



Oxfordshire Care Awards 2026

Terms and Conditions

and

Awards Guidance

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If you can't decide in which category to enter...

...Let *OACP* choose...

We will allocate your nomination to the most appropriate category.

Thank you for your interest in the Oxfordshire Care Awards 2026.

The 2026 Categories

There are 12 Awards to choose from with **two new categories** for 2026:

1. *Student*
2. *New to Care*
3. *Care Home Worker*
4. *Domiciliary Care Worker*
5. *International Recruitment*
6. *Leadership*
7. ***Nursing Practice***
8. *Team*
9. *Specialist / Complex Care*
10. *Oxfordshire Hero*
11. *Long Term Service*
12. ***Care Photography Award***

If you are not sure, select **Let *OACP* choose** in the online entry form to submit your nomination and we will allocate your submission to the most appropriate category.

Rules for entry

Oxfordshire Care Awards are open to **staff, volunteers, unpaid carers, care recipients** working in, contributing to, or receiving care and support in the **adult social care sector in Oxfordshire**.

The Awards cover care work from 1 March 2025 onwards, except Long Term Service Award, which recognises contribution over *at least* 10 years.

One nomination per entry.

All entries are treated confidentially.

Entries will be judged by a panel of reputable, independent and impartial adjudicators.

Entries will not be returned.

The Judges' decision is final and no discussion will be entered into.

How to enter

Choose the category in which you want to nominate a colleague, or team.

If you are entering into more than one category, separate entries must be completed.

Please read the Awards Judging Criteria carefully.

Write a statement of up to 600 words saying why the nomination should be considered.

Additional evidence from a service user/ resident/ client/ family member is welcomed, but not essential.

Add a photo of the Nominee so we can build a showcase for Oxfordshire's stars of 2026.

If you would like to add more information to support your online nomination, please use the **Add file** option in the entry form.

Additional evidence should be no more than two A4 pages.

Please make sure that the **name of the nominee** and the **award category** is included on all supporting information.

Please do not include logos, or links to websites, social media etc.

All nominations are shortlisted from multiple submissions: be clear why this individual or team stands out from your usual service delivery.

Complete the online entry form and submit.

Entries will be received at awards@oacp.org.uk.

This is the email address for any queries or follow up.

When you submit your form online, you will receive a confirmation e-mail: please check your junk folders for receipt. If you do not receive one, please email us at the above address.

Closing Date for Nominations is 5pm 3 March 2026

Top Ten Tips for Writing Winning Nominations

Make your nomination stand out. Competition standards increase year on year.

We do not know why a person or team is outstanding. Convince us.

1. Think carefully about who in your team, or which team, deserves additional recognition for their work over the last 12 months, or, in the case of Long Term Service, their contribution over 10 or more years.
2. Read the Rules of Entry above.
3. Check the Award criteria and try to evidence each bullet point.
4. Write out your supporting statement. Pause.
5. Re-read your supporting statement. Are you convinced? Is it succinct and relevant?
6. When ready, copy and paste the wording into the online form at <https://oacp.org.uk/oxfordshire-care-awards-2026>, or attach the document/ image. Keep a copy of your final submission.
7. Check that you are nominating the person in the right category for their role, or **Let OACP choose**.
8. Add a photo of the Nominee. We will use it to showcase our stars of 2026.
9. Tell the Nominee, their manager/ their employer (where relevant). All Nominees are winners just by you recognising them.
10. And relax – you are going to make someone very happy.

Learner/ Student Award

This Award is open to any person aged 16 or over, connected with your Oxfordshire service, who is currently studying a social care related course, on placement, work experience or engaging in recognised further study to progress their career.

The Award is open to students aged 16 or over, doing a Health and Social Care qualification (BTech/ T-level/ professional qualification etc).

Your nomination should evidence one or more of the following criteria.

