



**'NO LIMITS'
PROGRAMME**

Impact Report

West Oxfordshire 2024/2025

No Limits Programme funded by



www.aspireoxfordshire.org
In association with our delivery partners



**Funded by
UK Government**



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Contents

1

Introduction

2

Outputs & Outcomes

3

Demographics

4

Quality Assurance & Due Diligence

5

Key Highlights, Challenges & Lessons Learned

6

Case Studies

7

Conclusion

Introduction



Aspire Oxford has been delivering targeted employment support in West Oxfordshire, commissioned by OxLEP Skills and funded through the UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) under the district's local priorities. The programme ran from November 2024 to 31st March 2025.

Initially funded through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), OxLEP Skill's Social Contract Programme managed Phase 1 and the Phase 2 extension of the programme from August 2022 to June 2024 as SOFEA was subcontracted to deliver tailored support across the county, in partnership with Aspire Oxford, helping young people and adults overcome barriers to employment, education, and training.

As Phase 2 came to an end, OxLEP successfully secured further funding via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Support for individuals facing structural barriers', commissioned by West District Council. This marked the start of phase 3, a five month project, enabling the continuation of No Limits across the West District from November 2024 to March 31st 2025.

The UKSPF-funded phase focuses on intensive, person-centred support for individuals aged 16+ who face structural barriers to employment, including long-term exclusion from the labour market, limited access to transport, digital exclusion, low skills, or systemic disadvantage.



The programme aimed to:



