



# Vital Signs 2017

Vital Signs MK is an annual publication designed to round up the most current research on the communities of Milton Keynes and present it in an easy-to-read format. Vital Signs points to our strengths and to the challenges we face as a city. To download this year's Vital Signs Update, as well as an extended version with many more statistics and links to all of the sources of the original research visit [mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](http://mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk).

# Disadvantage and Poverty



Despite our city's record of great economic success, poverty and income inequality continue to grow in Milton Keynes, affecting greater and greater numbers of local working families who are living in poverty despite our thriving local economy.

## Vital Thinking

What are the key factors that create and sustain poverty in our society? Which of those key factors fall inside the influence of local people and local government? What is the best way for us to work together to mitigate those factors and reduce poverty in our community?

## Vital Action

Citizens Advice is an independent charity that offers free and confidential support to help people overcome a range of problems, including helping those who have significant financial difficulties to better manage their finances and their debts. Milton Keynes Citizens Advice recently launched a new 'home visiting' service that offers debt and money management advice to people who live in the most deprived areas of MK, people who otherwise would have been far less likely or able to access their city centre premises.



## Vital Statistics

128%

The proportion of homeless households in MK that include children or pregnant women has **increased by 128%** since 2013 to 5.7 out of 1000 households. (note that the national rate is 1.9)



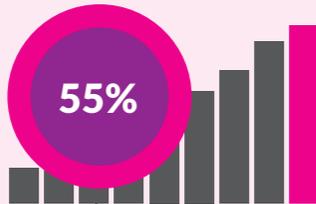
1,673

The 'Make Lunch MK' provided **1,673 hot meals over the past year** to local children from low income households during school holidays



55%

Nationally, the number of Britons living in working households that still fall below the poverty line has now risen to 7.4 million, or **55% of all those living in poverty**



**18.3%** of children under 16 are living in families who receive out of work benefit or tax credits and where income is less than 60% of the median

18.3%



12,300

MK Food Bank provided needy local households with **12,300 emergency food parcels in 2016**. This is an increase of 1,430 over the previous year



# Health and Wellbeing



With many improving indicators, there are reasons to feel positively regarding our progress toward better public health, although there are still serious areas of concern, including incidence of obesity, asthma and infant mortality.

## Vital Thinking

With such a wealth of green parks, woods and other public outdoor spaces in Milton Keynes, why do local people not access them more for exercise and other outdoor activities? Is this tied to our heavier reliance on cars for transportation in Milton Keynes?

## Vital Action

Age UK Milton Keynes works with a range of lunch clubs for older people across our city. In addition to providing a hot meal, these clubs offer a wide range of services including various social activities, visiting guest speakers and organised outings to various places of interest. Many of the members of these lunch clubs live alone and this weekly meeting is their only opportunity to enjoy a freshly cooked meal and to enjoy one another's company, addressing some of the isolation that is common amongst older people.



## Vital Statistics



23%

**23% drop** in the rate of children 0-15 killed or seriously injured in road accidents in Milton Keynes since 2013

13.5%

Only **13.5%** of local residents make use of our outdoor spaces in Milton Keynes for exercise or health reasons, compared to 17.9% nationally



**10%** of school children in reception year are clinically obese

10%

The rate of infant mortality in Milton Keynes is **35% higher than the national average** (5.3 out of 1,000 compared to 3.9 nationally)

35%



20%

**20%** of school children in year 6 are clinically obese



4%

Children in Milton Keynes are immunised against Measles, Mumps and Rubella at a rate (95.7%) that is **4% higher than the national average**



**14% drop** in hospital admissions for asthma among young people 18 and under since last year but this is still 15% higher than the national average

14%

With regard to children in care in MK, there has been a **9% drop** (to 88.6%) in the past two years in the percentage who have up to date immunisations

9%



# Mental Health

We are seeing very significant increases in the incidence of mental health problems and related behavioural problems, such as substance abuse and self-harm. At the same time, resources to address those problems have shrunk considerably in recent years and many local people have been left unable to access the support they need.

## Vital Thinking

Are the numbers of people seeking mental health support growing because of increasing incidences of mental health problems, because people are more open and willing to pursue this help, or some combination of the two? If the incidence really is increasing, what factors are playing a role in this change? Can they be addressed locally, even in part?

## Vital Action

The Youth Information Service (YIS) is one of the last remaining community counselling service focused specifically on young people in Milton Keynes. Established in 1979, the service has been forced to cut back substantially on their service in recent years due to the withdrawal of public funding for the organisation (despite the fact that many of their referrals still come from GPs, social services, schools, etc.) They work with young people aged 11-21 who are suffering with any of a range of issues, including anxiety, depression, anger, history of abuse and family problems, relationship difficulties and more. With their core costs being covered by a multi-year grant that is coming to an end, the survival of this service is very much at stake this year.