1. Excellence academically demonstrating a strong grasp of theoretical concepts
2. The ability to apply knowledge to practical, real world solutions
3. Made a positive impact on their course, in the workplace, in the classroom, or in other settings
4. Shows potential for leadership and entrepreneurial spirit
5. Involved in interesting or connected extra-curricular activities which enhance their learning
6. Gone above and beyond to give back and positively impact their college, workplace, or community
7. Can showcase their achievements or learning clearly and confidently
8. Displays creativity in projects, assignments, or artistic endeavours
9. Thinks outside the box, brings fresh ideas and solves problems creatively
10. Miscellaneous impact: they have done something exceptional which makes them stand out

New to Care Award

This Award recognises a new member of staff who has joined the care sector within the last 12 months, either for the first time, or after at least two years away.

The Nominee should demonstrate how they have transferred existing skills from volunteering, life experiences, or previous employment into their new role.

They must show a clear understanding of their responsibilities and what 'care' means, providing examples of excellent people skills and good practice.

The Nominee should be aware of the choices available to residents/ clients/ service users and demonstrate empathy, responsiveness, and a commitment to improving their knowledge across different settings.

1. Grasped their role confidently and quickly, enabling them to progress
2. Shown the ability to apply knowledge learnt to practical solutions
3. Made a positive impact in the workplace, or in other settings
4. Shown potential for leadership and entrepreneurial spirit
5. Involved in additional activities further developing their role, or the roles of others
6. Have gone above and beyond to give back and positively impact their workplace and community
7. Can showcase achievements in team meetings, or other learning environments
8. Display creativity and innovation in projects or tasks
9. Have shown career potential
10. Miscellaneous impact: they have done something exceptional which makes them stand out

Care Home Worker Award

This Award is open to all frontline staff who provide care in residential or nursing homes and recognises the vital role of the Care Home Worker in delivering high-quality care in residential settings. Nominees must demonstrate dedication, professionalism, and a commitment to continuous personal and career development.

Nominees should provide excellent, person-centred care, treating each resident as an individual and supporting their independence. Respecting privacy and dignity is essential, and examples of going the extra mile (or two) are highly valued.

Nominees should show an active role in involving residents and families in care development and demonstrate initiative, adaptability, and responsiveness. A commitment to personal development, training, and teamwork is key to success in this award.

1. Treat each resident as an individual, recognising their individual needs and interests and supporting their independence
2. Respect privacy and dignity, demonstrate initiative and adaptability and are willing to challenge established practices
3. Involved in additional activities further developing their role, or the roles of others
4. Have gone above and beyond to give back and positively impact their workplace and community
5. Display creativity and innovation in projects or tasks
6. Show a commitment to personal development, training, and teamwork
7. Show potential for leadership and entrepreneurial spirit
8. Proactive and helpful member of the team, contributing ideas and making the care setting an enjoyable place to be in
9. Commit to providing high-quality care, and a willingness to go the extra mile (or two!)
10. Miscellaneous impact: they have done something exceptional, which makes them stand out

Domiciliary Care Worker Award

This Award is open to frontline workforce working in home care, supported living settings and also in day services or other community-based services. Nominations of community care-givers, support workers, including seniors and personal assistants are welcomed.

This Award recognises the vital contribution of Domiciliary Care Workers in delivering high-quality care to individuals in their own homes. Nominees should empower clients to make decisions, maintain independence, and receive dignified, personalised support that respects their privacy.

We seek evidence of collaboration with clients and carers, a willingness to go the extra mile, and a proactive approach to personal development through training and learning. Adaptability, responsiveness, and initiative in meeting individual needs are essential.

1. Treat each client/ service user as an individual, recognise their individual needs and interest and support their independence
2. Respect privacy and dignity, demonstrate initiative and adaptability and are willing to challenge established practices
3. Involved in additional activities further developing their role, or the roles of others
4. Have gone above and beyond to give back and positively impact their workplace and community
5. Display creativity and innovation in projects or tasks
6. Have shown a commitment to personal development, training, and teamwork
7. Show potential for leadership and entrepreneurial spirit
8. Are a proactive and helpful member of the wider team, contribute ideas and make the service an enjoyable place to work in.
9. Commit to providing high-quality care, and a willingness to go the extra mile (or two!)
10. Miscellaneous impact: they have done something exceptional, which makes them stand out

International Recruitment Award

At a challenging time for our colleagues from overseas, this Award recognises EITHER an employer who has demonstrated best practice in International Recruitment to support their business, OR the specific contribution of an individual who has been recruited on a sponsorship visa route.

