

# 'Supporting businesses to survive and thrive'

The impact of OxLEP Business and Skills support through the COVID-19 pandemic  
April 2020 - August 2021

**NOVEMBER 2021**





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# 1.0 SUMMARY

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The period from April 2020 to August 2021 has been perhaps the most challenging ever for small businesses. Some businesses closed down altogether, many struggled but survived, and many thrived.

Throughout this time the **OxLEP Business and Skills team's** have been putting businesses need's first and providing much needed support. This report provides a snapshot of that support, the businesses engaged and the impact the support had had on them.

There are over 43,000 businesses registered in Oxfordshire, at least 99% of which are SMEs. Despite the challenging context, at least 644 of these SMEs have grown by 10% or more in the

last year, and 6194 new businesses have been registered since January 2020.

Oxfordshire has a well-balanced, resilient economy and is one of the strongest engines for growth in the UK. However, a wide range of Oxfordshire businesses still require support, Brexit, EU Transition and the COVID-19 restrictions have hit many businesses hard over the last year.

Responding to these challenges the **OxLEP Business and Skills** teams embarked on three interlinked missions:

- 1 Restart: getting businesses back operating over the first 6 months of lockdown
- 2 Recover: helping businesses to get back to profitability
- 3 Renew: Building better, stronger and greener businesses

Framing activities around these three 'missions', plus maintaining the ambition to develop a global innovation ecosystem, put **OxLEP Business and Skills** in the best position possible to support businesses in ways which aligned to national COVID-19 business support campaigns and to exploit new funding opportunities.

This report showcases some of the stories which describe the impact of the **OxLEP Business and OxLEP Skills team's** support for Oxfordshire businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic. Between April 2020 and August 2021 the **OxLEP Business and Skills team's** have:



## 2.0 THE SUPPORT OFFER

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**OxLEP** was in a strong and improving position to support businesses when the COVID-19 Pandemic began. A number of business support programmes were already in place:

- 1 The ERDF funded Innovation Support for Business programme to help develop and commercialise innovative business ideas.
- 2 The ERDF funded 'eScalate' programme which specifically targets scale-ups and social enterprises. Permission was secured from funders early on in the pandemic to be able to provide support to start up and growth businesses, including amending the grant scheme.
- 3 The ESF funded Skills for Business programme

A wide range of additional support was developed between April and October 2020, including:

The Business Resilience Fund Grant scheme.

The 'enhanced' Growth Hub to support all SME businesses with their specific needs and challenges.

The Kickstart Grant Programme offered 100% revenue grants of £1,000-£3,000 to support access to specialist advice or services to enable SMEs to adapt or pivot their business in response to the impacts of the pandemic. This additional funding was made available via the ERDF eScalate programme.

The Peer Networks programme, a national peer-to-peer networking programme for SME leaders that want to grow and develop their organisation for future success.

The Business Investment Fund offers co-investment grants for capital projects that deliver tangible outcomes aligned to driving economic recovery, growth and job creation. Funding was secured via the Government's Getting Building Fund, which aims to accelerate economic recovery following EU

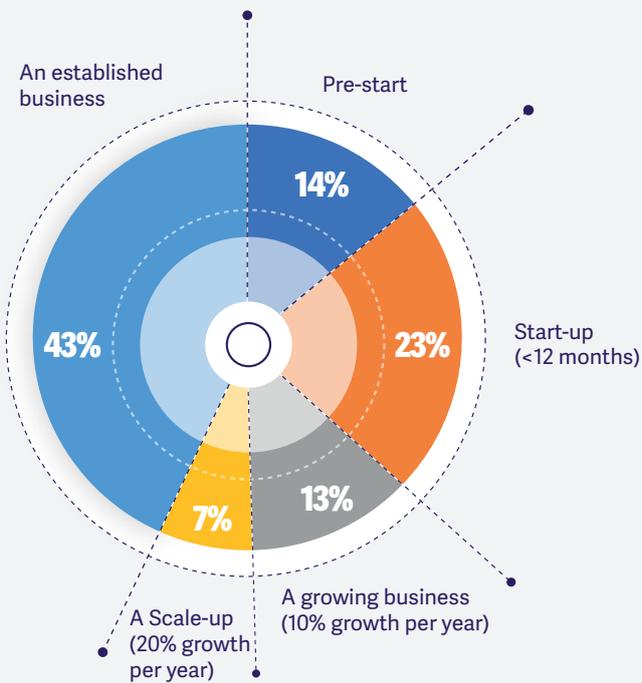
Transition Advisory Support Programme following the UK leaving the European Union.

Businesses were encouraged to complete the **OxLEP Business Support Tool** created by the Growth Hub. The information provided by the businesses allowed the Growth Hub team to provide each business with a bespoke 'Personal Support Plan'. By looking at the age and size of the business and their stated needs, they could be triaged to the most appropriate support.



## STAGE OF BUSINESS

BUSINESS SUPPORTED BY THEIR 'STAGE'



