OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2025

Building Blocks of Health

For further information, or if you have questions regarding this document, please contact: jsna@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Introduction

This document is a companion to the online dashboard of the Building Blocks of Health chapter of the 2025 JSNA. Further themes and indicators are included in this document where it was not possible or desirable to publish data in a dashboard. Therefore, while there is some repetition across the dashboard and this narrative document, they are designed to complement one another.

Contents

List of abbreviations

APS – Annual Population Survey

AQMA – Air Quality Management Area

EPC – Energy Performance Certificate

LSOA – Lower-layer Super Output Area

MHCLG – Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government

MSOA – Middle-layer Super Output Area

ONS – Office for National Statistics

PPFI – Priority Places for Food Index

Building Blocks of Health

This chapter provides data on social, economic and environmental factors that affect health and wellbeing such as employment, poverty, housing, and the environment. Previously, indicators related to education were included in this chapter. These can now be found in the Children and Young People chapter.

The quality of the built and natural environment, including housing quality, access to green spaces that enable connection, and the ability to access secure employment and a living wage are all determinants of health and wellbeing.

In areas of deprivation, these determinants of health are drivers of health inequalities and can result in multi-generational poor health and wellbeing.

Deprivation

People Claiming Benefit

When referring to quarters in this section it means calendar year quarters.

England
Following a sharp fall in the number of people claiming benefit since the coronavirus pandemic, the proportion of economically active residents aged 16-64 has been trending upwards since October 2022.

County
The number of people claiming benefit in the county has decreased significantly since the recent peak of 17,495 in quarter 3 (Q3) 2020. As of Q2 2025, there were 10,805 claimants in the county. This figure is trending upwards. People claiming benefit as a proportion of economically active residents aged 16-64 has followed a similar trend. In Q1 2025, 5% of this population in the county were claimants. As of Q2 May 2025, this figure sat at 2.8%

Districts
In terms of the number of people claiming benefit, all districts have followed similar trends to the county. As a proportion of economically active residents aged 16-64, Oxford has the highest at 3.5% as of Q2 May 2025. West Oxfordshire has the lowest proportion at 2.1%.

Children in Low Income Families

Relative low income refers to people living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year.

Absolute low income refers to people living in households with income below 60% in a base year, usual 2011/11. This measurement is adjusted for inflation.

Districts
Since 2022, the number of children in relative low-income families has increased across all districts in the county. Oxford (4588) and Cherwell (4361) had the highest number of children in such families in 2024. Comparatively, South Oxfordshire (2719), West Oxfordshire (2627) and Vale of White Horse (3047) had relatively fewer children in low-income families.

MSOAs
At this geography, there are marked differences across the county. Per district, the MSOAs with the highest number of children in low-income families are as follows:

- Cherwell: Banbury Ruscote (828), Banbury Grimsbury (465), and Banbury Neithrop (416)
- Oxford: Littlemore and Rose Hill (836), Barton (545) and Cowley South & Iffley (512)
- West Oxfordshire: Witney Central (340), Carterton North (329), and Witney East (272)
- South Oxfordshire: Berinsfield and Wittenham (257), Didcot South East (231), and Chinnor and Tetsworth (214)
- Vale of White Horse: Shrivenham, Watchfield, and Uffington (487), Faringdon and Stanford (345), and Grove (304)

Dimensions of Deprivation

Introduction

Caution should be used in interpreting the variable used here as a direct measure of deprivation. The Office for National Statistics' (ONS) 'Demography and migration quality information for Census 2021' article provides information about the methodology underpinning this data.

County

In Oxfordshire, there are 126,948 households (44.06%) that are deprived in at least one dimension. Broken down into dimensions of deprivation, this means that there are:

- 91,333 households (31.7%) deprived in one dimension
- 29,199 households (10.13%) deprived in two dimensions
- 6,041 households (2.1%) deprived in three dimensions
- 375 households (0.13%) deprived in four dimensions

Districts

Across districts in the county, Cherwell (30,242) has the highest number of households deprived in at least one dimension, followed by Oxford (26407), South Oxfordshire (25,426), Vale of White Horse (24,059), and West Oxfordshire (20,814).

