

# doorsteps

a Christian response

to children and vulnerable families

in Oxfordshire

RESEARCH REPORT, SPRING 2015

- The most significant issues affecting children and young people
- The statutory and civil social care goals and interventions
- The response by churches and Christian agencies in responding
- The gaps between need and intervention
- The opportunities for greater collaboration



## Executive summary

**The issues facing Oxfordshire's younger generation are increasingly broad and complex. This study highlights unstable family life and struggling parents, low self-esteem, lack of vision or aspiration for life, difficulty entering employment and household poverty as the five most significant issues facing children, young people and vulnerable families across the county.**

Local authorities and statutory bodies are the main players in providing the foundations of children's and family services including statutory obligations such as education and children's social care.

Across the statutory sector there is a strategic focus around four areas; a healthy start, safeguarding, raising achievement and narrowing the gap for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

Child sexual exploitation and trafficking along with improving pathways into work for young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), and not in learning (NIL), are a current focus of additional investment.

Most churches are active in working with children and young people in their communities and often recognise the most significant issues facing local families.

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However, examples of church-based interventions that specifically target unstable family life and struggling parents, low self-esteem, lack of vision or aspiration for life, difficulty entering employment and household poverty **are a small percentage** of the total activities that churches and Christian groups run for children and young people.

Churches spend a lot of their time doing activities such as Children's church, Sunday school, toddler and youth groups for children and young people

who are already coming to church, and who are not as vulnerable as others in the local community. 40% of church activity happens because it always has while 42% is based on a strategic decision.

The remaining 18% of activities started for various reasons including because a similar state-run programme closed down.

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There are clear gaps in the existing provision for children and young people most notably for those who have struggling families, difficulty entering employment or experience household poverty. Pressure on resources means that gaps in provision are not only clear but increasing. In December 2014, Ian Hudspeth, leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said, *"We are now at the stage where around half our budget is spent on two per cent of the population...Unless we get additional funding, the county council will struggle to do anything but provide a safety net for the most vulnerable people in Oxfordshire"*.

In this age of increasing pressure on statutory services the importance of partnership and 'co-production' across sectors in order to fill these gaps cannot be overestimated.

However, 62% of those surveyed for this study had little or no connection with others doing similar work. This disconnect is a challenge to be overcome to effectively meet the needs of vulnerable children, young people and struggling families.

Churches are currently perceived as less relevant because the focus of their activities for children and young people is mismatched to the most pressing needs.

**62% of those surveyed for this study had little or no connection to others doing similar work.**





If the local church can become central in meeting local needs, especially those of vulnerable children, young people and their families, it becomes a place that people want to be.

In order for this to happen, churches need to review their budgets and consider ways to invest more resources, both funding and people, in activities that focus on the needs of those struggling in the community rather than focussing on internal needs for volunteers and funds, legitimate as they are.

The Christian church has a long history of playing a positive, relevant and active role in the local community. **Today, in light of the increasing need in this current age of austerity, the Church needs to step up and step out even more in action, justice and compassion.**

**74% of survey respondents want to make an informed strategic response to common issues facing children and young people.**

**If the local church can become central in meeting local needs, especially those of vulnerable children, young people and their families, it becomes a place that people want to be**

The good news is this study shows churches have an appetite to do more with 74% of survey respondents wanting to make an informed strategic response to common issues facing children and young people. So while most don't connect, even more actually want to connect and want to be strategic in the way they respond to the needs of children and young people.

Overall there are clear opportunities for churches and Christian groups to improve their engagement with vulnerable children and young people through peer learning, sharing good practice and effective intervention models; through collaboration focussed on closing the gaps highlighted by this study; and through building new partnerships where issues are not being sufficiently addressed.

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## Foreword by Bishop Colin

The Doorsteps initiative, brought to us by Viva, has the potential to achieve something very important for Oxford City and the wider county of Oxfordshire.

The needs of our children and young people were brought home very forcefully to us all through Operation Bullfinch less than two years ago. Since then a lot of work has gone on with vulnerable families both in the city and around the county but there is much still to be done.

I am very pleased that the Doorsteps initiative is gathering churches together with other voluntary and public sector organisations to ask the fundamental question “What can we do together?”

I believe that partnership working is really important. A few years ago it was something we felt we had to do and the government was pushing us hard to do it. Now we know the value of it and we have also learned that we don’t have much choice! As resources become even more limited we have got to get more skilful about pulling together.

I am grateful to Viva for doing this work of mapping and surveying the county and asking the questions to see what churches are doing for children, young people and families. This is a good start.



I hope this report, which is the result of the mapping, will provide the foundation for future work together.

We can’t do everything, no-one is going to solve all the problems. But if we can do one or two things together that will make a difference to the lives of our children, young people and families then that will be very significant.

I commend this report to you and hope it will lead to a new era of partnership working between churches and wider society.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive style.

**Colin Fletcher**  
**Bishop of Dorchester**

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## Acknowledgements

text to follow

### Photo credits

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# 1 Introduction

**Trafficking and sexual exploitation cases are regularly highlighted in the media, with 2013's Bullfinch case affecting young girls in Oxford only a few streets from Viva's office.**

These high profile cases which demand a response should not overshadow the broader, more prevalent issues facing children, young people and vulnerable families such as household poverty, poor educational attainment and difficulty entering employment. These are challenges to this entire generation.

**Churches have a proportionately high percentage of activities focusing on children and young people**

Churches and Christian groups are, arguably, already the largest sector in civil society to have significant engagement with children and youth. The 2010 Building Better Neighbourhoods survey <sup>1</sup> which looked at the contribution of faith communities to life in Oxfordshire found churches to have a proportionately high percentage of activities focusing on children and young people including work with local schools and with the most disadvantaged.

The study states “...Of particular note is the scale and scope of provision for children and young people.” In fact, one third of churches have started independent or semi-independent organisations in response to clearly defined needs with a notable number supporting the needs of children, young people and families.

This high level of outward facing activity reflects how seriously local churches take their Biblical mandate to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’.

**But to what extent is the current activity of local churches and Christian groups relevant to the specific needs and issues faced by children, young people and vulnerable families in Oxfordshire today?**

And are these groups **working together** with other local actors to ensure that the interventions are coordinated and effective?

With almost universal agreement that collaboration is the most effective way forward along with the need for increased voluntary sector action Viva has felt compelled to ask if there are aspects of our global experience that could be appropriately shared here at home, without duplicating the excellent work already taking place. (See page 40 for a case study of collective action from Bolivia.)

As a result, during 2014 Viva asked churches and Christian groups in Oxfordshire the following question: **How are you engaging with children, young people and vulnerable families on your doorstep?**

This study sets out to answer this question. Its purpose is to inform a potential collaborative strategy, enabling churches and Christian groups to play their unique role in civil society and contribute to lasting change in the lives of children, young people and vulnerable families in Oxfordshire.

## Research Objectives

To discover:

1. the most significant issues affecting children and young people in Oxfordshire
2. the current statutory and civil society goals and related interventions for children and young people
3. what churches and Christian agencies are doing in response to the issues affecting children and young people
4. the gaps between need and intervention
5. the existing level of relationship and collaboration across civil society especially between churches, Christian agencies and other statutory or voluntary sector bodies
6. the opportunities for greater collaboration



## Glossary of Terms

### Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

A type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status.

### Christian Group

Any group that run has a Christian faith basis for its activity.

### Church Activity

Any programme, initiative and activity that is run by a Christian church.

### Civil Society

Individuals and organisations in a society which are independent of the government. Volunteering is often considered a defining characteristic of the organizations that constitute civil society.

### Community and Voluntary Sector Activity

Any programme, initiative or activity run by a group in the community or voluntary sector.

### Community and Voluntary Sector

The voluntary sector or community sector (also non-profit sector or “not-for-profit” sector) is the duty of social activity undertaken by organisations that are not for-profit and non-governmental. This sector is also called the third sector, in contrast to the public sector and the private sector. Civic sector or social sector are other terms for the sector, emphasising its relationship to civil society.

### Co-production

The delivery of public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours.

### Messy Church

A way of being church that is for all ages and based on creativity, hospitality and celebration

### NEET/NIL

A young person who is no longer in the education system and who is not working or being trained for work NEET stands for not in education, employment or training and NIL stands for not in learning.

### Other faith-based activity

An option in the online survey chosen by those who considered themselves to have a faith basis for their work with children and young people but who were acting separately from a church or other community or voluntary sector group. Many of these people were acting as individuals e.g. foster carers, teaching assistants, school governors and some were independent Christian charities.

### Statutory Sector (Public Sector)

A term for the sum of the agencies of central (“Whitehall”) or local government (e.g. local authorities, health authorities), which were created by Parliamentary Acts or laws at local council level.

## Explanations of issue names (which have one-word names on graphs on pages 14-15, 26-27)

### Abuse

Abuse, including violence, bullying and neglect

### Addiction

Alcohol, drugs, addiction, substance abuse

### Aspiration

Lack of aspiration or vision for life

### Crime

Juvenile crime

### Education

Lack of access to a good education, including early years

### Employment

Difficulty entering employment

### Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation and/or trafficking

### Faith

Lack of opportunity to explore/practice faith

### Family

Unstable family life and/or struggling parents

### Health

Poor health and nutrition or unhealthy lifestyle

### Internet

Misuse/overuse of the internet and social media

### Mental health

Mental health issues (eg depression, self-harm)

### Peer pressure

Peer pressure/lack of positive role models

### Poverty

Household poverty

### Self-esteem

Low self-esteem exists when someone has a general feeling of insignificance, a lack of importance or a lack of confidence in themselves. Someone with low self-esteem is likely to avoid social interactions, feel inadequate in work and struggle to accept criticism. Severely low esteem may also lead to physical symptoms, such as headaches and exhaustion.

### State

Reduced/ineffective state-run activities

## 2 Methodology

1. **Semi-structured interviews were conducted with people across all sectors working with children and young people in Oxfordshire.** This included Oxford city council, schools, children's centres, health, police, community and voluntary sector including churches and Christian voluntary agencies. Interviews were free-flowing starting with interviewees being asked to give their perspective on the most significant issues affecting the children, young people and vulnerable families that they worked with. The answers given to this question were used to compile the list of issue options in the online survey.
2. **An online survey was developed for churches and Christian groups** (see appendix 1). 450 churches and Christian groups across Oxfordshire were emailed to invite their participation. As far as possible requests were personalised to encourage higher chance of participation e.g. Senior leaders of several denominations and agencies sent letters encouraging member churches to participate.
3. **Focus groups for children and young people were conducted.** A couple of interviewees were willing to run focus groups with young people in the context of their regular activities and the researcher conducted one focus group. A total of 6 focus groups were held, 5 in Oxford city secondary schools (4 were lunchtime Christian Union meetings and 1 was a sixth form lesson) and 1 in a youth group session in E. Oxford. In each focus group session children and young people divided into small groups (4-5 in each) and asked to use flipchart sheets and post-it notes to answer the following questions:
  - What do you worry about?
  - What do you look forward to?
  - What would make things better?

The 4 lunchtime Christian Union groups were also asked the following additional questions:

- What support structures are in place for young people?
- What support structures have you, or would you, use?

Younger children in the youth group session were also asked to draw a map of their community including places where they felt safe or not safe.

4. **Doorsteps Conference** (partnership between Viva, CMS, CCPAS, Adventure *Plus*, PACT, BMS) held on 27th September 2014 for churches and Christian groups working with children and young people across Oxfordshire was used as an opportunity to receive input and feedback on the initial findings of this study.

Following a presentation of initial research findings including the most pressing issues facing children and young people two different types of focus group session were conducted:

*Geographical:*

participants were split into groups of 4-6 according to the area where they work and discussed the following questions, writing their answers on flipchart paper:

- What from these findings resonates with your experience?
- What from these findings is a surprise to you?
- What one thing will you do in light of this information

*Issue groups:*

participants were then split into small groups according to the issue they work with. The four issues discussed were:

- struggling families
- trafficking and exploitation
- education, training and employment
- cycle of deprivation

Each small group was asked to map, using flipchart, the interventions of the different programmes represented in the group, as well as others known to the participants, and to map any gaps where needs were not being covered by the known interventions.

5. **Desk research** has been ongoing throughout the time of primary research including reviewing research reports, local government plans, strategies and policies, organisational websites and newspaper articles (see Reference section for sources).



## Response rate

**1. 36 people participated in semi-structured interviews including:**

- 8 church-based family and youth outreach workers
- 6 people working in the statutory sector including Oxford City Council, local children's centres, early intervention and a statutory funded programme in an area of multiple deprivation
- 4 people involved in local education including primary school teacher, foundation stage head teacher, volunteer in local school and a county-wide deputy director of education
- 4 people from independent Christian outreach programmes
- 4 people providing Christian activities and youth work in local primary and secondary schools
- 3 foster and adoptive parents
- 2 social workers for looked after children
- 1 director of youth services for independent family centre
- 1 mental health professional
- 1 Senior Police officer involved with Operation Bullfinch
- 1 volunteer for an after school programme
- 1 director of an independent programme working with struggling young people

**2. 91 churches and agencies responded to the online survey, a 20% response rate.** This included 59 churches (65% of responses), the majority of which were Church of England. 15% of responses were from Christians involved in community and voluntary activity. Some examples of others who responded were Teaching Assistants from local schools, a pre-school supervisor and a foster carer.

**3. 50 children and young people, aged between 10 and 18 years old, from a mix of ethnic backgrounds and faith perspectives participated in the 6 focus groups.** These breakdown as follows:

- 5 young people aged 10 to 14 (2 in Year 5, 2 in Year 7 and 1 in Year 9) participated in the E. Oxford Youth session.
- 15 sixth formers aged 16 and 17 (Year 12) from St. Gregory the Great Secondary school participated
- 30 11-18 year olds (12 x 11 year olds, 4x 12 year olds, 5x 13 year olds, 1x14 year olds, 1x 15 year olds, 2x 16 year olds, 4x 17 year olds, 1x 18 year old) from lunchtime Christian Unions at Cheney, Cherwell Upper Site, Cherwell Lower site and Oxford Spires Academy participated.

Age	Total Number of Children and Young People
10	2
11	12
12	6
13	5
14	2
15	1
16	9
17	12
18	1

**4. 60 adults, involved with children and young people, participated in 10 focus groups** which interacted with the initial research findings and gave feedback during the Doorsteps Conference held in Oxford on 27th September 2014 ([www.viva.org/doorsteps](http://www.viva.org/doorsteps)).

