

Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2025

Children and Young People

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Introduction

This document is a companion to the online dashboard of the Children and Young People chapter of the 2025 Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. It contains a written commentary for each of the themes and the data therein.

This document aims to summarise the key findings of this chapter of the 2025 JSNA. It does not detail all of the indicators that are contained within the dashboards. To understand the full breadth of indicators presented in this year's JSNA, please use this narrative report and the dashboards together.

Note that figures in this document are rounded to one decimal point.

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List of abbreviations

AP – Alternative provision

DTaP/IPV/HIB/HepB – The 6-in-1 vaccine helps protect children against: diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, hib, and hepatitis B

EHCP – Education, health and care plan

LSOA – Lower layer super output area

MMR – Measles, mumps, and rubella

MSOA – Middle layer super output area

NBV – New birth visit

NEET – Not in education, employment, or training

SEN – Special educational needs

SEND – Special educational needs and disabilities

UKPRN – United Kingdom Provider Reference Number

Children and Young People

The Children and Young People chapter provides an account of the needs of children, young people, and families in Oxfordshire. This can be used to inform the direction and development of local services, with a view to reducing health inequalities through identification, prevention, and early intervention.

Health and Wellbeing

Pregnancy and Birth

England

Breastfeeding prevalence at 6 to 8 weeks has trended upwards in England since 2015/16, beginning at 43.2% at now sitting at 52.7% in 2023/24.

The number of mothers who smoke at the time of delivery has decreased year-on-year since 2010. This figure stood at 13.6% in 2010/11 and is now 7.4% in 2023/24. This statistic is calculated as the number of mothers known to be smokers at the time of delivery as a percentage of all maternities with known smoking status.

The percentage of term babies who have a low weight has decreased since 2010, from 3.0% to 2.9% in 2022. This is the most recent data available for this indicator.

Statistics related to obesity in early pregnancy are available for the past two years for the country and some of Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours. However, no Oxfordshire-specific data exists for this indicator at this point in time.

Data for the percentage of New Birth Visits (NBVs) completed within 14 days of birth shows that rates are recovering after a small dip in 2022/23 (79.7%). The figure was 83.0% for 2023/24, though this is still some way from the most recent high of 88.8% in 2018/19.

The under-18s conception rate per 1000 females aged 15-17 was 13.1 for England in 2021. This statistic has fallen almost every year since 1998, where there were 46.6 conceptions per 1,000 females aged 15-17.

County

Breastfeeding prevalence for Oxfordshire stood at 60.13% in 2023/24. It was third highest among its statistical neighbours and is significantly better than England (52.7%).

Oxfordshire has been significantly better than England regarding smoking status at the time of delivery since 2010. Oxfordshire's figure now stands at 5.5%, which is bettered by only two of its statistical neighbours: Hertfordshire (4.9%) and Surrey (4.60%). Note that this statistic should be treated with caution due to associated data quality issues.

The percentage of term babies who have a low birth weight in Oxfordshire has been significantly better than England since 2014. Compared to its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire (2.2%) is the third lowest in this statistic, with Worcestershire and Gloucestershire (both 2.1%) having lower percentages in 2022.

Oxfordshire's data related to the proportion of New Birth Visits (NBVs) has not been reported in the Fingertips service since 2021/22, at which point it was significantly worse than England (73.7% compared to England's 82.7%). Prior to this, the county was consistently significantly better than the country, with a significant drop from 2020/21 (89.1%) to the most recently recorded data. However, according to the [Health visitor service delivery: data for 2024 to 2025](#) release, NBVs within 14 days in Oxfordshire were consistently above 80% for 2024/25, with a high of 82.9% in quarter two.

Oxfordshire's conception rate for under-18s was significantly better than England when data was last recorded in 2021, with 8.91 conceptions per 1,000 females aged 15-17. This was a small increase from 2020, where there were 6.4 conceptions per 1,000 females aged 15-17 years.

Districts

There is no district-level data available for breastfeeding prevalence.

Oxfordshire's districts share a similar picture to that of the county regarding smoking status at time of delivery. All four districts have been significantly better than England since 2010. Four districts recorded statistics of 5.5% in 2023/24, with South Oxfordshire marginally lower at 5.4%. However, the same quality issues persist with data at a district level for this indicator.

Regarding term babies who have a low birth weight, the picture is more mixed at district level. Oxford, Cherwell, and West Oxfordshire are all similar to England at 2.6%, while Vale of White Horse (2.0%) and South Oxfordshire (1.4%) are significantly better.

There is no data available for NBVs at district level.

According to data from 2021, most Oxfordshire districts are statistically similar to England when comparing the conception rate per 1,000 females aged between 15-17. Only Cherwell is significantly better than England with a rate of 8.8.

Lifestyle Factors

England

The percentage of physically active children and young people has increased from 43.3% in 2017/18 to 47.9% in 2023/24.

Prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity) in reception-age children in England is currently 9.7%. This had a recent spike in 2020/21 at 14.4%, following which there were two successive years of decreases. The figure for 2023/24 is a small reduction since 2006/7 (9.9%) though this does not account for population change in that time (i.e. the absolute number of children who are obese will be higher in 2023/24).

Prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity) in Year 6 children in England has increased from 17.5% in 2006/7 to 22.09% in 2023/24. The past three data points have shown a decline year-on-year from a peak in 2020/21 of 25.5%.

The percentage of 5-year-olds with experience of visibly obvious dental decay has been trending downwards since 2007/08 when the figure was 30.9% to the 2023/24 figure of 22.4%.

County

Among its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire is one of two authorities which is significantly worse than England regarding the percentage of physically active children and young people, with 43.5%. Indeed, Oxfordshire records the lowest statistic among all of its statistical neighbours. Oxfordshire was significantly better than England in the period 2017-2021. Since then, it has been similar for 2 years before arriving at the point it finds itself today.

Oxfordshire's statistic for prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity) in reception-age children is significantly better than England (7.7% compared to 9.7%). Only two of Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours, Surrey (6.8%) and Cambridgeshire (6.5%), have lower prevalence of obesity in this population.

Oxfordshire's statistic for prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity) in Year 6 children is significantly better than England (19.0% compared to 22.1%). Among its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire is fifth lowest, with Leicestershire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Surrey all recording lower prevalence in this indicator.

Regarding 5-year-olds with visibly obvious signs of dental decay, Oxfordshire has alternated between being significantly better than England and statistically similar for the past five years, moving within a range of less than 2%. It is currently statistically similar to England (22.4%) at 20.9%. Only one statistical neighbour performs worse than Oxfordshire in this indicator, with Lancashire significantly worse than the country at 24.3%.

Districts

At a district level, the percentage of physically active children and young people is a mixed picture. Three districts (Vale of White Horse (48.2%), Cherwell (47.6%), and Oxford (43.8%)) are statistically similar to England. West Oxfordshire is significantly worse than England, recording a statistic of just 25.7%. However, the confidence interval for this ranges from as low as 18.9% up to 33.9%. No data is available for South Oxfordshire for the past two years.

At district level, Vale of White Horse (9.3%) and Oxford (8.3%) are statistically similar to England regarding the prevalence of obesity in reception-age children. Cherwell (7.7%), South Oxfordshire (6.8%), and West Oxfordshire (5.9%) are all significantly better than the country.

The prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity) in Year 6 children was significantly better in all districts apart from Oxford (21.3%) when compared with the England data (22.1%). Within the county, Vale of White Horse (16.8%) and South Oxfordshire (16.4%) are significantly better than Oxfordshire (18.6%).

Vale of White Horse is the only district which is significantly better than the country regarding 5-year-olds with experience of visibly obvious signs of dental decay. The remaining districts are all statistically similar to England, with Oxford having the highest percentage at 26.9%.

Healthcare Use

England

After a sharp fall in 2020/21 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, emergency admissions of 0–4-year-olds have returned to an almost ten-year low. There were 151.5 admissions per 1,000 in 2023/24, with only 2014/15 recording a lower rate than this of 148.4 per 1,000 children.

Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries for children aged 0-14 has decreased from a high of 118.3 in 2011/12, to 72.7 in 2023/24. This statistic is calculated per 10,000 of the resident population aged under 15 years.

Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in young people aged 15-24 has decreased from a high of 154.86 in 2010/11, to 88.6 in 2024. This statistic is calculated per 10,000 of the resident population aged 15-24 years.

In England, the number of admission episodes for alcohol-specific conditions for under-18s is 22.6 per 100,000 for the years spanning 2020/21 – 23/24. This has been trending downwards for a number of years, from its height of 39.2 per 100,000 in 2012/13 – 14/15.

County

Until 2019/20, Oxfordshire was significantly better than England regarding emergency admissions for 0-4 year-olds per 1,000. In 2022/23, the county (159.1) was similar to England (158.1) before becoming significantly worse for the first time in a decade in 2023/24 (159.1 compared to 151.4 for England). Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours are either significantly better or worse than England.

In Oxfordshire since 2014, hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries for children aged 0-14 has followed a similar trend to that of the country. In 2023/24 it was similar to England (72.7) at 72.6 per 10,000 of the 0-14 population. Though similar to England, Oxfordshire's performance amongst its statistical neighbours is bettered by all of them except Lancashire which, at 102.6 per 10,000, is significantly worse than England.

Oxfordshire's data for hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries for young people aged 15-24 has followed a similar trend to that of the country. It is currently significantly worse compared to England (88.6) at 95.1 per 10,000 of the 15-24 population. Kent (102.1) and Warwickshire (98.29) are the two statistical neighbours who are also significantly worse than England.

When compared with its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire is third lowest for admission episodes for alcohol specific conditions for under-18s at 18.3 per 100,000. Like England, this has been trending downwards in the county for a number of years, though Oxfordshire was significantly worse than the country for the time spanning

2013/14 -15/16 to 2016/17 -18/19. Since that time, it has been statistically similar to England.

Districts

Regarding emergency admissions for 0-4 year-olds per 1,000, three districts (West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire, and Vale of White Horse) are similar to England, with Cherwell (169.7) and Oxford (166.7) both recording significantly worse rates.

Vale of White Horse is the only district which is significantly better than England regarding hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries for children aged 0-14 at 62.3. All other districts are statistically similar to England, with Oxford (79.7) and Cherwell (79.0) both higher than the national statistic.

