussions with departmental faculty. The Oxford Education Deanery, hosted by the University's Department of Education, is a forum for teachers and University academics to share information and resources, and work together to produce high-quality education research. Offering courses and events on a range of topics, the Deanery provides important professional development opportunities for educators. Several departments also offer sessions to provide guidance about the UCAS application process, including suggestions for how to help students prepare for the transition to university, and tips for student success in their respective fields.

A number of colleges, such as Trinity College and University College, also provide teacher support programmes which focus on helping educators prepare their students for study at university level. Sessions detail the university admissions process and provide advice about how to help students prepare for admissions tests and interviews, guidelines for what students should include in their personal statements, and recommendations for how to structure their reference letters. These programmes are not only intended for those teachers whose students are interested in attending the University; they are for any teacher working with students who aspire to continue their education and are specifically designed with state school teachers in mind. Last year, nearly 160 teachers attended the University's continuing professional development (CPD) accredited Teacher Summer School, a free, two-day residential conference for teachers from state-funded schools and colleges.

For parents and carers in Oxfordshire, Trinity College also hosts a series of online interactive talks to discuss the costs and benefits of higher education and provide insight into what the University has to offer. The programme is targeted to parents and carers of children from state schools, and ultimately aims to help participants feel more confident about their role in supporting their child's future decisions. In 2023, more than 500 parents from across Oxfordshire attended one of these sessions; roughly a third of these participants reported that they had no prior higher education experience.

This page, top and centre: Trinity College Continuing Professional Development event for teachers.

This page, bottom: MPLS PGCE visit for aspiring teachers.

Opposite, left: Sport Leaders Programme participants from Greyfriars Secondary School learning American football with University of Oxford student athletes.

Opposite, right: Ollie Cook, Programme Manager of the SDG Impact Lab.

2

Building Bridges Through Sport

Sport offers a great way to build bridges between the University and the wider community. The University has a globally recognised reputation for sport, including the Bannister sub-four-minute mile, winning the FA Challenge Cup in 1874, and educating more than 160 Olympic medallists. By opening up access to University sports facilities, developing an inclusive sports leadership programme, and investing in community partnerships, we have been able to use this historical legacy to benefit the wider community.

Sport Leaders Programme

The University has developed a new sport and education programme, focusing on Year 8s from secondary schools in Oxford. In Autumn 2023, the University piloted the Sport Leaders Programme for 30 children from Greyfriars Secondary School to come and spend one day per week at the University. In the mornings, they received elite sports coaching from student athletes in areas such as basketball, football, athletics, touch American football, and rowing (at the Falcon Boat Club). After having lunch in a different college each week, the students spent the afternoons hearing from inspiring academics about research linked to sport, such as mathematical modelling for football, law and rules in sport, the anthropology of crowd behaviour, the media and sport, neuroscience and brain injury.

In May and June 2024, the programme expanded to three schools from East Oxford: Greyfriars, Oxford Spires, and The Oxford Academy, giving children the opportunity to mix with people from different schools. The programme involved University students in the design and implementation of the programme, which was delivered through the University's SDG Impact Lab,¹ and coordinated by former GB Olympic rower, Ollie Cook. An impact evaluation performed by the participating University students revealed that the programme had a positive impact in areas such as children's confidence, interest in sport, and understanding of the University. Based on the programme's success, it will be expanded in the academic year 2024–25, opening it to all state secondary schools across the city.

¹ The SDG Impact Lab is a pan-University initiative that enables students to collaborate with partner organisations to deliver the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many of its programmes support student opportunities to undertake local and global engagement projects.



Bannister Miles

On 6 May 2024, the University celebrated the 70th Anniversary of Sir Roger Bannister's sub-four-minute mile world record with a community event. The inaugural Bannister Miles event was organised by Oxford University Athletic Club and the University, with support from Oxfordshire County Council and the Bannister family.

In the morning, a community mile brought together more than 1,000 runners of all ages and abilities. The run started at St Aldate's, and went along Oxford's High Street before finishing on Iffley Road, where participants collected their finishers' medal on the famous Iffley Road Track.

“ The access to the colleges and sports grounds was really inspiring. I think the links to the university are really positive and I hope it creates an opportunity for greater access to facilities.”
Participant parent, on the Sport Leaders Programme

In the afternoon, athletes from across the country competed in a series of track races, with heats for athletes aged nine and over, para-athletes, and high-level amateur runners. The event concluded with the women's and men's elite races, with the latter setting off at exactly the same time as Bannister's race in 1954. Hundreds of spectators

were treated to four sub-four-minute miles, including a course record by Italian international athlete Ossama Meslek.

Throughout the day, several world-famous athletes were present. They included every male mile world record holder since the early 1980s, who ran alongside the kids and had their photos taken with attendees. Hichem El Guerrouj, Steve Cram, Filbert Bayi, Nourredine Morceli, Eamon Coughlan, Jo Pavey, and Mara Yamauchi were all in attendance. There were also a range of activities to inspire a next-generation of athletes, including a pop-up World Athletics museum, a presentation by World Athletics to commemorate Sir Roger's achievements and the history of Oxford University Athletic Club, and an exhibit celebrating the life and legacy of Sir Roger. The aim is for the Bannister Miles event, including the community mile, to become an annual event.

Partnership with Oxford City FC

The University has a longstanding relationship with Oxford City FC, a community club and the oldest football club in Oxford. The club's White House Ground was formerly on Brasenose College land, and the fanbase traditionally came from both the University and the wider community. We are working together on education, research, and sharing facilities.

As part of a new partnership agreement, both Oxford City's men and women first team shirts will carry the University name as first team sponsors for the next two seasons. All of the youth teams will also carry the University name, hopefully inspiring children interested in football to learn more about the University. The shirts have been made available across the city and are on sale at sites such as the Bodleian Library.