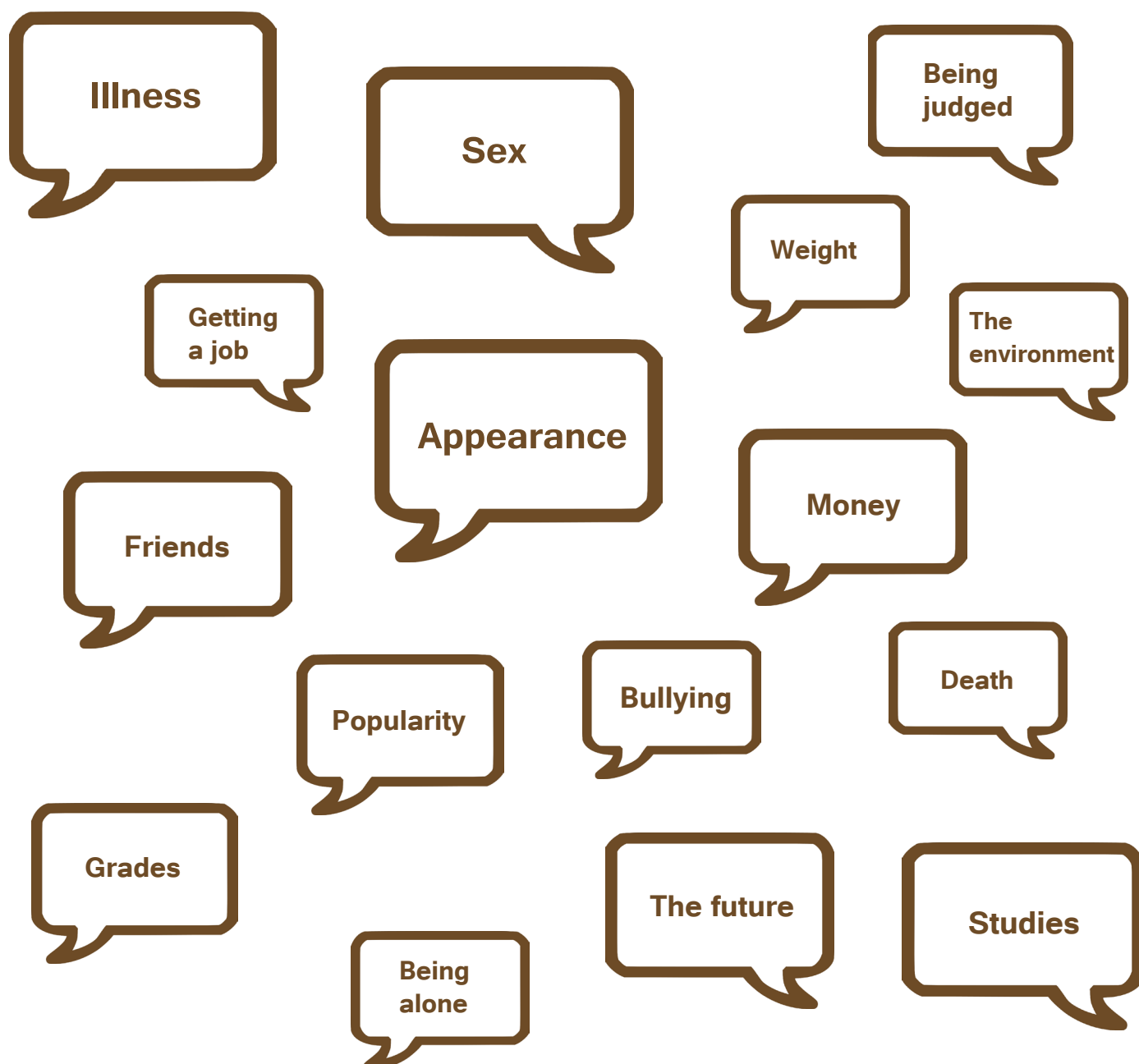
### 3 Results/Research Findings

#### 3.1.1 Most pressing issues as reported by different groups

	CROSS-SECTOR INTERVIEWS	CHURCHES & CHRISTIAN AGENCIES	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
PRIORITY			
1st	 <p>Unstable family life/struggling parents</p>	 <p>Lack of opportunities to explore and/or practice faith &amp; spirituality</p>	 <p>School work and exams</p>
	<i>TIED EQUAL WITH</i>		
2nd	 <p>Low self-esteem</p>	 <p>Unstable family life/struggling parents</p>	 <p>Unstable family life/struggling parents</p>
3rd	 <p>Difficulty entering employment</p>	 <p>Low self-esteem</p>	 <p>Low self-esteem</p>
4th	 <p>Lack of aspiration/purpose for life</p>	 <p>Lack of aspiration/purpose for life</p>	 <p>Abuse (including violence, bullying and neglect)</p>
5th	 <p>Low educational attainment/underachievement</p>	 <p>Household poverty</p>	 <p>Sex and relationships</p>

### 3.1.2 What do you worry about?

Answers from 15 sixth formers aged 16–17. Relative size of speech bubble represents frequency of answer.



**Overall children and young people are most worried about school work e.g. grades, studies and exams which is not mentioned as an issue by other data sources.**

However, struggles related to **family life and low self-esteem** also feature highly and this confirms the issues highlighted in both interviews and surveys.

Abuse especially **bullying** is mentioned frequently as a concern with one young person writing in a focus group: “Bullying is getting out of hand, not able to control it and it is a major issue”. **Sex and relationships** are worrying young people, especially the older teenagers.

An interviewee from Oxford City Council working with young people made the following observations about the issues highlighted by this study:

*“It is no surprise to me that this study brings out unstable family life... it is an underlying or foundational issue that leads to other issues for young people like low self-esteem. It is also no surprise that children and young people do not mention lack of vision or aspiration for life as an issue for them. Young people aspire to what they know and what they see around them without questioning it... so they don’t know to mention lack of aspiration.”*



## Issues that make headlines

- teenage suicide and self-harm
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and trafficking
- difficulty entering employment (NEET/NIL)
- children in care
- juvenile crime
- substance abuse
- asylum seeking young people
- radicalisation of young people

**Increased  
vulnerability**

**Underachievement**

**Lack of vision  
and aspiration**

**Low self-esteem**

**Struggling families /  
unstable family life**



### 3.1.3 Differences between interview and survey responses

**Low self-esteem, struggling families and lack of aspiration or vision for life all appeared in the top five issues in interviews and surveys.**

Opportunity to practice or explore faith and spirituality is the most significant issue for churches and Christian groups which is perhaps not surprising since it is a key part of their *raison d'être* and therefore an issue that churches are likely to focus their attention on.

### 3.1.4 Causes and Effects

**Many interviewees highlighted the inter-relationship between these issues, many overlap and the existence of one is often linked to a higher prevalence of another.**

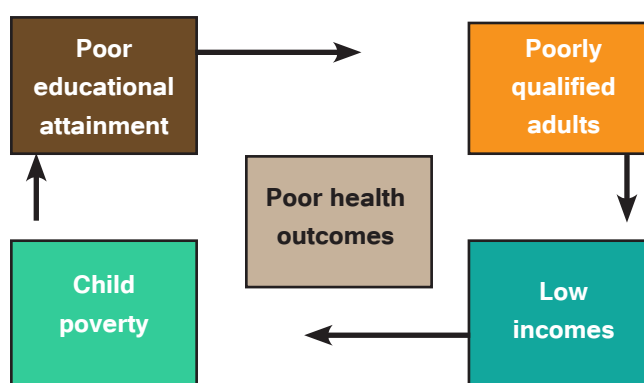
One interviewee working in one of Oxford City's areas of multiple deprivation summed it up in the following way: *"There is a link between long term deprivation, health, parenting and SEN (Special Educational Needs)...Children are hungry...the family rely on the food bank. Children are from single parent families and their family lives are unstable, they lack aspiration for life or positive male role models. I wonder how parents are managing anything at all...their lives are in such chaos. When children suffer from deprivation and poverty it is linked to poor nutrition and I would love to see more study into the relationship between these factors and the increasing number of children with recognised SEN in areas of multiple deprivation."*

**<< The issues that make newspaper headlines are just the tip of the iceberg.** These are the issues where most specialist intervention is often needed. However, below the waterline are the ongoing chronic issues which are cyclical and compound generation upon generation.

In many ways activities that break the cycle and prevent or protect children and young people from perpetuating the cycle in their lives are the most important for the long-term and for the highest number of vulnerable children and families.

In addition survey respondents mentioned household poverty whereas difficulty entering employment and low educational attainment and underachievement featured more highly in the interviews.

This perhaps reflects a geographical bias as interviewees were predominantly based in Oxford City where educational attainment is more of an issue whereas survey respondents were located throughout the county of Oxfordshire where household poverty appears as a more general issue.



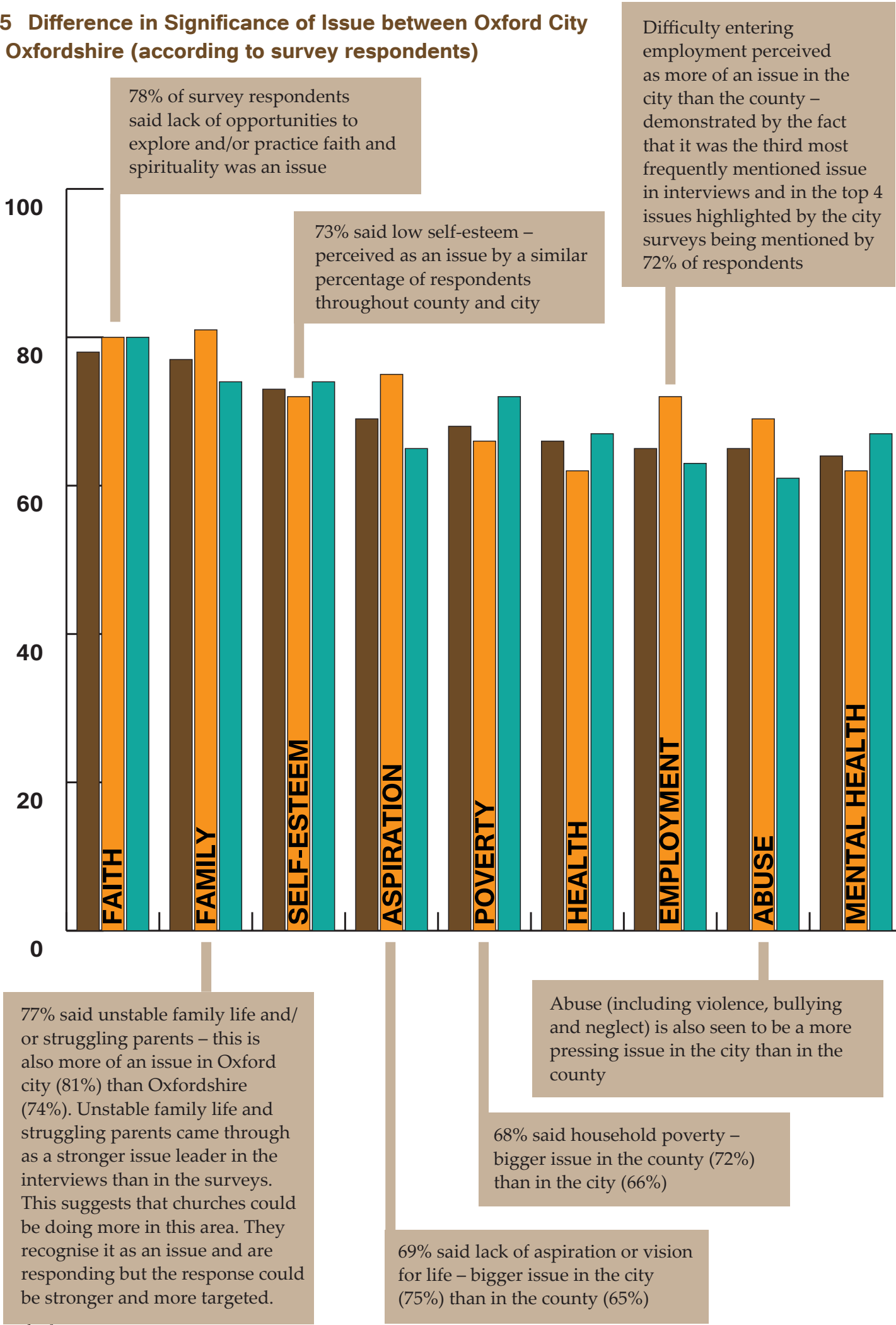
*Diagram to illustrate the Cycle of Deprivation*

It is arguably these issues, featured below the waterline, where most churches and Christian groups are best placed to work. E.g. preventative responses that support struggling families, promote resilience in young people and aim to break the cycle of issues lower down the pyramid and stop children and young people being so vulnerable that they fall victim to issues such as CSE, self-harm or juvenile crime.

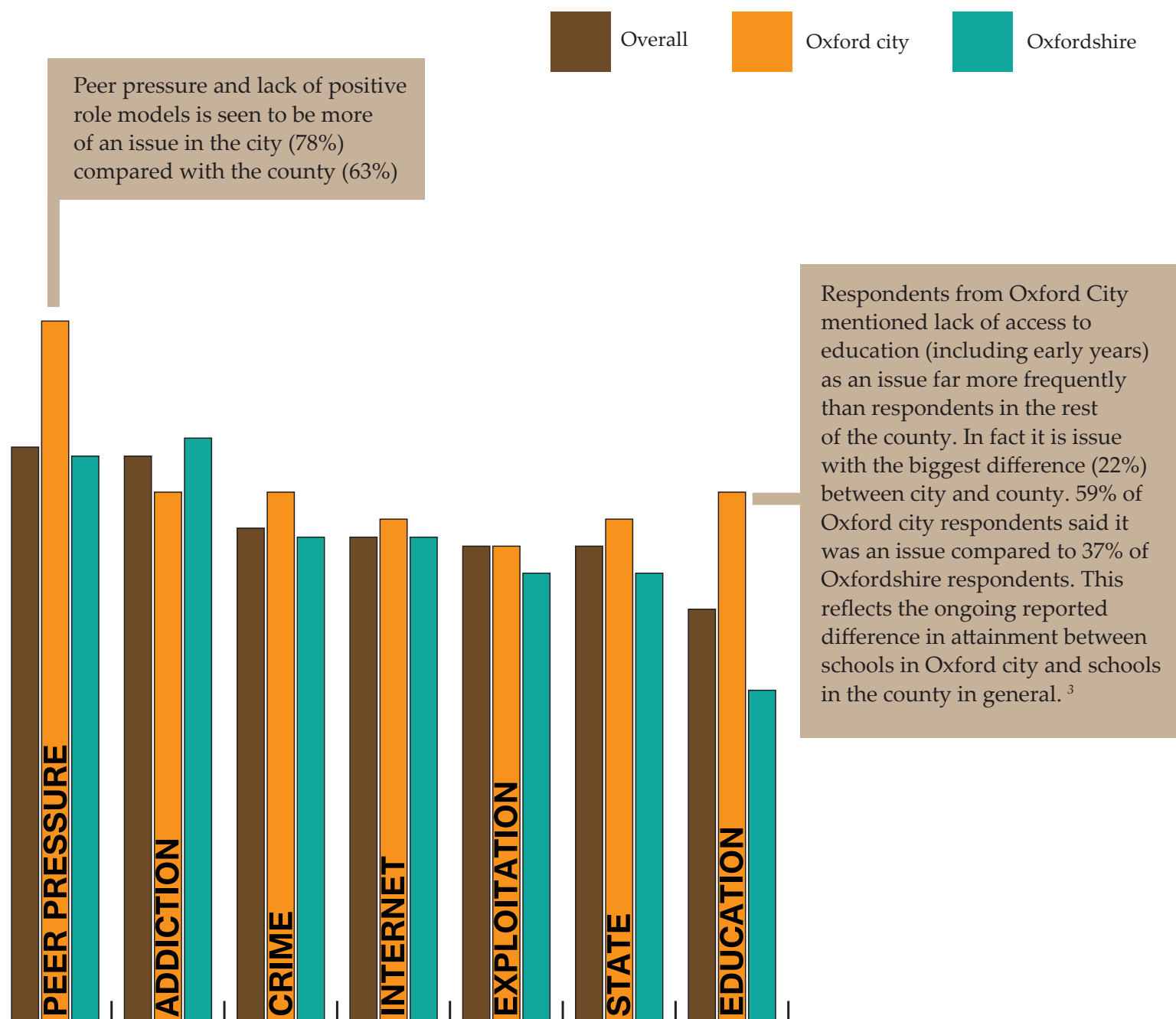
*"...Given the role that stable families play in giving children the best start in life, government cannot ignore the implications of family breakdown, and has an important role to play in supporting strong and stable family relationships"*<sup>2</sup>

There was widespread mention throughout interviews, surveys and focus groups of the need to see children and young people in the context of their family in order to effectively respond to their needs. One interviewee said "It's holistic, you need to see the young person in the context of their family, if you solve the family issues...the young person can often sort themselves out..."

### 3.1.5 Difference in Significance of Issue between Oxford City and Oxfordshire (according to survey respondents)







One interviewee working in the area of difficulty entering employment highlighted some of the obstacles young people face when seeking employment.

“ The world of advice and guidance in schools is fragmented and inconsistent, it’s a bit of postcode lottery as schools are responsible themselves to provide it since the connections service in secondary schools was cut. There is also a mismatch between the skills of young people and the labour market...young people are saying the opportunities for work are not there while business leaders are saying that they are not able to recruit young people as they don’t have the necessary skills. ”

## 3.2 The current statutory and civil society goals and related interventions for children and young people

### 3.2.1 Statutory goals and interventions

“

*We want Oxfordshire to be the best place in England for children and young people to grow up, by working with every child and young person to develop the skills, confidence and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential.*<sup>4</sup>

”

This is the overarching vision articulated by The Children’s Trust that produces Oxfordshire’s Children and Young People’s plan.<sup>5</sup> It is a partnership body comprising statutory, civil society and voluntary sector agencies focusing on the needs of children and young people in Oxfordshire.

It has the mandate to demonstrate effective partnership working across Oxfordshire to meet children and young peoples’ health and social care needs, to achieve effective use of resources and to deliver the priorities and objectives arising from Oxfordshire’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)<sup>6</sup> which underpins the Children and Young People’s plan (CYPP). The CYPP has 4 key priority areas:

- A healthy start in life for all children and for all children to stay healthy into adulthood
- Narrowing the gap for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups
- Keeping all children and young people safer
- Raising achievement for all children and young people

The Children’s Trust focuses where partners are already working to achieve these goals and where partnership working and collective action can add the most value to existing efforts to achieve these same goals.