Vale of White Horse is the only district which is significantly worse than England regarding hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries for young people aged 15-24 at 137.7. All other districts are statistically similar to England, with Oxford (79.7) the lowest at 81.6.

All districts are similar to England regarding admission episodes for alcohol specific conditions for under-18s. There are wide confidence intervals associated with this data, but Cherwell currently has the highest number of admissions per 10,000 at 21, with West Oxfordshire the lowest at 14.3.

Vaccination Coverage

According to the World Health Organization (WHO):

'The two public health interventions that have had the greatest impact on the world's health are clean water and vaccines.'

According to the NHS, vaccination coverage is the best indicator of the level of protection a population will have against vaccine preventable communicable diseases. Coverage is closely correlated with levels of disease. Monitoring coverage identifies possible drops in immunity before levels of disease rise.

The WHO has set vaccination coverage targets at global and WHO regional levels, which have been adopted by the Department of Health and Social Care at national and local levels. The 95% target for vaccination coverage is required nationally to ensure control of vaccine preventable diseases within the UK routine childhood vaccination programmes, with at least 90 percent coverage in each geopolitical unit. A target of at least 75% coverage has been set for the adult 65 and over years and risk group influenza programmes. For the remainder of the selective vaccination programmes there are no national targets, therefore these should be compared with the previous year's national average.

The UK Health Security Agency provides a [wealth of information about vaccines in their collection](#).

England

Coverage for the first MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) dose at 2 years old has been declining over the past decade, reaching below 90% in each of the last three years. The first MMR dose at 5 years of age has been in decline since 2015/16, though coverage remained above the 90% threshold in 2023/24, at 91.9%. The second dose of MMR at 5 years old has also been trending downwards, despite a small uptick in 2019/20. This currently sits at the lowest coverage recorded for the past ten years at 83.9%.

DTaP/IPV/HIB/HepB is a 6-in-1 vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, Haemophilus influenza type B and Hepatitis B. Coverage for this vaccine for 1-year-olds has been in decline over the past ten years, reaching its current low of 91.2%. Coverage for the DTaP/IPV/HIB/HepB vaccine for 2-year-olds had been above 95% until 2017/18. Coverage has continued to decline since then and was recorded as 92.4% in 2023/24.

County

Oxfordshire's coverage for the first MMR dose at 2 years has consistently been higher than England since 2014/15. Until 2016/17, the county achieved coverage of over 95%. In 2023/24, coverage was 93.5%, ranking it fifth among its statistical neighbours. The county has recorded coverage rates above 95% for the first MMR

dose at 5 years old for the past decade. It is ranked fourth among its statistical neighbours with 95.5% coverage in 2023/24. Oxfordshire ranks third among its statistical neighbours for the second MMR dose at five years old, achieving coverage above 90% for the past decade.

Coverage for the DTaP/IPV/HIB/HepB vaccine in Oxfordshire for 1-year-olds was 95.2% following a three-year period where coverage was just below the 95% threshold. In 2022/2023, coverage of the same vaccine in 5-year-olds dropped below the 95% threshold for the first time since 2014/15. However, in 2023/24 the percentage had increased to 95.4%.

Districts

There is no district-level data available for vaccine coverage.

Healthy Weight

The dashboard includes a page titled 'Healthy Weight MSOA Map.' The commentary for this data is in the above section titled 'Lifestyle Factors,' under the 'MSOA' subheading.

Children's Social Care

Assessments and Referrals

England

Referrals to children's social care per 10,000 children under 18 are currently 518.3 for England in 2024. This continues its downward trend from 552.8 in 2022, to 538.8 in 2023.

The percentage of referrals where the child is assessed but not found to be in need was 30.3% in 2024. This has been trending upwards since 2016, when 25.4% of referrals found that the child was not in need following an assessment.

In 2024, 21% of children who were the subject of a referral were rereferred within a 12-month period.

County

Rates of referrals in the South East of England have been higher than England since 2020. In 2024, there were 609.5 referrals to children's social care per 10,000 children under 18. Rates in Oxfordshire have consistently been lower than both the country and region since 2016. The county has seen a sharp decline since 2020 from an 8-year high of 519.4 per 10,000, to the 2024 figure of 330.9 per 10,000. Compared to its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire's figure is the second lowest, with only Hertfordshire (229.5) having lower rates of referrals in 2024.

The percentage of referrals where the child is assessed but not found to be in need has shown some large fluctuations in Oxfordshire in recent years. However, this is not dissimilar to the experience of the county's statistical neighbours, which evidence similar changes in this statistic. In Oxfordshire in 2024, almost half of referrals (44.7%) found that a child was not in need following an assessment. This is higher than both the country (30.3%) and region (26.8%). Among its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire ranks first in this statistic, followed by South Gloucestershire (43.5%), and West Sussex (39.6%). The range for this data (39.5%) is relatively large, with West Berkshire recording the lowest percentage at 5.2%.

The percentage of children with a referral within 12 months of a previous referral was 18.5% for Oxfordshire in 2024, lower than both the country (21.0%) and South East (24.1%). Compared to its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire is just 2% higher than the county with the lowest statistic for this indicator (West Sussex, 16.5%).