An employer will:

1. Successfully attract and retain staff recruited from overseas
2. Prepare and resource a welcome and induction, including a welcome pack and resources
3. Provide pastoral and professional support if needed
4. Support recruits to establish themselves in their locality and in the wider UK system
5. Provide open communication with overseas staff about career aspirations if relevant
6. Provide ongoing support and mentoring where needed
7. Understand and welcome the cultural aspects overseas recruitment brings
8. Provide or seek out peer support from others of same or similar nationality or culture as required
9. Be pro-active in identifying challenges or problems that they may face
10. Prepare for repatriation situations, if needed

An overseas employee will:

1. Adapt to their new workplace quickly and seamlessly
2. Be innovative in resolving issues affecting their work
3. Contribute to services and made real connections with people they support
4. Become an invaluable member of the team, providing support to existing colleagues or mentoring new staff
5. Demonstrate early leadership potential and raised issues proactively as they have arisen
6. Respect privacy and dignity, and demonstrated initiative and adaptability
7. Go above and beyond to give back and positively impact their workplace and community
8. Think outside the box and display creativity and innovation in their work
9. Commit to providing high-quality care, and a willingness to go the extra mile (or two!)

Miscellaneous impact: have done something exceptional, which makes them stand out

Leadership Award

This Award recognises outstanding skills in Leadership within a social care setting. The nominee may or may not be in a position of management, but will demonstrate significant skills and aptitude for leadership of projects, or teams, or situations.

This Award is open to supervisors, senior care workers, team leaders, first-time managers, or established management, who have demonstrated a strong commitment to improving care and support delivery within their team, or wider organisation.

The person will have shown leadership qualities by reflecting on areas for improvement and actively supporting others to drive positive change. They should inspire their team, or others, to strive for excellence in care, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Their ability to motivate and guide colleagues, implement effective solutions, and lead by example will be key attributes in receiving this recognition.

1. Demonstrate the ability to inspire others and lead by example
2. Use innovative methods to address challenges in the service or wider sector
3. Show tangible results of initiatives
4. Support and advocate for social care issues, specifically individual rights
5. Work collaboratively and effectively with a variety of stakeholders
6. Put people at the centre of care and support dignity at all times
7. Motivate and develop staff
8. Create a welcoming and home-like environment that's responsive, caring and supportive
9. Have a positive impact on the service, staff and people who use your services
10. Commit to or have undertaken learning, training, qualifications, or accreditations which enhance their leadership role

Nursing Practice Award

This is a new Award for 2026 to address the broadening of delivery, shift in complexity and growth in diverse settings that people are supported and cared for in. It will recognise Registered Nurses leading excellent nursing delivery in nursing homes, but also nursing tasks where delivered in other settings. These might be the work and practice of a Learning Disability Nurse in a supported living or working-age adult care home, or the practice and expertise of a non-registered care worker delivering delegated health care tasks in a domiciliary care setting.

1. Demonstrates consistently safe, evidence-based delivery of clinical tasks (including delegated health care tasks) and follows protocols, escalation routes, and infection prevention standards.
2. Prioritises dignity, choice, and autonomy; tailors care to individual needs and actively advocates for residents' preferences and health rights.
3. Provides clear direction, supports colleagues, and fosters collaborative decision-making; steps up in crises and cultivates a positive team culture.
4. Communicates clearly with residents, families, and multidisciplinary teams; maintains accurate, timely records and ensures handovers are effective.
5. Recognises deterioration or risk early, makes sound clinical judgements within scope, and initiates appropriate referrals or escalations.
6. Pursues continuing professional development, shares learning with colleagues, and reflects on practice to drive improvements.
7. Builds trusting relationships with residents and families; demonstrates empathy, patience, and emotional support while managing care needs.
8. Identifies practical improvements to care pathways, workflows, or safety and leads or contributes to projects that measurably improve outcomes.
9. Respects cultural, linguistic, and personal differences; ensures equitable care and challenges discriminatory practice.
10. Acts with honesty, confidentiality, and accountability; understands scope of practice (including limits for non-nurse staff performing delegated tasks) and always works within legal and organisational frameworks.

Team Award

This Award celebrates the Team that best demonstrates a shared vision and clear goals, led by a recognised and respected leader, or by a resident/ client/ service user/ family member, or by consensus. Team members should have a clear understanding of their roles, take personal responsibility for their tasks, and foster excellent communication, cooperation, and mutual trust.

The Team must prioritise dignity and privacy for clients while respecting one another, maintaining high morale, and recognising each member's unique skills. They should embody person-centred care and involve clients, carers, or relatives in service development. Commitment to learning and personal growth, effective conflict resolution, and avoiding stereotypes are essential. The Team must showcase outstanding qualities that set them apart.

Any group of people can enter this Award including catering, ancillary, outreach, team-around-a-person, a single shift, or other group focused on a common task.

Please do not enter a whole organisation.

1. Clarity of shared vision, values, aims and approach to achieving success
2. A commitment to the team's health and wellbeing and how they display this in line with our leadership behaviours
3. Substantial evidence of involving the people the Team supports
4. Approach is creative, innovative, and effective
5. Demonstrate a high level of performance, capability, and commitment
6. Demonstrate a commitment to users of services through outstanding person-centred care
7. Care provided should be recognised and supported by family, friends, or colleagues
8. Learns from what they have done together and their combined performance is enhanced
9. Able to advocate for improvement or resources (even if unsuccessful) based on outcomes achieved
10. Able to manage change and flexibility according to Team personnel or changing needs of the focus person, or people.

Specialist and Complex Care Award

This Award recognises the delivery of specialist skills within a social care setting that support and enhance the life of people with different conditions, including, but not limited to:

- Acquired brain injury
- Autism
- Dementia
- End of life
- Profound and multiple learning disabilities

This Award recognises an individual, who demonstrates the specific skills and compassion required to manage and/ or deliver services that are sensitive to the needs of people with conditions that require additional support.

The Nominee should have a clear understanding of the condition they support, providing personalised care that respects each individual's uniqueness. They should show how they help individuals maintain their skills and abilities, use effective communication, and address nutritional needs. The individual must provide examples of high-quality care, demonstrate a passion for improving care or support for that condition, or sharing their learning across a wider team and be adaptable, responsive, and impactful.

They may also demonstrate how they provide emotional support to families and friends, helping them navigate the challenges of caring for someone who may be going through significant change in their life.

The ideal nominee will show a deep commitment to care, offering comfort and guidance to both the individual and their support network in a compassionate, respectful manner.

1. They collaborate with the client to design and create the support plan
2. They adapt to meet individual user needs
3. They engage with family, colleagues, or other support network to ensure outcomes are maximised or communicated for the individual
4. They show understanding, kindness and sensitivity to those they support
5. Their learning, training, qualifications, or accreditations indicate a desire to understand more about the condition they support
6. They demonstrate an understanding of best practice techniques
7. They improve the quality of life of those they support for a significant period of time
8. They are able to describe what they have done to enhance the care of others
9. There is a lasting impact through their work
10. Miscellaneous impact: something exceptional, which makes them stand out

Oxfordshire Hero Award

This special Award is for someone who has shown outstanding innovation or contribution to a care setting or an individual requiring care and support, which has gone beyond what would be expected. The Award aligns with The Oxfordshire Way recognising real strengths in growing community resilience, enabling people to make their own decisions about their care options and supporting people to live their best lives as close to home as possible.

This special award recognises an individual who has made an outstanding long-term contribution to social care. Nominations are invited from all areas of the care sector, and the recipient will be chosen based on their enduring impact and dedication to improving the quality of care. The individual should have demonstrated exceptional commitment, innovation, and leadership over time, leaving a lasting influence on both the sector and the lives of those they have supported.

This award recognises excellence in person-centred ancillary services, such as those provided by handy persons, cleaners, and receptionists, who deliver exceptional support with dignity and respect. Candidates should exemplify treating each client as an individual and take pride in delivering outstanding service.

Nominees will:

1. Demonstrates consistent, dependable contribution over time or in a critical moment; commits regular effort and follows through on promises to people and services.
2. Puts individuals at the heart of their work, tailoring support to preserve dignity, choice, and independence while improving daily life and wellbeing.
3. Can show clear, measurable outcomes — reduced isolation, increased independence, safer living, or strengthened service delivery — resulting from their actions.
4. Uses creativity and initiative to solve problems, introduce practical improvements, or develop new approaches that go beyond routine expectations.
5. Builds local capacity, strengthens social connections, or reduces demand on formal services through proactive, preventative engagement with communities.
6. Acts as an advocate for vulnerable people or fellow carers, supporting access to services, raising awareness, or creating opportunities for others to be heard.
7. Brings a unique or hard-to-find skill, practical expertise, or auxiliary role (for example handy person, receptionist, or support worker) that substantially enhances care and service quality.
8. Demonstrates empathy, patience, and the ability to build trusting relationships with people, families, and partners while treating everyone with respect.
9. Shows long-term dedication or a legacy of change that has left a measurable, enduring benefit to a service, organisation, or community.
10. Provides a clear example of an extraordinary act, project, or outcome that distinguishes them from peers and justifies special recognition.

Long Term Service Award

Recognises an employee who has made a significant contribution to a care organization over a minimum of 10 years.

This special award recognises an individual who has made an outstanding long-term contribution to social care. Nominations are invited from all areas of the care sector, and the recipient will be chosen based on their enduring impact and dedication to improving the quality of care. The individual should have demonstrated exceptional commitment, innovation, and leadership over time, leaving a lasting influence on both the sector and the lives of those they have supported.

1. Employed in any setting and in any role within Oxfordshire's social care sector
2. Has a track record of continuous dedication over the whole period
3. Tireless contribution can be evidenced
4. Significant impact on colleagues or teams
5. Contribution may be in a single role, or across a number of roles or organisations.
6. Has impacted their workplace or individuals they work with
7. Significant outcomes over a sustained period of at least 10 years
8. Miscellaneous impact: something exceptional, which makes them stand out

Care Photography Award

What moment, frozen in a single frame, would show the true difference you make every day?

A new Care Photography Award celebrates the power of visual storytelling in capturing the heart of care. Through compelling images, we will honour the people, moments, and environments that define adult social care – from quiet acts of compassion to bold expressions of resilience.

This award invites care workers, advocates, and our wider community to share photographs that reflect the dignity, diversity, and depth of the care experience. Whether taken on a phone or camera, each image should tell a story that uplifts, informs, or inspires.

*Digital photographs submitted may be used in static or dynamic presentations to promote care as the positive career choice. You can play your part in promoting our sector. Images will not be used for commercial purposes without full permission.

Who Can Enter

- Care workers and support staff
- People who draw on care and support
- Family carers and advocates
- Social care organisations and community groups
- Amateur and professional photographers with a connection to care

Submission Guidelines

- A maximum of 3 different entries per photographer: black and white, or colour
- Images must be
 - original – onward usage will acknowledge the intellectual property
 - taken within the nomination period from 1 March 2025 onwards
 - respectful of consent and dignity [submissions must acknowledge that they have the consent of those photographed – consent will be held by the photographer, or submitting organisation]
- Brief captions (max 100 words) are encouraged to contextualise the image

Judging Criteria

- Emotional impact and storytelling
- Representation of care values (dignity, inclusion, empowerment)
- Creativity and composition
- Ethical integrity and consent

Category	Description
<i>Moments of care</i>	Capturing everyday acts of kindness, support, and connection
<i>Portraits of strength</i>	Celebrating the faces and stories of care workers, or those receiving care

<i>Behind the scenes</i>	Highlighting the unseen labour, preparation, and resilience in care settings
<i>Community & belonging</i>	Showcasing inclusive environments and relationships that foster belonging
<i>Joy in care</i>	Images that reflect laughter, celebration, and uplifting moments
<i>Nature & wellbeing</i>	Exploring how outdoor spaces and nature support wellbeing in care
<i>Creative expression</i>	Featuring art, music, or activities that empower those in care

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