Interviews and desk research undertaken for this study highlight some of the key statutory and civil society interventions in place to respond to both the goals highlighted above and the significant issues highlighted in section 3.1:

- Safeguarding and the work of Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) as a multi-agency partnership working together to

protect children from harm, abuse and neglect. This includes Serious Case Reviews and safeguarding training for all frontline staff.<sup>7</sup>

- Increased investment during 2013/14 in integrated working across sectors, especially Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire County Council and Social Services, in efforts to combat child sexual exploitation e.g. Establishment of the multi-disciplinary Kingfisher team and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as well as awareness raising in schools and child protection training for 7,500 multi-agency staff.
- An additional £1.4m allocated to fund the recruitment of a further 21 dedicated child protection social workers, plus increasing the budget for children’s social care by almost £20m in real terms between 2006/7 and 2013/14.<sup>8</sup>
- Work of Youth Partnership board around youth engagement, improving the pathways into work for NEET/NIL and using sport to promote leadership, motivation and self-esteem<sup>9</sup> including commissioning, by Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council, of four job clubs in Barton, Wood Farm, Littlemore and The Leys.<sup>10</sup>
- Focus on the hardest to reach families e.g. ‘thriving families’ programme.<sup>11</sup>
- £400,000 per year 2012-2016 to raise educational attainment in Oxford city primary schools.<sup>12</sup>
- Strategies for behaviour, attendance, and vulnerable learners.<sup>13</sup>



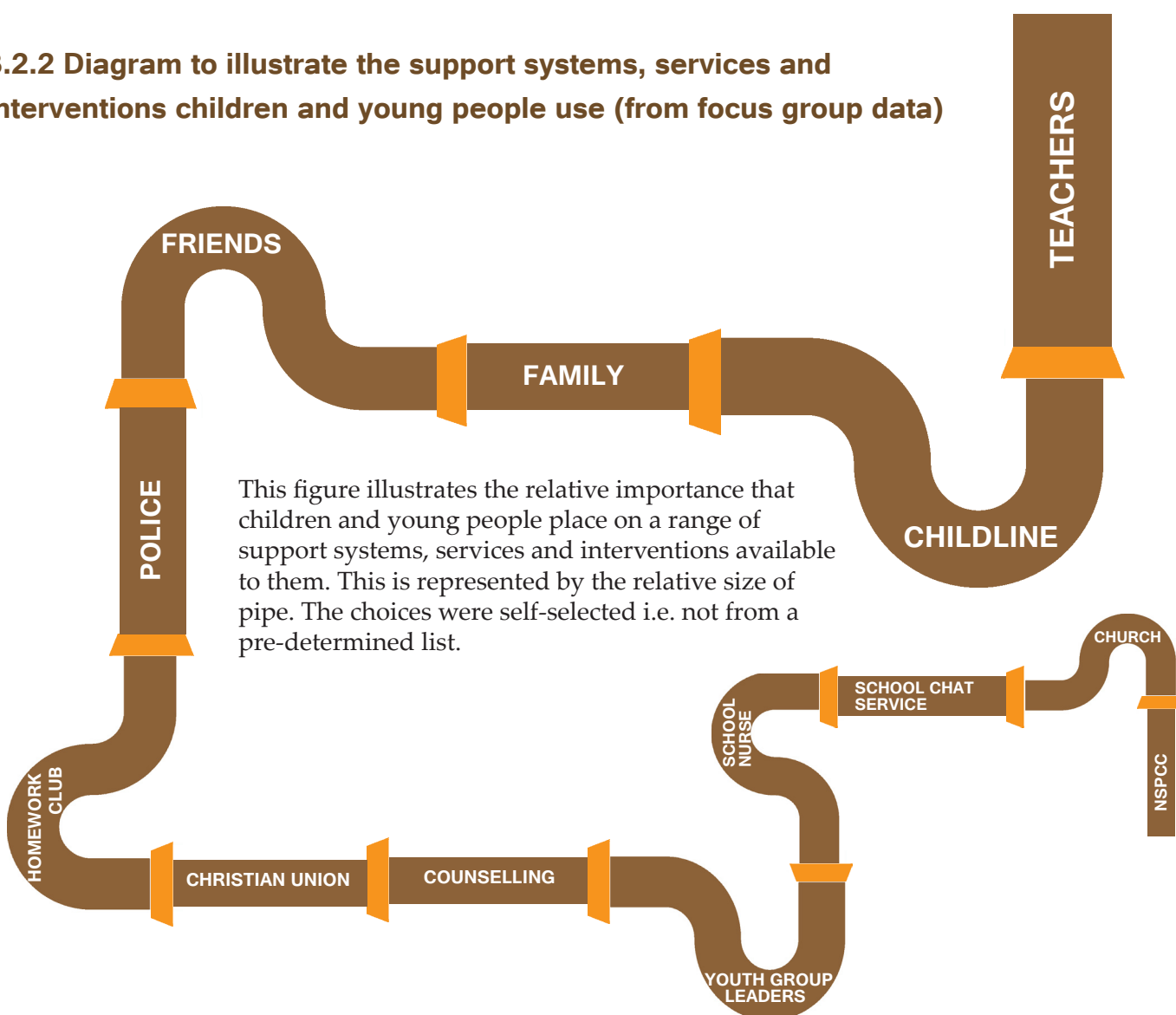
These goals and interventions remain key to a thriving future for Oxfordshire’s children and young people but they exist alongside the reality of shrinking statutory provision. Appendix 2 illustrates the extent of provision under threat.

In December 2014 Oxfordshire County Council announced proposals for £20m of new savings <sup>14</sup>, including £3m in cuts to children and family services e.g. children’s centres and early intervention hubs, due to “Huge and unprecedented pressures on budgets in adults’ and children’s social care over the coming years.” Ian Hudspeth, leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said, “We are now at the stage where around half our budget is spent on two per cent of the population - older people; people with physical and learning disabilities, and vulnerable children...Unless we get additional funding, the county council will struggle to do anything but provide a safety net for the most vulnerable people in Oxfordshire.” <sup>15</sup>

The future is bleak for statutory services. The local authority is likely to only provide the services which they are legally required to, their statutory obligations, such as children’s social care. Not least because the needs in this area continue to rise for example, this is an ongoing rise in the number of children subject to child protection plans. <sup>16</sup> As a result of these increased pressures there are now higher thresholds of need that children, young people and families must reach in order to qualify for existing services and funding pots for voluntary sector programmes are also disappearing.

This can be considered as both a crisis and an opportunity. Who is able to step into the space created when statutory services are pulled back? Perhaps community groups, particularly churches can fill the gap for children, young people and families who are struggling and need support but are not at the crisis point where social services will intervene.

### 3.2.2 Diagram to illustrate the support systems, services and interventions children and young people use (from focus group data)

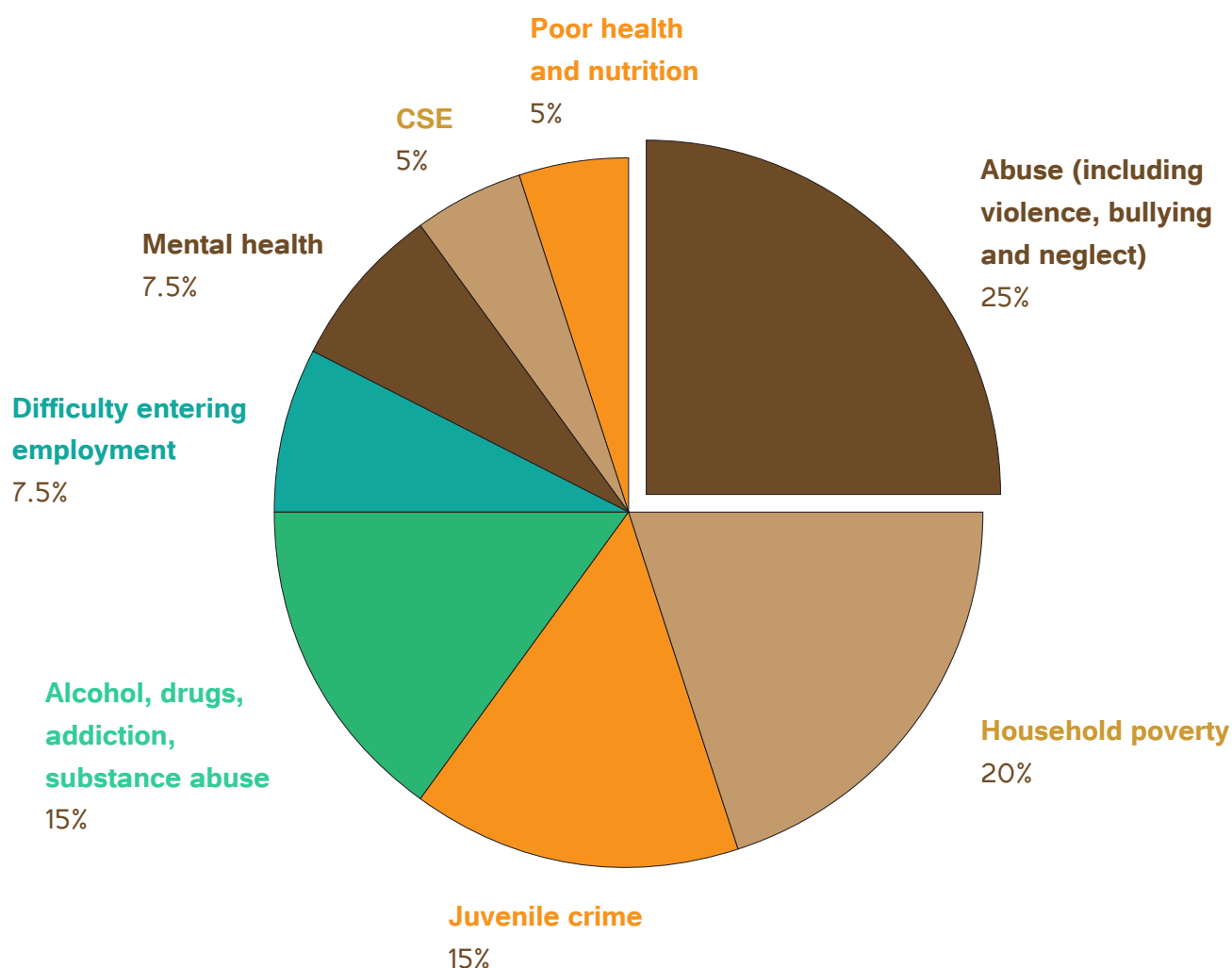




### 3.2.3 Survey Respondents Perceptions of Community, Voluntary and Statutory Sector Interventions

This section presents survey respondents' views on what issues other Community, Voluntary and Statutory Sector groups are focusing on.

*A pie chart to demonstrate how much survey respondents perceive that civil society and statutory bodies are responding to the following issues:*

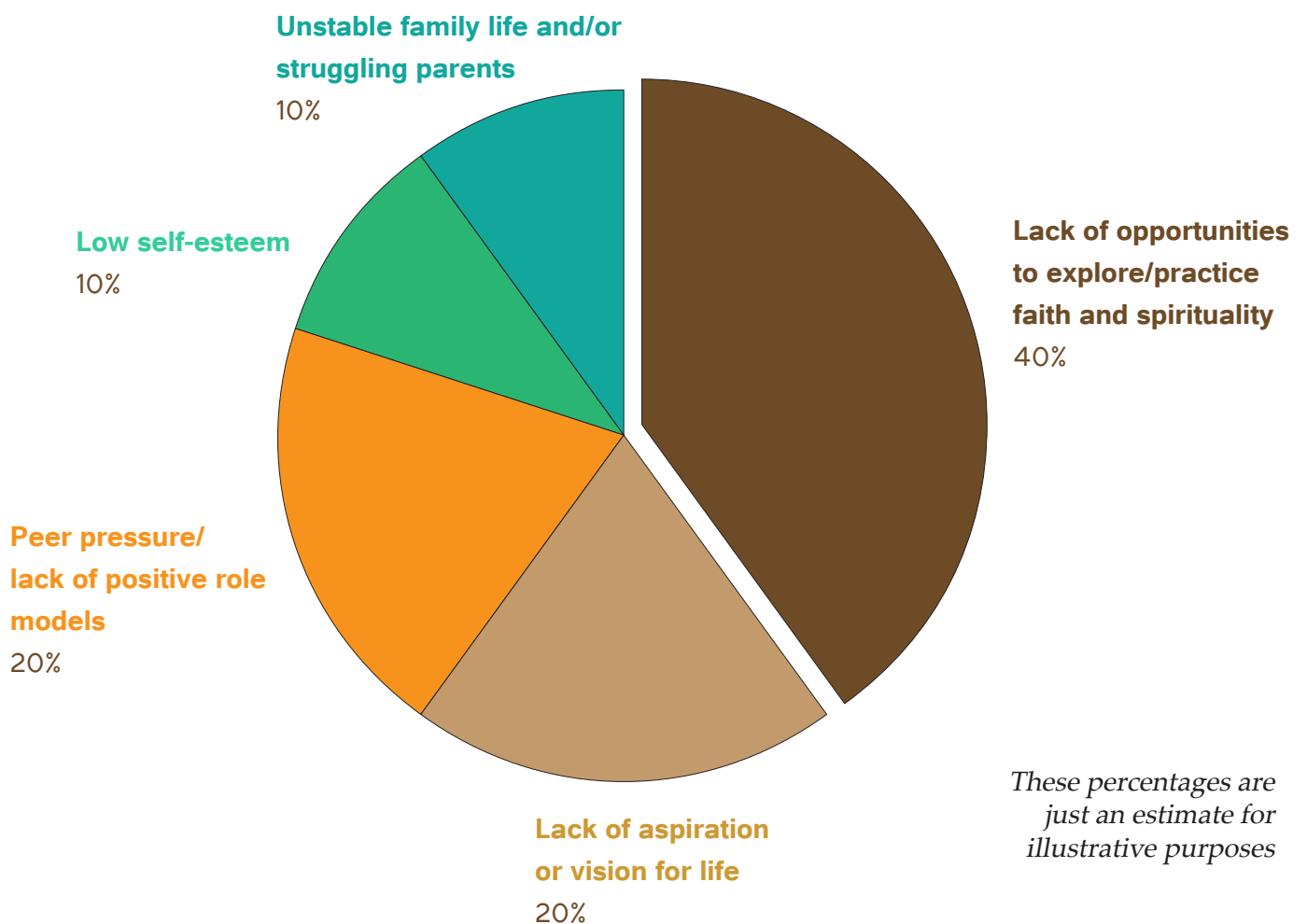


This pie chart illustrates that churches believe statutory and civil society groups are focusing on issues of abuse and household poverty, followed by alcohol, drugs, addiction and substance abuse. They are, however, less focused on others issues such as CSE and poor health and nutrition.

### 3.3 What churches and Christian agencies are doing in response to the issues affecting children and young people

This section presents survey respondents' views of the issues churches and Christian groups are responding to and how they are responding to them.