Researchers from the University have been working with the club on themes such as mathematical modelling for match analysis, neuroscience through the 'Football on the Brain' programme run by the Wellcome Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging, and environmental sustainability in football to Oxford City's professional and youth players. The University is developing a series of education programmes linked to football, including aimed at Oxford City FC players to support their careers beyond the game. During the 2024-25 season, players and coaches from the club will have the opportunity to take a leadership course alongside training once a week on University College pitches.



Right: New Oxford City FC kit featuring the University logo.

Below: Sport Leaders from Greyfriars Secondary School attending college lunch at St Hilda's College.



FOOTBALL ON THE BRAIN

Led by the University of Oxford's Wellcome Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging, Football on the Brain is a partnership with Oxford United in the Community, Ignite Sport, SheKicks Magazine, Oxford University Sport, and Football Beyond Borders to help players improve their football skills, and fans improve their understanding of the importance of brain health.

Bringing together neuroscience researchers, players, coaches, and fans, Football on the Brain works to improve our understanding of the role the brain has in fitness and technique development. The project has developed neuroscience modules for young footballers with Ignite Sport UK, delivered staff trainings for Football Beyond Borders' coaches, and devised creative and engaging activities for Oxford United in the Community's primary school tournament. Football on the Brain continues to expand its reach, having recently contributed to the women's football magazine SheKicks, to educate football enthusiasts about the importance of injury prevention and recovery.



Above: A young footballer wearing vision-distortion goggles to learn about neuroscience and football.

Below: Sport Leaders learn to row at the Falcon Boat Club.



3

Expanding our Cultural Programmes

While teaching and research are the core function of the University, we take great pride in the wealth and diversity of our cultural enrichment offerings. From our Gardens, Libraries, and Museums (GLAM), to the Humanities Division's new Schwarzman Cultural Arts Programme, our University researchers and staff are opening our doors to the community through a diverse range of programmes and activities.

Gardens, Libraries, and Museums

In 2023, GLAM's seven public venues – four museums, the Bodleian Libraries, the Oxford Botanic Garden, and Harcourt Arboretum – attracted 3.3 million visitors, with more than a third of those from Oxford and Oxfordshire. Hosting a range of exhibitions and seasonal fairs, topical talks, and weekend and evening events, public engagement is central to GLAM's mission and ethos.

In addition to visiting and booking a tour at any GLAM venue, GLAM hosts specialised programmes that aim to make enrichment opportunities accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ability, gender, sexual identity, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. Many of GLAM's programmes are offered at low or no cost. Every weekend and during school holidays, the Museum of Natural History offers a range of free activities, such as festivals and themed activity weekends, for local families and residents. In February 2024, the Bodleian Library collaborated with Oxford's Chinese community, offering

the opportunity to contribute personal stories and responses to items in the Bodleian's Chinese collection through five workshops. Participants came together to co-design a free, public spring festival at the Weston Library, featuring activities inspired by Chinese New Year, such as lantern making, calligraphy, and dance. In the same month, the Ashmolean Museum hosted its annual One World Festival, a free, two-day festival celebrating diversity in Oxfordshire through 26 events exploring different faiths represented in the local community. The festival attracted roughly 9,000 visitors, 38% of whom were first time Ashmolean visitors.

The GLAM Community Engagement Team also delivers free, hands-on outreach sessions to local organisations and groups, such as housing associations, community

Below, left: South Asian dancers performing at the Ashmolean Museum's One World Festival.

Below, right: Pitt Rivers Museum evening visitor event.



“ These workshops give people like me an opportunity to meet new people, make new friends, and learn something new. They give us something to look forward to and makes me feel like people are thinking about us and care.”

Participant, Inclusive Programming for Adults with Learning Disabilities

hospitals, homelessness charities, care homes, prison and probation services, talking cafes, and the Department of Education's Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF). Additionally, they offer free monthly onsite programmes for audiences at risk of exclusion or discrimination, specifically older people facing loneliness, adults with learning disabilities, people who are blind or partially sighted, and young people with anxiety and depression. Started in 2023, Discover and Create was developed in partnership with Response (a county-wide mental health charity), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and young people experiencing mild

to moderate mental health issues who do not regularly attend school. It is an eight-week programme of creative activities for young people aged 14–18 which aims to support participants' wellbeing and help them build confidence through socialisation.

These programmes represent just some of the many ways that GLAM are engaging with the local community; their offerings continue to grow, becoming more comprehensive and inclusive. With a little bit of something for everyone, GLAM remains an important point of access and connection between the University and our neighbours across Oxford.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S AWARDS

In 2024, the Vice-Chancellor's Awards were expanded to recognise some of the many outstanding achievements and research contributions of the collegiate University to our local, national, and global communities. The Community Partnership award was created to celebrate staff and partner organisations who have worked together to make a positive difference at the local, national, or global level. Two projects were selected as the winners in the category, both of which focus on communities in Oxfordshire.

Engagement staff from GLAM division collaborated with members of the local community to develop inclusive programming for adults with learning disabilities (ALD), which seeks to eliminate barriers to participation. The ALD programme uses tactile learning and crafts to deliver educational workshops. The programme also provides the University's first Easy Read consent forms and travel support through the Travel Buddy scheme operated by local disability advocacy charity My Life My Choice.

The History of Science Museum, in collaboration with scientists from MPLS, has also been working with community-based organisation African Families in the UK to help young people of African and black Caribbean heritage from Blackbird Leys build cultural connections through science-based workshops at the Museum, the University's science facilities, and other sites, such as Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Diamond Light, and the City College's Technology campus.



PHOTOS: JOHN CAIRNS

Top: GLAM recognised for partnering with the community to develop inclusive programming for adults with disabilities.

Bottom: The History of Science Museum, MPLS scientists and AFiUK are recognised for their work to support the Blackbird Leys community.

Schwarzman Cultural Programme

The University’s Humanities Division is home to several active community engagement initiatives, including the new Schwarzman Cultural Programme, which follows the blueprint of cultural democracy, a term used to describe an ‘approach to arts and culture that actively engages everyone in deciding what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it, and who experiences it’. It aims to expand access to cultural activities in Oxfordshire through co-creation, co-production, and co-delivery with local organisations and community groups.