Children in Need

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as:

- a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development,
- a child whose health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of children's social care services
- a child who is disabled.

Children in need include:

- children on child in need (CIN) plans
- children on child protection plans
- children in care
- care leavers
- disabled children
- unborn children and young people aged 18 years and over who continue to require support

Throughout 2023/24, there were 5,945 children in need in Oxfordshire.

England

The percentage of school-age children in need eligible for Free School Meals has increased every year since 2017. At this point in time, it was 43.3% and has since increased to 60.9% in 2024. Data for the South East reflects national increases, with a figure of 37.1% in 2018 increasing to 55.7% in 2024.

The percentage of school-age children in need with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support has remained stable for a number of years. In 2017, this percentage was 22.0% and 21.8% in England and the South East respectively. In 2024, the percentages are 22.0% and 21.7%.

The rate (per 10,000) of children with an episode of need during the year increased for both the country and South East region in the years following the Covid-19 pandemic, peaking at 604.2 for England and 642.5 for the South East. Since then, rates have decreased slightly but have not returned to their pre-pandemic levels.

County

Like the country and region, the percentage of school-age children eligible for Free School Meals has increased markedly since 2018. Then, the figure stood at 32.8% increasing to 56.2% in 2024. Oxfordshire's data does not appear remarkable when compared to its statistical neighbours. Cambridgeshire has the highest percentage of pupils eligible, at 66.4% and Buckinghamshire the lowest, at 46.3%.

In Oxfordshire, the percentage of school-age children in need with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support has fluctuated in recent years. It has consistently been higher than both the country and region since 2017. Following a peak of 28.4% in 2020, the current percentage sits at 26.7% in 2024. The picture across Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours is varied. The county has the second highest percentage, with Gloucestershire having the highest at 29.9%.

The rate (per 10,000) of children with an episode of need during the year in Oxfordshire has been consistently lower than the county and region since 2017. It did not see as large of an increase following the Covid-19 pandemic, and since then has seen a sharp decline. The rate now sits at the lowest it's been since 2017, at 389.8 per 10,000 children. Compared to its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire's rates are the second lowest, with only Hertfordshire (296.1) having lower rates of children with an episode of need during the year.

Districts

There is no district-level data for any of the indicators related to children in need in this year's JSNA.

Child Protection

England

Referrals to children's social care per 10,000 children under 18 years was 518.3 in 2024.

The rate of CIN plans per 10,000 children under 18 at 31st March has been relatively stable in England for the past three years. From a rate of 89.2 in 2022, it was 86.2 in 2024.

The percentage of children with a referral within 12 months of a previous referral has moved within a range of 2.7% over the past eleven years. The most recent high was 22.9% in 2013. The figure was 21% in 2024.

County

In Oxfordshire, the number of referrals to children's social care per 10,000 children under 18 years was 330.9 in 2024. Oxfordshire has consistently reported lower rates than the country and South East since 2016. In the past two years rates have decreased to a large degree in the county, falling from 458.1 in 2022, to the most recent figure of 330.9 in 2024. This is almost half the rate of the South East. In 2024, Oxfordshire reported the second lowest rates when compared to its statistical neighbours.

The rate of CIN plans per 10,000 children under 18 at 31st March in Oxfordshire was 79.6 in 2024. This was lower than both the South East (83.3) and England (86.2). Oxfordshire's rate is fifth-highest among its statistical neighbours. Cambridgeshire's rate was almost half that of Oxfordshire at 40.4 per 10,000 children under 18, making it the county with the lowest rate among its statistical neighbours.

Following a sharp increase in 2021, the percentage of children with a referral within 12 months of a previous referral in Oxfordshire was 18.5% in 2024. This was a small decrease from 2023's figure of 20.2%. In 2024, Oxfordshire's percentage of rereferrals was lower than both England (21%) and the South East (24.1%). Oxfordshire has the fourth lowest percentage of rereferrals within a 12-month period among its eleven statistical neighbours (though Hampshire had no recorded data as of September 2025).

Districts

There is no district-level data available for these indicators.

Children in Care

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is considered to be 'looked after' if they have been in the care of their local authority for more than 24 hours. These children are also known as 'children in care'.

Children in care may be living:

- with foster parents/carers
- with friends or relatives through kinship foster care
- in a residential children's home
- in residential settings like schools, secure units, or semi-independent living accommodation

England

In England in 2023/24, there were 70 children in care per 10,000 of the population aged less than 18. This amounts to 83,630 children.

The percentage of children in care placed over 20 miles from home, outside the LA boundary has increased by three percentage points in England since 2016, from 14.0% to 17.0%. The South East region has seen a larger increase, increasing seven percentage points from 15.0% to 22.0%.

For the past two years, the proportion of children in care receiving immunisations in England has remained static at 82.0%. This has fallen from a peak of 88.0% in 2019/20.

County

In Oxfordshire, there were 50 children in care per 10,000 in 2023/24, which equates to 770 children. This means that Oxfordshire is significantly better than England. Among its statistical neighbours, only Cambridgeshire (47), Buckinghamshire UA (41), Hertfordshire (36), Surrey (36), and South Gloucestershire (35) had fewer children in care per 10,000 of the population aged under 18.