#### 3.3.1 What issues facing children and young people are churches and Christian groups responding to?

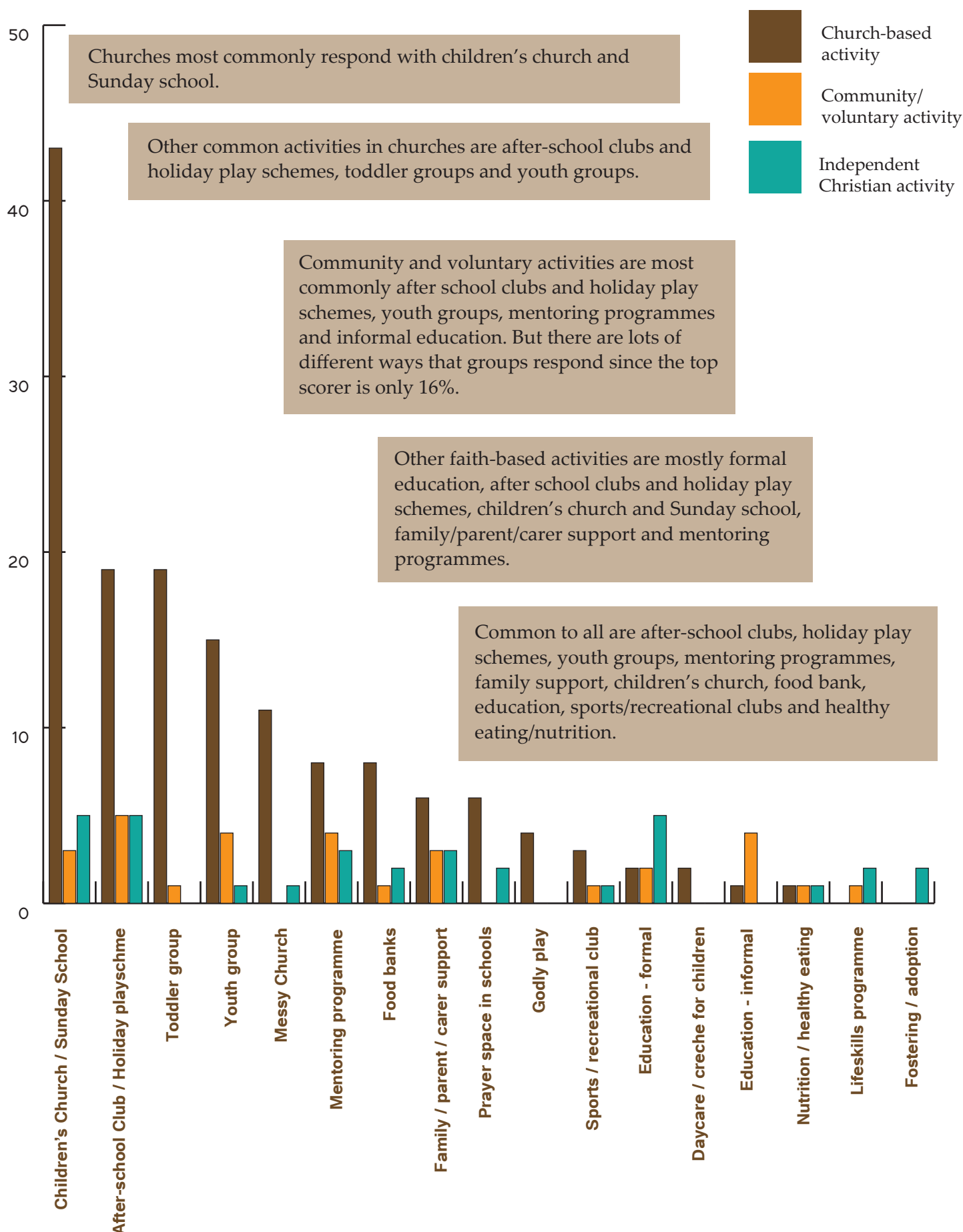


Churches and Christian groups have recognised some of the most significant issues and perceive that their interventions are responding to them in some way. They do not necessarily recognise the issues in the same priority order as broader civil society including children and young people themselves.

Children and young people are also concerned about school work and exams, abuse (including bullying) as well as sex and relationships.

Churches could give a greater priority of focus to underlying issues such as unstable family life and struggling parents as well as the specific concerns highlighted by children and young people.

### 3.3.2 How are churches and Christian groups responding to issues facing children and young people?



Graph to illustrate activities of churches and Christian groups, by percentage of survey responses

<< This graph tells us that churches and Christian groups have recognised some significant issues affecting children and young people in their community. However, it is unclear how far their most common interventions (Children's church / Sunday school, toddler groups and youth groups) go to address the most commonly significant issues of **low self-esteem and struggling families**. They also don't specifically target issues of particular concern to young people such as schoolwork, abuse or sex and relationships. There is an opportunity here for churches and Christian groups.

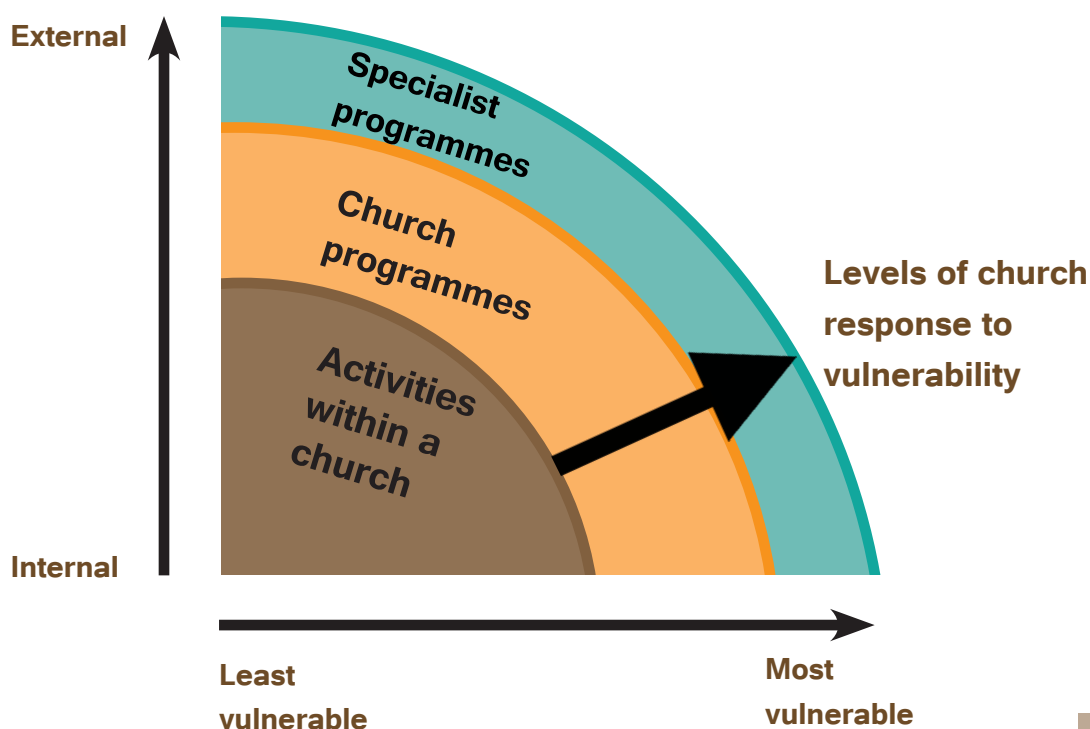
However, there are a range of other less frequently occurring Christian voluntary and community programmes that are perhaps more targeted at effectively addressing these needs - including after school clubs, holiday play schemes, mentoring programmes, family/carer support and food banks. Overall churches seem to be doing things predominantly 'in' church with the least vulnerable children and there is an opportunity for the church to reach 'out' into the community to come alongside those who are struggling or vulnerable.

This can be visualised in the diagram below:



- **Most activity is within churches** e.g. Children's church/ Sunday school, toddler groups or youth groups and seems to be aimed at children of families already engaged in the church or happy to enter a church building i.e. **generally the least vulnerable**.
- **Church programmes** are strategic responses to children and young people with higher levels of vulnerability. A smaller number of churches have community outreach activities that exist to work with struggling families, children and young people and some have started semi-independent or independent projects separate from the regular activities of the church that specifically come alongside those **more vulnerable in the community**.
- **Specialist programmes** to address specific issues/**very vulnerable young people** – a handful of churches partner with these specialised intervention programmes.

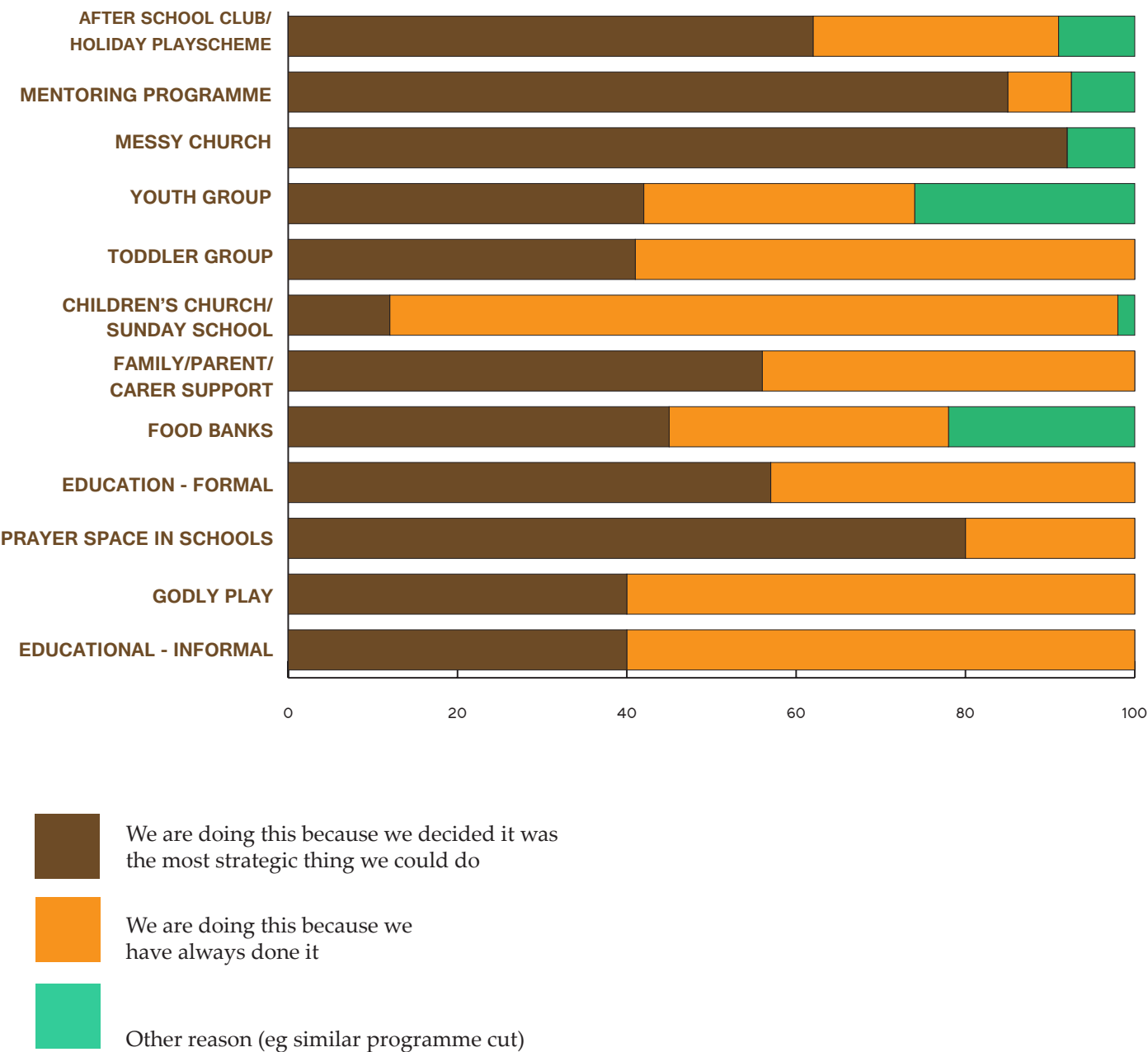
This section illustrates that the Church could be more relevant in the local community if it could be more proactive in addressing the specific needs of vulnerable children, young people and struggling families.






3.3.3 Why do Christians do what they do?

Graph to illustrate the reason churches and Christian groups start their activities, by percentage of survey responses



 42% of all activities surveyed were started by churches and Christian groups because they were considered ‘the most strategic thing they could do’ whereas 40% of all activities were because they ‘have always done it’.

The remaining 18% of activities started for other reasons, most significantly because a similar state-run programme was cut. The most common activities, according to the graph in 3.3.2 on page 20, considered strategic are after school clubs, holiday play schemes, mentoring programmes and Messy Church. This suggests many churches are attempting to make a strategic response to specific needs. It is hard to say how far these responses go towards addressing the most common pressing issues highlighted by this study, as it depends whether or not the programme itself is specifically designed to target them.

By far the most common activity being done because ‘we have always done it’ is Children’s church or Sunday school (49% of ‘always done it’ activity) while a few churches have a long history of running activities that target the most common pressing issues highlighted by this study e.g. family support or mentoring programmes.

This suggests that many churches are focussing on traditional activities aimed at children who already come to church i.e. children in the middle of the concentric circles (see diagram in 3.3.2), or those who are least vulnerable.

### **3.3.4 What’s going well in churches’ and Christian groups’ existing work with children, young people and families?**

This study discovered some good examples of local churches making strategic and sacrificial choices to engage in a meaningful way with children, young people and families in their community, including in areas of multiple deprivation.

These programmes and activities target many of the top issues of low self-esteem, struggling families, lack of aspiration and vision for life, peer pressure, lack of positive role models, difficulty entering employment, household poverty and lack of opportunities to explore and/or practice faith and spirituality.

**Moreover, this also suggests that when a church starts something it keeps doing it without always taking the time to review if it is still the best thing to be doing in light of changes in the local context.** For example, traditional churches have a long history of running Sunday schools which started as a strategic response to a specific need in the 18th century i.e. many children worked in factories six days a week and could only go to school on Sunday which is not the case in the 21st Century.<sup>17</sup>

This suggests that churches should consider ways to review their child-focussed activities and ensure they remain inclusive and relevant to the current needs of children and young people in the wider community.

For instance, if Messy Church is a strategic way to engage local families perhaps churches could consider how more of their Sunday school/ children’s church could be run as messy church. Again, with mentoring programmes, youth groups, toddler groups, after school clubs and holiday playschemes this graph suggests that they can be strategic if their focus is towards helping children and young people grow in areas such as self-esteem, aspiration for life and in navigating the complexities of school work, pressure, sex and relationships. Prayer spaces in schools are also considered to be a good way to engage children and young people in thinking about matters of faith and spirituality.

Often this is through developing trusting relationships in the context of mentoring, youth leadership development including life skills and self-esteem, after school clubs, sports activities, mum and toddler groups, job clubs, debt counselling, food banks and parenting courses.

There are also some notable examples of joined up strategy, information sharing and even co-production between the church or Christian groups and other local actors including the police, council, school and community groups in the area.

Quotes taken from survey respondents' free-flow answers to the survey question:  
'Please tell us what is going well in your work with children and young people.'

“ We're a small local charity that work with many of the churches in the local area to address the needs of vulnerable families with small children. We believe passionately that we need to work with the family as a whole rather than isolated work with the children. Our vision is to share our methods with others so that churches can serve vulnerable families. Our biggest success is the Family College. We run a 10 week course in Parenting and Home Management. Families attend 2 days per week in a well equipped and well staffed play space. Children are cared for while their parents go out for their tutor time, they then rejoin the group for family play and shared lunch so that the parents can put into practice under supervision what they're learning in class. This is an immensely popular course and has an excellent attendance and completion rate. Many of the students then go on to complete the second level in Personal Growth and Development to build up their confidence and self esteem as individuals. Many of our parents are very young adults themselves and have been brought up in the care system without a good model for parenting. We worked in partnership with Bright Horizons to create a "Bright Space" - a safe and welcoming environment where children of vulnerable and struggling families can play and learn. This works extremely well both for the Family College and the weekly Family Day (toddler group). We also provide "Family Friends" for each family who wants one - which is someone to befriend, encourage and give advice about parenting and relating well with their children.” ”

An example of a successful faith-based family support project

“ Increasing their motivation, self-esteem and employability ”

“ Toddler group is thriving and owned by the mothers ”

“ Provide holidays for children who will never get the opportunity ”

“ Great community engagement ”

“ Children growing in confidence and life-skills ”

“ Children who were purposeless are now focusing and making good choices for life ”

“ Awareness that children are the chuch of today not just tomorrow ”

“ Very good work is happening at the local schools ”

“ Somewhere children can play and feel safe and be creative ”

“ Good track record of working with hard-to-reach families ”

## Success stories

Relative size of star represents frequency that activity is mentioned by survey respondents as being successful



“The children are happy with holidays taken by the seaside with us each summer, free music lessons, cooking, sewing sessions and report to us regularly quite openly what their needs are. We take them to children’s play areas and support the children by attending any school events they may be participating in. We sometimes see the need to feed them. Other members of this informal network of helping adults help the children with their homework, literacy skills and washing clothes and bedding and offer sleep-overs occasionally for the children. We talk to each other and the children’s social worker when necessary. We take them to the RAD Club which I help lead, where they have fun activities in a Christian atmosphere.”

An example of a Church taking a relational approach to supporting one family with children and a struggling dad



Graph to demonstrate gap between significance of need and level of intervention across sectors, by percentage of survey respondents



3.4 The gaps between need and intervention

3.4.1 Gaps between need and intervention across all sectors – according to survey respondents

<< The graph on the previous page demonstrates the gap or difference between how significant survey respondents perceive an issue to be and how significant they perceive the existing local interventions in that issue are.

Household poverty, difficulty entering employment and misuse or overuse of internet and social media are the biggest gaps between level of need and level of intervention. So there is need for an overall rise in response to these issues. However, of the five most significant issues the biggest gap is in the response to household poverty, unstable family life and struggling parents.

Where are churches best placed to get involved?

And where are the gaps in how the Church is responding to the issues?