Currently, the Schwarzman Cultural Programme has two ongoing projects: one working with refugees and asylum seekers within Oxford and Oxfordshire, and the other working with the Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys community to revive the annual Leys Festival as part of a long-term partnership plan.

The Leys Festival is an event that was co-created by the Leys community and the University, which featured the theme of ‘One People, One Place’, and marked the rebirth of a longstanding festival with historical and personal significance to communities across Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys.

Beginning in March 2024, the central University and Schwarzman Cultural Programme began to hold fortnightly meetings in venues across the Leys, such as the Oxford Hub, Ark-T, and Activate Learning, to initiate conversations about a new era of collaboration between the University and the Greater Leys community. Facilitated by Erica Whyman, former Creative Director at the Royal Shakespeare Company, early discussions addressed the historically strained relationship between the University and the Leys, acknowledging that engagement has traditionally taken place through extractive research without reciprocal benefit to the community. Through this co-creation project, the University pledged to begin work on transforming its relationship with the Leys.

It was agreed that the focus of a University-community collaboration should be on the Leys Festival, which drew on a range of artistic and musical talent across the Leys, as well as themes that reflect and unify the Leys’ diverse cultures and heritages, including food and sport. As community trust and enthusiasm began to grow, more people from across the Leys began to attend the planning meetings, including local artists, such as Rawz and Mani, county and city councillors, local football clubs, and community leaders from a range of cultural organisations.

The Festival took place on 28 July in Blackbird Leys Park, inviting families and residents from across Oxford to participate in a range of activities, such as sport coaching offered by Oxford United FC, a local rounders coach, and kids’ cricket offered by Oxenford CC. Live music, spoken word poetry, and dance performances were held on the main stage, and community members contributed to a new mural which now adorns the Activate Learning building and celebrates the spirit of the Leys. Those in attendance also had the opportunity to share their stories and experiences in the speakers’ corner, support local businesses, and learn about career and continuing education opportunities at the University.

The Festival marked the beginning of a new relationship between the University and the Leys. Follow-up meetings have provided the opportunity to reflect and learn from one another, as well as a platform for discussions about how the Cultural Programme can use the Festival’s legacy to promote a sustainable and symbiotic relationship between the University and the Leys.

Other vehicles for this work include a new initiative led by the Oxford Hub called the ‘Leys Engine’, which will serve as a partnership between business, local government, and community organisations to support greater opportunity for people in the Leys. The intention is to partner with other anchor institutions who work in the Leys, with accountability to the community.

Below, left: The Space for Reading at the Weston Library.
Below, right: The new Blackbird Leys mural co-created during 2024 The Leys Festival.





Above: The first annual Leys Festival, co-created by the University of Oxford and members of the Blackbird Leys community.

OXFORD OPEN DOORS

Launched by the Oxford Preservation Trust in 2007, Oxford Open Doors is an annual event in September which welcomes members of the community to visit parts of Oxford that are typically closed to the public. The event weekend includes a number of family friendly activities, which are free and open to the public.

Each year, the University of Oxford and its colleges invite the community to visit a range of University venues, including college gardens and university buildings. In 2024, 30,000 visitors – nearly 80% of whom were local – explored over 140 participating sites across Oxford. Visitors had the opportunity to tour the Radcliffe Camera with the head of GLAM, Richard Ovenden; go behind the scenes of Oxford University Press; or use their wits to ‘escape the lab’ at the Wellcome Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging.

4

Welcoming Refugees and Sanctuary-Seekers

Every year, hundreds of refugees and asylum-seekers come to Oxfordshire, whether through government relocation schemes or because they have family or other connections within the county. This diverse community is made up of individuals from countries such as Ukraine, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Syria. A range of local organisations work to help them transition to life in the UK, offering support with housing, employment, and counselling services. As a University of Sanctuary, we are committed to supporting sanctuary-seekers, both within the University and across our wider community.

Becoming a University of Sanctuary

In May 2023, the University of Oxford became a University of Sanctuary (UoS), committing to being a place of welcome and inclusion for refugees, asylum-seekers, and people with displacement backgrounds. UoS status is conferred by the NGO City of Sanctuary, and is based on the University's commitment to a series of criteria, including offering sanctuary scholarships, providing a webpage and contact person to support students and staff from sanctuary backgrounds, and working collaboratively with local organisations to support refugees and asylum-seekers within Oxfordshire.

The University's UoS status builds upon Somerville College and Mansfield College successfully being awarded College of Sanctuary status in 2021. The University is the first collegiate university to be awarded UoS status, which applies to all entities within the University, including the colleges. Rather than seeing UoS status as an end-point, we regard it as part of a journey, and so we have worked to strengthen our commitment to sanctuary in several ways.

The University has rapidly expanded the range of sanctuary scholarships available, with around 50 full scholarships awarded in 2023–24 and 2024–25, and a

“It's too easy to focus on grammar and not see the student and remember the journeys so many of them have been on. As soon as they read their poems you understand who they are.”

Becky, EMBS teacher



new Palestine Crisis Scholarships scheme announced for 2025–26. We have created the Oxford Sanctuary Community, with a dedicated full-time coordinator and a cohort programme, which welcomes students and staff with displacement backgrounds from across our community. A new University of Sanctuary Committee coordinates this work, and includes members with displacement backgrounds, as well as representation from the local community. We have also strengthened our relationships with local community organisations, such as Asylum Welcome, Refugee Resource, and Aspire, which are doing great work to support refugees and asylum-seekers across Oxfordshire.