MSOAs

As with the data about children in low-income families, there are marked differences across the county at this level of geography. Per district, the MSOAs with the highest number households deprived in at least one dimension are as follows:

- Cherwell: Banbury Grimsbury (2,945), Banbury Ruscote (2,117), and Banbury Easington (1,973)
- Oxford: Littlemore and Rose Hill (2,326), Cowley and South Iffley (1,946), and East Central Oxford (1,872)
- South Oxfordshire: Wallingford and Brightwell (1,832), Hagbourne, Moreton, and Cholsey (1,778), and Chinnor and Tetsworth (1,640)
- Vale of White Horse: South Wantage, Harwell, and Blewbury (2,302), Abingdon Town and West (2,235), and Shrivenham, Watchfield and Uffington (2,119).
- West Oxfordshire: Witney Central (2,420), Witney East (2,129), and Carterton North (1,523).

Food Insecurity

Introduction
This section of the JSNA uses the Priority Places for Food Index (PPFI) to assess food insecurity across the county. The PPFI is a composite index which is formed of data compiled across seven different dimensions relating to food insecurity.

This data is granular and covers a range of different indicators. Therefore, while some of the headline findings are summarised here, please consult the dashboard to explore this data in greater depth.

England

According to the PPFI's research:

Within England there is a large variation in where priority places are located across regions. The region with the greatest frequency of priority places is the North East, although because this is a small region then there are more priority places in Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands and the North West in absolute terms. There are relatively few priority places in London, the South East and the South West, although in the latter there is a concentration in Cornwall.

At a regional level, they note that the South East tends to have relatively good family food support and low fuel poverty, though tend to experience more socio-economic barriers and poorer online delivery access.

Districts
According to the overall index, the number of areas in the county experiencing high needs (an index value of 1) are relatively low. Cherwell (7) and Oxford (6) are the only districts which contain LSOAs with the highest levels of need.

Proximity to supermarket and non-supermarket provision and accessibility to supermarket retail facilities are three indicators which contain the largest number of high need areas across the county.

MSOA and LSOA

Regarding proximity to supermarket facilities, West Oxfordshire (32) has the highest number of LSOAs scored with an index value of 1 (highest need). This is followed by South Oxfordshire (29), Cherwell (23), and Vale of White Horse (13). There are no LSOAs in Oxford which are scored as having the highest level of need regarding proximity or access to supermarket or non-supermarket facilities.

Fuel Poverty

Introduction

Like the PPFI data, this information is granular and covers areas down to LSOAs. Therefore, while some of the headline findings are summarised here, please consult the dashboard to explore this data in greater depth.

Districts

At district level, Oxford has the largest proportion of houses which experience fuel poverty, with 11% of households being fuel poor in 2024. Fuel poverty across other districts in the county is similar, with just 0.8% separating West Oxfordshire (8.9%) with the second highest proportion and Vale of White Horse (8.1%) with the lowest.

MSOAs and LSOAs

Below are listed the LSOAs, and the MSOA to which they belong, which had the highest proportion of households experiencing fuel poverty in 2024.

Cherwell:
- Banbury Grimsbury, Cherwell 004F – 17.04%
- Banbury Ruscote, Cherwell 005F – 14.77%
- Sibford, Hook Norton and Milcombe, Cherwell 009C – 14.62%

Oxford:
- East Central Oxford, Oxford 011G – 28.48%
- East Central Oxford, Oxford 011F – 22.24%
- East Central Oxford, Oxford 011E – 21.19%

5 of East Central Oxford's 7 LSOAs have proportions of households experiencing fuel poverty above 20%

South Oxfordshire:
- Benson and Crownmarsh Gifford, South Oxfordshire 011F – 15.44%
- Wheatley and Great Hasely, South Oxfordshire 004A – 14.45%
- Berinsfield and Whittenham, South Oxfordshire 006F – 14.37%

Vale of White Horse:
- Abingdon South, Vale of White Horse 008C – 15.11%
- Faringdon and Stanford, Vale of White Horse 009B – 13.71%
- Faringdon and Stanford, Vale of White Horse 009C – 13.24%

West Oxfordshire:
- Chadlington and Wychwoods, West Oxfordshire 003B – 16.02%
- Kingham, Enstone, and Middle Barton, West Oxfordshire 002A – 14.87%
- Burford and Brize Norton, West Oxfordshire 012C – 14.35%

Employment

Employment and Economic Activity

England
The employment rate for the population aged 16-64 has increased from 70% in 2011 to 75.70% in 2024. Across that time, the employment rate has peaked at 76% on two occasions; in 2019 and 2023.