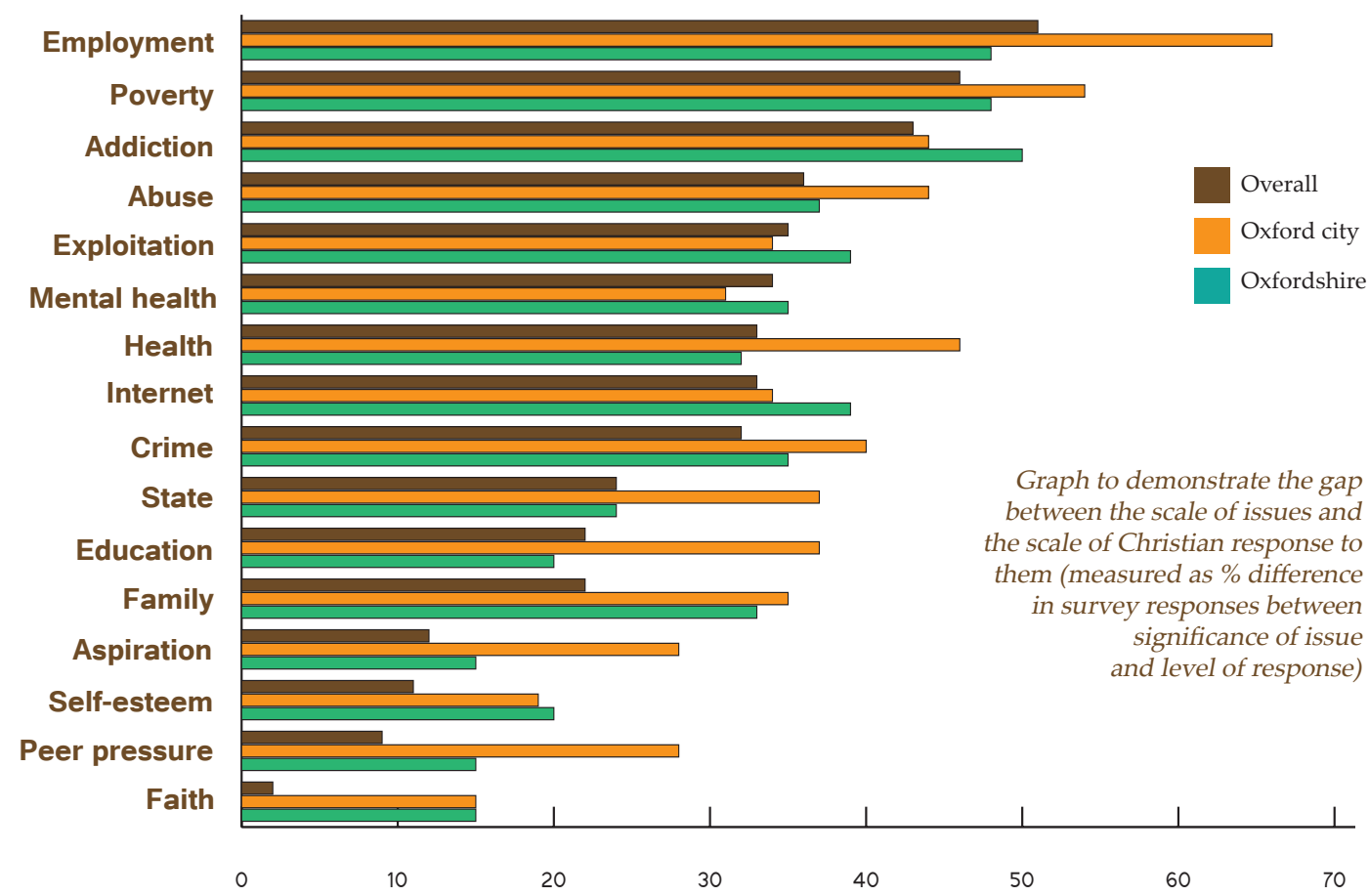
**A case study of asylum-seeking children**  
(data source: interview with a social worker)

These young asylum seekers are very vulnerable but a group hidden from this study. They are often from countries such as Eritrea, Albania, Afghanistan and Iran.

If they are under the age of 18 they are assessed and placed with foster families. When they turn 18, if they are refused asylum (following a human rights assessment), they will be on a waiting list to be returned home.

The local authority only has legal responsibility if it is considered that the young person’s human rights are being breached in their country of origin. Otherwise the local authority considers that it has done what it can for these young people. But while they are waiting to be returned home these young people are at very real risk of exploitation as they lose all rights and access to benefits after they turn 18 e.g. no housing benefit or provision for accommodation. They cannot work legally.

This is a clear gap for a small number of very vulnerable young people. How could local faith communities come alongside these young people to provide an informal network of support? And how can they link to other local groups already working with refugees and asylum seekers?



Graph to demonstrate the gap between the scale of issues and the scale of Christian response to them (measured as % difference in survey responses between significance of issue and level of response)

### 3.4.2 Gaps between need and intervention in the Christian response in Oxfordshire and Oxford City

◀◀ This graph represents the difference between how much survey respondents perceive an issue to be significant and how much they perceive churches and other Christians are responding to these same issues. It is different from the graph in section 3.4.1 because it is just focussing on how much churches and Christians are responding to the issues and it simply shows the size of the gap. It does not show the overall importance of the issue itself.

So the gap between the perceived significance of an issue and the Christian response to it are clearest around difficulty entering employment, household poverty and substance abuse issues. The gap in response to difficulty entering employment is particularly marked in Oxford City whereas the gap in Oxfordshire is more notable around substance abuse issues.

This suggests that churches are responding to other issues in some way but they are not doing very much around these issues. So despite the rise in the number food banks, including those run by churches, there is still more need to respond to household poverty.

In terms of opportunities to close the gaps around household poverty and difficulty entering employment five Oxford churches in partnership with Christians Against Poverty<sup>18</sup>, who work across the UK to lift people out of debt and poverty, have recently opened a debt counselling centre in Oxford<sup>19</sup> and their programme model now includes job clubs. This is a very positive step for churches to work together to meet a clear need.

In Oxford city there is a gap around poor health, nutrition and unhealthy lifestyle. There is also a gap around the response to abuse (including violence, bullying and neglect) this is relevant as the focus groups with children and young people also mention abuse as something that worries them and they would like to see more safe places to go. In E. Oxford there is a gap in the response to low educational attainment and access to good education (including early years) – this was highlighted particularly in the interviews.



One interesting difference between the gaps highlighted in 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 is that the gap around misuse of the internet and social media is smaller in the Christian response than it is the cross-sector response. This is a little surprising and may suggest Christians think they are responding to this issue relatively more than other sectors.

The question is where, and how, are churches and Christian groups best placed to respond to these gaps. In some issues being aware of warning signs and referral systems may be most appropriate, in others signposting local families to resources and, in some cases, direct action – prevention or intervention projects.

**3.4.3 The gaps according to children and young people (when asked, “what could make things better?”)**



Most frequently mentioned themes in the focus groups included more safe places to go with free things to do e.g. sports and social activities.

Children and young people consulted <sup>18</sup> mention similar things including a wider range of sports and more competitive sports as well as more information on and support in applying for jobs and links to youth employment and apprenticeships.

Relative size of cloud represents frequency that the gap is mentioned by focus group participants. The choices were self-selected ie not from a pre-determined list.



### 3.5 The existing level of relationship and collaboration across civil society especially between churches, Christian agencies and other statutory or voluntary sector bodies

#### The existing level of collaboration reported by survey respondents

62% of survey respondents say they don't collaborate with anyone else with 26% saying they don't know anyone else doing work with children and young people and 36% saying that they know others but don't connect. The greatest level of disconnect is between Churches and statutory groups with 61% of respondents reporting a low level of connection with the statutory sector (answering either 'we don't know anyone' or 'we know them but don't connect'). Joint training is least common form of working together with only 2% respondents engaged. However, 32% of churches report some level of sharing of resources with other churches and there are a few pockets of partnership between churches and schools with 27% reporting these sorts of joint initiatives. A good example of churches collaborating together to meet a clear relevant need is the five Oxford churches working in partnership with Christians Against Poverty<sup>20</sup> to lift people out of debt and poverty through opening a debt counselling centre in Oxford.<sup>21</sup>

#### Co-production between churches or Christian groups and statutory bodies

18% of survey respondents reported running a programme with statutory groups e.g. local council (referred to as 'co-production'). This represents 12 groups: 42% churches and 58% community, voluntary and other faith-based activities. Several of the churches have started independent or semi-independent programmes for children and young people including schools, mentoring programmes, youth groups and after school clubs and it seems to be these programmes that have the partnership with the local authority.

#### Case Studies of Christian/Statutory Partnership

There are a handful of good examples of joined up strategy and partnering with other local actors e.g. school, police, other churches, voluntary sector and statutory groups. These are often in areas of multiple deprivation such as Barton, Blackbird Leys and Rose Hill in Oxford City.

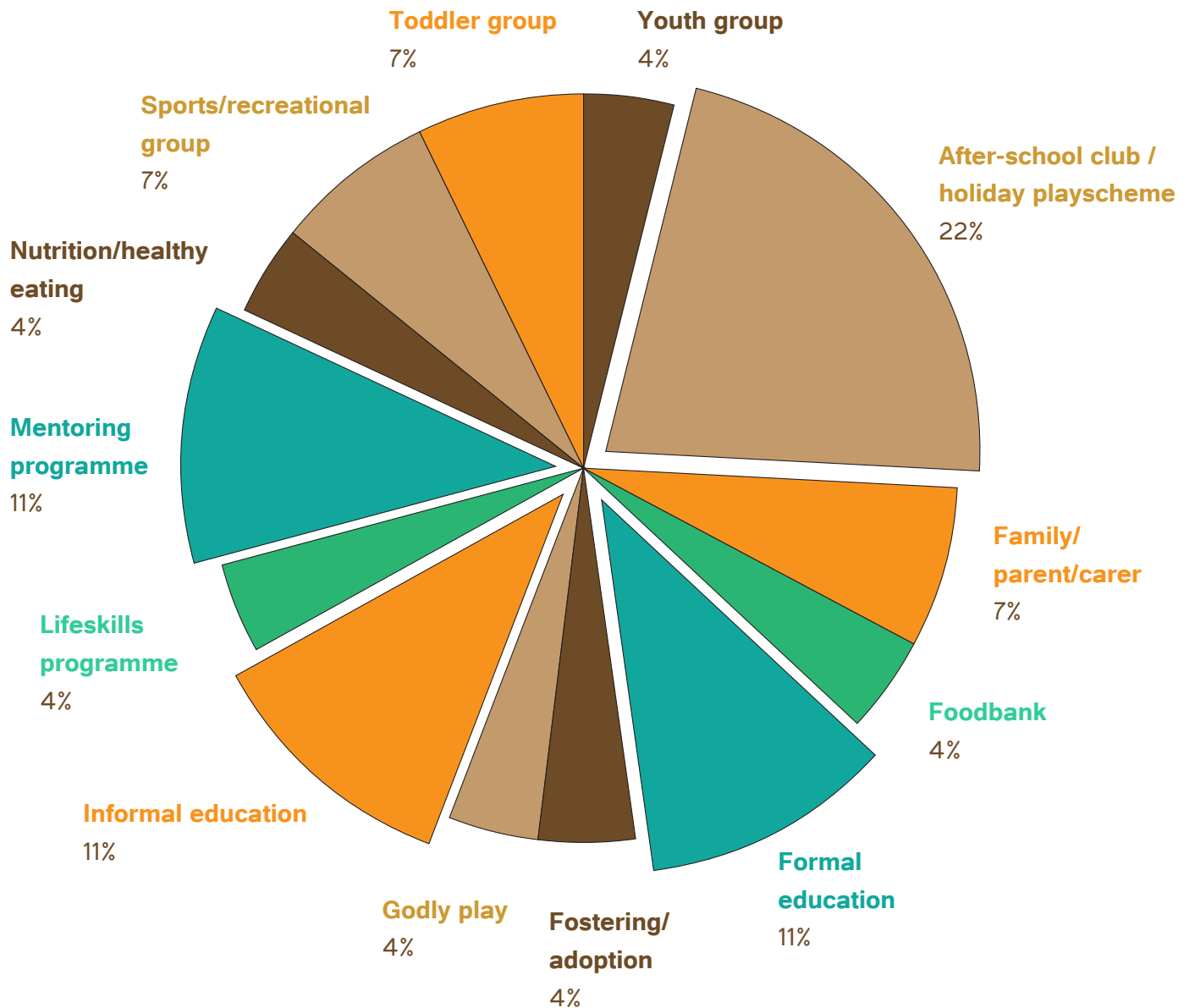
**Oxford Community Church**<sup>22</sup> has a semi-independent programme in Blackbird Leys called the Leys Youth Project<sup>23</sup> which works with several hundred young people each year through

**The co-production of public services** has been defined in a variety of ways - e.g. *"the delivery of public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours"* (new economics foundation) or *"the public sector and citizens making better use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes and improved efficiency"* (Governance International). It encourages them to use the human skills and experience they have to help deliver public or voluntary services. The active engagement of people who have previously been seen as passive recipients is largely positive, enabling them to make services work for them, growing their own confidence and capacity. Nevertheless, in co-production approaches it is important to consider equality around the burden placed on people's time. Co-production is different from 'voice' based interventions as it recognises that it is critical for people to play a role in the activity of delivering services, not simply to contribute ideas to shaping new services that rely on professionals to deliver them.

mentoring activity clubs and has an important working partnership with Oxford Academy in Blackbird Leys. The resolve for local partnering was strengthened following a Wates' Foundation report<sup>24</sup> which stated a lack of coordinated strategy among local actors as the reason for the low level of positive change in Blackbird Leys despite years of high investment.

The **Thrive** programme<sup>25</sup> which inspires and equips young people in Barton to transform their community (Barton is in the top 10% most deprived areas in England) is an interesting example of joint working at various levels. It is a partnership that combines the skills and strengths of people connected to Headington Baptist Church<sup>26</sup> and Innovista<sup>27</sup> (International Christian charity based in Oxford). In Barton the Thrive team works with the Barton Community Association<sup>28</sup>, the local police, youth partnership and other agencies to better help young people. Quite possibly as a result of this joint working the August 2014 crime figures for Oxford City show

**A pie chart to demonstrate activities of groups that partner with statutory sector**



anti-social behaviour dropped by 31% in Barton versus a 5% drop in Oxford as a whole.<sup>29</sup> This is attributed to more of the current generation of local 10-14 year olds taking a different path than the previous group. They are making different choices, staying in school, and removing themselves from unhelpful situations.<sup>30</sup> Partnership impact that makes headlines!

### **Collaboration between Church and State**

Any church or Christian group working with children, young people and families is helping to fulfil Oxfordshire's overarching statutory goal highlighted in section 3.2.1 *"We want Oxfordshire to be the best place in England for children and young people to grow up in, by working with every child and young person to develop the skills, confidence and opportunities they need to achieve their full potential"*

through their intention to improve the lives of children and young people via after school clubs, holiday playschemes, mentoring groups and the like. This means that the vast majority of Churches and Christian groups who participated in this study have a common goal, shared with the local statutory bodies, to see children and young people fulfilling their potential.

The disconnect, mentioned above, between Christian groups and statutory bodies is a challenge to be overcome especially in view of the widespread opinion/rhetoric across all sectors that working together and collaboration is the only way to achieve this shared goal. The question is therefore 'how?' This will be discussed in the next section.

## 3.6 The opportunities for greater collaboration

There is a lot of positive rhetoric across all sectors about the need to work together in order to bring lasting change.

This is reflected in this study with the vast majority of survey respondents interested in more joined up working. 76.5% want to share information and contacts with others and 74% want to make an informed strategic response to common issues facing children and young people. There is also a significant level of interest in signposting to resources (64%) and joint training and equipping (62%). Over half of respondents (56%) want to improve their existing collaborative working relationships.

Since 62% of those surveyed don't connect with others there are clear opportunities to cross-pollinate through sharing good practice and effective intervention models, to collaborate around closing the gaps highlighted by this study and to partner around starting new work where issues are not being sufficiently addressed. There are also opportunities for collaboration that build on what is already going well and for more churches to learn from what is already working and apply that in their local community. In practice, there is more talk than action, this is borne out by the study with 62% of respondents showing little or no connection to others. It is challenging to work out 'how' best to collaborate for real impact. However, there is an almost unprecedented opportunity to find ways through both these challenges.

### 3.6.2 Opportunities for Greater Collaboration between Statutory and Community and Voluntary Sector: Strengthen links with the Oxfordshire Children's Trust and Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Forum

An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) reveals more compelling strengths and opportunities for working together across sectors than weaknesses and threats. The trend is definitely towards forging partnerships across sectors and in light of a shrinking statutory sector, opportunities abound for greater joint working and co-production.