Provide intensive, holistic support to overcome personal and structural barriers



Build confidence, aspirations, and readiness for work



Connect participants with relevant training and employment opportunities



Improve long-term outcomes for those furthest from the labour market

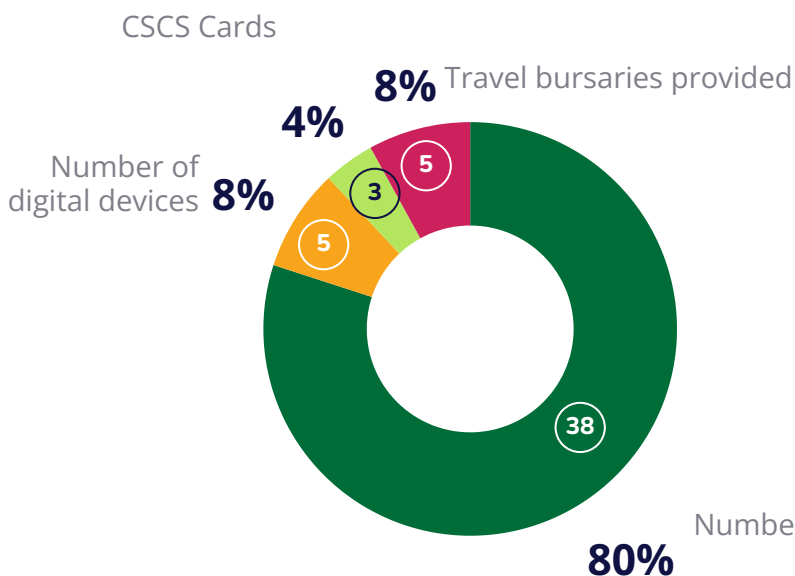
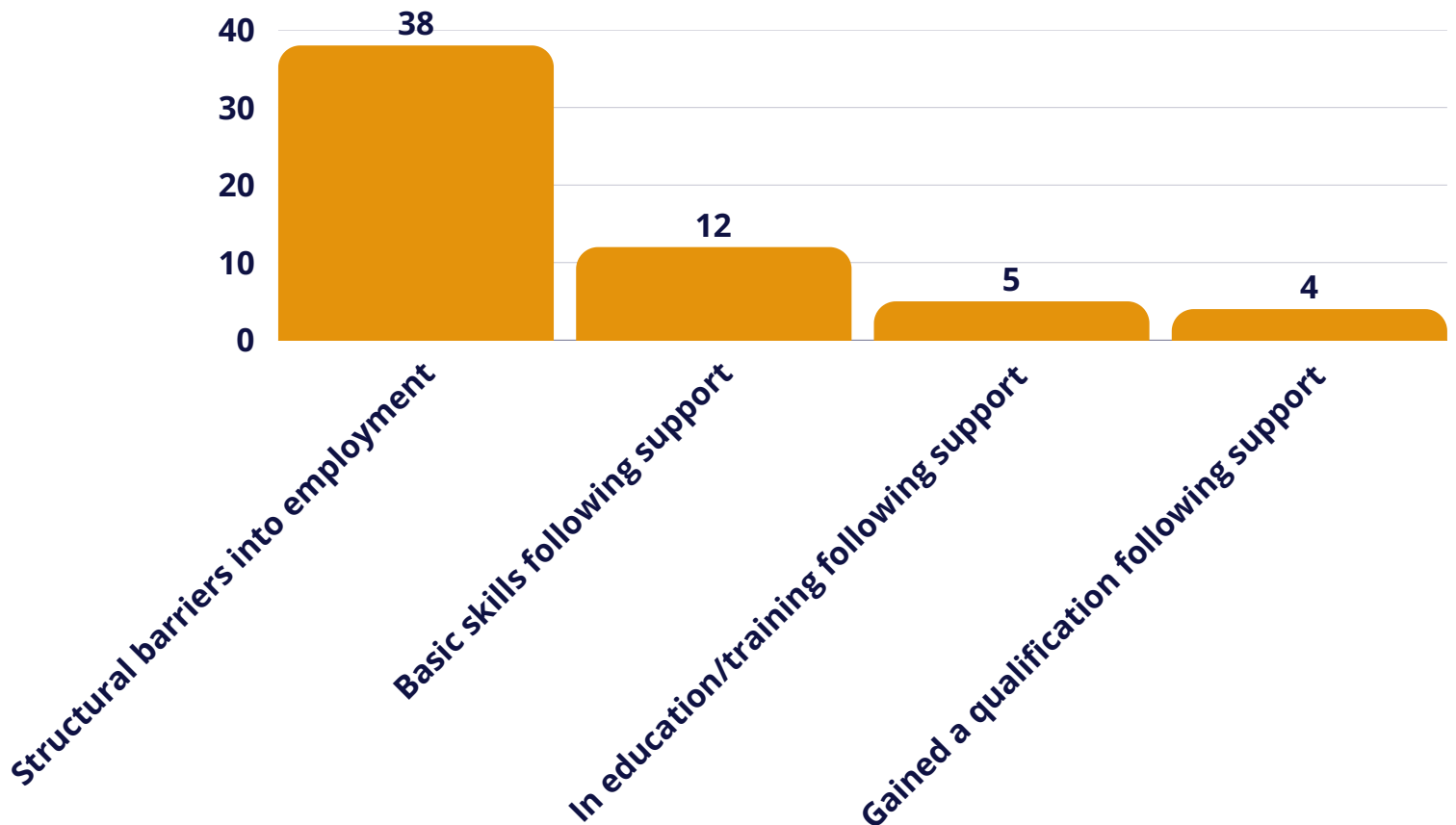
Aspire Oxford's delivery combined local knowledge, partnership working, and wrap around support to reach individuals often underserved by mainstream provision. Delivery was completed in accordance with the branding, performance, and reporting requirements set out in the service agreement.