County
Oxfordshire's employment rate for the population aged 16-64 has consistently been higher than that of England since 2011. Across that time period, the rate peaked last year at 83.8% and has reached 83.4% on two occasions in 2019 and 2024.

Districts
In 2024, Oxford has the lowest employment rate for the population aged 16-64 among districts with 76.9%. For the same indicator, the values for Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, and West Oxfordshire were between 86-88%.

Economic Inactivity

Many of the indicators included in the dashboard in this section are affected by data quality issues across a number of years. For the purposes of the dashboard, these are flagged by the presence of blank values. For more details, refer to the Annual Population Survey.

As the ONS explains:

Annual Population Survey (APS) responses are weighted to official population projections. As the current projections are 2018-based they are based on demographic trends that pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic. We are analysing the population totals used in the weighting process and may make adjustments if appropriate. Rates published from the APS remain robust; however, levels and changes in levels should be used with caution. This will particularly affect estimates for country of birth, nationality, ethnicity and disability. This affects all APS periods from April 2019 to March 2020 onwards.

Given the inconsistent availability of data for some of these indicators, we have opted not to summarise them as part of the narrative for this chapter.

Housing

Home Energy Efficiency

Introduction

The median EPC rating for existing dwellings tends to be lower for existing dwellings than for new houses and flats. For example, only 8 MSOAs out of 87 have a median EPC rating of less than 80 for new houses, with only one (Risinghurst and Sandhills) having a median EPC rating of lower than 70 (62). In contrast, there are only 7 MSOAs who have a median EPC rating of 70 or more for existing houses.

Districts and MSOAs

When looking at the data for all dwellings across the county, the MSOAs with the lowest median EPC rating are:

- Kingham, Enstone, and Middle Barton, West Oxfordshire (59)
- Sibford, Hook Norton, and Milcombe, Cherwell (62)
- Watlington and Nettlebed, South Oxfordshire (64)
- Wheatley and Great Haseley, South Oxfordshire (65)
- Iffley Fields, Oxford (65)
- Goring, Woodcote and Whitchurch, South Oxfordshire (65)
- Chadington and Wychwoods, West Oxfordshire (65)

House Price Affordability and House Prices

Introduction

The Office for National Statistics uses a threshold of five years of earning as a broad indicator of affordability. On this basis, across all of the indictors that are used to measure housing affordability, all districts have exceeded this threshold since 2001.

A housing affordability ratio is one way of understanding how affordable homes are. To calculate it, we take the value of a home and divide it by the household's income. Therefore, if a home is worth £250,000 and the household's income is £50,000, the affordability ratio would be 5 in this instance. Affordability ratios vary across the county according to location and property type.

For a more granular look at house prices in Oxfordshire, please use the dashboard. This allows you to see the mean price paid for different property types across the county from 1997 to 2024.

County

For the indicator median house price to median gross annual residence earnings, the housing affordability ratio recently peaked at 10.97 for the county. This has since fallen to 9.38 in in 2024.

Districts

Across all indictors for affordability, Oxford has had ratios of between 11 and 13 over the past 5 years. As of 2024, it was the least affordable district to live in the county according to these indicators. Across three of the four indicators, Cherwell has the lowest affordability ratios, with only Vale of White Horse having a lower affordability ratio according to the lower quartile house price to lower quartile gross annual workplace earnings indicator.

Mortgage and Landlord Possession

Introduction

This data comes from the Ministry of Justice. They are the leading indicator of the number of properties to be repossessed and the only source of subnational possession information.

Districts

Following the Coronavirus pandemic which saw a sharp fall in the number of possession actions, 2022 saw a large increase (1884 actions, 177 percent), followed by a smaller increase the following year (2315 actions, 29 percent). 2024 saw a small decrease (2258 actions) and the overall figure remains below pre-pandemic totals. The average (mean) number of possession actions for 2016-2019 was 2894.

Rental Affordability

Introduction

The Office for National Statistics calculates rental affordability using mean rent prices and median incomes for households. For this, they use the gross monthly income of private-renting households. An area is considered ‘affordable’, if a private-renting household would spend 30% or less of their gross income on rent.

England

According to the Office for National Statistics, private rent affordability has fluctuated since 2016 but remained above the 30% affordability threshold in England.