### 3.6.1 Opportunities for future collaboration according to survey respondents

- Linking rural churches together
- Collaborating in the provision of youth group for older children
- Joint training of volunteers around specific issues e.g. mental health
- A Prayer group for Christian teachers and a Christian teachers network
- More collaborative activities across Oxford e.g. children's clubs, youth days, messy church, Christian retreats etc) so that children from different churches could grow together in their faith. It is difficult for smaller churches to put on enough for all of the age groups. Also, it would be useful to have a city-wide email newsletter that advertises all the church activities on which are open to all young people.

There is a clear common agenda among faith, community and statutory groups alongside recognition by statutory bodies of the unique role that faith groups can play as well as an increased emphasis on the active role of the voluntary sector.

The government's focus on the key role of faith groups in challenging social and economic times can be summarised by the following quote speaking about voluntary sector including faith groups *"...often ideally placed to support individuals and families during times of need, and to support communities facing social and economic change..."*

Equally, it is important to work closely at a more local level with voluntary sector organisations and district, town and parish councils" in helping support delivery of welfare to those in the greatest disadvantage and *"...to encourage volunteering and to increase the role of the voluntary sector"*

## SWOT analysis on collaborative working between faith groups and statutory bodies to enhance work with children and young people

<p><b>Strengths (Internal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Common agenda:</b> Children and families are a priority for the church, key priority in public sector too - work together to improve wellbeing and resilience in families.</li> <li>• Public sector agencies universally positive about <b>the unique role</b> that faith groups can contribute to achieving common goals.</li> <li>• Local Government's increased emphasis on the <b>active role of the voluntary sector</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Longevity of commitment</b> that faith communities are able to make to their communities and to community projects. Members of churches live in the neighbourhood and are part of the community – therefore trust base is higher as not someone from the outside or from the 'authorities' (struggling families may feel threatened if local authority offering services).</li> <li>• <b>Examples of good practice</b> in work with children, young people and families and in local partnering between local community, faith groups and statutory e.g. police, schools or voluntary sector.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses (Internal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Challenges around lack of resources</b> e.g. frequency that finance and volunteers mentioned by Churches and Christian groups in the survey (<i>see appendix 5</i>).</li> <li>• <b>Current lack of VCS representation on Children's Trust</b> – which is the main official bridge between statutory sector and VCS.</li> <li>• <b>Few Christian groups involved in OCVA</b> Voluntary and Community Sector Engagement Forum.</li> <li>• <b>Churches and Christian groups are often unaware</b> of and disconnected from the work of statutory groups e.g. 61% of survey respondents didn't know or didn't connect with statutory groups</li> <li>• <b>Statutory groups are often unaware</b> of and disconnected from the work of faith groups</li> <li>• <b>Churches feel disempowered/ignored</b> by statutory and other bodies (not good collaboration) according to focus groups at Doorsteps conference</li> <li>• <b>There is a skills and resources gap</b> e.g. churches are working on statutory obligations without the necessary training e.g. in safeguarding</li> <li>• <b>There are differences in language, ideology and motivation</b> between Statutory bodies and Christian groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities (External)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rising number of children and young people:</b> Number of children born each year in Oxford has risen sharply over last decade. In 2011 there were 40% more under 5s than in 2001. This means a higher population of teenagers (<i>Oxford City Council Child Poverty Analysis 2013</i>).</li> <li>• <b>Issues not going away</b> e.g. Wide disparity of need depending where you grow up in Oxford/Oxfordshire.</li> <li>• <b>Convert rhetoric into practice</b> around the importance of collaboration between Statutory and VCS including faith groups.</li> <li>• <b>Current window of opportunity</b> for VCS reps to be appointed to the Oxfordshire Children's Trust via the OCVA Children and Young People's forum.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats (External)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Not being able to agree</b> about how best to work together.</li> <li>• <b>Statutory risks</b> – many statutory services are vulnerable as they are no longer a statutory obligation or legal requirement e.g. Early Intervention hubs, Thriving Families, children's centres and Sure Start.</li> <li>• <b>Churches and Christian groups may not be interested in getting involved</b>, doing more or working collaboratively in their communities.</li> </ul>

The Children's Trust is a multi-agency strategy group involving local government and other statutory bodies such as the NHS and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. It produces the **Children and Young Person's plan** which influences priorities across sectors. **Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)** representation on the Children's Trust is recognised as being very important as it can represent the realities of work in the community. There is a current window of opportunity for VCS representatives to be appointed via the **Oxfordshire Community Voluntary Action (OCVA) Children and Young People's VCS Engagement forum**. It is also an opportunity for the work of local churches and Christians groups to be to be represented as a significant player in the voluntary and community sector response, especially since there is such an overlap in priorities.

The Children's Trust and OCVA's VCS Engagement Forum for Children and Young People are the current official bridges between faith groups and the voluntary and statutory sector. However this bridge is weak and there is an opportunity for strengthening it in 2015.



### 3.6.3 Opportunities for Greater Collaboration between churches and Christian groups

#### 3.6.3.1 Inspire, mobilise and equip a broader response through sharing good practice.

There are a small number of churches and Christians doing some really good work. These pacesetters have a unique opportunity to inspire and equip their peers to get started, through sharing their work, tips and good practice at peer learning workshops. These could be hosted at community level or via local pastors' forums or Churches Together meetings.

#### 3.6.3.2 Develop a joined up approach to work with families

Evidence throughout this study supports the need to prioritise work with families e.g. The Oxfordshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment <sup>31</sup> recommends support for better parenting as a way to help children make a healthy start. Churches need to be part of developing a joined up strategy at local level, linking with others like children's centres and early years service providers to run family support initiatives like parenting courses.

- Prioritise and expand work with families around self-esteem and vision/aspiration for life. Various ways that churches can play their part

- Promote volunteering in existing local charities who already support families e.g. Family links (Oxon), Balsam Family Project (Didcot), Homestart (Blackbird Leys) or Donnington Doorstep (E. Oxford)
- Build on links with local schools and childrens centres e.g. volunteers for reading, assemblies, special activities, prayer spaces, parenting courses and family support.
- Map gaps in local provision and consider how church's activities can not only complement what is already happening but also be more specifically targeted to the needs of struggling families in the area around the church.
- Consider local strategies to close the gaps around household poverty and difficulty entering employment.
  - Check out potential church based social action programme models via the cinnamon network ([www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk](http://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk))
  - Consider mobilising volunteers for existing local debt counselling projects and job clubs
  - Gather other local churches and groups together to consider partnering around initiatives that support families struggling with poverty and employment issues



*Diagram to illustrate areas of practical support for struggling families in the local community*

## 4 Conclusions

### The needs facing Oxfordshire's younger generation are significant.

The five most pressing issues highlighted by this study are:

- unstable family life and struggling parents
- low self-esteem
- lack of vision or aspiration for life
- difficulty entering employment and
- household poverty.

In addition, pressure on statutory budgets threatens many existing areas of statutory provision for children, young people and families.

As a result, a gap in services is opening and a cross-sector collaborative response to fill the gap is vital if vulnerable children, young people and families are going to get the support they need.

**Churches are well placed to be a part of this response since they are community and relationship based.** Members of churches live in the neighbourhood and are part of the community.

**A cross-sector collaborative response to fill the gap in services is vital if vulnerable children, young people and families are going to get support.**

In addition many churches are already active in work with children and young people and, as community-based organisations, they are somewhat protected from the constant winds of change affecting statutory provision and they don't represent a legal authority like statutory services which can be threatening to troubled children, young people and families.

Therefore, despite widespread concern in December 2014 over further cuts announced to children and family services threatening provision through Family Centres and Early Intervention Hubs **there is the potential for positive outcomes where the local community is mobilised to take on provision 'for its own.'**

Surveys and interviews for this study both showed examples where previous cuts to council-run youth services led to six churches beginning provision and developing something locally sustainable and run in connection with local police and council.

So, while the voluntary sector as a whole may well lose funding in the next round of statutory cuts, **churches are better placed than many, as they are not so reliant on statutory investment.**

However, churches are currently perceived as less relevant because the focus of their activities for children and young people is mismatched to the most pressing needs.

Churches are active in their communities and often recognise the most significant needs. However, their most frequent activities for children and young people (children's church, toddler group, youth group, after school clubs and holiday play schemes) generally do not reach the most vulnerable children and young people.

Examples and case studies in this study indicate that where churches and Christian groups have initiated activities and interventions in response to local needs transformation has resulted.

**Overall, more could be done to support struggling families.** Again, churches perceive themselves to be responding to the widespread issue around unstable family life and/or struggling parents but this study demonstrates that the response could be stronger and there is an opportunity for churches to get more effectively involved in supporting struggling families in their community.

**The focus of churches' activities for children and young people is mismatched to the most pressing needs.**



It's the most significant issue highlighted by this study to have a gap in the level of intervention. Moreover it's a foundational issue (*see diagram in section 3.1.4 on causes and effects*) and when families struggle over a sustained period the result is children and young people who become vulnerable in other ways.

**Struggling families is the most significant issue highlighted by this study to have a gap in the level of intervention.**

The good news is this study shows churches have an appetite to do more with **74% of survey respondents wanting to make an informed strategic response** to common issues facing children and young people.

However, this is not necessarily straightforward as many churches and Christian groups already cite lack of volunteers and funds as the greatest challenges to their existing work with children and young people (*see appendix 5*).

This is where the value or working together cannot be underestimated. How can more be done with

less? Part of the answer lies in collaboration. There is great potential for working in partnership, from information sharing to co-production with statutory bodies. However, the majority of local groups do not connect with 62% of those surveyed not connecting at all with other groups.

By contrast there is an appetite for cross-pollination with **76.5% of those surveyed keen to share information at the very least**.

In addition, working together with statutory sector bodies is an important consideration as demonstrated by a SWOT done for this study (*see page 33*).

**Some practical ideas for ways of partnering have been explored by this study and can be summarised in the final section on recommendations.**

**This is where the value or working together cannot be underestimated.  
How can more be done with less?  
Part of the answer lies in collaboration.**



## 5 Recommendations

### 5.1 Recommendations for churches and Christian groups in Oxfordshire

The issues and gaps described in this study highlight a clear opportunity and challenge before every church in Oxfordshire to take the next step towards making a lasting contribution in the lives of children and young people in the community. Shrinking statutory provision and the knock-on impact on a voluntary sector that relies on statutory funding only underlines this opportunity.

**A locally focussed cross-sector collaborative response is key as no one group or agency is able to meet the needs.** For instance there is a real need to come alongside families who are struggling and at risk but who don't qualify for statutory services because the thresholds are too high and they are not at sufficient risk.

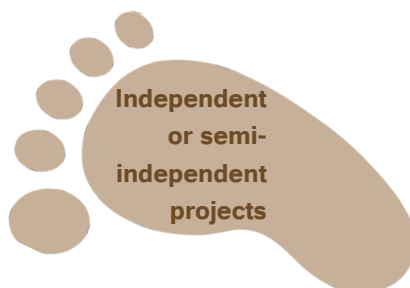
Local schools are already picking up more of the work with children and young people from struggling families and it is an opportunity for local churches in the community to come alongside other actors and play their part.

If the local church can become central in meeting local needs, it becomes a place that people want to be. In order for this to happen, churches need to review their budgets and consider ways to invest more resources, both funding and people, in activities that focus on the needs of those struggling in the community rather than solely focussing on the internal needs for volunteers and funds, legitimate as they are.

- Think about how to become **more relevant** to the needs of children and young people identified by this study. How can current activities change to better address the most pressing needs?
- **Review current work** including activities, volunteer hours, resource allocation and budget spend to assess how far it targets the needs of local children, young people and struggling families highlighted in this report. What steps could your group take over the coming year to make a further contribution to the local community?
- **Map your local community** to identify key issues, interventions and gaps.
  - Where is your church best able to get involved?
  - How can your church's activities not only complement what is already happening but also more specifically target the needs of struggling families in the local community?
- **Consider ways to make existing work more targeted** to the needs highlighted in this report. For example:
  - Do existing youth groups focus on issues of self-esteem and life aspiration?
  - Do after school clubs provide support with homework and exam revision (most widely mentioned concern of young people)?
  - How could your church come alongside struggling parents in your neighbourhood (e.g. with parenting courses and practical family support)?
- Participate in a **common collaborative strategy** for local churches and Christian groups.
- **Safeguarding:** Be aware of warning signs and referral systems in relation to keeping children and young people safe. As the post Bullfinch report put it, everyone must play their part in reporting concerns about children "in the same way as they would not hesitate to report a burning building".<sup>32</sup> Do you know who to call if you have a concern for the safety of a child or young person? Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (OSCB) and NSPCC have information, free training and resources available. Make good use of these and ensure you have the appropriate policies and practices in place.

*Further ideas can be found in appendix 5.*





**SMALLER NUMBER OF  
CHURCHES AND  
CHRISTIAN GROUPS**

**5.2 Everyone can take the next step...  
what's yours?**

**ALL CHURCHES AND  
CHRISTIAN GROUPS**

### 5.3 Recommendations for statutory bodies to engage faith communities in achieving common goals

- **Promote awareness of safeguarding to Churches and Christian groups.** Every group should be making good use of free training and resources available (e.g. via OSCB, NSPCC, denominations) and have the appropriate policies and practices in place. Big opportunity for joint training between churches and statutory groups.
- **Look to churches and Christian groups in the local area as potential partners.** Here are three examples:
  - where the Local Authority is looking to recruit 45 foster families this year. Oxfordshire churches could get involved with Home for Good<sup>33</sup> and an emerging partnership with the Local Authority to see potential foster families recruited from with Oxfordshire churches.
  - With budget pressures on Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hubs, could local churches that already run mother and toddler groups provide some continuity of service to families?
  - In specialist areas where critical intervention needed e.g. asylum seeking young people who age out of the social care system and lose all benefits – could local churches befriend them and together provide support?

### 5.4 What Viva can do

- **Gather stakeholders to develop a collaborative strategy** across Oxford City and/or Oxfordshire to enhance work with children and young people including identifying strategies around specific issues (e.g. struggling families, household poverty, difficulty entering employment, low self-esteem, lack of aspiration and positive role models, help with school work, bullying).
- **Investigate 'collective impact'** as well as consortia as helpful collaborative models for Oxfordshire.
- **Cast vision in churches** for increased engagement around struggling families, children and young people.
- Work with churches and church networks to **map their local communities** and design the most strategic and collaborative responses.
- Equip churches to respond by **signposting to resources** (on Viva's website and links to other web resources) and linking up with others for sharing best practice, gathering people for joint trainings.
- **Link statutory groups** like OSCB and voluntary groups like OCVA to church groups and networks where there are overlapping goals e.g. need for safeguarding training for volunteers.
- **Links to national resources** e.g. Cinnamon Network that can help local churches start social action projects for children and young people (TLG, 4Family, Who Let the Dads Out, MakeLunch (see [www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/cinnamon-projects/](http://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/cinnamon-projects/)) or Home for Good and see how to support them in the Local Authority partnership around fostering and adoption to local churches and church networks. Another organisation to link to would be the Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Trust.

## 5.5 Viva and the power of collaboration

Imagine this hypothetical scenario: a person discovered large numbers of children floating down the river, many of them struggling to keep above the water. He recruited lots of friends to come and help him pull the children out, only to find more appearing. The person was desperate to know why there were so many children in the river and who was throwing them in.

**This is how many individuals, churches and NGOs working with street children in Bolivia have been feeling for many years: it has been like a constant battle.**

However, churches working together in collective action are changing this. Viva's Early Encounter programme, run by our partner networks in the cities of Cochabamba and Oruro, is bucking the trend, and changing attitudes and practises related to street children. At the heart of these positive changes is the way in which the networks have been able to advise and influence government.

**As a result of Early Encounter, the municipal government in Cochabamba has now boldly stated that there are no new street children in the city** – or, to use our opening analogy, that there are no new children being thrown into the river.

The children currently on the streets are the ones who have always been there and have been entrenched in street life for many years. Fewer working children are becoming street children. Through the Early Encounter programme in Oruro there is **a recognised reduction in the number of children migrating from Oruro to Cochabamba and other cities to become street children.** As a result of Early Encounter, **14th May is now the Day of the Family**, which was first named by the networks and has now become public policy. It is now a big initiative that is obligatory to celebrate across Bolivia – authorities use this day to mark importance of family in different ways.