Outputs & Outcomes

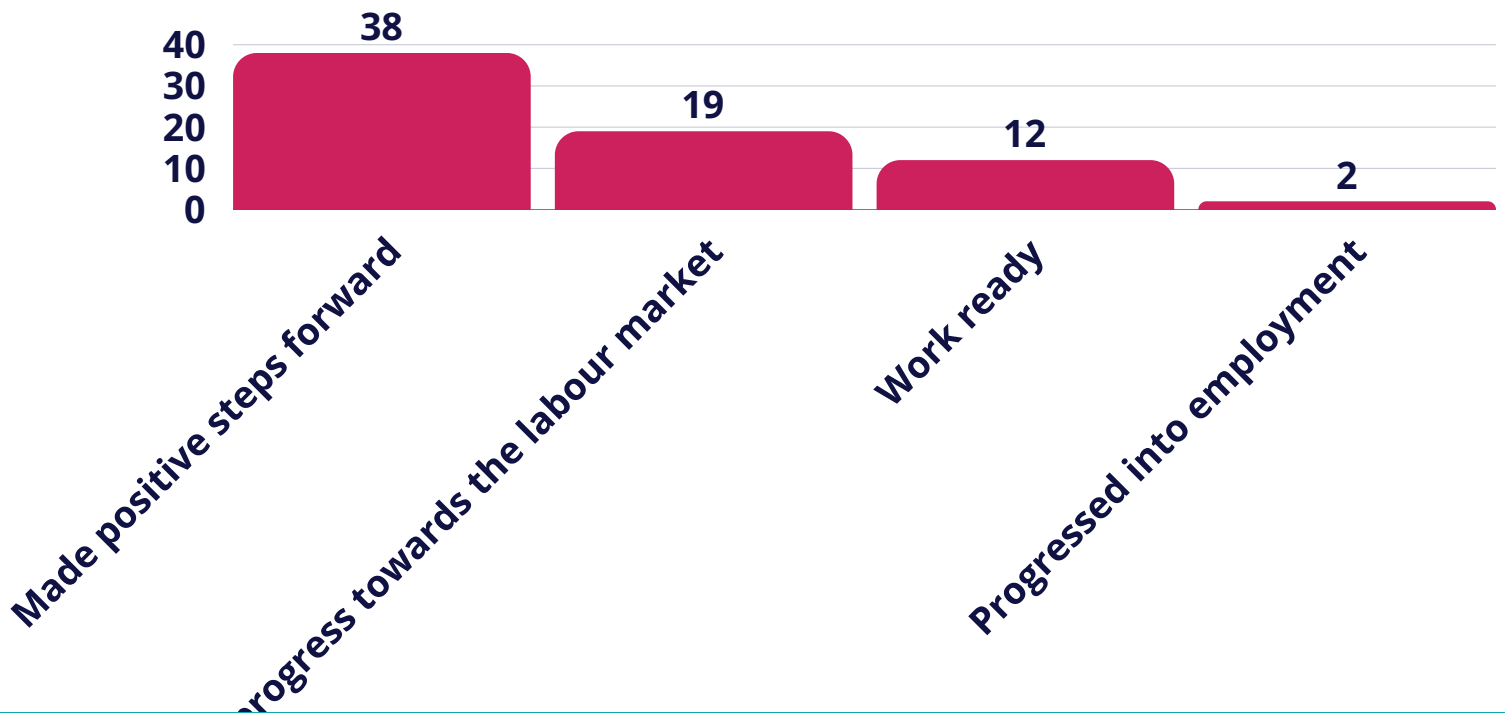
Outputs

While we successfully met our target of engaging with 38 individuals, some outcome areas—such as basic skills, education/training, and qualifications—fell short. This is largely due to the project starting later than planned, limiting the time available for participants to achieve longer-term outcomes. However, based on current engagement levels and ongoing support, we are confident these figures will improve and targets will be met as the programme continues on schedule.