Partnering with Local Refugee Organisations

Across the University, divisions, departments, and colleges are working with refugee and asylum communities to celebrate our city's diversity and promote inclusion. For example, the Cultural Programme has been supporting local refugee artists through Asylum Welcome, while a group of professors from the Mathematical Institute have been running activities for maths-literate sanctuary seekers across the UK. The award-winning GLAM MultakaOxford team brings communities together by sharing the rich knowledge and heritage of people from all over the world who have made their home in Oxfordshire. Based at the History of Science Museum and Pitt Rivers Museum, this volunteer-led programme supports people to get involved in a range of projects, including 'Palestine: Pieces of Me', a co-created event series held at the Pitt Rivers Museum, developed in partnership with the Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association, the Palestinian History Tapestry, and the Oxford Dabke Group, as well 'Alice Celebrates Eid', a multicultural celebration which marks Alice's Day and the Muslim festival of Eid al-Fitr. We are also in the process of developing a volunteer scheme with Asylum Welcome to engage University staff, students, refugees, and asylum seekers in conversation clubs and informal language exchange. On 13 June, the University co-organised the

Oxford Sanctuary Fair at the Town Hall with Asylum Welcome, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and Oxford Brookes University. It served as a drop-in event for connecting refugees, students, and the local community, with a range of stalls, plenary discussions, and break-out workshops. Discussions included sessions on 'know your rights' to help participants understand the rights of asylum seekers in the UK; on 'employment and volunteering opportunities' to work with refugees led by Aspire and the International Rescue Committee, and a workshop on 'access to higher education for asylum-seekers' led by Refugee Education UK. The event also included art, music, and craft activities, with catering provided by Damascus Rose Kitchen, an Oxford-based social enterprise serving traditional Middle Eastern dishes made by Arabic-speaking refugee women.

The University is also working on an exciting new project with Asylum Welcome and Oxford Brookes, creating a Refugee-Led Research Hub in East Oxford. Building upon the University's Refugee-Led Research Hub in Nairobi, the model will offer opportunities for sanctuary seekers in Oxford to access learning opportunities and get involved in policy research at both the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University. In order to develop the model, we have had a series of consultations with relevant organisations and sanctuary seekers across Oxford. The new Hub will open in January 2025 with premises close to Asylum Welcome in the St Mary's area of the city.

With Oxford Brookes applying for UoS status, and the City and County Councils keen to apply to become a City and County of Sanctuary, there is huge potential to create a community of sanctuary across Oxfordshire.

Opposite: MultakaOxford family event.

Below, left: Henna art at the History of Science Museum's *Alice Celebrates Eid* event.

Below, right: The Oxford Sanctuary Fair at the Town Hall, co-organised with Asylum Welcome, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and Oxford Brookes University.



MANSFIELD COLLEGE SANCTUARY ARTS PROJECT

Since becoming a College of Sanctuary in 2021, Mansfield College has worked to nurture a culture of inclusivity and awareness for those seeking sanctuary, including asylum-seekers and refugees. Kate Clanchy, Mansfield's Writer-in-Residence, and Shukria Rezaei, a former student of Oxford Spire Academy, who arrived in the UK as an Afghan refugee and studied poetry with Clanchy, before joining Mansfield College as a communications officer, have developed a partnership with EMBS Community College.

EMBS Community College provides educational opportunities and social connection for local students, many of whom are refugees, asylum seekers, or first-generation immigrants. EMBS students who participate in the Sanctuary Arts Project partake in creative writing sessions to supplement their English Language Course at Level 2. The sessions are offered weekly and include three hour-long workshops, followed by lunch and one-to-one mentorship.

Shukria explained, 'Because it is English learning, the students therefore feel entitled to make the time in between work and family and attend. After a few sessions, they start to very much enjoy the writing and to express themselves fully and richly. They speak of the sessions adding joy, meaning and dignity to their lives as well as aiding their English expression. They reflect on their lives and their journeys, and share details of their culture with each other. They sometimes reflect on current events – for example, after the Turkish earthquake a very upset Turkish student was able to share with the group how he was feeling about his family at home and to write a poem – and also to write angrily or sadly about their refugee status, but the poems which allow them to inhabit, for a short while, their former professional lives, or remember their families or national recipes are equally valued. Both teachers and students agree it is a powerful way for the students to get to know each other, and for the teachers to understand, in a non-intrusive way, where the students come from.'

Creating a book gives purpose to the sessions. The final stages of editing and collating are stimulating and exciting, and allow for one-to-one sessions with the students where they feel in command of the text and attend to the detail of language. The finished books are very much valued by the students because they can see their words and memories beautifully presented and framed and also how they fit into a bigger group.



The books are shared through reading to each other, to their teachers, and at college gatherings. The students gain through reading aloud. The books go on to have an afterlife by being sent to relatives and friends, and read to other classes in college. One copy is now resident on the counter of a small shop in Cowley where any interested person is urged to read it!

Above, top: EMBS students visiting Mansfield College on International Poetry Day.

Above, bottom: EMBS students visiting the Bodleian Libraries.

Opposite: Anneliese Dodds, MP for Oxford East, visits the Science Together stall at the Leys Festival.

5

Undertaking Research to Shape Policy & Practice

Collaborating with government, charities, businesses, and community organisations is one way we ensure that the University produces research that responds to local, national, and global needs. Across the University, our academics are working with Oxfordshire residents to learn about local challenges and deliver evidence-based solutions.

Public and Community Engagement with Research (PCER) describes a method of conducting research that is collaborative and mutually beneficial for researchers and the public. This approach may involve consulting community leaders or groups to shape research questions, using participatory research methods, or engaging in public debates about research findings. Examples of research that centres the Oxfordshire community can be found across the University.

Science Together

In 2021, the Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division (MPLS) launched Science Together: Oxford Researchers and Communities, an innovative, community-first research programme. Delivered in partnership with the Medical Sciences Division and Oxford Brookes University, and with support from Research Services, Science Together has brought together 22 local organisations, 30 facilitators, and over 50 researchers from across the academic disciplines to co-create and co-deliver research initiatives which tackle important social issues within the Oxfordshire community. In its first year alone, Science Together reached over 88 individuals of varying ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and abilities.