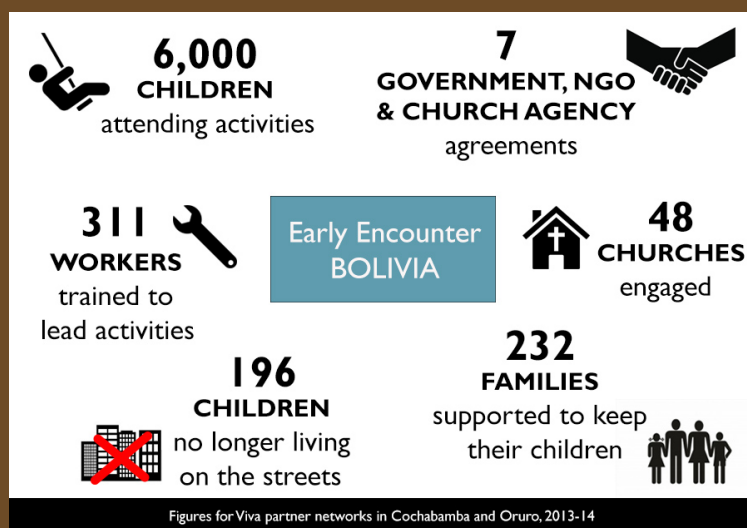
**This kind of outcome cannot be achieved by individual organisations or projects, it takes a concerted, collective approach built up over time with credible management and delivery.** The networks in Bolivia have been working for up to ten years, bringing together 133 churches and 80 organisations in seven cities. Their combined effect is beginning to change the situation of children.

Early Encounter works both to rescue children already living on the streets and protect many more at risk of ending up there. **By uniting projects and organisations with expert local knowledge and a wide variety of competencies, the networks are excellently placed to identify and build relationships with vulnerable children.** The Viva partner network in Cochabamba comprises 35 organisations and 26 churches, with 19 churches making up the Oruro network.

Yerko Areralo, Viva's Network Consultant for Bolivia, says, *"Christians are being recognised for the excellent work. In the past Christians were seen as having a good heart but ignorant to society's needs. Now the work of the Church is leading the way in inspiring lasting change for children."*

The Church was not previously equipped to deal with social issues. **The perspectives of pastors have changed and they have now been equipped to deal with issues both spiritually and professionally.** By being part of the network they have been included in the common agenda with the government and other social players, and they have also mutual support that has reduced any sense of isolation they might have.

Early Encounter is inspiring lasting change in children's lives. Young people are growing into adults with a different vision for life: people who don't just think about their rights but also about their responsibilities and ready to play their role in society. Yerko says, *"These children are the leaders of tomorrow – they will make Cochabamba and Oruro better cities and Bolivia will be a different country because these lives have been changed through the work of Early Encounter."*



## 6 For further study (including limitations of this study)

As with any study of this nature, it is incomplete, with limitations that leave a number of areas for further study these include:

### Limitations of this study

- Survey respondents were primarily from traditional, white congregations. Engagement with BME Christian groups including Oxford Pastor's Forum needs to be strengthened in order to get a more complete picture of the role of Christian groups
- Interview results show an Oxford City bias as the majority were conducted in the city
- Survey results show an Oxfordshire bias as majority of respondents were from the county including the towns of Abingdon, Didcot and Witney
- Christians are known to be active in fostering and adoption but this does not come through very strongly in this study, as it is a response of individuals or families rather than churches and Christian groups
- The needs of some vulnerable groups e.g. children and young people with special needs, asylum seekers and child sexual exploitation do not feature highly in the study because it looks at the broader issues that affect the majority of children and young people and so the extreme needs of a smaller number of children and young people do not feature so highly. This is a limitation because often the vulnerable groups need a lot of support which is both specialist and requires a great deal of human resource, expertise and finance.

### Areas for further study

- Potential models of collaboration relevant for Oxfordshire e.g. Collective Impact
- Investigate further the role of churches and Christian groups in fostering and adoption, especially in light of the potential partnership between Oxfordshire Councils and Home for Good
- Why do most churches keep on doing what they've always done rather than take time to review their activities to make sure they are still meeting the intended need or the reason they originally started. Where are churches responding to the push to change or the pull to remain the same?
- How can smaller, local parish churches turn the general tide of decreasing attendance and increasing member age to become more relevant to young people in their local community? (This study has uncovered a proportionately large number of diminished church congregations – decreasing size and increasing age - who seem to have lost or failed to attract local activists. They appear to be doing things the way they have always done them and are somewhat closed to change. Whereas a smaller number of larger church hubs mostly in urban centres attract movers and shakers – they seem able to make strategic decisions and have more capacity and resource in targeted programmes – which when successful become semi-independent programmes or independent charities in their own right. Do the big hubs keep doing the work? How can the smaller local parish churches initiate things? E.g. Messy church is a good example)
- Have local churches become de-skilled or sidelined from community action because they have 'delegated' too much to semi-independent



## 7 End notes

<sup>1</sup> **Building Better Neighbourhoods “The Contribution of Faith Communities to Oxfordshire Life” 2010 SURGE and Coventry University for OSCA**

[http://www.ocva.org.uk/sites/ocva.org.uk/files/BBN%20-%20Report%20\[FINAL\].pdf](http://www.ocva.org.uk/sites/ocva.org.uk/files/BBN%20-%20Report%20[FINAL].pdf)

<sup>2</sup> **Department for Work and Pension Report quoted in front page article from Daily Telegraph, Wed 19th November 2014**

<sup>3</sup> **Oxford City Children and Young People Needs Analysis 2013** <http://www.oxford.gov.uk>

<sup>4, 13</sup> **Oxfordshire Children and Young People’s Plan 2013/14** <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.org> and **2015-2018** [https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/CYPplan\\_Adults/consultationHome](https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/CYPplan_Adults/consultationHome)

<sup>5</sup> **Children and Young People’s Board/Children’s Trust** <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk>

<sup>6</sup> **Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2014** <http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/Final%20JSNA%20-%20Corrected%20%28Nov%202014%29%20to%20upload.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> **OSCB annual report** <http://www.oscb.org.uk/>

<sup>8</sup> Document detailing “Oxfordshire County Council actions taken to tackle child sexual exploitation” distributed at Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police’s child sexual exploitation briefing event on 5th September 2014

<sup>9, 12</sup> **Oxford’s Youth Ambition Strategy 2013-2017** <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Library/Documents/Policies%20and%20Plans/Youth%20Ambition%20Strategy%202013-17.pdf>  
**Youth Partnership Board – Our Plan**  
<http://www.oxford.gov.uk>

<sup>10, 20</sup> **Oxford City Council’s Draft Children and Young People’s Plan 2014-2017: Summary of response to consultation** <http://www.oxford.gov.uk>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/aug/county%E2%80%99s-thriving-families-scheme-national-stage>

<sup>14, 15</sup> <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/dec/new-savings-%C2%A320m-pay-ever-increasing-social-care-costs>

<sup>16</sup> **Oxfordshire Children’s Needs Analysis 2014** <http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/oxfordshire-childrens-needs-analysis-2014-0>

<sup>17</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday\\_school](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday_school) and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/7484282.stm>

<sup>18, 20</sup> <https://capuk.org/i-want-help/cap-debt-help/debt-centre/488/oxford-central>

<sup>19, 21</sup> [http://www.mrc-oxford.org/Groups/239356/Magdalen\\_Road\\_Church/Church\\_Life/CAP\\_Oxford/CAP\\_Oxford.aspx](http://www.mrc-oxford.org/Groups/239356/Magdalen_Road_Church/Church_Life/CAP_Oxford/CAP_Oxford.aspx)

<sup>22</sup> <http://oxford.occ.org.uk/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.leysyouthprogramme.org.uk/>

<sup>24</sup> **The Leys: A Report for the Wates Foundation** <http://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/The-Leys-July-2009.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://thriveteam.wordpress.com/about/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://hbc-oxford.org.uk/>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.innovista.org/>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.bartoncommunityassociation.com/>

<sup>29</sup> **Article about Youth Crime in Barton** <http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/newsevents/newsevents-pressreleases/newsevents-pressreleases-item.htm?id=288944>

<sup>30</sup> <http://thriveteam.wordpress.com/2014/09/>

<sup>31</sup> **Oxfordshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment** <http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/oxfordshire-children-young-people%E2%80%99s-trust-child-poverty-needs-assessment>

<sup>32</sup> **Bullfinch Report: Action in response to child sexual exploitation in Oxfordshire** <http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/resources/files/30891>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.homeforgood.org.uk/>

### Further reading

**Oxfordshire County Council Budget 2015/16** <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/budget-201516>

**Oxford City Council Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adult Policy**

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/SafeguardingChildrenandVulnerableAdultPolicy.pdf>

### Oxford Mail articles

[http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/11441988.City\\_handouts\\_give\\_big\\_lift\\_to\\_the\\_less\\_fortunate/](http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/11441988.City_handouts_give_big_lift_to_the_less_fortunate/)

[http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/yourtown/oxford/11325048.Families\\_stuck\\_in\\_the\\_hidden\\_poverty\\_trap/](http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/yourtown/oxford/11325048.Families_stuck_in_the_hidden_poverty_trap/)

**Results of a survey of the residents of Cold Harbour about the new St Luke’s, Canning Crescent**

<http://www.stlukesoxford.org.uk/#/our-links/4539448302>

### “Working Together”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children>



## How are churches and Christians in Oxfordshire engaging with children and vulnerable young people?

### 1) Please tell us your age (tick appropriate box)

- ☐ under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 and above

### 2) What is the basis of your work with children or youth? (please tick the most applicable answer)

- ☐ Community or voluntary activity
- ☐ Church run activity (Church of England)
- ☐ Church run activity (Other Christian church)
- ☐ Other faith based activity
- ☐ Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ None

### 3) Please tell us the name of your church, organisation, group or project:

4) Please tell us which of the following issues are faced, if at all, by children and young people in the area(s) you work and how, if at all, they are being addressed.

Issue	We have an activity that deals with this effectively	We have an activity that partly deals with this	Someone else is doing something about this	Nobody is doing anything about this	Not an issue/Don't Know
Low self-esteem					
Poor health and nutrition or unhealthy lifestyle					
Lack of aspiration or vision for life					
Mental health issues e.g. depression, self-harm					
Alcohol, Drugs, Addiction, Substance abuse					
Abuse (including Violence, Bullying and Neglect)					
Child Sexual Exploitation and/or Trafficking					
Misuse/Overuse of the Internet and Social Media					
Household Poverty					
Difficulty entering employment					
Lack of access to good education (including early years)					
Unstable family life and/or Struggling parents					
Peer Pressure/Lack of positive role models					
Reduced/ineffective state-run activities					
Lack of opportunities to explore and/or practice, faith and spirituality					
Juvenile Crime					

**5) What activities do you currently run, or have run within last 5 years, on behalf of children and young people? Please describe up to 3 activities in the table below.**

Type of activity	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
After school club/Holiday playscheme			
Children's church/sunday school			
Community health initiative			
Counselling programme			
Education - formal			
Education - informal			
Family/parent/carers support			
Food bank			
Fostering/Adoption			
Godly play			
Lifeskills programme			
Mentoring programme			
Messy church			
Nutrition and healthy eating initiative			
Prayer space in schools			
Preschool/Daycare for children			
Residential care initiative			
Sports/recreational club			
Toddler group			
Youth group			
Other			

In the online survey, respondents were also given five drop-down menu options **to indicate why each activity started**.

These were:

- We've always done it
- A similar state-run programme was cut
- A similar community-run activity closed down
- It was the most strategic thing we could do
- Don't know

6) Please tell us what difficulties, if any, you as a group face in responding to the needs of children and young people.

7) Please tell us what is going well in your work with children and young people.

**8) Please tell us who else you know working with children and young people in your area, and how, if at all, you work together.**

	We don't know anyone else	We know others but don't connect	We share useful resources	We do joint training	We run a programme together
Other Christian churches					
Other faith groups					
Other Voluntary sector or Community based groups e.g. scouts, after school club					
Statutory groups e.g. local council run services					
Other					

**9) Are you interested in collaborating further with other like-minded groups for the benefit of children and young people in the local area? Please tell us what your interests are by ticking all that apply.**

- ☐ sharing information and contacts
- ☐ signposting to resources
- ☐ joint training and equipping
- ☐ making an informed strategic response to common issues facing children and young people
- ☐ improving our existing collaborative working relationships
- ☐ not interested in further working together with others
- ☐ other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_



**10) Please tell us where in Oxford city your work with children and young people is based. Tick all the areas that apply. If your work is based in other areas of Oxfordshire please go to Question 11.**

- ☐ Botley
- ☐ Central South and West (City Centre, Hinksey Park, Jericho, Osney)
- ☐ Cowley ( incl. Cowley Marsh and Lye Valley)
- ☐ East (incl. Iffley Fields, St Clement's, St Mary's)
- ☐ Kennington
- ☐ North (Wolvercote, Summertown and St. Margaret's)
- ☐ North East (Barton, Sandhills, Headington, Headington Hill, Northway, Quarry, Risinghurst, Marston, Churchill)
- ☐ South East (Blackbird Leys, Littlemore, Northfield Brook, Rose Hill, Iffley)

**11) Please tell us where in Oxfordshire your work with children and young people is based. Tick all the areas that apply.**

- ☐ Abingdon and surrounding area
- ☐ Banbury and surrounding area
- ☐ Bicester and surrounding area
- ☐ Burford and surrounding area
- ☐ Carterton and surrounding area
- ☐ Chipping Norton and surrounding area
- ☐ Didcot and surrounding area
- ☐ Faringdon and surrounding area
- ☐ Henley on Thames and surrounding area
- ☐ Kidlington and surrounding area
- ☐ Thame and surrounding area
- ☐ Wallingford and surrounding area
- ☐ Wantage and surrounding area
- ☐ Wheatley and surrounding area
- ☐ Witney and surrounding area
- ☐ Woodstock and surrounding area

12) Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Please return to the Viva stand or to Katy Thompson

Thank You Very Much!

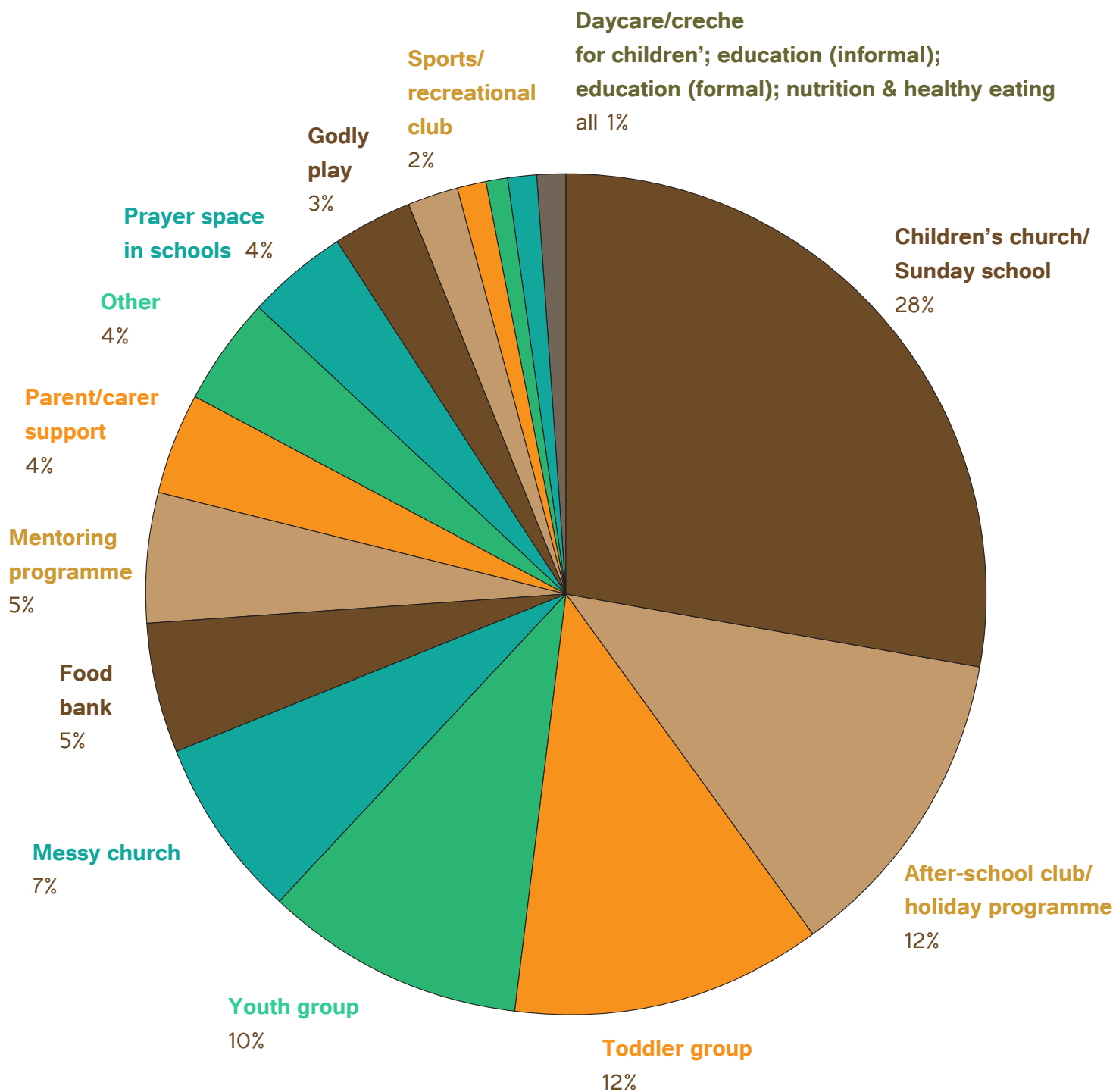
## Appendix 2: Map of Statutory Interventions *(table awaiting verification)*