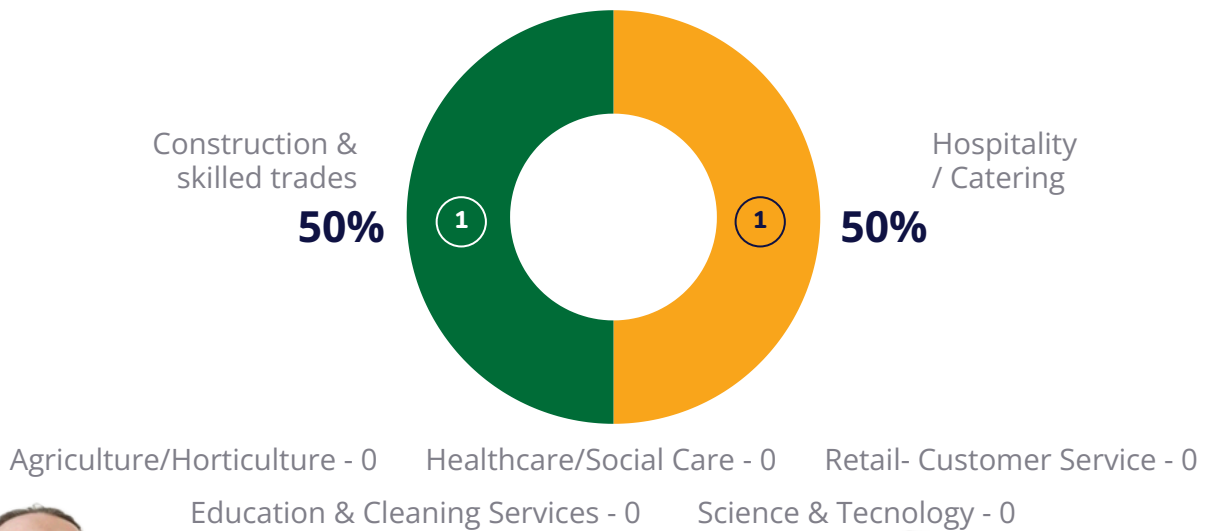


Solutions to
reducing
barriers

Beneficiary Outcomes



Employment breakdown



Community & Partnerships

8 organisations

collaborated with 'No Limits':

Oxford Wood Recycling

Restore

Abingdon & Witney College

NHS

Oxfordshire Youth

Aspire – METS programme

The Cornermen

Turning Point

This strong multi-sector engagement has helped individuals develop workplace skills, improve confidence, and gain access to employment pathways.



