

Oxfordshire County Council Parish Briefing

HAPPY NEW YEAR AND GOOD LUCK!

PLANS TO TRANSFORM ADOPTION SERVICES ACROSS THAMES VALLEY

OCC is joining forces with neighbouring councils to create a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) for the Thames Valley. The agency will improve outcomes for both children and adopters – including the ability to match children with families more quickly and improve support services for adopters. The Government has advised that a grant of £300k will be made available to help set up the new service. OCC will be the host authority within a partnership known as ‘Adopt Thames Valley’, alongside six other councils (Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, Swindon and Reading) and two Voluntary Adoption Agencies (PACT and Barnardo’s). All partners have begun work to develop the new shared service across the geographical area covered by the councils.

LAUNCH OF NEW ONLINE FLOODING ‘TOOLKIT’

A new online 'toolkit' has been launched by OCC which provides information and advice for those wanting to take action to safeguard their homes or businesses against the effects of flooding. Visitors to the site can use its tools to determine whether their home or business is in an area at risk at flooding, and links to a series of ‘How To’ guides. The toolkit also explains the different types of flooding that can occur with bespoke guides on how to deal with them and, for those responsible for things such as drains and streams running across their land, guides on how to carry out preventative maintenance. Interactive illustrations give visual inspiration for ways people can protect their properties and highlights often forgotten areas such as garages, airbricks and cable holes. The toolkit can be found at www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE ABOVE NATIONAL AVERAGE

The delayed transfers of care (DTC) figures released in December show Oxfordshire improving significantly on the situation a year ago: total delayed transfers of care were 11% lower, and those due to social care delays were 19% lower. This compares with a rise in numbers nationally of 25% in total and 41% due to social care. Nationally over a third of all DTC cases were attributable to social care delays, but in Oxfordshire it was less than a fifth.

HOME LIBRARY VOLUNTEER SUCCESS AND NEW LIBRARIES E - NEWSLETTER

In September OCC launched a county-wide campaign for Home Library Service volunteers. This successful campaign has led to 150 volunteer applications so far, and the campaign was shortlisted for a public sector communications award. Home Library Service volunteers choose and deliver books to those who are unable to get to a library. More information about the scheme, including details of what volunteering involves and interviews with those who benefit from the service, can be found at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/homelibrary

The Library Service has also recently launched a bi-monthly newsletter sent to 6000 library service users. It contains the latest libraries news, events, book recommendations, volunteering opportunities and more, including information about Zinio (free electronic magazines), eBooks, People's Network (free public access to computers) and Wi-Fi in Libraries. Parish councils are requested to inform residents that they sign up at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/librariesnewsletter

GRANT FUNDING ANNOUNCED FOR 'OPEN ACCESS' CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Community-led schemes will complement a comprehensive new service for 0-19-year-olds across Oxfordshire, which ensures children at risk of abuse and neglect are protected and that families who need extra help are identified at an early stage. Applications received during the first round of the £1m grant scheme were assessed by a cross-party working group of councillors which made recommendations to the council's Cabinet. Six community groups planning to run 'open access' children's services were successful and will receive funding worth £163,000 from the scheme. They are:

- Butterfly Meadows (Bloxham) - £29,384
- Carterton Town Council - £30,000
- Bridges (Oxford) - £30,000
- Grandpont Nursery (Oxford) - £35,600
- St Nicholas Primary School (Marston) - £8,000
- Sharing Life Trust (Thame) - £30,000

A further eight bids were supported in principle by the working group, but deferred to the second round of bids so that further work can be carried out on their business models. The panel refused just three bids – in these cases the eligibility criteria were not met.

DON'T MISS APPLICATIONS DEADLINE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES

Families with children due to start primary school this year are being urged to ensure they don't miss the 15 January applications deadline. Parents or carers of children born between 1 September 2012 and 31 August 2013 should visit the [primary school admissions pages](#) on the council's website and apply online where possible. Primary or junior school applications also need to be made for children currently attending an infant school who were born between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010.

When applying, parents are strongly advised to state three preferences and include their catchment school as one of these – even if it is their third preference school. This does not in any way affect families' chances of securing a place at their first-preference school. The council

was able to offer first-preference places for more than 90 per cent of children who started primary school in Oxfordshire in September.

Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Education Cllr Steve Harrod said: "We're urging parents to ensure they apply for a school place for their child on time, as this increases the chances we will be able to offer them a place at a school listed among their preferences.

"Most people will have been pre-occupied over the Christmas and New Year period, but the deadline is now creeping up, so anyone who hasn't yet submitted an application needs to get this done as soon as possible."

He added: "Understandably, many parents have strong views about which school they would like their child to attend, however, we would always urge families to state three preferences on their application form, and include their catchment school as one of these – even if it is their third preference. This does not in any way reduce the chances of securing a place at your first-preference school. All the information about how to apply can be found on our website."

The council still accepts postal applications but recommends families [apply online](#) where possible, as this helps speed up the applications process. Applying online also means families receive an automatic response confirming their application has been received and can be quickly notified if further information is needed. Those who apply online will also receive an email on allocation day informing them of the outcome of their application - avoiding waiting for a letter to arrive in the post. The deadline for primary and junior school applications is 15 January 2017.

The deadline for 'on-time' applications for secondary school places in September 2017 has now passed, but any families who have yet to apply should do so as soon as possible by visiting the council's [secondary school admissions pages](#).

HEALTH INEQUALITIES COMMISSION REPORT

Oxfordshire's Commission on Health Inequalities has published its recommendations to narrow the health and wellbeing gaps which divide communities in the county. The Commission was set up earlier this year by the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board. Its members came from health, local authority and voluntary sectors. Public sessions were held at venues across the county and evidence was taken from a wide range of statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations. The Commission heard that Oxfordshire, overall, is an affluent county with relatively low levels of deprivation, but there are significant variations. Among the 60 recommendations made by the Commission are:

- An integrated transport strategy to reduce social isolation
- Greater investment in prevention of ill health
- Employers to promote the health of working people
- Greater integration of health and social care and more support for unpaid carers
- Public sector organisations should review their buildings and land which might be used for key worker and affordable housing
- Promotion of physical activity and exercise among vulnerable groups
- More provision for mental health services

The next steps for the Commission will be to promote the findings of the report and for discussion of what can be achieved through local action.

OXFORD PARKWAY/CITY CENTRE OPENING

The link between Oxford Parkway and the city centre was opened at the beginning of December with a journey time of just 8 minutes. The Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, attended the opening. OCC Leader Ian Hudspeth took the opportunity of talking to him not just about railways, but also the road problems in Oxfordshire, particularly with regard to the A34, A40 and A420. Ian went on to remind the SoS that if we are to have the projected extra houses and jobs, then OCC needs the funding for the infrastructure to deliver sustainable development.



Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Harrod". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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