The 2023–24 programme launched in October 2023 with a project development workshop at the Old Fire Station where participants explored project ideas in a collaborative brainstorming session. The workshop resulted in the formation of seven new project groups formed with community partners from across Oxfordshire including the Ark T Centre; MES Creations; In-Spire Sounds; the Parasol Project; Slade Nursery School; Good Food Oxfordshire; and the Oxford Lindy Hoppers. The final projects were the product of true partnerships between the participating community groups and university academics.

- **Ark-T** – assessed the impact of Ark-T's Community Hub Days as a key community wellbeing intervention and the extent to which Ark-T is meeting the needs of the community and participants.

- **Good Food Oxfordshire** – co-designed solutions with community groups to help improve access to healthier and more sustainable diets for Oxfordshire residents.
- **In-Spire Sounds** – investigated the impact of music and mentoring on young people taking part in workshops, and the wider social benefits of providing a creative platform for unheard youth voices in the community;
- **MES Creations** – delivered a programme of introductory graffiti workshops to gauge attitudes towards community, anti-social behaviour, wellbeing and perceptions around graffiti and street art from those taking part to inform the development of further local projects;
- **Oxford Lindy Hoppers** – explored the benefits of dance on physical and mental wellbeing – and how social



and improvisational skills are developed through swing dancing;

- **Parasol Project** – identified the social resilience factors that are particularly important to the inclusive Parasol community and supported the development of skills through co-designed activities;
- **Slade Nursery School** – investigated the impact of the nursery's 'Home Hub' initiative to improve children's communication skills and their ability to self-regulate behaviours.

Each group had the opportunity to showcase their work during the Summer Celebration in June 2024. Science Together is now in its fourth year, with eight new community-led projects taking place in 2024–25.

Community History Hub

The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities serves as another hub for multi-disciplinary research projects and public engagement with research. The humanities have produced a number of collaborative and participatory research projects, such as the Community History Hub, which was launched in June 2022. The hub works to connect History faculty and researchers with local historians from cultural and community-action organisations with the intention of illuminating hidden histories and sharing the experiences of diverse communities from across Oxfordshire. This initiative takes a community first approach, which prioritises creating sustainable relationships and facilitating reciprocal knowledge exchange.

The Community History Hub currently has six active research collaborations with local leaders, activists, and organisations. Among them is 'Art, Party, and Protest', a research project led by Rawz, a local artist, poet, musician, and youth worker from the Greater Leys in

Oxford. Through oral history and archival research, Rawz is exploring how Oxford's culture and politics have been shaped by art, party, and protest. Focusing on topics such as sound system and rave cultures, squatting movements, graffiti, demonstrations, vigils, protests, leafleting, poster and flyer campaigns, Rawz's research is shedding light on the wealth of history hidden within a city built on tradition.

Citizen Science in Wytham Woods

Gifted to the University in 1942, the Wytham Estate is situated just outside the city of Oxford, and is home to over 500 species of plant and 800 species of moths and butterflies, which have inspired decades of ground-breaking ecological and climate change research. The 1,000-acre Estate is comprised of Wytham Woods – the University's 'living laboratory' – and Hill End, an outdoor education centre that has been in operation since the 1920s. As the custodian of Hill End, the University has preserved the space for community and nature education, in accordance with the stipulations of the Estate's deed. Each year, Hill End attracts 50,000 visitors, the majority of whom are students in local primary and secondary schools.

Beyond Hill End, the Woods provide a wealth of opportunities for members of the community to observe and appreciate the natural world while learning about the globally important research taking place on their doorstep. The University invites secondary schools to visit Wytham Wood to meet University researchers, and participate in fieldwork or enrichment workshops.

The citizen science programmes at Wytham Woods provide opportunities for non-scientists of any age to participate in ecological monitoring as part of the ongoing research projects in the Woods. Currently, there are two active programmes: Fungi Monitoring and Oxford

Below: MES Creations mural at the Science Together summer celebration.

Opposite, left: Climate lead, Sarah Gilbert, from the Oxfordshire County Council, participating in the Local Policy Lab hackathon.

Opposite, right: Professor Irene Tracey attending the Science Together summer celebration.



Plan Bee. For the Fungi Monitoring project, citizens are asked to report their observations on common species of fungi, such as the Oyster Mushroom, so that scientists can analyse how they are responding to climate change. The Oxford Plan Bee initiative invites the public to observe the activity and diversity of solitary bees around the city, and to do their part to create bee habitats in their own gardens.

Local Policy Lab

In 2024, two new programmes, the Local Policy Lab and Community Impact Lab, were created to bridge the divide between research and policy, and to strengthen connections with local policymakers and community organisations. The Local Policy Lab is the result of a new partnership between the University of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University, and the Oxfordshire County Council. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Impact Acceleration Account, the Lab was created to connect researchers and policymakers to support evidence-based local policy. The initial focus of the Lab is on two areas: climate and health policy.

The idea for the Lab came from speaking to County Council Cabinet members who identified that one of the things they most wanted from the University was access to research insights to inform policy, recognising that established professors are often unable to rapidly pivot their research agendas to meet local policy needs.

To further develop the concept, the University convened two 'hackathons'. The first focused on climate policy, and brought together researchers focusing on relevant areas such as transport, food, and energy, with climate and net zero-focused policymakers and politicians from across the County and District Councils. The second focused on health inequalities in Oxfordshire, similarly bringing together relevant researchers and policymakers. Both

conversations acknowledged that there is a need for more a formal collaboration between researchers and policymakers. The Local Policy Lab was launched at a City Council event held in the Old Fire Station, and featured a series of break-out sessions in which researchers, policymakers, and community researchers discussed the Lab's model and brainstormed thematic priorities for its work.

"It is exciting for us to have this resource [community hub dashboard] that came through the Lab. It will drive forward something that we feel very passionate about.

Thank you so much for this opportunity. It is not something we could have done ourselves [and] it will be really impactful not just driving our work but pushing other organisations too."