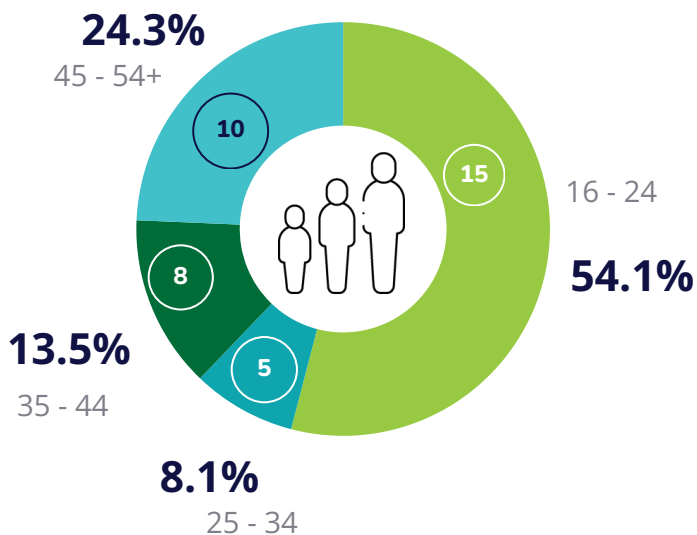


● Demographics

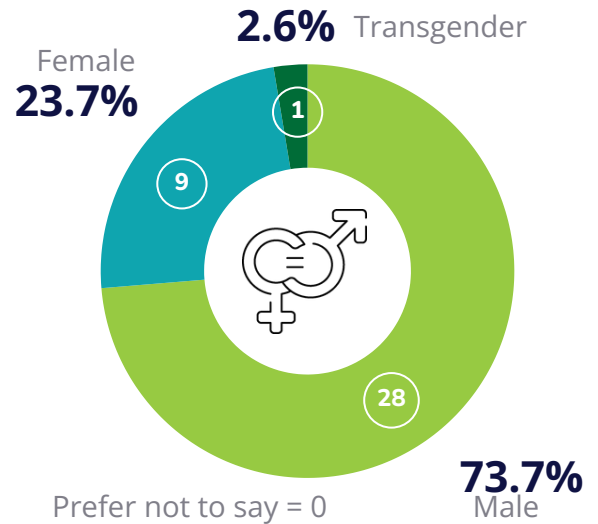


Age and gender

Age range

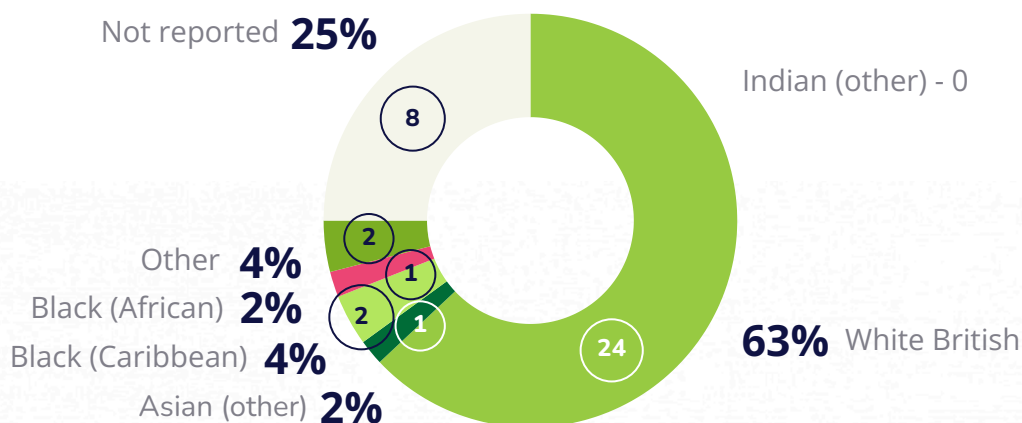


Gender

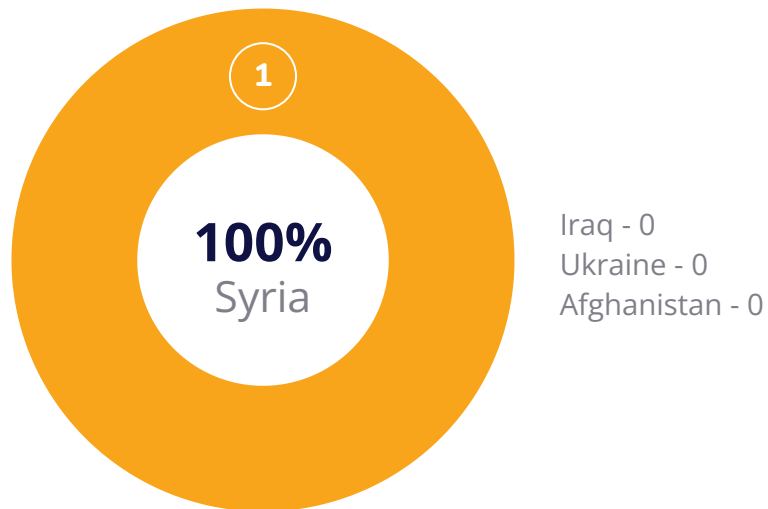


Ethnicity & Refugees/asylum seeker

Ethnicity

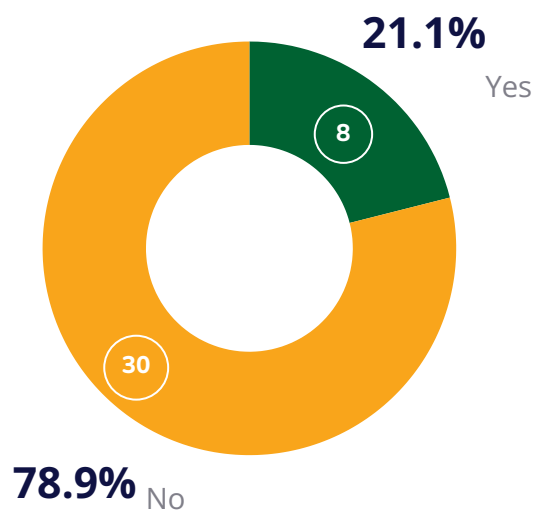


Refugees/Asylum Seekers



Disabilities

Disabilities Known



Travel and Device Support

Travel Assistance:

Provided to

28 individuals to support access to employment, training, and key services.

Device Distribution:

A total of



27 laptops



5 mobile phones



2 SIM cards



2 Wi-Fi dongles

were distributed, ensuring participants had the necessary digital access for job searching, education, and communication.



Quality

- Assurance & due diligence

Quality Assurance & Due Diligence



- All clients wishing to participate in the No Limits programme require a data collation form completed. This is to ensure they fit the eligibility criteria to engage with the programmes support and ensures they are consenting to our handling of their data and for it to be shared with funders where required.
- Staff are well briefed on the eligibility criteria for individuals wanting to engage in the No Limits programme. Clients should be 16+, unemployed, live in Oxfordshire (specifically within West Oxfordshire). Anybody living within Oxfordshire but outside of these areas will be referred to a SOFEA triage worker for South and Vale District City and the Cherwell District.
- Staff processing referral forms and risk assessments have been briefed on the eligibility criteria for individuals wanting to engage in the No Limits programme. Clients should be 16+, unemployed, live in Oxfordshire (specifically within West Oxfordshire). Anybody living within Oxfordshire but outside of these areas will be referred to a SOFEA triage worker for Cherwell or South & Vale districts, and Aspire Oxford for Oxford City District.
- Risk assessments have been established, reviewed and monitored for any known or potential risks to delivery of the No Limits programme.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are closely adhered to and monitored. We hold regular meetings with our Safeguarding team to discuss if any issues or concerns arise and can contact the team if anything urgent occurs as per our safeguarding policy.