Districts

Oxford’s rental affordability has remained consistently higher than other districts in the county for many years. Rental affordability peaked here at 45.4% in 2021 and sat at 38.9% in 2023, the most recent data available. This is the lowest percentage since 2015. Other districts in the county are broadly similar, with just under three percentage points separating the Vale of White Horse (lowest, 27.2%) and West Oxfordshire (second highest, 30%).

Rough Sleeping

Introduction
This publication from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) provides the estimated number and age, gender, and nationality of people sleeping rough on a single night in autumn 2024. Local authorities choose a single date between 1 October and 30 November on which to base their snapshot estimate.

Caution should be used when interpreting this data. For example, it can be used to assess changes in the number of people sleeping rough over time but cannot be used to estimate the total number of people sleeping rough throughout the year. See the MHCLG's website for more detailed information.

England
There were an estimated 4,667 people sleeping rough on a single night in autumn. This figure has increased three years in a row and by 20% since 2023. In 2024, there were 8.1 people per 100,000 sleeping rough in the population, up from 6.8 in 2023.

County
The estimated number of people sleeping rough is increasing across the county. 38 people were recorded as sleeping rough on a single night in Autumn in 2020. In 2024, there were 62 people recorded as sleeping rough.

Districts
Estimated numbers of people sleeping rough in Oxford are consistently higher than other districts in the county. From a 10-year low of 19 in 2020, the figure stood at 41 in 2024. In terms of total numbers of people estimated to be sleeping rough, Cherwell has routinely recorded higher numbers than other districts in the county. In 2024, 14 people were recorded sleeping rough compared to 2 in Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire, with a further 3 in West Oxfordshire. Calculated as rates per 100,000 of the population, South Oxfordshire (1.3), Vale of White Horse (1.37) and West Oxfordshire (2.51) have the lowest estimated number of people to be sleeping rough in the county, followed by Cherwell (8.42) and Oxford (24.82). Cherwell's figure is similar to the figure for the South East (8.38) and England (8.09).

Environment

Active Travel

According to Sport England's Active Lives survey, Oxford has many more residents using active travel, with 55.8% of those surveyed saying they had used active travel in the last 28 days. Cherwell (28.9%) had the lowest percentage of respondents reporting the use of active travel, while Vale of White Horse (34.7%) and West Oxfordshire (33.2%) both reported percentages below the figure for the county (38.2%) and England (33.8%). South Oxfordshire (35.6) reported the second highest percentage of respondents using active travel in the last 28 days.

Green Space

Introduction

This data set explores access to parks and playing fields. Published by the Office for National Statistics, it is an analysis of data from Ordnance Survey. It is possible to see the average distance to either parks or parks and playing fields in each LSOA within the county.

MSOAs and LSOAs

For each MSOA, it is possible to sum the average distance to park or parks and playing fields the LSOAs within it. This gives a broad sense of those MSOAs where residents would, on average, have the longest and shortest distances to walk to access green spaces. For parks and playing fields combined, the MSOAs with the longest distances to travel are Sibford, Hook Norton, and Milcombe (Cherwell), Berinsfield and Wittenham (South Oxfordshire), and Shrivenham, Watchfield, and Uffington (Vale of White Horse). Those with the shortest distances to travel are Cowley North (Oxford), Bicester South (Cherwell), and North Central Oxford (Oxford).

Emissions

Districts

According to the latest Air Quality Annual Status Reports there are 9 designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Oxfordshire.

Cherwell has 2 AQMAs in Banbury (Hennef Way) and Bicester (Kings End/Queens Avenue), down from 4 previously declared. The Bicester AQMA is in the process of revocation during 2025 as there have been no exceedances for 5 years; therefore, Cherwell will soon only have one AQMA.

- 2024 data showed that the AQMA in Hennef Way, Banbury, exceeded the UK's legal annual mean limit value of 40 $\mu g/m^3$ of NO_2.

The whole of Oxford is designated as an AQMA, see the 2025 Air Quality Annual Status Report.

- Throughout 2024, NO_2 was measured at 118 sites across Oxford. Only one site (Headington Hill annual mean of 43 $\mu g/m^3$) breached the UK's legal annual mean limit value for NO_2, however this site is not considered a location of relevant exposure as members of the public are not likely to be regularly present for a long period of time appropriate to the averaging period of the annual mean limit value. Between 2023 and 2024 NO_2 levels decreased on average by 10 % across the city.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse currently have 4 AQMAs down from 6, in Henley, Watlington, Botley and Marcham. Three of these (Henley, Watlington and Marcham) are in the process of revocation as they have not exceeded the national objective for NO_2 for 5 years. This will leave one AQMA in Botley.

- 2024 monitoring of NO_2 showed no areas of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse exceeded the UK's legal annual mean limit value for NO_2. However, the Botley AQMA continues to show concentrations close to the objective at 2 roadside locations.

West Oxfordshire has 2 AQMAs in Chipping Norton and Witney. These are both in the process of revocation as they have not exceeded the UK's legal annual mean limit value for NO_2 for 5 years.

- 2024 monitoring showed all monitoring locations in West Oxfordshire district were in line with the UK's legal annual mean limit value for NO_2.

Flood and Heat Risk

Introduction

The data in this section is provided by the council's Climate Resilience report.

Wards

The score for heat risk in each ward considers the following factors:

- Urban heat island (the percentage of urban/suburban land cover)
- Percentage of green space
- Percentage of population under 15
- Percentage of population over 75
- Percentage with a disability under the Equality Act 2011
- Index of multiple deprivation

A ward is considered at high risk if its score is 9 or more. Using this measure, 25 wards in the county are currently considered high risk. The top three are Blackbird Leys, Northfield Brook, and Holywell.

For flooding, the risk score is influenced by the following factors:

- Risk of flooding from rivers and sea
- Building heights
- Percentage of population under 15
- Percentage of population over 75
- Percentage with a disability under the Equality Act 2011
- Index of multiple deprivation

Like heat risk, a ward is considered high risk for flooding if it is scored 9 more. Using this threshold, 24 wards in the county are currently considered high risk. The top three are Northfield Brook, Abingdon Caldecott, and Witney Central.

Place-Based Carbon Calculator

The place-based carbon calculator estimates the average (consumption-based) carbon footprint per person for each LSOA in England. The dashboard uses data from September 2022.

24 of Oxfordshire's LSOAs were rated in the worst 1% in England, with a grading of F- ('high emissions'). Areas of high emissions include rural part of Cherwell and Oxfordshire; a mix of rural and urban areas of Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire, and parts of North Ward and Headington in Oxford City.

Renewable Electricity

As of 2023, Oxfordshire had a total installed renewable energy capacity of 493 MW, up from 476 MW in 2022.

The majority of the capacity in 2023 was provided by photovoltaic (85.6%) followed by municipal solid waste (5.48%) and landfill gas (4.67%).

The districts with the highest proportion of installed renewable capacity were Vale of White Horse (37.12% of the county) and Cherwell (31.64%) of the county.

The amount of renewable energy generated depends on capacity and weather conditions. In 2023, the total renewable energy generated was 508,887 MWh in Oxfordshire. This was below the total in 2022, where 517,494 MWh of electricity was generated.

Vehicles

There was a total of 4.79 billion vehicle miles travelled on roads in Oxfordshire in 2022. This remains below the pre-pandemic level of 4.96 billion in 2019.

The number of licensed plug-in cars in Oxfordshire has been increasing. As of Q4 2024, there were 20,186 vehicles of this type in the county. This represents a 421% increase since Q1 2020, when there were 3,783 licensed plug-in cars in the county.

Cherwell has the greatest number of licensed plug-in cars (23,407) of Oxfordshire districts representing 30.97% of the total.

Crime

For an in-depth examination of crime data and statistics, please refer to Thames Valley Police's Strategic Needs Assessment. This year, we have chosen to present only those indicators which have both been reported in previous years and are not included in Thames Valley Police's report.

Districts

Oxford is the only district which has seen a consistent increase in the number of victims aged 65 and over of violence and sexual offences. 104 victims were recorded in 2020/21 compared to 142 in in 2024/25.

In 2024/25, South Oxfordshire recorded the highest number of victims of child sexual exploitation with 27 victims. The number of victims has increased every year in the district since 2020/21 when 10 victims were recorded.

The district recording the highest number of domestic abuse incidents involving children was Cherwell, with 954 such incidents in 2024/25. It has consistently recorded the highest number of incidents in the county for the past five years. Indeed, each district has remained consistent in its ranking in this statistic, with Oxford consistently in second place, and West Oxfordshire recording the lowest number of offences.