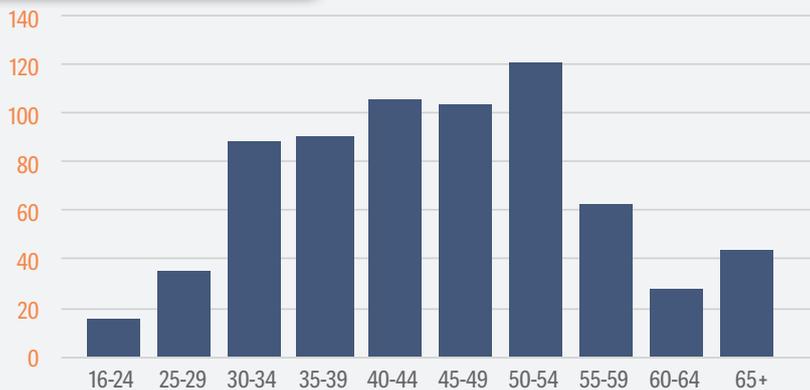
## BUSINESS SUPPORT

**2670**  
BUSINESSES  
ENGAGED

**1374** BUSINESSES  
COMPLETED THE  
BUSINESS SUPPORT TOOL

**12,000+** HOURS  
OF BUSINESS SUPPORT

## AGE RANGE



**114** BUSINESS RESILIENCE  
GRANTS AWARDED  
TOTTALLING £794K

**422** BUSINESSES  
RECEIVED LIGHT  
TOUCH EU TRANSITION  
SUPPORT

**192** BUSINESSES  
RECEIVED INTENSIVE  
1-2-1 EU TRANSITION  
SUPPORT

74

SME SKILLS  
NEEDS ANALYSES  
COMPLETED

6

COMMUNITY  
EMPLOYMENT  
PLANS DELIVERED

£1,900,000

WORTH OF SUPPORT PROVIDED

487

JOBS CREATED

22

BUSINESSES  
SUPPORTED

FOUNDATIONS TO  
GROWTH PROGRAMME

£2,243,000

BUSINESS INVESTMENT FUND  
GRANTS COMMITTED OF £2.243M

100+

BUSINESSES

JOINED THE OxLEP  
START-UP CLUB

449

BUSINESSES

PROVIDED WITH ONE  
TO ONE SUPPORT

156

ACTION

LEARNING SESSIONS

152

WEBINARS

EVENTS AND VLOGS

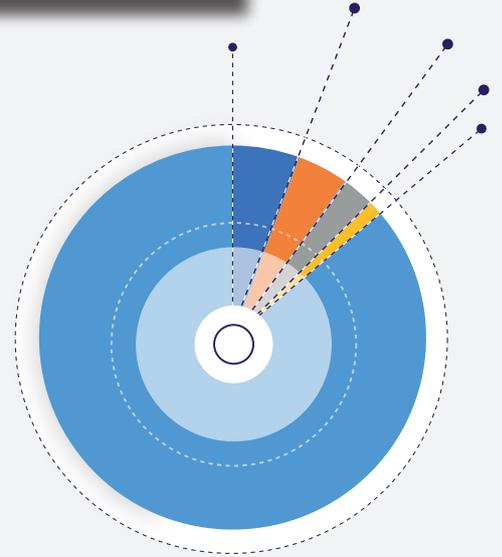
26

APPRENTICESHIP  
AMBASSADORS RECRUITED

38

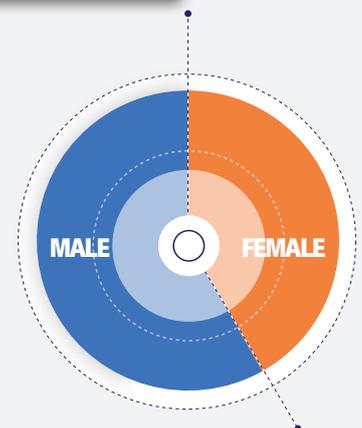
SMEs SUPPORTED TO TAKE  
ON 1ST APPRENTICE

## ETHNICITY



- WHITE
- ASIAN / ASIAN BRITISH
- BLACK / AFRICAN / CARRIBEAN / BLACK BRITISH
- MIXED / MUTLI ETHNIC GROUPS
- OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS

## GENDER



## 3.0 THE BUSINESSES SUPPORTED

### 3.1 Comparison of business needs

1374 of the businesses supported completed the **OxLEP Business Support Tool**. Information collected from the business support tool provided valuable information on business needs and allowed the teams to shape and adapt the support services throughout the year as Oxfordshire businesses restarted and began recovery. These business needs are summarised in Figure 2.



Figure 1: The businesses needs highlighted through the Business Support Tool

### 3.2 Where were the businesses based?

The businesses completing the OxLEP Business Support Tool can be sorted by District Council. This shows a relatively even spread across the County.

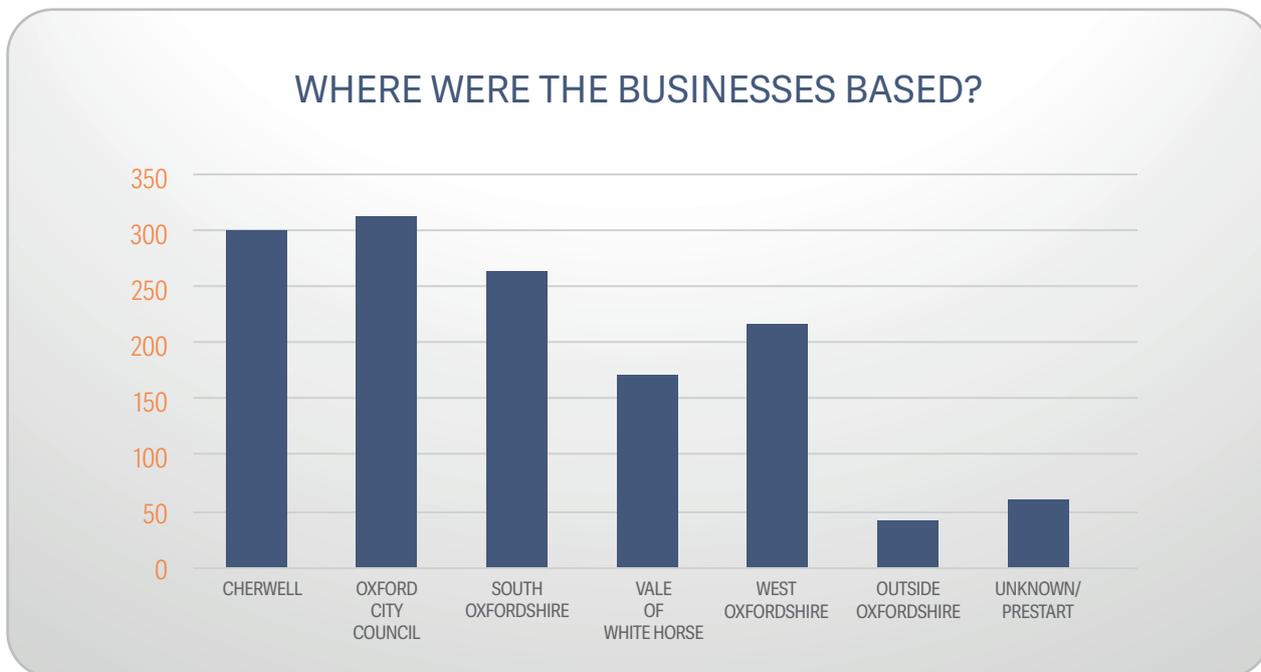


Figure 2: The number of businesses that have completed the Business Support Tool by District council