Emma Coles – OIEP, on the Community Impact Lab

One of the key innovations of the Lab is that it involves graduate students from both Universities in 12-week research projects. In the Lab's first iteration, a cohort of 18 students was recruited to work on nine projects in areas covering climate and health policy. The projects focused on areas identified by County policymakers and covered themes such as identifying practices for school decarbonisation; exploring ways to make climate policies more inclusive for local people; assessing social prescribing opportunities for young people; evaluating the impact of home visits on supporting healthier and greener homes; examining use of carbon capture in the



PLASTIC GOLDFISH, OXFORD INSIDE OUT



ANDREW BAILEY

county; and promoting vegetable growing within NHS greenspace.

“ I developed a lot of confidence through this programme. It was great to observe my impact in our team despite being the least experienced in non-academic work. It showed me that I have a solid and diverse skillset in problem definition, collaboration, stakeholder management and communication.”

Mathilde Ritman – DPhil in Atmospheric & Planetary Science, on the Community Impact Lab

Participating students received a five-week training programme, which encompassed areas such as community engagement, social science for public policy, and working with local government. The students were also mentored by academics, policymakers, and professional services staff. They then had the opportunity to work in interdisciplinary teams on priority projects, supported by County officers and university researchers with relevant expertise, and to present their project outcomes at a showcase event hosted by the Blavatnik School of Government in July 2024.

The Lab's initial work has been evaluated, and we are now

planning for the next phase of its work in 2025. In future, the Lab will prioritise a smaller set of thematic areas, with research spanning across student cohorts.

Community Impact Lab

We also piloted a new scheme to enable our postgraduate students to partner with local organisations on research projects. The Community Impact Lab provides the opportunity for graduate students to work in interdisciplinary teams on short-term research projects that add value to the work of local organisations. The programme initially worked with five partner organisations across a ten-week project period from May until July 2024, and was coordinated by the SDG Impact Lab and funded by the ESRC's Impact Acceleration Account. The projects took on a range of roles, from impact evaluation to literature review and building new products, such as apps and other digital platforms. They also covered a diversity of themes, including decarbonising Oxford colleges, social prescribing, environmental sustainability and local sport, access to physical activity, and community hubs.

The Low Carbon Hub worked with Lab students to analyse the decarbonisation strategies of Oxford colleges and propose recommendations for greater energy efficiency. Another group worked with Oxford Hub to evaluate the impact of social prescribing in Oxford and build an app to enable patients and practitioners to better navigate opportunities. Others worked with Active Oxfordshire to evaluate the impact of their Move Together programme,



examining how it can better support adults with learning difficulties to access physical activity, as well as Oxford City FC to identify best practices for improving environmental sustainability at the football club. Working in collaboration with the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership, the Lab also analysed the role of community hubs in providing social services, and created a dashboard to help community hubs across the County promote inclusive employment.

Some of the students had the opportunity to present and share findings with local authorities and with the boards of the relevant organisations, offering a direct pathway to implementation. Having built successful partnerships, the programme is set to continue in 2025.

Social Prescribing

Social prescribing is a primary care tool which utilises community networks, activities, and services to address an individual's social, emotional, and practical needs. In support of Oxford Health's Green Spaces initiative, our Gardens, Libraries, and Museums (GLAM) have partnered with a number of local organisations, charities, and health providers to help improve the health and wellbeing of the Oxfordshire community.

The GLAM wellbeing team has worked with the Oxford Health Clinical Research Facility (CRF) at Warneford Hospital – the only dedicated mental health CRF in the country – to plant a therapeutic garden for mental health patients, where service users and volunteers have the

opportunity to engage in gardening projects to enhance the ward environment. GLAM are also working with the Berin Centre's older people's group and local charities, such as Down Syndrome Oxford, Children Heard and Seen, Refugee Resource, and Asylum Welcome to offer activities and events to mitigate social isolation and anxiety by helping participants reconnect with nature. Working in partnership with the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Science, including members of the University's Centre for Evidenced-Based Medicine, Kellogg College and GLAM created the interdisciplinary Oxford Social Prescribing Research Network (OxSoP). Bringing together members of the public, policymakers, researchers, and clinical providers, OxSoP has become the primary community of practice for social prescribing in Oxfordshire, and has helped shaped social prescribing practices at the national and international levels.

Opposite, left top: Michael Folayan presents his team's research at the Local Policy Lab Fellowship Showcase.

Opposite, left bottom: Emily Hsu and Laurence Peinturier present their work on decarbonising Oxford colleges at the Community Impact Lab Showcase event.

Opposite, right: Professor Alex Betts and Ollie Cook attend the 2024. Community Impact Lab Showcase event.

Below: Intergenerational visit to the Oxford Botanic Garden.



6

Shaping an Inclusive Economy

The University contributes significantly to the regional economy through employment, its spin-out companies, procurement, and attracting tourism. There is a perception that the University's presence has a distorting effect on the availability of affordable housing, and on the economic and social geography of the city. We want to ensure local residents have access to the opportunities and benefits of living close to one of the world's leading universities, so we are taking an active role in making changes that improve the health and wellbeing of our community.

Our Economic Impact

We have undertaken analysis to measure the economic impact of the University. Our total economic impact on the UK economy is estimated at over £16 billion per year.² This is made up of research and knowledge exchange activities, operating and capital expenditure, teaching and learning, and tourism associated with the University. A significant proportion of this impact is concentrated within the South East of England, and particularly in Oxfordshire.

“ It was an amazing experience winning the intermediate and advance apprentice award last year. After winning the award, I felt proud of the work that I do and the positive impact that I have on the people around me. Completing my apprenticeship has really helped me in starting and developing my career. ”

Apprentice Award Winner

The collegiate University as a whole is the second largest employer in Oxfordshire, with 10,000 people employed directly by the University, and a total of around 16,000 employed by the broader collegiate University, Oxford University Press, and University spin-out companies. 86% of the University's staff live in the South East and 50% in Oxford.

The tourism sector accounts for about £780 million a year in revenue for local businesses. Out of a total of 425,000 overnight trips by visitors from overseas to Oxford in 2022, around 211,000 can be attributed to the University. In other words, about half occurred because of visits to the University. Approximately 45% of the University's procurement expenditure take place in the South East, with 8% in Oxford.