## Vital Voices

### Steve McNay – Mind BLMK

“The mental health of young people appears to be worse than ever, we’ve got to look at a different approach, more preventative work. The same is true of adult services as well. These days unless you are in crisis, it’s very difficult to find help. You can access NHS talking therapies, IAPT, through your GP, but even that is delivered over the phone.”

“Demands on adult mental health services are significant, and what I’ve seen over the last fifteen years is a rise in the threshold for access to specialist mental health services. They just get further and further out of reach for many people that need them.”

“Why is demand increasing? In part, because we are slowly but surely chipping away at the stigma associated with talking about your feelings.”

“We’ve heard lots of positive noises for the last five or six years, like people saying, ‘we’re going to invest, we will get to the point where there is parity with mental health’ but so far we’ve not seen this happen. Over the last Parliament, we lost upwards of 800,000 bed days in mental health, and we’ve lost 3,000 mental health nurses. This is the reality. Demand is increasing, income is decreasing.”

“Mental health is everybody’s responsibility, and in the face of the closure of family and children’s centres, the disappearing of support for young parents, what can we do? Provide positive role models for young people, volunteer to be a mentor, get more engaged with your community, work with young parents. There are so many ways you can have a significant and positive impact on the mental health of our communities.”

### Simon Green – YMCA

“Our residents come here and sometimes for the first time, meet people who are similar to them and as a result, don’t feel so stigmatised. Consequently, a lot of the young people here form really strong bonds of friendship with the other residents here, which has a positive impact on their mental health.”

“The way we think of mental wellbeing and treat mental health needs to get more creative. For example, today we’re taking our residents on a bike ride. Apart from the physical exercise, this will give some of those vulnerable young people an opportunity to get outside to do something social and positive. The impact for them will be improved mental wellbeing.”

### Elizabeth Sabey – YMCA

“There are gaps in service provision. IAPT doesn’t take people at the high end of the scale with self-harm and suicidal thoughts, so I then went to ASTI (Assessment and Short Term Intervention) with those people but as they didn’t have ‘severe and enduring’ mental health issues, they weren’t willing to take them on either. Where are they supposed to go?”

“Other times I’ve taken young people with very serious mental health issues to the health services and after a very difficult intake session, they were offered nothing, just a referral to a community counselling service, which I didn’t feel was suitable or adequate in those particular cases. These were young people in distress, engaged in self-harm with plans for doing further harm to themselves. It’s not good enough.”

## Vital Statistics

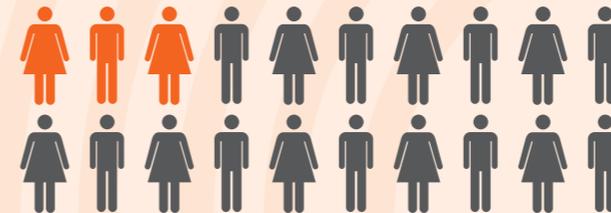


Hospital admissions for substance abuse among 15-24 year olds has **increased 45%** since 2013



Mind BLMK, who are contracted with the NHS and MK Council to deliver mental health services in MK, report that the total number of referral clients they saw between 2015 and 2017 was **3,750**

**3 out of every 20** local residents between the ages of 16-74 experienced mental health problems last year



A piece of research commissioned by PWC, entitled ‘Creating a Mentally Healthy Workplace’, found that for every pound invested in implementing mental health support for employees, there was a **£2.30 return** (in increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, etc.)

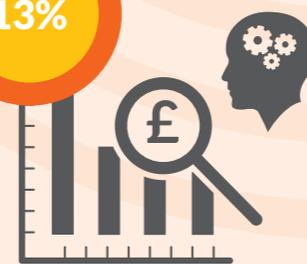


Among 10-24 year olds, hospital admissions for self-harm have **increased 40%** since 2013



Nationally, the increase in the number of people detained under the mental health act from 2015/16 to 2016/17 was **9%**

While mental health problems are responsible for 23% of the total impact of ill health in the UK, they receive only **13%** of the NHS budget



Among young people 17 and under, hospital admissions for mental health-related reasons have **increased 57%** since 2013

# Crime and Safety



While there are many worsening indicators in the most recent police reporting on local crime, the police leadership in Milton Keynes are keen to point out that the overall crime levels have decreased considerably over the past several years and so while they are again on the increase, they are still low by historical standards.