### 3.3 What Sectors Were The Businesses In?

Businesses were asked what sector they were in. With a variety of answers, the businesses have been broadly grouped as follows:

SECTOR	No.
Other service activities	111
Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	92
Accommodation / Hospitality & Leisure	93
Manufacturing / other manufacturing	117
Human health and social work activities	75
Creative, arts and entertainment activities	81
Education	67
Information and communication	59
Activities of head offices; management consultancy activities	49
Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities	37
Other professional, scientific and technical activities	46
Food and beverage service activities	37
Construction	34
Travel agency, tour operator and other reservation service and related activities	23
Scientific research and development	27
Office administrative, office support and other business support activities	17
Financial and Insurance Activities	16
Charity	15



## 4.0 BUSINESS CASE STUDIES



See more Case Studies which illustrate the impact of OxLEP Business and OxLEP Skills support:  
[www.oxlepbusiness.co.uk/case-studies](http://www.oxlepbusiness.co.uk/case-studies)

## STYLE DIGITAL



Style Digital creates 3D imaging and virtual staging for the property industry. Companies and individuals selling property, which is unfurnished, or in need of modernisation, are able to utilise Style Digital imaging services.

Like all start-ups, the challenges of finding clients, market research, funding the venture, all required a lot of time and effort.

**OxLEP**, and in particular, the one to one support were a key element to me securing a start-up loan. I came with my own ideas, and an outline of what I thought a business plan should look like. The business advisor provided the template that crystallised my notes and got me to think about all the various elements required to start a business.

I signed up to the **OxLEP Start-Up Club**, which assisted with my start-up and business progression. I also engaged with a range of webinars, which provided information on aspects from social media marketing, starting a business with no funds, through to selling without selling.

This ongoing support, provides me with the reassurance and confidence, that I'm not alone in the start of my new business venture and career.

[style-digital.co.uk](https://style-digital.co.uk)



## JUICE HOSPITALITY



Juice Hospitality provide permanent staff to the hospitality, leisure and tourism sector across the UK. We provide services to luxury hotels and fine dining venues from as far north as the highlands to the Scilly Isles off the tip of Cornwall. In a positive economy this is a thriving and vibrant industry and we are here to support our clients with their recruitment and HR requirements.

Heavily restricted by the COVID-19 lockdown, we made the decision to diversify to the commercial sector whilst we were closed on the hospitality side. We were supported by **OXLEP** who gave us some brilliant advice. Firstly, a thorough review, some excellent advice offered in terms of signposts to SEO/Grant funding and help with mentoring.

Without **OXLEP** pointing specific grants out, we would have missed the opportunities.

Our business future looks stronger than ever, we are in the process of writing up job specifications for positions we are growing into. The hospitality sector is once again accelerating and we are backed up by our commercial team.

[www.juicehospitality.com](http://www.juicehospitality.com)



## YELLOW SUBMARINE



The charity Yellow Submarine believes people with learning disabilities and Autism deserve to live life to the full.

We run evening social clubs, day long holiday activities, and residential holiday/respite breaks for 11-18s and over 18s, plus workplace training schemes, using our two social enterprise cafés in Oxford and Witney. As well as serving great food, the purpose of the cafés is to allow us to run our in-house Traineeship programme for young adults with learning disabilities, which provide a genuine stepping-stone to employment and independence. Customers enter the cafés because of the quality of the coffee and food. It just 'so happens' that some 90,000 customers have left the door with a different perception of 'disability'.

COVID-19 meant that not only the cafés had to close, but all our other projects,

which rely on face to face activities, had to go on hold or be transformed into remote provision. Our cafés have grown into a hugely significant source of unrestricted funding for our work – in 2018/19 they provided a third of our income.

As a charity and a business, we sought as many sources of Covid financial support as we could - local and national, voluntary and public sector.

Through the support of the **OxLEP Business Resilience grant** we were able to bring back one member of staff to prepare for reopening the Oxford café and prepare the space for covid compliancy.

[www.yellowsubmarine.org.uk](http://www.yellowsubmarine.org.uk)



## GRACE AND GRAVITY LIMITED



Grace and Gravity is a yoga and wellbeing company based in two beautiful locations and online. Our studios are located at Howbery Business Park, Wallingford and The Swan at Streatley, and our online classes can be accessed via our website. Both our studios are bright, contemporary, and calm, so you can focus on yourself at one of our wide range of classes. There is something for everyone, whether you want to relax, stretch, sweat, or even fly! We provide a friendly, relaxing environment where you can get away from the noise and concentrate on your mind and body.

When the pandemic unfolded in March 2020, we had been running as a business for just 10 months.

We were heavily impacted with our studios closing throughout the three lockdown periods and being greatly restricted with social distancing and covid measures required when open.

The peer network programme showed up at the perfect time. Lockdown was in full swing, and our business had flipped to online almost overnight. We didn't yet have the systems in place to manage the new demands of our online business and we were struggling to adapt at such speed.

Through the peer network, we were better able to take a step back and assess, taking us out of panic mode and into logical thinking. The group offered support in a way that made us feel empowered. They asked us questions to find our own solutions rather than giving us answers. That said, the group was always wonderful at offering suggestions too when the time was right.

We very much enjoyed the time we spent in the peer network, and continue to work and connect with the members regularly. It was great to meet other local businesses and grow through this experience together.

[www.graceandgravity.studio/](http://www.graceandgravity.studio/)



## FISHER STUDIOS



The sudden economic impact of COVID-19 hit Fisher Studios immediately. Gone were many of the opportunities which required a photographer. Social distancing made many bookings impossible. Commercial clients squeezed their marketing budgets. Projects were put on indefinite hold. was just the impetus I needed to move forward.”

Like so many business owners, David Fisher had a choice: to wait out the pandemic and hope business returned or be proactive by using the crisis to re-examine his business and make changes to help it to thrive in the long-term.

Fisher Studios came to **OxLEP Business** to speak with the Skills team about apprenticeships and the Kickstart scheme for young people. David saw it as a way of changing the business and gradually broaden its horizons with new talent.

A meeting with an **OxLEP Business** Advisor to look at the challenges faced by the studio helped David Fisher to create a 3-stage employment strategy, laying the foundations for the future. As David explained:

“I found the meeting incredibly insightful and really appreciated the clear perspectives, ideas and suggestions. It provided me with some clarity and confidence especially in terms of my plans to recruit and was just the impetus I needed to move forward.”

[fisherstudios.co.uk](http://fisherstudios.co.uk)



## STEPHEN SPENCER + ASSOCIATES



Stephen Spencer + Associates is a collaborative training and consulting organisation that brings people together to find new ways to do business and better models for sustainability.

Our primary customer sectors – tourism, retail and hospitality – were obviously either closed or severely impacted by Covid-19. Our business and ideas we had been working on were perfectly placed to help our clients as they emerged from lockdown.

There's reopening, then there's building back better, then there's creating a sustainable long-term future, for our communities, our destinations and for our businesses.

We developed an Innovation Toolkit which is facilitated by our inspirational people, using practical case studies and

innovation-led techniques to foster an innovation mindset and motivate people and organisations to take action, together, to build forward better. The Innovation Toolkit is designed to facilitate business journeys from crisis/stagnation to a new sustainable future, via the application of a range of bespoke tools and techniques.

*"The support OxLEP provides is multi-faceted, including expertise, finance and structured networking. The Peer to Peer programme has been a game-changer for us: providing focus, impetus and above all a supportive framework which is crucial to sustain an entrepreneur's often lonely and doubt-ridden journey"*

[www.stephenspencerassociates.com](http://www.stephenspencerassociates.com)



## PRIMARY CARE INTERNATIONAL



Primary Care International (PCI) is a social enterprise supporting healthcare workers around the world to serve communities in some of the poorest and fragile settings, from Africa to the Middle East to South Asia. Their aim: to get quality healthcare to all.

COVID-19 created a sudden accelerated requirement for quality online learning and training. PCI were in need of some financial support to develop and launch the PCI Academy, their unique and accessible online learning offer. As their hub is based in Oxfordshire, PCI were able to connect with OxLEP Business.

"It can be very hard to get support and funding for a social enterprise. We were signposted to **OxLEP's eScalate programme** – specifically set up to support social enterprises. When we reached out to them, they were extremely supportive. They provided us with one to one advice and supported us to apply for grant funding".

**OxLEP's grant funding** has helped PCI in many ways;

*"We used the funding to develop materials for the PCI Academy, which includes interactive, evidence-based content delivered via e-modules and live workshop sessions. It's also enabled us to work with a freelance digital consultant and their existing expertise meant we got information, about managing Covid, out to our healthcare professionals very quickly. Part of the funding was also used to develop a prototype app to be used by doctors in treating diabetes in Mexico."*

*"We would definitely look to work with OxLEP again in the future. Their flexibility and understanding of us as a small social enterprise and knowing how they could best support us was brilliant."*



[youtu.be/Vxh4hNvDcOc](https://youtu.be/Vxh4hNvDcOc) | [pci-360.com](https://pci-360.com)



## SYLO | BEYOND HR AND DATABASIX UK



**SYLO** | BEYOND  
HR.  
Your People...Your Business

**databasix**  
bringing people and data together

SYLO | Beyond HR and Databasix UK are two Oxfordshire companies that have embraced the Peer Networks programme for their founder members and leadership teams. Sally White (SYLO | Beyond HR) and Kelly Peters (Databasix) shared their thoughts and an exciting new collaboration that happened as a result.

"This is not networking where you're pitching your services and doing your 60 seconds, which we are both very comfortable doing. This group required you to be prepared to come to the table to share your challenges and your advice.

It allows you to have more in-depth conversations with likeminded businesses, sharing experiences and challenges in a really supportive environment.

It's been really good to forge closer relationships with other business leaders, discover our commonality and be supporting other **OxLEP businesses**. It is nice to get a sense of how each business runs. It doesn't matter that the businesses in the group were all different. For me, it was nice to discuss what it's like to be a co-founder of a business during the

pandemic and how people found recruiting staff members. It is nice to speak to people who are at the same level professionally and have the same concerns."

A result of their participation in the group is collaboration on an exciting new project.

Together SYLO | Beyond HR and Databasix UK designed the Diploma in Workplace Data Protection, a five-module course that combines HR with data protection. Each of the five modules are CPD accredited (thanks to Sally) which is massive in terms of the opportunity for delivery. The entire course was designed in the time of the pandemic so it's all online and can be delivered entirely remotely, which we're very proud of, and we will soon be launching our third cohort.

More information on the Diploma in Workplace Data Protection can be found here:

[www.dbxuk.com/hr-training/the-diploma-in-workplace-data-protection](http://www.dbxuk.com/hr-training/the-diploma-in-workplace-data-protection)



## AINA GOMEZ



Aina Gomez is Managing Director and Lead Photographer at Family Memento, a photography business based in Cowley, Oxford. Aina also runs Razzamatuzz Theatre schools and has recently relocated to Oxford from Cambridgeshire.

Family Memento was born from Aina's desire to ensure that families had the opportunity to capture precious memories and challenge the perception that family portrait photography was a luxury not a necessity. "We need photography more than we think. You only get one chance to capture a moment and we don't give family photography the importance it needs. Children especially need and want to see photos of themselves, and their families, and I wanted to make sure as many families as possible have their memories captured," commented Aina.

Getting in touch with OxLEP Business was originally part of working out a survival plan for Covid, but I also believe that just like it takes a village to raise a child, it takes

support and community to build a business. I am very sociable and like interaction so I was also looking for something that I could get involved with that would not only support my business but provide some social interaction."

The first opportunity that I thought was a good fit was the Foundations to Growth programme, a 6-week structured programme that met every Monday for two hours.

Bookending the programme were two expert speakers who gave their insight into specific areas of business. As a group we then applied action-learning and accountability. It was great because we got to know the different businesses within the cohort, the issues they faced

and the options available for them to 'grow out' of that challenge and move towards their goal."

"It was a small cohort of six diverse businesses, and everyone had the opportunity to talk about their business, their challenges and how they wanted to grow. We were a real mix; some B2C, some B2B, some product led, and some service led yet we all benefited from the experts and the programme of broad topics and big picture stuff that we could tailor to our individual needs. It's expert support that's customised for you delivered in a supportive group.

Every week we were focusing on one of the group so there was a lot of listening, asking questions and then if prompted we'd offer advice and possible solutions to help people with their problems. A big part of this programme's learning is in looking at someone else's business and collectively helping them with the group's combined knowledge and expertise."

"When the programme finished we had the opportunity for one-to-one time with the experts for further support on implementing what we had learned

One of the advantages of this one-to-one advice is that you know the experts you're working with have gone through a sieve or a filter, the fact that they come through **OxLEP** ensures they will be good. There are lots of business and growth coaches out there, but you know that this is curated expert advice and you can trust it."

Now the programme has ended we are all still in touch and I hope we will continue to support each other - working with similar people who've been in similar situations certainly helps future proof your business."

Once you engage with **OxLEP Business** and speak to someone it is truly a personalised service. They are looking for your success, it's what they're there to do. Small businesses are a huge part of the UK's economy and it's in everyone's best interest that we succeed and grow."

"I don't understand the scepticism around free business support. There is a lot of great stuff that is free at the point of use, like the NHS. Why take the risk and pay privately for coaching support to grow your business when it's free from **OxLEP**? It's free, so just give it a try!"



## ORCHESTRA OF ST JOHN'S



The Orchestra of St John's was established fifty years ago by John Lubbock. Fifty years on the OSJ remains a busy, vibrant orchestra and John remains its conductor and musical director. John has always believed that music has extraordinary power and reach. So alongside their concerts, he introduced the 'Connections Programme' – taking the orchestra out of concert halls to perform in front of children with learning difficulties in a project known as 'Music for Autism' and those that are disadvantaged, including refugees. The OSJ ethos is to bring music to all.

Simon Payne from OSJ explains: "We were lucky enough to continue our outreach work 'Music for Autism' in a remote capacity during lockdown and also played safely to patients and staff in NHS hospital gardens. One of the greatest challenges we have faced has been obtaining audiences during lockdown due to COVID-19.

OSJ was awarded an **OxLEP Kickstart Grant**. The grant funding had two main advantages for the charity. The first being to work closely with a marketing consultant, who has helped to improve the overall marketing strategy, social media and adopt a more professional approach to their marketing delivery.

Secondly, OSJ has been able to partner up with a specialist who is evaluating their approach and strategy to the music for the 'Connections Programme'.

Alongside the grant funding, Simon Payne from OSJ has attended **OxLEP's Peer Networks** Programme webinars over a few months. Simon explained: "The workshops proved really useful, and it was great to talk to other people from similar industries who were in the same situation as us."

[osj.org.uk](http://osj.org.uk)



## SAFETY KNOT



Every year more than 5 million people die from injuries worldwide. Nine out of ten deaths are in low or middle income countries. It is a tragic death toll, made worse because so many of them are preventable. An Oxford-based business, Safetyknot, is committed to acting to reduce the toll with their innovative approach to the problem. They are nurturing a greater culture of safety amongst the people most affected in countries where little attention is paid to prevention and safety at home and work.

The enterprise is the brainchild of founder Katherine Weatherburn. She has developed the business to provide practical safety training and safety support to people at risk of harm, with a aim to prevent injuries in the first place. To develop the business and its service innovations,

Safetyknot took part in the **OxLEP Business Innovation Support for Business (ISfB) programme**. Katherine Weatherburn was able to get greater insight into what was needed to implement a much more robust business plan.

“It was so helpful” Katherine explained. “ISfB gave me access to a group of knowledgeable and friendly experts that are dedicated to helping my business grow and succeed. The programme helped us to refine our vision and bridge the gap between ideas and execution.”

They were awarded a **Go Create Grant** by the programme to support a simplified or streamlined version of a mobile phone app which is designed to give practical safety advice for primary caregivers and community construction workers in low- and middle-income countries in Asia.

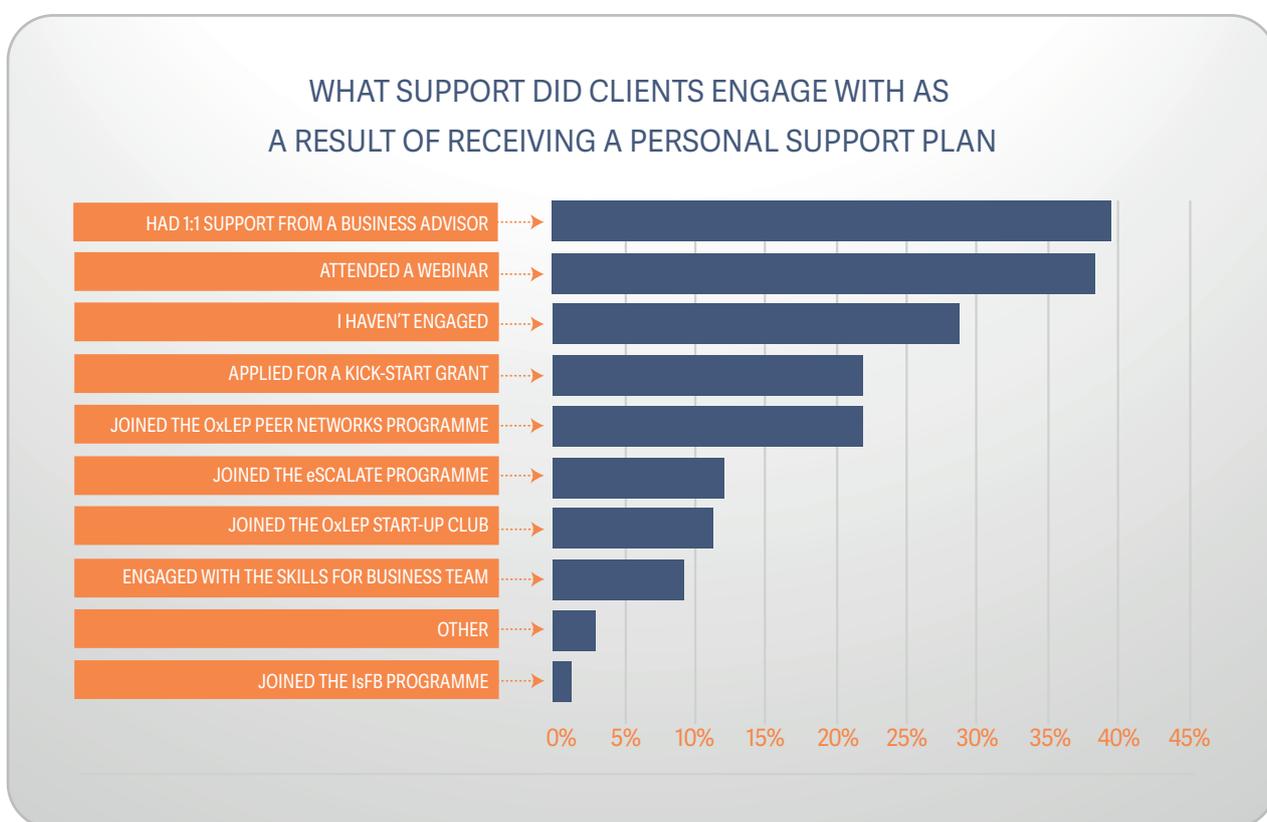
[www.safetyknot.org](http://www.safetyknot.org)



## 5.0 MEASURING SUCCESS

We collected feedback from the businesses being supported throughout this period following webinars, one to one support and the more in-depth programmes. Some of this feedback is presented here.

Over 1000 businesses who had received a Personal Support Plan were asked for feedback in December 2020, and subsequently reminded to complete the feedback in January 2021. 298 clients completed the survey. Of those 212 had engaged with the support offered in the Personal Support Plan.



*Figure 3: Shows the support that clients / businesses engaged with as result of receiving a Personal Support Plan.*

69 businesses with between 5 and 45 staff were targeted in our initial telephone survey. They had not completed the online evaluation at the time of calling them. They were asked similar questions to our online survey.

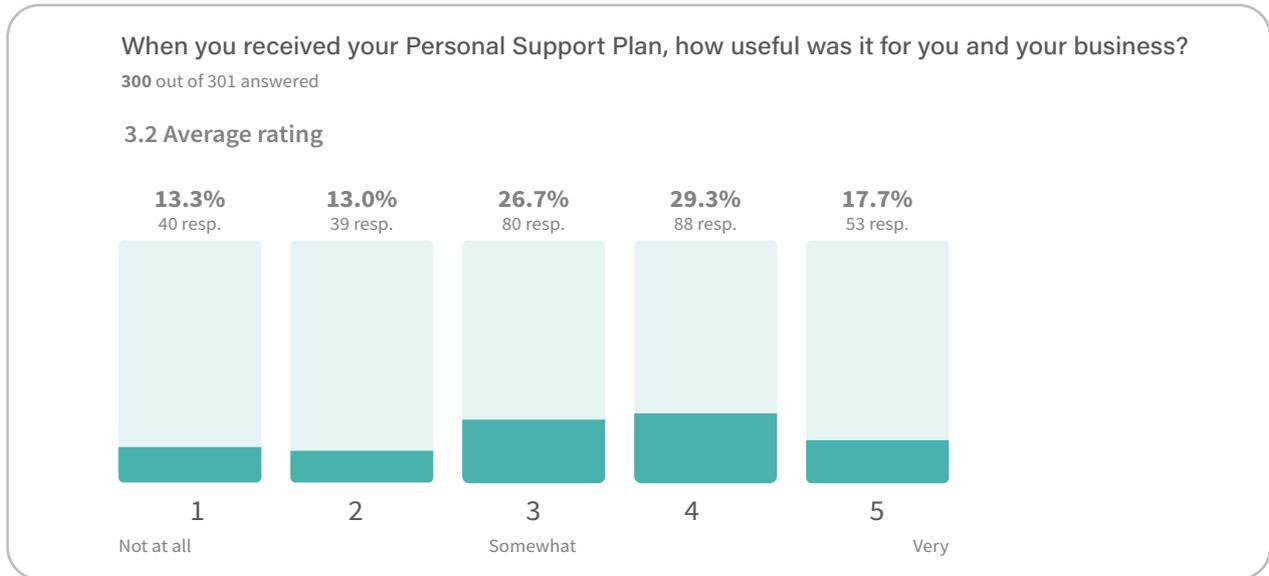
A second telephone survey targeted businesses with less than 5 staff. These calls helped to evidence the number of jobs protected as a result of OxLEPs support.

## 5.1 The Personal Support Plans

The graphs below show how satisfied beneficiaries were with the Personal Support Plan and the subsequent support they received. Over 80% said they were likely to recommend OxLEP to a friend.

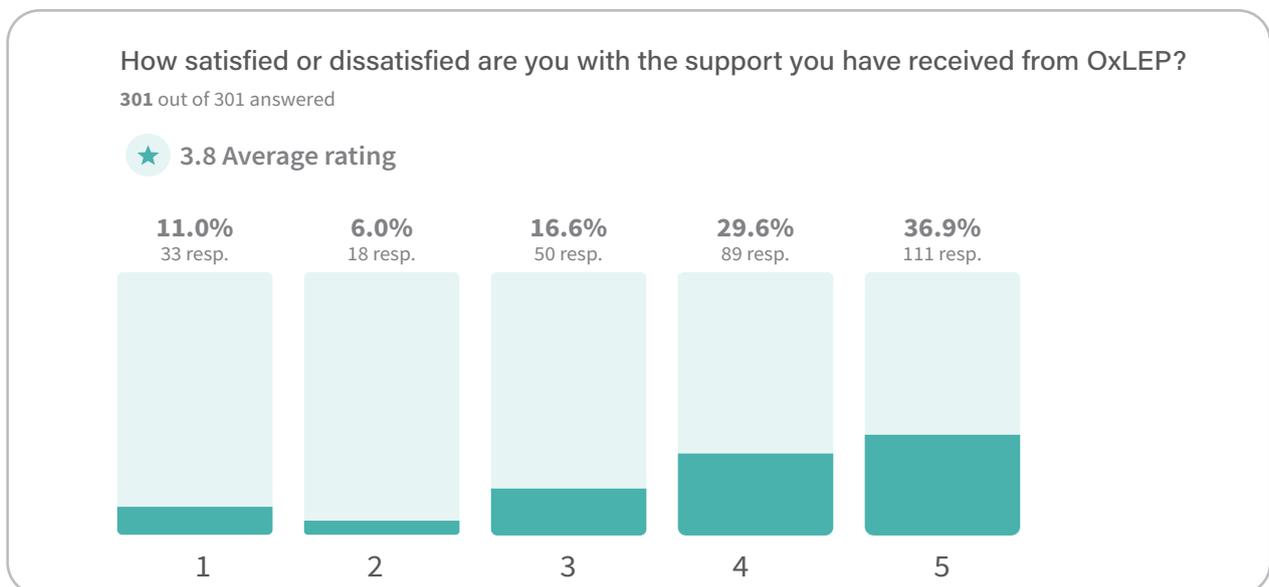
### 5.1.1 How useful was the Personal Support Plan?

Over 73% of businesses found the Personal Support Plan of at least some use to them.

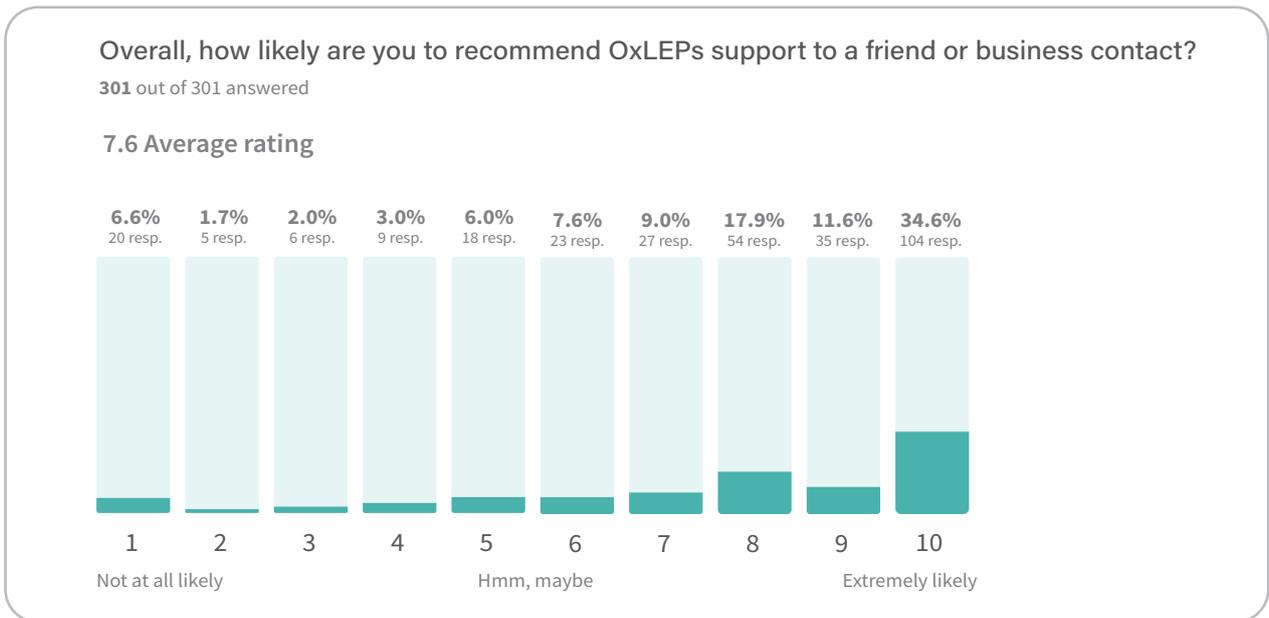


### 5.1.2 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the support you have received?

83% of businesses were in the satisfied to delighted range based on the support they have received.



## 5.1.3 How likely are you to recommend OxLEP's support?



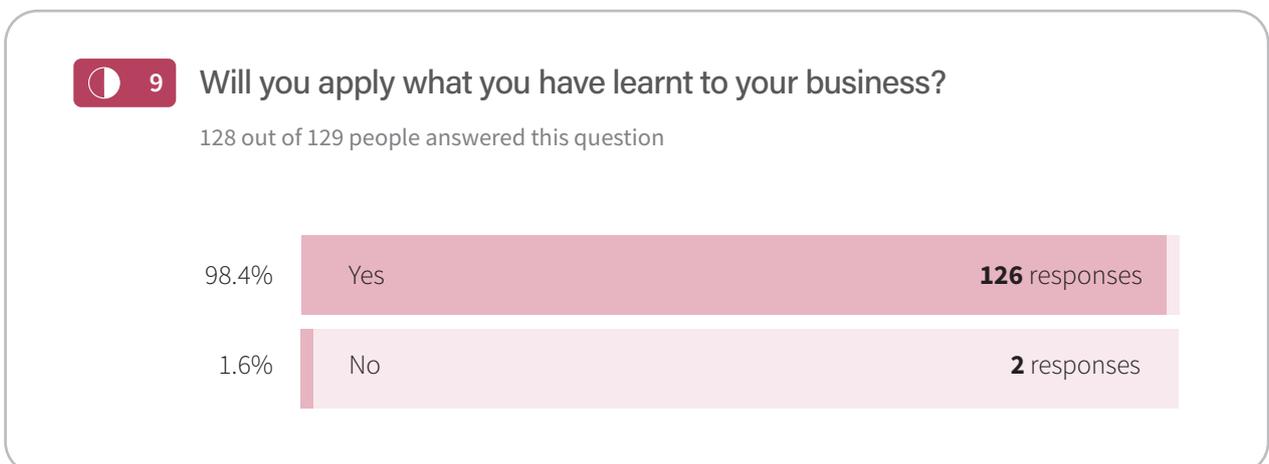
## 5.1.4 Why wasn't the Personal Support Plan useful?

The reasons given for not finding the Personal Support Plan useful were;

- Not having the funds to support the match funding requirements of grant programmes
- It wasn't suitable for my company
- Not enough information about the support
- There was too much information in the plan to digest
- The Plan was too generic

## 5.2 Webinars and 1:1's

Clients that attended a webinar or 1:1 were sent a separate survey following their session. 129 responses were received and the results show an extremely high level of value to clients from the support they received.



## Feedback from Beneficiaries – when expectations were not met

We feel that the help categories are very rigid and lots of deserving businesses like ours are overlooked just because they don't fit the your pre-determined moulds.

It is not a criticism it is just that my business does not fit your model.

It's a good plan but as a charity we have specific needs.

It's good but not especially relevant in our case.

We need financial support

Unfortunately nothing to date has seemed relevant to our business model.

Each business is individual and for any advisor to provide useful input requires the advisor to get to know it. The cost commitment made available would not have even covered this time. It certainly would not have covered our management time.

## Positive Feedback from Beneficiaries

OxLEP and the help they have provided and signposted, really have been my only source of support during the pandemic. As a result, I have spent more time working on the business than in its 20 year history and am feeling incredibly positive about a strong recovery and the opportunities for growth ahead. I have already taken on a new staff member as a direct result of the outcomes of my early 1:1 coaching sessions and am hoping to create two new positions in the business before the end of the year.

It is really quite a lovely experience, (and not one I have had on my business journey,) to be part of a journey with such an honest balance of personal and professional support. It has been challenging and yet not intimidating. Thank you.

Your support and lockdown gave me the confidence to pivot and support NHS with healthy snacks and support families using food bank ingredients to make healthy meals.

We are immensely grateful and appreciative of the support that we have received. It has been just what we have needed to get things off the ground with our business

This has been a great boost to our business

I dont think people realise what is available and what help can be provided

## Feedback on our current Business Support Plans has been very good:

*"The Business Support Plan took away the jargon and made it simple for us to put actions in place. We have engaged with a Business adviser and taken actions on planning, resilience, finances and grants. This support has helped us to protect 5 jobs in the company."*

### **A Web Design & Application development company**

*"OxLEP Start-Up Club has steered me towards helpful resources and opportunities and provided opportunities to remain inspired and positive about the future of my business".*

### **Photography company**

*"Week 1 on the course and it has made me realise so much, I am changing the whole business!"*

### **Distribution company**

*[Foundations to Growth Entrepreneurs Network participant]*

*"My 1:1 helped me to structure the business plan in a realistic way. It influenced how I planned the development of the value proposition. It made me prioritise key activities for business operation"*

### **Manufacturing company**

*"OxLEP is always ready to help. There is always someone, a real person, to talk to. We feel that we receive a personal, tailored and considered service and in short, feel valued as an Oxfordshire business. Whenever we approach OxLEP it's only ever a positive and helpful response. We've been offered and received myriad forms of support from advice, 1-1 sessions with business growth experts, grant advice and grants themselves, which have made a big difference to our gin business being able to grow in the way it has in the past 2 years."*

### **Gin Distillery**

*"It is a really nice surprise when you raise a problem which you think is unique to your business, but then find out others have the same or similar ones. Even if they have not had similar experiences, the feedback and suggested solutions are often not what you would have expected or even thought about but still highly relevant and useful. Peer 2 Peer is an invaluable opportunity to experience and benefit from this."*

### **Participant in Peer Networks 2020/2021**

*"Our facilitator has been outstanding and has good all-round knowledge and expertise and knows who or where to point you, to get any additional assistance where required."*

### **Peer Network Participant 2020/2021**

## Feedback on a webinar delivered by MAVERRiK for OxLEP Business:

*"Really brilliant session. I've heard several people speak about LinkedIn but never in these clear terms and explaining how the platform works. I can see so many things I can start to apply and change tomorrow."*

## 6.0 SUPPORTING BUSINESSES TO THRIVE INTO THE FUTURE

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The **OxLEP Business and Skills Teams** continue to provide a broad range of support to Oxfordshire businesses. **OxLEP** is always listening and learning, and the support is continually evolving, some programmes come to an end as others start.

Some companies required specialist advice that wasn't available within the programmes. As a result, networks were grown and referrals were improved. Some businesses needed more time with an Advisor to support a specific ambition. We developed the Non-Exec for a Day programme to provide 8-10 hours of support to these businesses.

The Peer Networks programme was a huge success. **OxLEP** is already supporting 50 more businesses on this programme and will support 165 businesses by March 2022.

COVID-19 locked businesses down making online engagement more important than ever. As a result online capability has improved and online delivery for one to ones and webinars has become the norm. These will continue as cost effective mechanisms for delivering support to a large number of clients.

One of the biggest challenges is reaching out to businesses across the wide range of sectors represented in Oxfordshire. This is a challenge that **OxLEP** and the wider business support community are addressing together.

**OxLEP Business and OxLEP skills** are committed to supporting Oxfordshire's wide range of businesses, ensuring that its resilient economy continues as one of the strongest engines for growth in the UK.

Start your business support journey with OxLEP by completing the Business Support Tool at

<https://www.oxlepbusiness.co.uk/oxlep-business-support-tool>



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