Key Highlights,
challenges &
lessons learned

Key Highlights



38

We have seen great demand for the No Limits programme in West Oxfordshire, with 38 clients engaging with employment, training and education support.

10

Since November, the programme has supported 2 participants into paid employment and one into a volunteering role with an art gallery in Witney. We have supported 8 participants to engage in courses or education, although due to delays with the programme starting many of these will not be completed before the end of this phase of No Limits.



Triage worker Mark Devaraj has worked pro-actively to promote the No Limits programme and make connections with partner agencies and external organisations. The main purpose of this was to maximise the potential for the programme to support clients from any referrals that may be generated from these connections as well as some of these organisations being able to provide additional assistance to participants where needed. This has been a successful approach as we have seen a significant increase in referrals and have also been able to link participants into further support services or educations, training and employment opportunities, helping them progress in their journey with the No Limits programme.



Through our knowledge and understanding of the complex barriers experienced by participants, we have extended the support clients can access by utilising our connections both internally and with external agencies. This has been with issues around homelessness, immigration, benefits, mental health and wellbeing and substance misuse. This person-centred, holistic approach has ensured clients are able to access the most appropriate support to help them progress with their journey on No Limits, helping them to achieve successful education, training and employment outcomes.



Strong connections have been fostered with community hubs and ladders as well as with the DWP, Abingdon & Witney College, and West Oxfordshire District Council's NEET team. This approach has ensured we are extending the No Limits offer of support to individuals who are furthest from the labour market, in the most rural locations and ensures the programme is able to provide participants with the best possible opportunities throughout their journey with us, helping them to rebuild and make positive steps towards their futures.



We recently attended a job fayre in Witney which had great attendance by those wishing to find employment. From that event we received eighteen new referrals to the No Limits programme. This highlights the demand for the programme in the West Oxfordshire district. Many of those who engaged with us at the job fayre experienced significant barriers to achieving employment such as language barriers and disabilities and the support provided on the No Limits programme will be crucial in helping these individuals progress into paid employment. We also used the job fayre as an opportunity to explore employment options for existing No Limits participants and hope this will support them progress in their chosen careers.

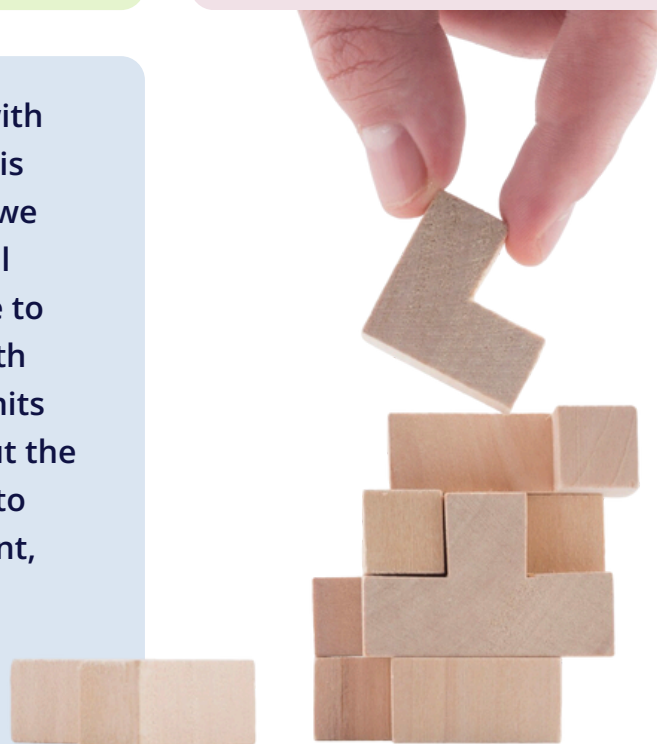
Challenges

There were issues with commencement of the programme due to delays with contracts and recruitment. This initially impacted on our ability to support participants and promote No Limits in West Oxfordshire. Once contracts were arranged and whilst we went out to recruit, the programme was temporarily supported by a triage worker covering one day per week until the new worker was able to begin, receive training and complete their enhanced DBS clearance to enable them to support the programme full time.


