Oxford City Council and Crisis, the national charity for single homeless people, are working together to redevelop and refurbish the Old Fire Station to a high standard. It will be home to a new Crisis Skylight centre (an education, training and employment centre for homeless and vulnerably housed people) and a social enterprise, Crisis Skylight Café, open to the public. It is also intended that it will accommodate a range of flexible and inspirational spaces for professional artists, the wider arts community and the public. These spaces will include a flexible arts auditorium, a dedicated creative workspace, a gallery and a retail unit for emerging artists and makers. It will also offer some office space for like-minded organisations.
The overall vision for the Old Fire Station is to create a unique, dynamic and inspirational centre for creativity, skills development and enterprise in Oxford.

At its heart will be a new Crisis Skylight centre providing education, training and employment opportunities for homeless and vulnerably housed people and a social enterprise, Crisis Skylight Café, open to the public.

There will also be high quality, flexible spaces for artistic professional development and training, and for community groups to use to offer performance and visual arts events, regular classes and courses for the public. These spaces will accommodate an auditorium, a gallery and retail space, and a creative workspace for artists and designers.

Brought together under one roof and through interconnected spaces, people from across the city will be able to meet, learn, network, participate and ultimately move forward in their lives.

This vision is integral to the building’s ability to retain its active role in the arts and cultural sector in Oxford whilst, at the same time, helping to end homelessness in the city – making it a true place of change for the whole community.

“There’s nowhere in Oxford that offers anything like this.”

Hostel resident, Oxford
**Planning**
A formal planning application was submitted on 20 November 2009 and a decision is expected by the end of February 2010.

**Contractor procurement and design**
The project team, made up of representatives from Crisis and Oxford City Council, is currently undergoing a tender process in order to appoint a contractor, following a traditional two stage approach. This approach centres on the recruitment of a contractor at a very early stage in a project, i.e. at the design stage. The contractor will therefore work closely with the design and project teams to develop the final design and detail. A collaborative approach like this means they will work together to develop a design that takes account of the contractors’ views in relation to buildability, sequencing and sub-contractor selection – with the intention that any potential problems are identified and avoided at the outset.

**Business planning**
Business planning for the arts-related spaces within the OFS has been underway for several months now. A social enterprise consultancy, Eastside Consulting, was commissioned to identify the most financially viable business model and to subsequently develop the business plan. Their brief was to make the arts-related spaces within the building sustainable whilst meeting the needs and demands of the arts and cultural sector and wider community. Business planning continues with all feedback from consultation activities being fed back into the business plan as it continues to develop. The project team is also receiving additional support from an arts development specialist to ensure the right model is delivered.

Crisis is committed to operating the elements of the project working with homeless people.

**Consultation**
On 28 October 2009 we held a public information event at the OVADA Gallery and more than 100 people attended to view the initial design plans and offer feedback. They represented a good cross section of the city: from homeless service providers and users to local Councillors to arts practitioners to local residents to community and charitable organisations. Many people responded on the night and afterwards with comments and observations which have since been fed into the design process and business planning for the project. Following the event, group consultation sessions have been held with various arts groups separately to discuss the designs and business model.

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**Key dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 February 2010</td>
<td>Next public information event at the OVADA Gallery, 6.30 - 9 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2010</td>
<td>Planning decision due and detailed design completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>Appointment of contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2010</td>
<td>Refurbishment work commences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer 2011</td>
<td>Redeveloped Old Fire Station reopens</td>
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**Keeping you informed**

**Next Public Information Event**
Wednesday 10 February 2010, at OVADA Gallery from 6.30 to 9 pm.

This event is an opportunity for the project team to update the community on how the development is progressing and to present their responses to feedback received at the last event in October. Councillor Bob Price, Leader of Oxford City Council and Duncan Shrubsole, Director of Policy & External Affairs at Crisis will be opening the event at 7 pm.

**Stakeholder Consultation**
This will be ongoing over the coming months and will involve briefings and design workshops with service users, homeless service providers and various arts groups, enabling them to comment and make recommendations on spaces that ultimately they will be users of. Briefings to local Councillors and community leaders will continue and to key contacts within the learning sector, the local community and local businesses.

**Crisis and Oxford City Council Websites**
Updated design plans will be available on both websites following the February public event. A consultation document outlining all activity, feedback and responses to date will also be available to access after 10 February, via the following links www.crisis.org.uk/oxford and www.oxford.gov.uk/oldfirestation

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**Get in touch**

Feel free to get involved or feed back any comments by contacting:

Ciara Devlin at Crisis on 0207 426 3851 or email newdevelopmentsteam@crisis.org.uk

Nerys Parry at Oxford City Council on 01865 252825 or email oldfirestation@oxford.gov.uk
Recognised as a model of good practice by the department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), Crisis Skylight offers practical and creative workshops including art, music and drama, vocational workshops such as bike maintenance and carpentry, accredited learning opportunities in literacy, numeracy, IT and ESOL and tailored employment programmes. It is a supportive community that transforms lives and membership is open to those who are or have been homeless and facing social exclusion.

Crisis Skylight in Oxford will be our third centre and will build on the success of similar centres in London and Newcastle. These are funded in part by voluntary donations and in part by contracts we deliver in consortium with, for example, Further Education colleges, Local authorities and the Learning and Skills Council.

Crisis will work in close partnership with a range of local organisations, both within the Old Fire Station and across the city, drawing upon their expertise to ensure people are getting the support they need and the opportunities they want to regain their independence and end their homelessness for good.

What to expect from Crisis Skylight

Crisis Skylight London’s informal workshops

**Vocational**
Job club, Construction Skills Certification Scheme card training, gardening, bicycle maintenance skills, sewing, plumbing, introduction to Mac computers, law clinic, Microsoft Word and Excel skills.

**Creative arts**
Creative writing, reading group, open access art, playwriting, jewellery making (beginners and advanced), surface design, hatmaking, painting, photography, music production, life drawing, mosaics.

**Performing arts**
Songwriting, theatre improvisation, musical theatre, Cardboard Citizens choir, Cardboard Citizens dance, theatre acting, guitar for beginners, musicians workshop, singing workshop, contemporary music, Streetwise Opera singing.

**Body, mind, spirit (health activities)**
Creative thinking, Brain Gym, Yoga, Pilates, Qi Gung, Tai Chi, Reflexology.

Crisis Skylight London’s accredited courses

- Numeracy
- Literacy
- Certificate in self development through learning
- Beginners IT
- Computer literacy and information technology
- European Computer Driving Licence
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- ESOL & citizenship
- British Safety Council health and safety at work