Meanwhile, Oxford's research and knowledge exchange activities have a significant multiplier effect. For every £1 invested in University of Oxford research and knowledge exchange activities, we generated £11.20 for the UK economy in 2021–22; 63% of this activity occurred in the South East.

The University Careers Service has supported students in contributing to our local community while developing key employability skills. During the 2023–24 academic year, nearly 800 students undertook micro-internships with Oxfordshire-based organisations across a range of sectors, including education, environment and sustainability, and charity/nonprofits. The Careers Service's Oxford Strategy Challenge engages 150 students each year in addressing real business issues for local (and global) organisations.

Aligning with the OIEP

Despite being one of the wealthiest cities in the country, Oxford is also one of the most unequal. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) is a collaboration working to create a more equal and sustainable county. It is a multi-stakeholder collaboration that includes local government, business, and community organisations, and is focused on educational attainment, inclusive employment, social value procurement, and place shaping. It is co-chaired by Baroness Jan Royall, the Principal of Somerville College, and Jeremy Long, former Chair of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Several members of the University participate in the OIEP Steering Committee, and within its working groups. The OIEP Charter offers a means for organisations across the County to commit to pledges in areas related to the work of the OIEP.

In February 2024, the Vice-Chancellor hosted a panel discussion on the topic of 'Working Towards an Inclusive Oxfordshire' at Brasenose College in collaboration with OIEP. The Vice-Chancellor chaired a panel discussion that included Jan Royall, Mark Beard (chairman of Beard

² In 2021, the University commissioned London Economics to measure the economic impact of the University for 2018–19. This was published as 'The Economic Impact of the University of Oxford' in 2021. We have recently updated the analysis for 2021–22.

Construction), Jane Rendle (joint CEO of ARCh), and Rick Mower (CEO of RAW), with around 60 attendees from the Oxford business community, local government, and community organisations. At the event, the Vice-Chancellor committed the University to the OIEP Charter. The Charter covers several important areas in which the collegiate University is already striving to make a difference: providing fair wages; supporting the local and social economy; creating opportunities to work; sharing resources, skills, and assets; recruiting inclusively; working toward net zero; and improving training and educational attainment for employees.

Inclusive Recruitment

As the largest employer in Oxfordshire, one area where the collegiate University can have a considerable positive impact on the local economy is through more inclusive recruitment. This means changing the perceptions around the types of job opportunities that are available at the University, and making a concerted effort to make our recruitment process more accessible. The University and several colleges have been working to develop more inclusive recruitment policies, which open up pathways for members of our community, including to ex-offenders, refugees, people with homelessness backgrounds, older people, and recent school leavers, to find employment at the collegiate University.

Apprenticeships and hands-on learning programmes provide exciting opportunities for recent school leavers or anyone interested in learning a new trade or skill. Open to anyone over the age of 16 who has completed their GCSEs and is not in full-time education, apprenticeships are a great option for those that feel traditional education pathways may not be the right fit for them and who are eager to learn through practical experience.

Placements are available across the University, with roles ranging from finance, marketing, and IT roles, to events planning, carpentry, horticulture, and even lab technicians and clinical trial support, and the number of roles continues to grow. For example, every year, GLAM hosts more than 100 work experience placements,

apprenticeships, and internships from local secondary schools and colleges.

All full-time, new entrant apprentices earn £23,706 a year, and apprenticeship placements can be contracted for 1–4 years. This hands-on work experience is supplemented with education and certification programmes ensuring that apprentices continue to develop relevant knowledge and skills throughout their placement. The University of Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards celebrate the achievements of our apprentices and apprenticeship line managers.

In addition to apprenticeships, members of the collegiate University are working with local institutions and community organisations to enhance pathways to employment for refugees, asylum-seekers, ex-offenders, and disability groups. Angela Unsworth, the Domestic Bursar for Jesus College, and the Domestic Bursars Committee (DBC) have been at the forefront of this work. The DBC Clinics provide an informal space for speakers from local organisations to introduce projects or initiatives, and discuss the possibility for future collaboration. After a successful clinic with HM Prison Services (HMPS) to discuss recruitment of ex-offenders, college HR staff and Domestic Bursars visited HMP Bullingdon and worked with HMPS to develop a recruitment framework for use by colleges. A college representative was also appointed to the Employment Advisory Board at HMP Bullingdon.

In October 2024, the colleges and central University attended a job fair hosted by the Department of Work and Pensions to inform potential applicants about the opportunities in colleges and the central University, and dispel myths about working for a college. Plans are also underway for additional inclusive recruitment events to showcase career opportunities across the University. The University is also working closely with the City and County Council procurement teams to develop a social value statement as the basis for more effective social procurement policies. The central University and several of the colleges have also committed to paying the Oxford Living Wage. CEO Sleepout

Below, left: Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy (OIEP) Partnership Manager, Emma Coles, pictured with Luisa Costa, who partnered with the OIEP for her research on community hubs.

Below, right: The annual Apprenticeship Awards held at the Oxford Museum of Natural History.



CEO SLEEPOUT

Since 2022, members of the Colleges and University have participated in the CEO Sleepout to support the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement (OHM), a network of organisations working together to raise awareness and provide support for those experiencing homelessness. The collegiate University has supported and worked with the Oxfordshire Homelessness Movement for several years, particularly around inclusive recruitment and expanding employment opportunities for ex-offenders and previously homeless people.

Business owners, CEOs, directors, and partners from across Oxfordshire came together to spend a night camping on University grounds. In 2023, Vice-Chancellor Irene Tracey, Baroness Jan Royall of Somerville College, Angela Unsworth of University College, and Professor Alexander Betts, University Local & Global Engagement Officer, were among those that participated, raising over £75,000 for the Movement. The 2024 CEO Sleepout took place again, and raised an additional £93,000 for OHM. Every pound raised from the event will go to front-line projects for people experiencing homelessness in Oxfordshire.



