

## **OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

OCC Children's Services have been subject to a detailed Ofsted Inspection, which focused specifically on the Child Protection & Looked-After Children's Services. In addition, the Local Safeguarding Board has been the subject of a simultaneous but separate inspection. The outcome of the 4-week inspection is that Children's Services have been judged as 'Good' in all six categories.

These are:

- Children who need help and protection
- Looked-after children
- Adoption
- Experiences and progress of care leavers
- Leadership, management and governance
- Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

This outcome is the result of a lot of hard work from staff, OCC's partners and councillors. It is worth considering that only half a dozen county councils across the country have earned a 'Good' rating.

The team of inspectors recommended that OCC recruits more foster carers so that looked-after children can be placed in or near their own communities. I would appreciate any help that Town Councillors can give to publicise the need for more foster carers.

## **OXFORDSHIRE'S KINGFISHER TEAM**

OCC's Children's Services have won a Management Journal (MJ) Achievement Award alongside their Health and Police partners, for their joint working in the Kingfisher Unit.

This is a specialist unit working with vulnerable children, which was set up on the wake of the recent Bullfinch investigation into child sexual exploitation. News of the MJ award came as 6 men were arrested in Banbury as part of an investigation by the Kingfisher team.

More information at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/jun/oxfordshire%E2%80%99s-kingfisher-team-wins-prestigious-national-award>

## **CONNECTING OXFORDSHIRE**

Discussions about strategic transport schemes have been taking place recently across the County. The meetings have considered the work of the County Council and other partners such as Network Rail up to 2020.

A session for South Oxfordshire was held on 16 July in Henley, and the final meeting in the series takes place on 23 July at County Hall.

OCC is beginning to construct Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4), and debate from these meetings will feed into that plan so that we ultimately have a transport system which will enable residents to move around the county. Consultation on the goals and objectives of the new plan runs until 1st August. A draft plan will be presented for full consultation in the spring of 2015.

More information on at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/apr/county-council-leader-outlines-his-vision-transport-connecting-oxfordshire>

## **READING CHALLENGE**

Certificates were recently presented at John Hampden School at the conclusion of this year's OCC literacy campaign. A professional story-teller had the children enthralled at the ceremony, and headmaster Alan Haigh was delighted with the campaign's achievements.

The last annual report from the Oxfordshire Reading Campaign showed the average reading age of children taking part had increased by 13.5 months since the project began in Autumn 2012.

The National Literacy Trust is OCC's partner in the reading scheme for more than 50 primary schools. The scheme is aimed at children struggling to reach the reading level for their age group, and it includes a volunteering programme to provide pupils with one-to-one support.

It is no secret that reading standards among young children in Oxfordshire have not been good enough in recent years. OCC set up this pioneering scheme to address that situation, and the initial results show how much progress can be made in a short space of time.

Children can now explore a 'Mythical Maze' as part of this year's Summer Reading Challenge. Children have been challenged to read at least six books over the summer holiday, collecting rewards on the way. The Challenge runs from July 12th to September 13th and it can be done in three visits to the library.

More information at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/jun/are-you-ready-%E2%80%98-maze-ing%E2%80%99-summer-your-library>

## **LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES**

OCC and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group are jointly reviewing the services for adults with learning disabilities. The review is part of a planned reassessment of services with the aim of supporting more people with learning disabilities to move from hospital-type settings and live in the community with appropriate support.

The primary objective is to ensure the safety of those who are being cared for, in conjunction with Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust which provides many of these services in Oxfordshire.

More information at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/jun/statement-future-learning-disability-services-oxfordshire>

## **CONSULTATION ON HOUSING-RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES**

A 12-week consultation has launched on how to save £1.5m over two years from services for homeless people and 'substance' users.

The consultation is based on an initial proposal to keep open three hostels in Oxford. The proposal, approved for consultation by the multi-agency Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board, looks at how relevant services - known collectively as housing-related support - can be delivered in future.

OCC has subsidised a reduction in central government funding for housing-related support for the past four years, but it decided in February that it can no longer justify this level of cost.

More information at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/jun/consultation-how-save-%C2%A315m-housing-related-support-services-launched>

## **BEM FOR INNOVATIVE FLOOD WORK**

Our much-lauded Town Clerk may be interested to hear that an Oxfordshire fireman has also been awarded the British Empire Medal.

Gary Mattingley's award recognises his national work around flood management over many years, which culminated in his innovative approach to keeping Oxford open to traffic during February's floods.

He conceived a pumping and damming system which kept open two key routes into the city. A previous flood had closed these roads and had cost the county's economy an estimated £40m.

More information at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/jun/firefighter-gets-british-empire-medal-innovative-flood-work>

## **NEW CHILDREN'S HOMES**

Plans have been unveiled for two new children's homes to ensure the safety of vulnerable young people in care or at risk of coming into the care system.

Following recent public consultation, OCC plans to build an assessment centre in Thame for up to six children on the edge of the care system, and a 'move-on' home in Didcot for up to four older teenagers preparing to leave care. The homes would enable more of the county's vulnerable young people to live closer to home and reduce the enormous costs of sending them to out-of-county settings where OCC has less control over the quality of placements.

More information at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/jun/new-children%E2%80%99s-homes-protect-vulnerable-young-people>

*Nick Carter  
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