Compared to the country and region, the percentage of children in care placed over 20 miles from home, outside the LA boundary in Oxfordshire increased since 2016. This peaked at 37.0% in 2020 and 2021, and has decreased slightly to 34% in 2024. Oxfordshire has the highest percentage among its statistical neighbours.

The percentage of children in care in Oxfordshire receiving immunisations is significantly better than England (82.0%), at 86.0%. Mirroring trends at a national level, Oxfordshire's statistic has decreased from a recent high of 94% in 2019/20. All but one of Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours outperform the country in this indicator. Nine counties have higher percentages than Oxfordshire, with Nottinghamshire leading the way with 98%.

Districts

There is no district data available for children in care in this year's JSNA.

Young Carers

A young carer is defined as a person who is under 18 who provides or intends to provide unpaid care for another person. Young carers provide regular and ongoing care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled, or misuses substances. What distinguishes young carers is that responsibilities persist over time and are important in maintaining the health or wellbeing of a family member.

For this data, state-funded alternative provision schools and non-maintained special schools are excluded as there were no recorded young carers in their populations.

England

According to the 2024/25 release of 'Schools, pupils, and their characteristics', there were 64,475 pupils in England who were young carers. They accounted for 0.8% of the pupil population. This is an increase of 25,492 pupils (65%) who are young carers in two years.

County

Apart from pupils in Year 2, the percentage of young carers has increased across all year groups primary and secondary schools in the county. In the case of Year 8 pupils, although the percentage decreased from the 2024 to 2025, the absolute number of young carers has almost doubled since 2023, increasing from 78 to 143 in 2025. In 2023, there were 777 young carers in Oxfordshire, with the figure standing at 1,280 in 2025. This represents a 65% increase in two years, the same as the percentage increase nationally.

Districts

There is no district-level data available for young carers.

Wider Determinants

This dashboard includes data about children in low-income families and the percentage of children eligible for free school meals. Only the former is addressed here, with free school meals addressed in its own section later in the report. The JSNA's Building Blocks of Health chapter contains further information about 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% of the 2010/11 year. This allows for comparisons over time. The Department for Work and Pensions provides [more information on how low income is measured here](#).

England

The percentage of children (under 16s) in absolute low-income families has risen every year since 2021/22. From 14.9% in 2021/22, the figure had risen to 19.1% in 2023/24. It is a similar picture for children in relative low-income families, with the percentage increasing every year since 2020/21, where 18.6% of children under the age of 16 were in relative low-income families. In 2023/24, 22.1% of under 16s were in relative low-income families.

County

Oxfordshire is significantly better than England when comparing the percentage of children in both absolute and relative low-income families. Though the percentage for both measures is trending upwards in the county, they remain significantly lower when compared to the country. In England, 19.1% of under 16s are in absolute low-income families compared to 9.8% in Oxfordshire. For relative low income in England and Oxfordshire the figures are 22.1% and 11.7%, respectively.

Among its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire records the second-lowest percentage for children under 16 years of age in absolute low-income families and third lowest for relative low income.

Districts

All districts are significantly better than England regarding children in absolute and low income families, but there are pronounced differences between them. For example, Oxford's figure of 14.2% of children in absolute low-income families is almost double that of South Oxfordshire's which was 7.5% in 2023/24. A similar picture emerges for children in relative low-income families, with Oxford recording the highest percentage at 16.7%, and South Oxfordshire the lowest at 8.9%. West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, and South Oxfordshire all recorded lower percentages than the county in 2023/24.

Domestic Abuse and Exploitation

Read the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership's [Strategic Needs Assessment](#) for further findings about crime and community safety in Oxfordshire, including sexual violence and domestic abuse.

The indicators included here are those that have been previously reported in the Oxfordshire JSNA and do not appear in the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership's Strategic Needs Assessment.

Districts

South Oxfordshire recorded the highest number of victims of child sexual exploitation in 2024/25 with 27 victims. It was the only district to record an increase in victims compared to the previous year. After four of the five districts each recorded a five-year high for victims of child sexual exploitation last year, South Oxfordshire was the only district to have an increase in the number of victims in 2024-25.

Cherwell is the district which has consistently recorded the highest number of domestic abuse incidents involving children for the past five years, with 954 incidents recorded in 2024/25.

Education

Start Well – Education

England

The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at 2 to 2-and-a-half years old has decreased in England since this statistic was first reported in 2017/18. At that time, 83.3% of children were judged to have achieved a good level of development compared to 80.4% today.

The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at end the of reception has increased each year since collection of this data began in 2021/22, rising from 65.2% to 67.8% in 2023/24.

Since reporting on this indicator began in 2017/18, the proportion of children in England receiving a 2- to 2-and-a-half-year review has increased from 75.7% to 78.4% in 2023/2024. Within that time, it peaked at 78.6% in 2019/20 and reached a low of 71.5% the following year.

County

The last time that data was collected in 2021/22 regarding a good level of development at 2 to 2-and-a-half years old for children in Oxfordshire, the county was significantly better than England at 86.2%. There is no recent data from Oxfordshire to enable comparisons with its nearest neighbours.

The percentage of children achieving a good level of development at end the of reception in Oxfordshire is significantly better than England at 68.8%, though this is a decrease compared to last year's percentage (69.2%). Among Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours, seven counties report higher percentages of children achieving a good level of development at the end of reception. Only two counties, Cambridgeshire (66.5%) and Lancashire (64.8%) are significantly worse than England.

The most recent data for the proportion of children in Oxfordshire receiving a 2-to-2-and-a-half-year review is from 2021/22 when the county was significantly worse than England at 47.6%. The county experienced a significant decline in these reviews being carried out from 2019/20 (88.3%) to 2020/21 (35.2%). Given the lack of recent data for Oxfordshire, it is not possible to compare it to its statistical neighbours.

Districts

There is no data available for the percentage of children achieving a good level of development at 2 to 2-and-a-half years old at district level.

There is no data available for the percentage of children achieving a good level of development at end the of reception at district level.

At district level, there is no data available for the proportion of children receiving a 2-to-2-and-a-half-year review.

Pupil Age and Sex

In 2025, there were 119,411 students in Oxfordshire. This was made up of 61,848 males and 57,563 females.

This dashboard presents data on the pupil population, which can be filtered by establishment group, age, and sex. Given the wide range of possible data combinations, we encourage JSNA users to explore the dashboard directly.

Pupil Ethnicity and Language

England

In England in 2025, 78.2% of pupils were recorded as having a first language known or believed to be English. 21.4% of pupils were recorded as having a first language known or believed to be other than English. This is an increase of 0.6% from 2023/24 and continues a recent trend of increases.

County

In 2025, 83,416 (82%) were recorded as having English known or believed to be their first language. This is compared to 17,983 (18%) whose first language was known or believed to be other than English. In 2020, 82,271 (85%) were recorded as having English known or believed to be their first language. This is compared to 17,983 (14%) whose first language was known or believed to be other than English. Therefore, in five years, there has been a 3% reduction in the number of pupils who are known or believed to have English as their first language, and a 4% increase for those whose first language is known or believed to be other than English.

Attainment

England

The average Attainment 8 score is the lowest it has been according to the records available on Fingertips. This most recently peaked at 51.0 in 2021/22, before falling to its present average of 46.1 in 2024. The same indicator applied to children in care has demonstrated a similar trend, peaking at 23.3 in 2020/21 before falling to 18.0 in 2024.

The average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for free school meals has seen some fluctuation over the past eight years. After a peak of 39.1 in 2021 this has fallen each year since, with the average score sitting at 34.9 in 2024. The South East follows a similar pattern, but has consistently recorded lower averages than England. The average score for the region was 32.1 in 2024.

In 2023, the percentage of key stage four pupils going to, or remaining in, education, employment, or training in England was the lowest that it has been since 2016, dropping to 93.1%. Since that time, the highest proportions were recorded between 2017-19 when 94.1% of pupils were in this group.

Since 2021, the percentage of pupils achieving a 9-4 pass in English and Maths has been declining in England. In 2021, the percentage was 72.2% and has since fallen to 65.4% in 2024. This percentage is similar to pre-pandemic figures, where 64.9% of students achieved a 9-4 pass in 2019.

County

Average Attainment 8 scores are not compared for statistical significance across nearest neighbours or districts. Oxfordshire's most recent average score is 46.7, 0.3 points higher than England. Similar to the national data, Oxfordshire's average score has been trending downwards since 2020/21. This fall has been more pronounced for children in care whose average Attainment 8 scores have decreased from 20 in 2023 to 14 in 2024.

Oxfordshire has recorded lower average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for free school meals than both England and the South East since 2018. In the last five years, this score most recently peaked at 35.9, before falling to 29 in 2023. Compared to the country and region, Oxfordshire's score has increased between 2023 and 2024 but is still lower than both of them at 31.1. In 2023, Oxfordshire had the lowest score among its eleven statistical neighbours for this indicator and was third lowest in 2024.

In 2023, Oxfordshire recorded a higher percentage of key stage four pupils going to, or remaining in, education, employment, or training than England (93.1%) and the South East (94.2%) with a figure of 94.5%. All of Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours sit within a range of 1.3% for this indicator, with very little separating them both recently and in the past.

The percentage of pupils achieving a 9-4 pass in English and Maths in Oxfordshire has followed a similar trajectory to the country and region. Following a high of 73.9%

in 2021, the percentage was 65.6% in 2024. This is slightly lower than the South East which recorded a percentage of 67.4%. Among its statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire recorded the third-lowest percentage for this indicator in 2024.

Districts

There is no district-level data available for average Attainment 8 scores.

There is no district-level data available for average Attainment 8 score for pupils eligible for free school meals.

There is no district-level data available for the percentage of key stage four pupils going to, or remaining in, education, employment, or training.

There is no district-level data available for the percentage of pupils achieving a 9-4 pass in English and Maths.

Pupil Absence

England

In England, pupil absence has increased since 2020/21. At this point in time, the percentage of sessions (half a school day) missed by pupils was 4.6%. This increased to 7.6% in 2022/23 and reduced slightly to 7.4% the following year. Note that this indicator includes both authorised and unauthorised absence.