Sustainable Transport

During the academic year 2023–24, six colleges – led by University College – partnered with Pedal & Post to pilot an eco-friendly parcel delivery programme. The programme aimed to reduce the number of delivery vehicles traveling through central Oxford, consolidating roughly 15–25 vehicle deliveries across services, such as DHL, Evri, DPD, and UPS, into a singular cargo bicycle delivery. The program is part of a wider University initiative to curb carbon emissions and improve traffic conditions within Oxford, making the city centre safer for cyclists and pedestrians, in line with the University's Vision Zero aspirations. The programme continues to expand, now with nine colleges on board. There is also collaboration between Lyreco, the supplier for the University and for colleges in the Purchasing Shared Service, and Pedal & Post.

To further support safe cycling within the city centre, the University collaborated with the Oxfordshire County Council to provide alternative cycle pathways during path repairs and roadway construction. In Autumn 2023, the University worked with County and City Councils to provide cyclists with an alternative off-road route between central Oxford and Marston while two bridges in University Parks were being repaired. At designated times, cyclists could wheel their bikes along a marshalled path through University Parks and across the High Bridge, providing a safe off-road route for children travelling to and from school. We are excited to continue working with the City and County Councils to support initiatives that encourage safe and sustainable transport, furthering our commitment to achieve net zero, promoting active travel, and shaping a healthy future for our community.



PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BMW MINI PLANT

For over a century, car production has played a key role in the Oxfordshire economy, and the BMW MINI Plant Oxford is one of the largest employers in the county, producing around 1,000 cars every day. Since 2022, the University has been collaborating with the BMW Group through the SDG Impact Lab. The programme supports graduate students from across the University to work with BMW colleagues at the plant on research projects that support delivery of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, locally and globally, while supporting BMW's 'Lean, Green, Digital' strategy.

Today, the plant stands at the cutting edge of automotive manufacturing technology and sustainability, after

significant investments over the years. A major focus is the reduction of energy usage, water consumption, waste, and CO2 emissions. The roof of the building has a solar energy plant the size of five football pitches.

Thirty-two students have been part of the collaboration over the past two years, working on a variety of themes that support our shared goals relating to environmental sustainability and community impact. They have worked on projects to develop and adapt BMW's corporate social responsibility strategy to the local context, improve engagement with the Leys, inform the plant's AI strategy, and improve overall consumption and waste management. The partnership highlights the collective impact the University and business can have when we work collaboratively to support positive social and environmental impact.



SDG IMPACT LAB

Opposite, top: Baroness Jan Royall of Somerville College, Angela Unsworth of Jesus College, and Anneliese Dodds, MP for Oxford East, at the 2024 CEO Sleepout.

Opposite, bottom: Children participate in cycling lessons offered by local organisations in Blackbird Leys.

Above: Students involved in the BMW-SDG Impact Lab partnership visit the BMW MINI Plant Oxford.

Towards the Future

For the first time, local engagement will be a central theme within the University's five-year strategy (for 2025–30). Over the past year, we have tried to pilot a series of new initiatives, reflected in this report, in order to inform our strategy, and identify where and how we can make the greatest difference.

We hope to be able to create a cultural change such that it becomes normal for every part of the University – colleges, departments, divisions, professional service teams, student groups – to consider its impact on the local community. Our aim is to mobilise our community to make a positive difference. We have started a pilot volunteer scheme in collaboration with the Oxford Hub, which enables students to spend a couple of hours a week doing voluntary work with local organisations. We are also working to expand the programme to include staff volunteer opportunities.

Our aim is to work in partnership, and where constructive to play a convening role. Through our new Sport and Community Engagement Partnership, we aim to share our sports facilities and our coaching capacity with schools and local sports clubs. With the support of local business leaders, we are working to expand this already successful sport and community engagement work. As the Vice-Chancellor recently put it in her 2024 Oration, “sport is a great democratiser. It builds bridges, so we have used sport to build connections with the local community.”

As we develop our local engagement strategy, we will need to make choices. One of our biggest priorities will be to open doors to opportunity for young people, in both the city and the county. As a university, supporting young people is part of our core purpose, and it is an area in which we can make a difference. There are a range of ways in which we are likely to be able to do this, including:

1. Supporting local state schools to offer greater opportunity to their students.

We want to ensure that every primary school in Oxford, and many across the county, have some kind of relationship with the collegiate University. We want to support the delivery of extracurricular after-school clubs through student volunteering. And we want to develop a staff volunteer scheme to support local school and pre-school capacity. In addition to working with school children, we

will do more to open-up career opportunities for young people through more strategic use of our apprenticeships and work experience placements.

2. Creating opportunities for local communities to engage in sport and cultural activities.

We aim to share our sports facilities and coaching capacity to reach local children through schools and sports clubs. We will continue to co-create major cultural and sporting events with local community organisations, as we have done with the Leys Festival and Bannister Miles, while continuing to diversify and grow engagement with our gardens, libraries and museums, and our new Schwarzman Cultural Programme.

3. Sharing our research expertise to support evidence-based local policy and practice.

Building upon the early successes of our Local Policy Lab, we want to work collaboratively with local government to shape public policy in areas such as climate, health, and education policy. We aim to support our students to undertake research placements with local community organisations that strengthen their evidence-base and build capacity for impact evaluation, while building pan-University community-led research programmes, based on the positive work of initiatives, like Science Together.

As we embark on these and other areas, one of the challenges we will need to consider is how to sustainably fund our local engagement work. By working together, we hope to identify new and innovative financing mechanisms that can combine university, business, government, and philanthropic funding to create an Oxfordshire in which every resident can flourish and be proud to live in a county that has one of the world's leading universities in its ecosystem.

Our local engagement strategy will evolve and improve as we learn more about how we can most effectively serve our community. We know there is a lot to be done, and we are prepared to rise to the challenge.

Opposite, top: Sport Leaders Programme participants learn basketball skills from Oxford University student athletes.

Opposite, bottom: Family friendly session at the Weston Library.



ANDREW BAILEY



IAN WALLMAN



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD