



Policy report January 2012

1. Adult social care and health

1.1 Social care

- A new county-wide Social Care **Crisis Response Service** is in development
- **Day Opportunities** Bids Process is now complete – official announcement sent to providers
- **Home Support Service** – all users have new arrangements in place following the closure of the council's in-house service
- Procurement for **supported living service** is underway for people with learning disabilities – provided in-house previously, being outsourced
- OCC aims to commission support for a network of **Good Neighbour** schemes, including small start up grants
- There is a new dedicated site area for adult social care providers on **Source Oxfordshire** www.sourceoxfordshire.org.uk
- **Delay in transfer of care** remains a key issue
- **Additional support funding for social care** and Disabled Facilities Grant: government has announced that it is allocating a one-off additional £150m to Primary Care Trusts in England for immediate transfer to local authorities for investment in social care services which also benefit the health system.
- Dr Stephen Richards of the new **Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group** was named 'Best Clinical Leader of a Commissioning Group' at a recent awards ceremony

OCVA had a constructive meeting in December with Flo van Diemen, Marketing and Communications Manager for Adult Social Care at Oxfordshire County Council. We set a challenge that for the changes we would like to see by December 2012:

- OCVA would receive consistent feedback from the VCS that communications are clear, relevant, regular and timely
- Providers know what their funding situation is from April 2013
- People who get in touch with the directorate get replies to emails and calls

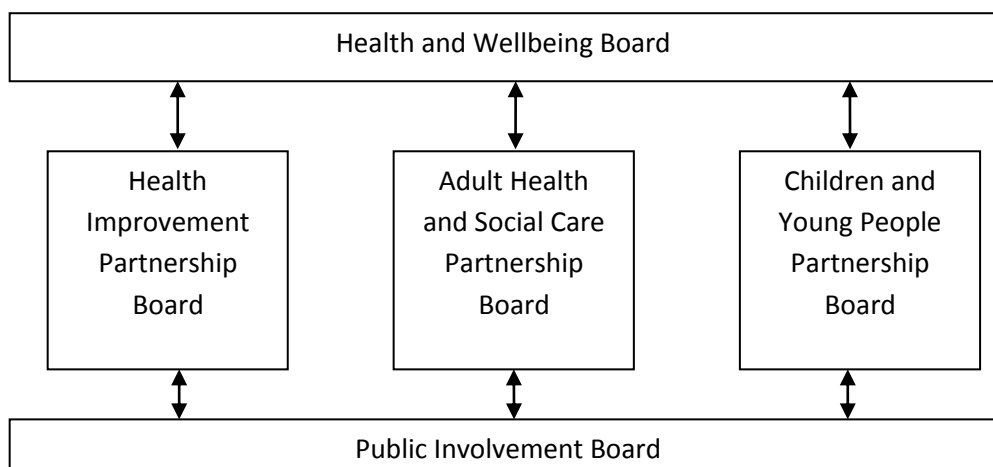
For our part we agreed to be proactive in disseminating information as widely as possible. We agreed that regular meetings would be helpful to maintain momentum.

Alison Baxter also met with Sara Livadeas, Deputy Director Joint Commissioning at Oxfordshire County Council in December. There is further restructuring taking place and further job losses are expected but Sara was very open to our concerns and has joined the Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Alliance 'cabinet' that meets regularly to review relationships between and issues affecting the voluntary and statutory sectors.

The **Social Inclusion Reference Group** that brought together representatives of groups with an interest in social inclusion to advise the county council has been disbanded. OCVA will continue to advocate on behalf of people and groups at risk of exclusion but without the benefit of this formal mechanism.

1.2 Health and Wellbeing Board

Alison Baxter met the Director of Public Health, Jonathan McWilliam, and Assistant Director Jackie Wilderspin, together with Patrick Taylor of Mind, Lesley Dewhurst of Oxford Homeless Pathways, and Martin Gillett of the Oxfordshire Play Association, in their capacity as the previously elected voluntary sector representatives on the old Health & Wellbeing Partnership and Children's Trust. The aim of the meeting was to discuss how the new structure for the Health & Wellbeing Board is developing.



The Health & Wellbeing Board will be a statutory body once the legislation is passed and is therefore a formal committee of the county council, chaired by the Leader. There is not expected to be a voluntary sector place on the Board. The Chair of Healthwatch (see below) will have a seat.

At the moment it is proposed that any voluntary sector representation on the three Partnership Boards should happen through nomination from the Public Involvement Board (which is much broader than the voluntary sector). There will therefore no longer be a voluntary sector election process.

The Public Involvement Board is expected to be the mechanism for the voluntary sector, users, carers and advocacy groups to influence the agenda and input their views. Alison Baxter also attended an initial meeting specifically about the Public Involvement Board with Alison Partridge, the Engagement Manager for Oxfordshire County Council, who is responsible for taking this forward, and other stakeholders. There will be a planning workshop on 2 March and OCVA is hoping to access funding for a further workshop in late March. In the meantime, voluntary organisations that are interested in being involved in steering the development of the PIB should contact OCVA (Alison Baxter or Hilary Burr).

1.3 Healthwatch

We understand that Healthwatch (replacing the LINK) will now not go live until April 2013. OCVA attended two of the consultation workshops about the design of Healthwatch and responded to the subsequent discussion document. To read our response go to <http://www.oxnet.org.uk/research/responses> Heathwatch will chair the Public Involvement Board but its remit is intended to be narrower.

2. Children and Young People

- There have been **boundary changes for the two Early Intervention Hubs** in Oxford City to better reflect the increased level of need in certain areas.
- The **review of Children's centres and re-commissioning** is continuing. Perhaps merging some centres and putting centres in clusters and linking more to the Early Intervention Hubs. From April-Oct 2012 there will be a formal tender process and/or internal redesign and award of new contracts, with the new services starting April 2013. Details of the consultation should be published soon.
- The Early Intervention Service has partnered with Skills Training UK, a leading Department for Work and Pensions contractor, to deliver **support for workless families experiencing multiple barriers** with funding from the European Social Fund. One worker will be based in a Hub in each of North, Central and South areas.
- **National Citizens Service** - Oxfordshire County Council has £160,000 to run another project for young people over the summer of 2012. It will be run across the new Early Intervention Hub locations. Connexions also has a contract for this.

For more details about all of the above and to access newsletters from the Early Intervention Service go to www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/earlyinterventionhubs.

- OCVA responded to the Oxfordshire County council consultation on its **Strategic Plan for Education**. Our response can be viewed on our website at <http://www.oxnet.org.uk/research/responses>

3. Learning and Skills

3.1 Oxfordshire Skills Board

At the second Board meeting in November, Adrian Lockwood was elected Chair and draft terms of reference for the group were circulated. Adrian represents the private sector and was chair of the review groups that brought the Oxfordshire Learning & Skills Partnership and the Oxfordshire 14-19 Skills Group together to form the new Oxfordshire Skills Board.

The Board discussed whether it should be constituted as a formal group, in particular because of its responsibility for the Local Area Agreement Reward funding. The discussion took place in the context of the current review of the

governance of the Local Enterprise Partnership, which will be formally constituted.

3.2 Local Area Agreement Reward Grant

There is still around £480,000 available to be spent to support learning and skills and this has been earmarked for projects that will help to get individuals back into work or further training.

A sub-group of the 'Back to Work Group' (a group of learning providers chaired by JobCentre Plus) is now involved to move this forward in the most appropriate way that is not duplicating other activities in the county.

No providers responded to the Invitation to Tender published towards the end of 2011. This is seen as a positive development because all of the available funding will now be allocated through a further process which has still to be agreed but will be more accessible to smaller providers.

The process is likely to be supported by workshops to assist smaller providers wishing to contribute to the programme. Suggestions so far for this work include:

- 3-5 locally delivered activities that will encourage, motivate, signpost people to take up courses and programmes designed to support people into work that are mainstream funded and readily available.
- Deliver training to the local providers of the above so that they have good up to date knowledge of the programmes available.
- Development of local "career ladders" which describe the experience and qualifications that local employers, with regular vacancies, require. Then we can ensure all steps on the ladder are locally accessible and promoted.

3.3 English for Speakers of Other Languages

This remains a big issue but there are differences of opinion about how much need for more ESOL provision there is, and the level of impact the availability of ESOL provision has on communities. Kate Hill is drawing up a list of organisations that are highlighting ESOL as an issue to their community. She is meeting with Joe Carter of the Oxford Community School on 17 January to discuss further. She has been in touch with Cllr Larry Sanders (Oxfordshire County Council), who highlighted this issue to the County Council at their meeting on 13 December 2011 and is keen to have more evidence to strengthen his case that provision needs to be increased.

Cllr Sanders has talked to a Councillor who sits on the Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee about starting a discussion at the Committee itself and will raise the issue with the Acting Director of Children's Services at their next meeting. As pupil premium funding is set to rise dramatically there is potentially scope for some of that funding to be used by schools to support parents with

their levels of English so that they can better help their children's educational attainment.

3.4 Adult Community Learning Consultation

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) consultation on Informal Adult and Community Learning closed in October and results were due to be published in the autumn but this has not happened yet.

4. Local government

OCVA has responded to the **City Council'** consultation on its Corporate Plan. To read our response go to <http://www.oxnet.org.uk/research/responses> It is interesting to note that the council proposes investing a substantial sum to support educational attainment in the city over the next three years.

The Oxford Strategic Partnership, where OCVA represents the voluntary sector, has reviewed its strategic priorities and agreed to concentrate on the following three areas for the next five years:

- **Breaking the cycle of deprivation** (through the regeneration framework and to include educational attainment and young people's services)
- **Economic development and growth** (employment, skills and training, development sites, links with business, enterprise and innovation)
- **Stronger communities** (cohesion, engaging with BME groups, neighbourhood development)

OCVA has long advocated for a greater focus on stronger rather than just safer communities. The proposal is to focus on the following issues:

- Cohesion across the city
- Community development (links to neighbourhood planning and area forums)
- Sport, culture and arts
- Engagement with black and minority ethnic groups
- Wider resident engagement

There will be a workshop in April/May to take forward this concept.

OCVA also responded to the **South Oxfordshire District Council** budget setting online consultation to emphasise the importance of maintaining grants and rate relief for voluntary and community groups.