After many years where the authorised absence rate was trending downwards in England, it spiked in 2022 at percentage of 5.5%, the highest recorded percentage for this indicator since 2007. Since then, it has had two successive years of decline and currently stands at 4.7%.

County

Increases in pupil absence are evident across all of Oxfordshire's nearest neighbours. Oxfordshire's percentage of pupil absence is significantly worse than England, with 7.3% of sessions missed by pupils in 2023/24.

Oxfordshire's authorised absence rates have followed a similar pattern to those of the country and region, though the authorised absence rates for secondary school pupils have remained relatively high for the past two years at 6.7% compared to 5.4% for England and 5.9% for the South East.

In many of the indicators related to absence in secondary schools, Oxfordshire reports relatively worse statistics than the majority of its statistical neighbours. This includes:

- Percentage of severe absentees (second highest)
- Authorised absence rate (highest)
- Overall absence rate (highest)
- Persistent absentees (highest)
- Unauthorised absence rate (third highest)

Districts

Percentages of sessions missed by pupils in Oxford has been significantly worse than England since 2010/11. It is currently the only district that is significantly worse than the country, with 8.1% of sessions missed in 2022/23. Other districts in the county are similar to England, with South Oxfordshire's figure of 6.9%. Pupil absence is increasing and getting worse across all districts in Oxfordshire.

Free School Meals

The Wider Determinants section of the Children and Young People JSNA contains one indicator related to free school meals. It is reported on in this section, alongside the indicators that are presented in the free school meals page.

England

In England, 24.6% of children were eligible for free school meals in 2023/24. This percentage has risen every year since 2017/18 when the percentage was 13.6%

County

The percentage of children eligible for free school meals in Oxfordshire has followed a similar path to that of the country. It has risen every year since 2017/18, when it was 8.0%. In 2023/24, 15.7% of children in Oxfordshire were eligible for free school meals. This means that it is significantly better than the country. Oxfordshire has the fifth-lowest percentage of children eligible for free school meals among its statistical neighbours; all of them significantly better than England.

In primary schools, it is generally the case that the older the year group, the higher the proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals. Some year groups have shown relatively stable proportions over the past five years. For example, in Reception, the figure has moved between 11.31-12.35% (currently sitting at 11.88% in 2025). However, in some year groups there are some pronounced increases. In 2021, 14.84% of students in Year 5 were eligible, whereas in 2025 this figure was 19.4%. Similarly, 14.56% of students in Year 6 were eligible for free school meals in 2021, compared to 19.45% in 2025.

Unlike primary schools, there have been noticeable increases in free school meals eligibility across all year groups in secondary schools. All year groups have seen at least a 5% increase in pupils eligible for free school meals from 2021 to 2025.

In state-funded special schools, trends are more difficult to identify. Year 6 pupils have seen the largest increase in free school meals eligibility, moving from 39.5% in 2021 to 52.0% in 2025.

There are differences in free school meal eligibility across different ethnic groups in the county. Both the 'White – Gypsy/Roma' and 'White – Traveller or Irish Heritage' groups had relatively high percentages in primary, secondary, and special schools in 2025. The 'Mixed – White and Black Caribbean' group of pupils has also recorded some of the highest percentages in recent years.

Districts

Across Oxfordshire's districts, it's possible to understand local needs through data from each MSOA. In terms of Oxfordshire as a whole, Banbury Ruscote in Cherwell recorded the highest percentage of free school meal-eligible children in 2025 with 36.2%. This is followed by Littlemore and Rose Hill (35.2%) and Barton (34.0%),

both MSOAs in Oxford. In South Oxfordshire, Didcot South East (20.9%) and West (20.8%) had the highest percentages of eligible students. In the Vale of White Horse, Abingdon South (24.5%) had 6.9% more students eligible for free school meals than the next MSOA, Shrivenham. Watchfield, and Uffington with 17.5%. Witney West (20.2%) recorded the highest percentage in West Oxfordshire, followed by Chipping Norton (19.8%) and Leaffield, Minster Lovell and Duckington (19.3%).

Alternative Provision Settings

The data which informs this section of the JSNA comes from the Department for Education's 'Schools, Pupils, and their Characteristics' release. Alternative provision (AP) provide education for children who can't go to mainstream school. There are different reasons why a child may attend an AP school, including illness, their behaviour, or mental health. This section looks at the number of pupils attending different alternative provision settings in Oxfordshire, and the reasons for their placements.

County

The number of students in AP settings has almost doubled in two years. There were 412 students in AP settings in 2023, compared to 811 in 2025. Some of the largest increases in placement settings include one-to-one tuition (8 in 2023 to 165 in 2025, an almost 2000% increase), and registered providers with UKPRN (30 in 2023 to 133 in 2025, an increase of almost 350%).

The reasons why students have needed to be placed in an AP setting have changed over time. In 2018, the only reason used as an explanation was 'Setting named on EHC plan'. Though this still counts as the reason for most students attending an AP setting, the picture is now more varied. 'Other including pregnancy/childcare' now accounts for over 25% of the reasons pupils are attending an AP setting. 'Mental health need' was identified as the reason for the placement of 5 pupils in 2020. In 2025, this was the case for 55 pupils, a 1000% increase. From 2018 to 2023, only two students had 'Permanent exclusion' listed as a reason for their placement. Across 2024 and 2025, this was the case for 20 students.

Education and Training, 16- and 17- Year-Olds

The law requires all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday, although in practice the vast majority of young people continue until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. In the JSNA dashboard, those young people continuing in education or training are categorised as 'meeting the duty to participate'.

England

In England, the percentage of young people meeting the duty to participate has remained relatively stable over the past three years, falling 0.2% since 2023. 92.3% of young people were meeting the duty to participate in 2025. This is similar to the South East which has seen a 0.3% decrease over the same period. 90.9% of young people were meeting the duty to participate in 2025 in the region.

The percentage of young people participating in apprenticeships has been trending downwards for a number of years. In 2019, 5.5% of 16-17 year-olds were enrolled in an apprenticeship in England. In 2025, this has fallen to 4.2%. The South East has followed a similar pattern, albeit with lower percentages. In 2025, 3.4% of 16-17 year-olds were participating in an apprenticeship.

The largest reason for young people not meeting the duty is because they are employed with non-regulated qualifications. This group accounted for 2.4% of 16–17-year-olds in 2025 in England. In the South East, the figure was 2.8% for the same period.

County

Although the percentage of students in Oxfordshire in 2025 meeting the duty to participate is higher than the South East and just 0.3% from England's figure, it has seen the largest fall across the three areas. In 2023, 93.8% were meeting the duty compared to 91.9% in 2025.

Like England and the South East, the number of 16-17 year-olds participating in apprenticeships has been trending downwards. In 2019, Oxfordshire had a higher percentage than both England and the South East with 6.1%. This has since fallen to 4.2%; the same percentage as England and 0.8% higher than the South East's figure. Oxfordshire is broadly comparable to its statistical neighbours.

Districts

There is no district-level data available for these indicators.

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

Local authorities have [statutory duties](#) to “encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training” until they are 18 years old, or 25 years old if they have an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

[Research](#) has suggested that time spent NEET leads to reduced life chances including lower future wages, a higher likelihood of becoming unemployed or committing crime, and lower levels of physical and mental health.

England

The percentage of 16-17 year-olds who are NEET has been increasing in England since 2022. In that year, 2.6% of 16-17 year-olds were NEET, compared to 3.4% in 2025. The South East started from a lower percentage in 2022 (2.2%), but now matches England in 2025, recording a percentage of 3.4% in 2025.

County

The percentage of 16-17 year-olds who are NEET has followed a similar pattern in Oxfordshire to that of the country and region. Since 2022, the percentage has increased from 1.7% to 2.7% in 2025. Most of Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours mirror this trend, where the county sits joint-seventh compared to these counties. Only Hertfordshire (2025), South Gloucestershire (2023), and West Sussex (2024) have seen a reduction in this percentage since 2022.

Districts

There is no district-level data for children and young people who are NEET.

SEN Provision and Primary Need

Section 20 of the Children and Families Act 2014 defines a child as having a special educational need (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

Special educational provision is different from or additional to that normally available to pupils or students of the same age. This is designed to help children and young people with SEN or disabilities to access the curriculum.

The data that underpins this section of the JSNA details SEN provision and the primary needs of children in Oxfordshire schools. For information about this topic at a national and regional level, refer to the central government's [‘Special educational needs and disability \(SEND\) and high needs’](#) page.

County

Since 2016, the number of pupils in Oxfordshire who need SEN provision has increased from 12,508 to 21,877. For those children and young people with an EHCP, this has meant the population has increased from 2,225 in 2016 to 5,172 in 2025. For those with SEN support without an EHCP, this population has increased from 10,283 to 16,705.

Those primary needs which have seen the largest increases since 2016 include Autistic Spectrum Disorder (197%), SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need (391%), Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (110%), and Speech, Language and Communication (150%).

Districts

There is no district-level data available for SEN provision and primary need.

Education, Health and Care Plans

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provisions in the Children and Families Act 2014 were introduced on 1 September 2014. By 1 April 2018, local authorities must have transferred all children and young people with Statements of SEN who meet the criteria for an Education Health and Care (EHC) plan or have made a decision that it was not necessary to issue an EHC plan. On this basis, the percentage figures in this dataset prior to 2018 should be viewed in this context and treated with care.

This dataset details the EHCP caseload in Oxfordshire by establishment type. For headline statistics for the country, and for the opportunity to interrogate the entire data set for yourself, visit the Department for Education's ['Education, health and care plans' page](#).

County

Since 2018, the number of children and young people with an EHCP has increased from 2,828 to 6,420 in 2024. This represents an 127% increase. Since 2022, the number of children and young people who have an EHCP has increased by over 1,000 (1,395 or an increase of 28%).

In 2024, half of children and young people with an EHCP were educated in a mainstream setting, with 32% of these attending academy schools.

In further education, the numbers of children and young people with an EHCP had been increasing year-on-year until 2022. Numbers fell by 167 in 2023, though partially recovered to 794 in 2024.

The number of students with a EHCP who are NEET has increased over three-fold in the past six years. In 2019, 94 children in the county with an EHCP were classified as NEET compared to 339 in 2024, a 261% increase.

Districts

There is no district-level data available for EHCPs.