



c/o Janet Eustace
Parish Clerk
Oddington Parish Council

12 January 2026

Dear Oddington Parish Councillors,

**Overview of activities in 2025 and Application for funding to support The Theatre, Chipping Norton in 2026.
Registered charity number 268154.**

Thank you to the Parish Council for supporting The Theatre with a grant of £100 last financial year. I am pleased to provide you with an overview of our activities in 2024-25 and enclose our most recent impact report for your information.

The Theatre, Chipping Norton is a resource for our community and a rare example of a professional rural arts hub welcoming, supporting and producing exciting artists and performances. We welcome approximately 50,000 customer visits every year from an audience catchment area of around 25 miles in all directions from Chipping Norton. This includes a number of Oddington parishioners who attend The Theatre, participate in our programme, or volunteer as ushers.

As a rural arts hub our aims are;

- to make and host inspiring performances that will transform lives in Oxfordshire and beyond; and
- to make the benefits of the arts accessible to all, providing the support our community needs and a place to belong for everyone.

We continue to focus on our community programme and are working with more people from hard-to-reach and sidelined parts of our community than ever before. On average, 60% of the families we support live in Chipping Norton and 40% live in the surrounding villages and parishes.

Your support has helped us achieve this. Thank you. We hope you will continue to support our programme in 2026. Any amount you are able to award would be gratefully and warmly received.

Making and hosting inspiring performances

We are a source of joy and pride for our local community. We work hard to maintain affordable and accessible ticket pricing whilst offering a programme of high-quality live theatre, music, comedy and family shows, as well as screenings of theatre, opera, ballet and film. Last year, over 40,000 people enjoyed 209 live performances on our stage, including 868 free community and carer tickets.

We also continue to produce our own live theatre productions and create opportunities for local actors and creatives. This year's pantomime, *Beauty and The Beast*, was written, designed and created by a professional team, many locally based, and offered roles for 12 young people performing alongside a company of eight

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professional actors. 'Chippy Panto' is a Christmas tradition for families across the region with an audience of over 14,000, including 4,000 local school children, attending over 90 performances.

"The Theatre must be remarkable, unique and essential. In the work on our stage, as a creative hub and a producing company we must thrive. We want to make our work bigger, bolder and more diverse, and we seek a deeper connection with the community in which we live."

John Terry, Artistic Director - The Theatre Chipping Norton

Looking forward, we are working with Reduced Shakespeare Company and Selladoor on a new production of '**The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)**', a West End hit rewritten and reimagined for today's audiences. This production marks a significant step forward in the scale and reputation of The Theatre's in-house work with a 20 week national tour - our biggest to date - following a two week run at The Theatre in February.

A place to belong

We continue to work with over 400 young people and adults each week through our Take Part programme. We are pleased to report that the supported drama groups, '**YT Open**' and '**YT-Open Senior**' introduced last year for young people with additional needs, have been very successful. Many participants have now progressed to Youth Theatre and performed on stage in showcases.

In response to need, and a lack of provision, we have also launched '**YT-SEN**', a specialist drama group which provides the first step for young people with a higher level of need who might otherwise be excluded from this type of activity and are often marginalised in formal education settings.

We continue to offer creative writing, drama and movement courses for adults. With funding from the Oxfordshire Connected Communities, we have added a second group for '**Great Company**', our established theatre group for young adults with learning disabilities. This is very well attended and was oversubscribed.

Our front of house team includes around 60 volunteer ushers, several of whom live in this parish. Volunteering provides an opportunity to engage with the arts and join a community of fellow arts lovers of all ages. Our volunteer ushers are also fundamental to the Theatre's viability, and we are very grateful to all those who support us in this way. We also provide work experience placements for young people who are interested in exploring a career in theatre or choose to volunteer for their Duke of Edinburgh award.

Going forwards we plan to **introduce a range of participatory programmes focused on older members of the community**, creatively supporting and engaging those facing loneliness or isolation, or living with Parkinsons or dementia. We are recruiting a specialist practitioner to research and develop this programme to ensure that we meet the needs of our local community and do not duplicate any existing services. We have also taken on the running and have partially refurbished the Highlands Centre on Burford Road, which now provides accessible space for workshops and rehearsals and will be the base for this new programme.

Support for our community

The central commitment of The Theatre's Community programme is to build long-term relationships and to **transform lives through culture and creativity**. We aim to improve the lives of those we work with by creatively **tackling rural isolation, lessening inequality of opportunity and improving community cohesion and wellbeing**.

The basis of our community programme remains our ladder of engagement; a series of long-term programmes designed with and for communities who might not usually access the arts. We now support more families in marginalised or sidelined parts of our communities across the local rural area than ever before. This has driven a significant change in the stakeholders of our building.

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Overall, 60% of the families we support live in Chipping Norton and 40% live in the surrounding villages and parishes. In the last year our community programmes have delivered:

- **10,200 free school holiday lunches**, supporting 165-170 young people every school holiday
- **850 cultural engagements** with free activities, films, crafts and family days in the holidays
- **866 free community tickets** for those who may not otherwise experience live theatre, including relaxed performances making theatre accessible to those with additional needs or disabilities
- **52 free school holiday drama workshops places** for young people from low income families
- **Over 50 year-round youth theatre places** through our Tony and Judith Yarrow Bursary programme
- **200 places in peer support groups for parents** of young people with mental health challenges
- **52 participants in term-long mental health and wellbeing courses** at Chipping Norton Secondary School and Park School, supporting young people on the CAMHS waiting list across several year groups

Many of the young people we support have trauma experience and challenging or unstable home lives. By building relationships we are often trusted as a first port of call in times of crisis or emergency. This year we made seven safeguarding referrals in the course of our drama and wellbeing courses at Chipping Norton Secondary School and instigated a team around the family (TATF). We also regularly signpost to and work with other local organisations – including Thrive OX7 and The Branch - to support families in need.

The people who can say best how our community programme works and what its priorities are those at its heart; community participants, collaborators and partners. This tapestry of testimonies has been gathered from a variety of sources, including unsolicited emails, anonymous surveys and evaluations:

“My daughter does Youth musical theatre, and I do the parent and baby drama group, and come to the parent mental health group, and we all have the free meals. The theatre bursary has been the most life changing for my anxious eight year old who has not only made great friends but also gained confidence in herself and become a brilliant public speaker which will really help her all the way through her education. She is struggling in school, and at home, and this has made a real difference. The extra money for food shops during holidays just make everyone that little bit happier with less stress surrounding food and what we can afford. And I wanted to say thank you, I’m so glad the new SEN parent group has started, we really needed it. We love the Theatre and all love being a part of everything you do.” – online anonymous survey

“I absolutely love and admire the work that you are doing at Chipping Norton Theatre. You are a beacon for community services.” – Judy Tjan-Griffiths, CAMHS Schools In-reach worker

“I’m Sienna and I do Youth Theatre. In the summer we did two performances and I did a Backstage Pass, where we learnt all about lighting, sound and prompting and things like that. My favourite part about Youth Theatre is being with everybody. I have a really good time and I feel quite relaxed, and like I can just be free. I think youth theatre has made me feel more confident and more relaxed outside of youth theatre as well.

Before I joined I had very little confidence and although I can still be a bit shy my self-confidence has definitely improved. I find it easier now to speak out in class and read in front of people. My mummy says it has also helped me in expressing my emotions, I guess Youth Theatre has helped me to express myself. It’s a really good place, and it’s good to share your love of acting, to talk about what’s been going on in your life and just have fun. I think everyone should join youth theatre!” – Sienna, supported by mum Sam

“I sometimes get really stressed out. And just coming here makes me feel like there are people who want me around.” – Lawrence, Great Company adult learning disability group member

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“I just wanted to say how much I appreciate and value the support and peer support provided by both parent support groups offered by the theatre (SEN and mental health). As you know, life with an SEN child can be very challenging and lonely and parental need in the area (and elsewhere) is great. I cannot thank you and the theatre enough for the great work you are doing for parents as well as everything you do in the community and with our young people.” – Catherine Pearce, parent participant

“I work with children in the Nurture Room at St Mary’s primary school, and it’s just great hearing them tell me about the drama workshops that they’ve been involved in with the Theatre. Some of the children who have been so shy and struggled with their confidence and struggled with anxiety, we’ve seen them grow through the drama – either the term time or holiday activities – it’s just been incredible to see that growth and development. We’re seeing children and whole families feel that they’re part of something, feel that they’re part of a community, growing in confidence and trying new things that they never thought they’d be part of.” – Catherine Spring, Outreach Manager - Domestic Abuse, Mental Health and Nurture, The Branch (local charity & community hub)

“For the quieter residents, it opens them up and brings them to life – it’s almost as if they’ve been in a cage and with the theatre here they are set free” – Sandra Stowe, Activities Coordinator, Beech Haven Care Home

“I’ve watched Chippy Theatre, grow, develop and change, move with the times and give people what they want. It’s not just about theatre, it’s about providing a really good mix of things for the community to take part in. I think that’s what Chippy Theatre has accomplished perfectly that many, many theatres around the country fail at, that it’s a good community theatre.” – Tania Kirby, Chipping Norton Town Council

Your Support

Last year 79% of The Theatre’s income was funded through tickets and sales - an impressive achievement for a rural venue of 220 seats. However, we rely on the support of our local community, grants and trusts to maintain The Theatre and to facilitate our community and outreach programmes, which are supported entirely by donations.

We hope that Oddington Parish Council will be able to support The Theatre in 2026 by awarding a grant of £200. Any amount you are able to give would be gratefully and warmly received.

To award a donation or grant to The Theatre please send cheque donations to Katie Shama, at the above address, made payable to ‘The Theatre Chipping Norton’, or make your donation via BACS using the following details:

Chipping Norton Theatre Ltd, Acct No: 00272361, Sort Code: 20-03-84, Barclays

Our warmest thanks to you all for the vital part you have played in our continuing success. If you have any questions, we would be happy to share more about our work.

Yours sincerely

Katie Shama
Fundraising Officer
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Enc. 2024-25 Theatre Impact Report

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