Due to many of the participants referred initially to the programme being under 18, we experienced challenges when trying to link them in with education opportunities. This is primarily due to issues with Maths and English GCSE's and functional skills. This issue has had a significant impact on individuals as they are then unable to progress onto further education or employment without these qualifications.

The logistics of where the triage worker conducts outreach work has been challenging. We have several outreach locations we have set up including The Branch in Chipping Norton and the food larders at Carterton and Charlbury however to effectively engage with more people we need locations in more rural areas.

We have had some successes with participant engagement, but this seems to be a challenge which we also witnessed during our social media campaign. We would like to find a better way to connect with potential participants of No Limits that ensures people know about the programme and enables them to access support with employment, training and education.



Lessons Learned

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- ✓ We have learned the importance of working more cohesively as a team and using the resources available to us to maximise the opportunities available to No Limits participants. An example of this is ensuring we are utilising the learning and employment opportunities through things such as skills bootcamps and apprenticeships by linking in with local education providers and OxLEP's apprenticeship team. Also sharing information across districts has been important as some participants are willing to travel to improve their employment prospects.
 - ✓ We need to better understand the issues around education for under 18's as this appears to be a regular theme with this demographic of participants. There is a gap in provision for these individuals where they are no longer engaging in full-time education. Having more knowledge of how the education system works for this cohort and establishing any resources or funding available will be a crucial part in us supporting these participants to achieve successful outcomes.
 - ✓ The level of engagement from participants can be difficult to navigate and the reasons for this are often due to the complex barriers that they face. This highlights the importance of supporting clients holistically to ensure they are receiving support relating to other challenges they are experiencing. Triage workers need to understand more about additional support mechanisms available in both statutory and community settings so that they can signpost and refer participants of the programme. The hope is that this approach ensures that people receive appropriate support for specific issues which will then enable and empower them to engage with the support they need from the No Limits programme, helping them achieve their education or employment goals.



Case studies



SB was referred to me via a colleague at Aspire Oxford to assist in getting him work ready as he was keen to get back into employment and find a stable housing.

He had recently become homeless due to a break down in his relationship and ended up sleeping rough with no form of ID or bank account and no access to any government services, benefits or support.



Initially, he was assisted with obtaining ID, as he needed this to open a bank account, access benefits and for future employment. This was in the form of us funding and supporting him to apply for a birth certificate. Along the way we also supported SB with getting food vouchers and food bank packages. This process took longer than expected and the cold and hunger that SB was experiencing caused him to become depressed and frustrated until it came to a head, and he talked about being suicidal. At this point we referred him to WODC and Connections who escalated the situation and provide support. This resulted in him being housed in O'Hanlon House meaning he now has somewhere warm to sleep and access to food and longer-term housing support. To support with this move, we assisted SB with his transport to attending the housing assessment.

Since receiving his birth certificate, SB has opened a bank account which has helped him access Universal Credit payments. These payments are helping SB to support himself until he said, find employment.

SB is keen to do his CSCS course soon and hopes to progress to employment in the construction industry. This employment will enable him to support himself and his family financially and means he will be in a stronger position to resolve his housing issues.

He expressed deep gratitude for the support we provided and said 'we saved his life and gave him hope'. He now feels motivated and excited for his future and looks forward to being able to achieve success and financial independence.



TA was referred to us by WODC EET team as he had dropped out of education and not completed his GCSE's.

Due to his anxiety, TA had not been out of his home for a long time or engaged with anyone outside of his family and he had become extremely isolated.

Since January, TA has engaged well and has met me at least once a week to access support from the programme as he wants to continue his education and establish a long-term career. TA is now in the process of completing his Functional skills in both English and Maths as this will enable him to start a Game Design course at Witney college in September and pursue the career he dreams of.

TA has made great progress in a short period of time and has worked hard to make changes which will support him to achieve the goals he has set for himself. He responds to all modes of communication and feels comfortable telling me if he is struggling and if it's not a particularly good day, he lets me know and we reschedule meetings.