<b>Interventions (including local authority plans, research and strategies)</b>
Oxford city council children and young people's plan 2014-2017 including Oxford Children & Young People Needs Analysis
Oxfordshire County Council Children and Young People Plan 2015-2018
Youth Ambition Strategy (Oxford City Council) and Positive for Youth Strategy (UK Government)
Young people's plan
Sport to grow leadership, motivation & self-esteem e.g. StreetSports and free swimming
Community grants (£85k in 2014)
Focus on young people who are NEET or NIL or at risk of becoming NEET and NIL
Youth Parliament
Bungee App co-produced with local young people
Focus on transitions from education to employment
Boombox and Oxcentric (websites)
Oxford City Council research on skills and employment challenges
Local job clubs
Apprenticeships available = good experience even if no pay
Thriving Families
Brighter Futures in Banbury programme
Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation programme (Oxford)
Child and Family journey programme board
CAF including TAF (team around family)/TAC (team around child)
Early Intervention Hubs
SureStart/Children's Centres
Family liaison work with police
2 year old free childcare places
Family Information Service
Family Support Work in Schools
Special needs and disability forums including Oxford Youth Enablers
Autism strategy and action plan
Parent Partnership (for families of children with SEN)
Grants to community groups that support children and young people activities
Youth Dragons Den pilot at Oxford Spires
Oxfordshire Youth
Youth Voice (cultural)
Positive Futures and Youth Ambition (Oxford City)
Youth Partnership Board
3 City council grant programmes
PEEP (Parents Early Education Partnership)
Early Years Aspiration Network
£400,000 per year 2012-2016 to raise attainment in city primary schools
Reading Campaign
Strategies for behaviour, attendance, and vulnerable learners
Outstanding Leadership
ESOL support

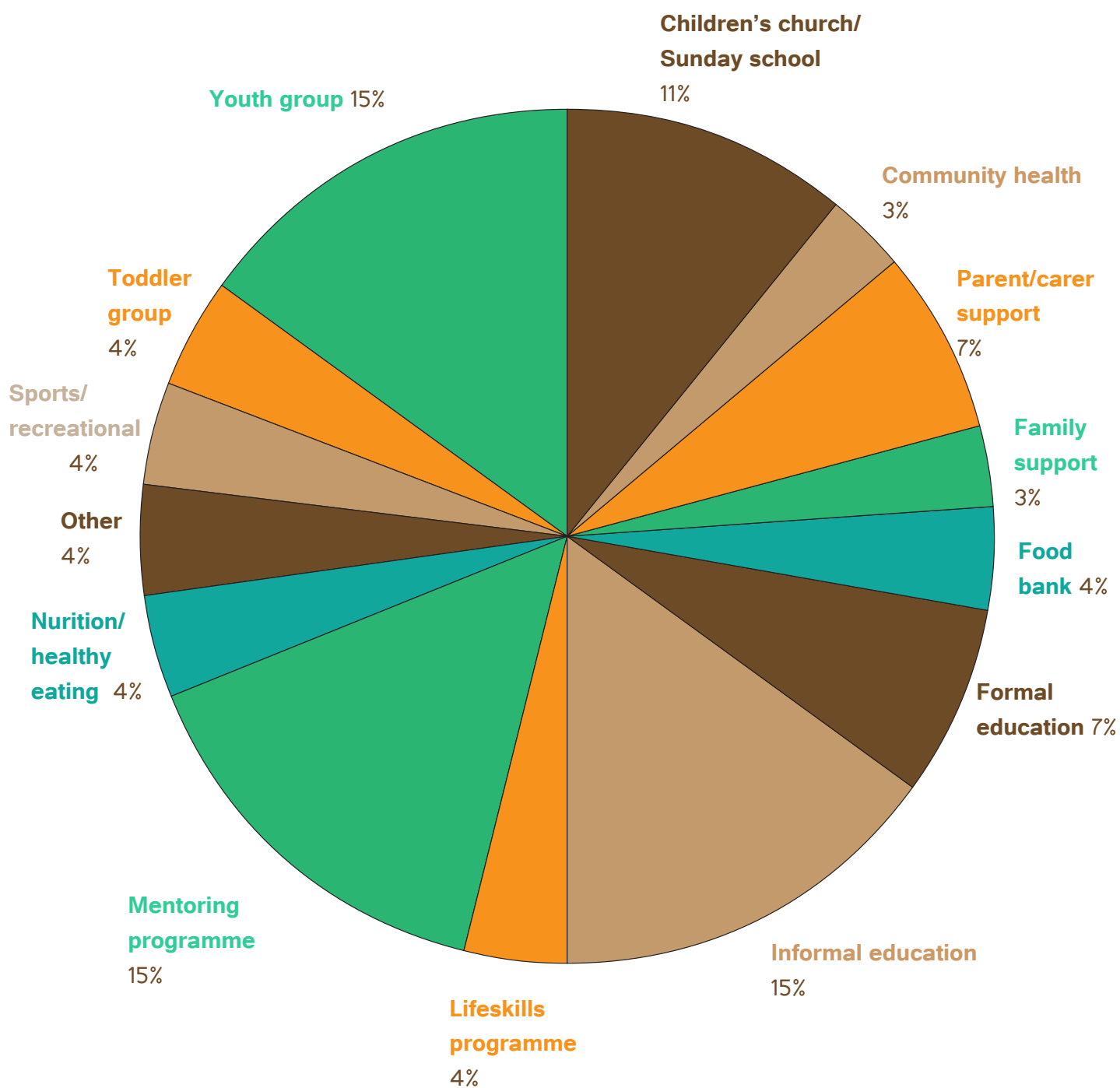




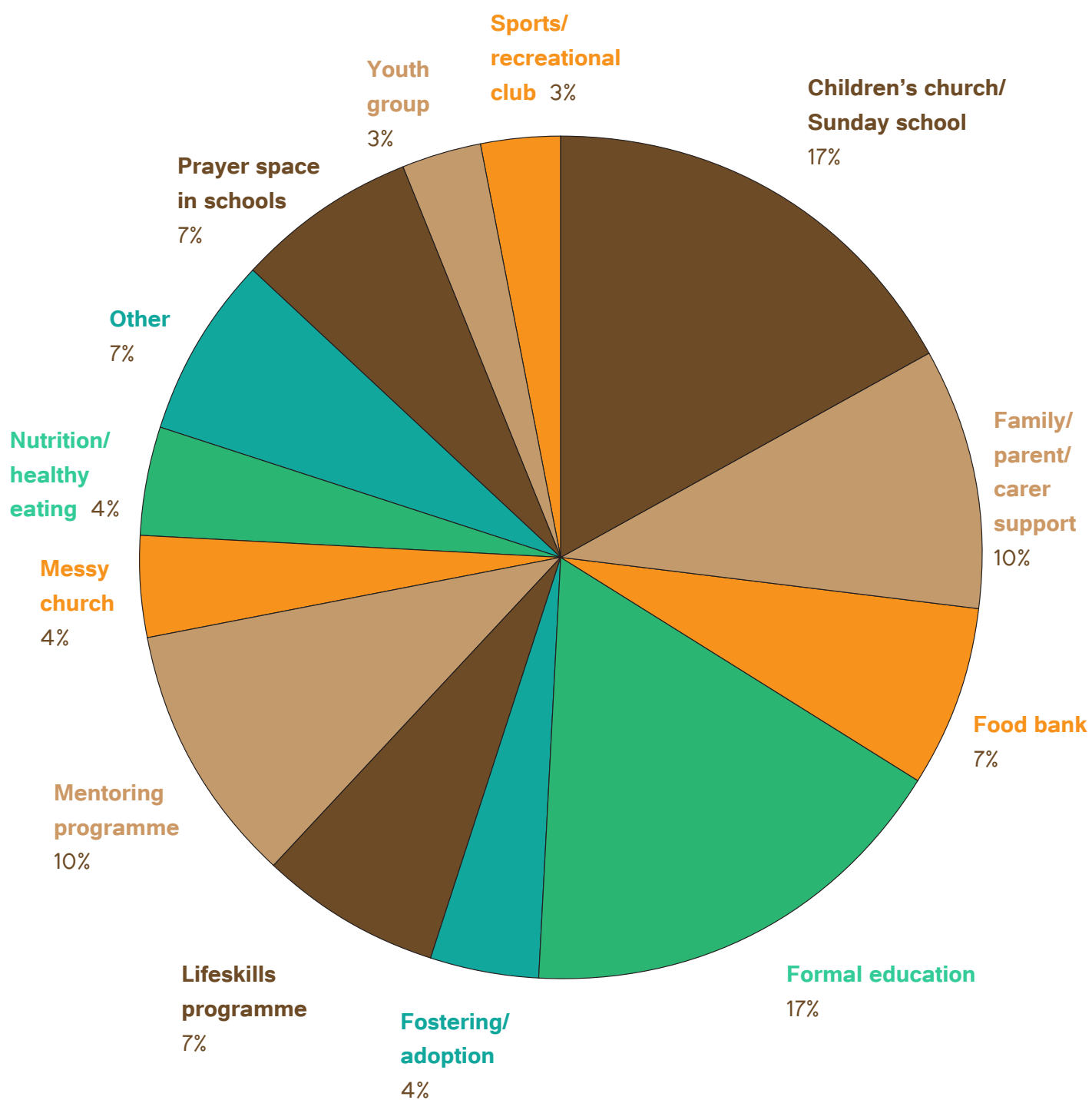
### Appendix 3: How churches respond to children and young people



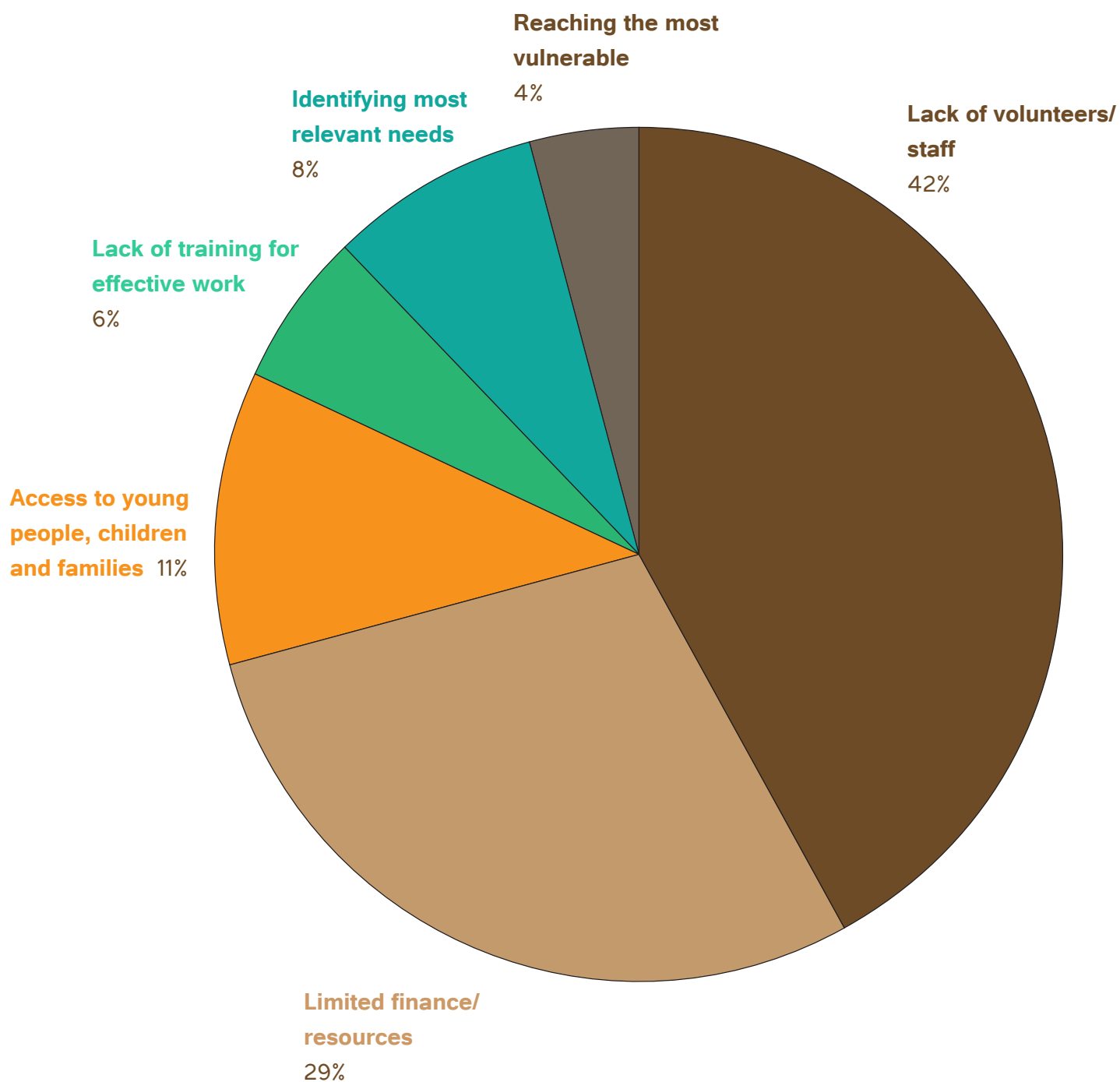
## How Christian community and voluntary activity respond



## Responses of other faith-based activity



#### Appendix 4: What are the difficulties you face in responding to the needs of children and young people?





## Appendix 5: Further ideas for churches

- Partner with local schools and children's centres – mobilise volunteers from the church to help where needed e.g. reading support, mentoring, family support
- Support existing local child, youth and family focussed groups – ask where help, volunteers is most needed
- There is a clear opportunity for joint training between churches and statutory groups like OSCB. Christian groups can go to statutory training and OSCB are offering bespoke training for Christian groups ([www.oscb.org.uk](http://www.oscb.org.uk))
- Peer learning, sharing good practice, information and signpost to resources with others. Pacesetters to help others who want to get started through sharing their experiences.
- Joint training for economies of scale
- Consider collaborative approaches around the biggest issue gaps e.g. struggling families, household poverty and difficulties entering employment. As a first step could your church mobilise volunteers for existing local debt counselling centres and job clubs?
- Also link to existing initiatives and resources like the Cinnamon network which enables churches to start community action initiatives to help struggling children and families in a number of different ways e.g. mentoring, parenting help, help finding employment, debt counselling (<http://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/cinnamon-projects/>)
- Local Council is looking to recruit 45 foster families this year. Oxfordshire churches could get involved with 'Home for Good'[1] and an emerging partnership with Local Authority to see foster families recruited from Oxfordshire churches
- Oxford City churches and Christian groups
  - Share best practice, information, signpost to resources and consider collaborative approaches around biggest issue gaps e.g. poor health, nutrition and unhealthy lifestyle, abuse (including violence, bullying and neglect) and access to good education (including early years)
- Oxfordshire churches and Christian groups
  - Share best practice, information, signpost to resources and consider collaborative approaches around biggest issue gaps e.g. Oxfordshire there is a gap in the response to alcohol, drugs, addictions and substance abuse

### *Linking with other voluntary sector groups*

- Participation in OCVA's Children and Young People Community & Voluntary Sector (CVS) Engagement forum and thereby inputting to direction and decisions of The Children's Trust

### *Partnering with local statutory groups*

- Necessary to make an effective joined up response in a local community
- Develop a joined up local strategy at neighbourhood level – working together on a common strategy with police, neighbourhood associations and other local actors for children and young people
- Learning from examples of successful working with statutory

## Endorsements

Viva, Unit 8, The Gallery, 54 Marston Street, Oxford, OX4 1LF

01865 811660 | [info@viva.org](mailto:info@viva.org) | [viva.org](http://viva.org)

Registered charity no. 1053389