TA has now enrolled onto the iHasco platform of online courses and is working through a few short courses to help him get a part time job in the evenings which we are supporting him with. His commitment to engaging with this support from No Limits has been instrumental to the success he has achieved so far, and he now feels more focussed and confident about his future.





LM, is a 62-year-old male, who was referred to the No Limits programme after struggling with addiction issues and homelessness.

He had been provided with temporary housing in supported accommodation but wanted help to get back into employment within the construction industry.

We supported LM to enrol for a CSCS course which he successfully completed and then worked on updating his CV to demonstrate the wealth and of skills and experience he amassed throughout his career. We supported him to perform job searches specific to the area of work he was interested in and LM achieved a few interviews during this process. Together, we did some interview preparation and worked on some techniques to support him when attending these. He subsequently received a job offer as a site foreman which he was delighted with and was excited to start.

Prior to LM commencing employment, he mentioned the new job to his housing provider. It was only then that he learned he was unable to work due to the way his housing agreement and rent payments were structured. LM was disappointed as he felt he not only wanted to get to work to keep busy and have daily structure and purpose, but he also wanted to start saving money for his future to help him rebuild his life and achieve some stability.

We supported LM to discuss this issue with his housing provider and he is now moving from this supported accommodation into longer term housing. This means he will be able to progress into full time employment and can accept job offers. LM expressed his gratitude for the support the No Limits programme provided and for the confidence boost following his job offer, as he said he 'wasn't sure he could achieve his goals at his age' and is looking forward to working again and rebuilding his life. The programme continues to support LM in his journey towards this.

County-Wide Programme Summary

No Limits Phase 3, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and commissioned by OxLEP Skills, was delivered between July 2024 and March 2025 across Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse, and West Oxfordshire. Delivery partners SOFEA and Aspire Oxford provided intensive, bespoke person-centred support to economically inactive residents facing complex and structural barriers to employment.

The overall county-wide programme supported over 245 individuals, helping them build confidence, access training, and take meaningful steps toward employment. Participants benefited from tailored one-to-one guidance, digital inclusion support, building awareness of Green skills courses and providing access to training—particularly in Green Skills and Construction pathways.

Building on the success of the No Limits programme since its launch in November 2022, we are now working successfully with councils across the county on a six-month extension, funded through the second round of UKSPF. Meanwhile, OxLEP Skills is seeking to expand the programme's reach and secure the delivery of the Department for Work and Pensions Connect 2 Work programme through Oxfordshire County Council.

The positive outcomes, strong engagement, and the learnings from No Limits have demonstrated a clear need and appetite for continued support. As a result, the programme is planned to evolve and develop over a three to four year period with a county-wide focus, ensuring sustained impact and broader access for individuals across Oxfordshire. This continuity reflects both the effectiveness of No Limits and the partnership's commitment to evolving and scaling successful initiatives.



Key Highlights of No Limits Programme County-Wide



53+

Individuals progressed into paid work



130+

Individuals became work ready



80+

Devices (laptops, phones, dongles) distributed



Dozens enrolled in vocational, ESOL, CSCS, and Green Skills courses



Partnerships with community settings and local larders have been vital in reaching and engaging participants across all districts, providing trusted spaces that supported meaningful connections and positive outcomes.

Conclusion



Despite delays in commencement of the WODC No Limits programme, we have seen a high level of referrals and participants have made good progress during this time.

The information provided in our report demonstrates the impact that delivery of the programme has had in West Oxfordshire and that there is a need for this provision to help individuals overcome barriers and work towards achieving their goals.

The person centred, holistic support provided by triage workers has enabled participants to progress in their education, training and employment journeys and has helped them learn new skills, build confidence, self esteem and improve their individual circumstances.

In addition to the support provided on No Limits, triage workers have referred participants to additional sources of support, including through Aspire's wider offer. This has provided individuals the opportunity to access our social prescribing, homeless prevention, enterprise and inclusive recruitment teams. This engagement has helped empower participants by building positive relationships and social capital as well as learning new skills and information.

We continue to build upon the strong start that the No Limits programme in West Oxfordshire has made, supporting those experiencing barriers to engage in education and training and employment. No Limits has helped empower programme participants to become more confident, skilled, knowledgeable, providing them with opportunities to build more positive futures.

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