## Vital Thinking

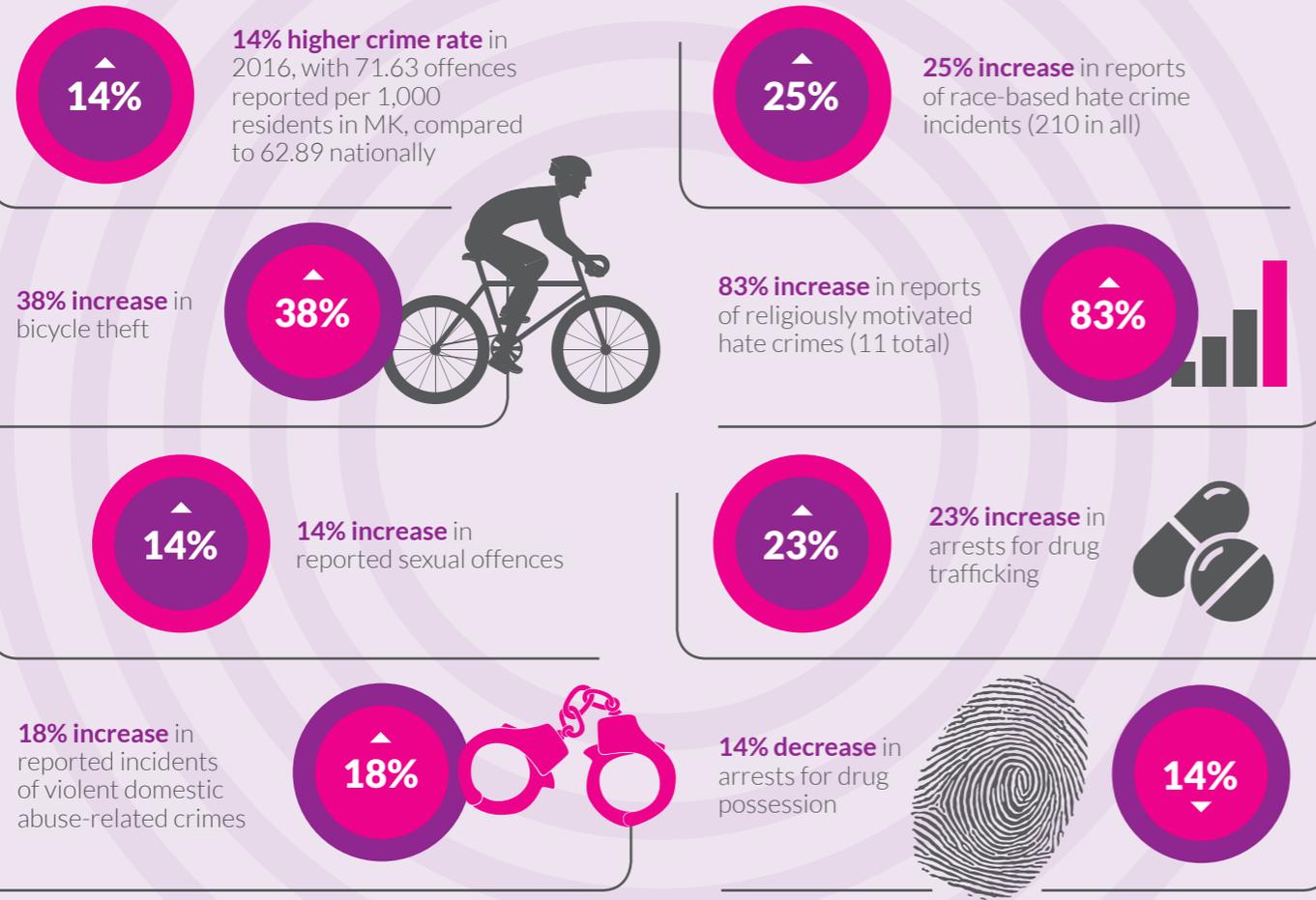
The dramatic increase in bicycle theft in Milton Keynes over the past year is attributed, at least to a significant degree, to theft of bicycles provided as part of the Santander bike hire scheme (delivered in partnership with local charitable social enterprise 'Cycle Saviours.'). There is concern that while the scheme has a damage / theft rate of roughly 20% in other areas, in MK it is closer to 65%. Recently it has been reported that the scheme may be withdrawn due to the cost of addressing the high level of theft, as well as the more than £200,000 worth of extensive and deliberate damage done to the bicycles in the scheme.

## Vital Action

MK Prison Fellowship is a volunteer led local group that supports the prisons at Woodhill and Oakhill through their management of an accredited 'Restorative Justice' course for prisoners, their cooperative work with the prison chaplaincy and their support of the children visiting family members in the prisons. This past year, the Fellowship secured funding to equip a more family friendly environment at the prison for visitations that involve young children.



## Vital Statistics



# Economy



Milton Keynes consistently performs very near the top of the national tables on several key indicators, like GVA growth, job growth and unemployment rates, and this year is no exception. Even more, useful secondary indicators are looking very positive as well, for example, apprenticeship schemes in Milton Keynes (most of which are offered through MK College) have more than doubled over the past ten years.

## Vital Thinking

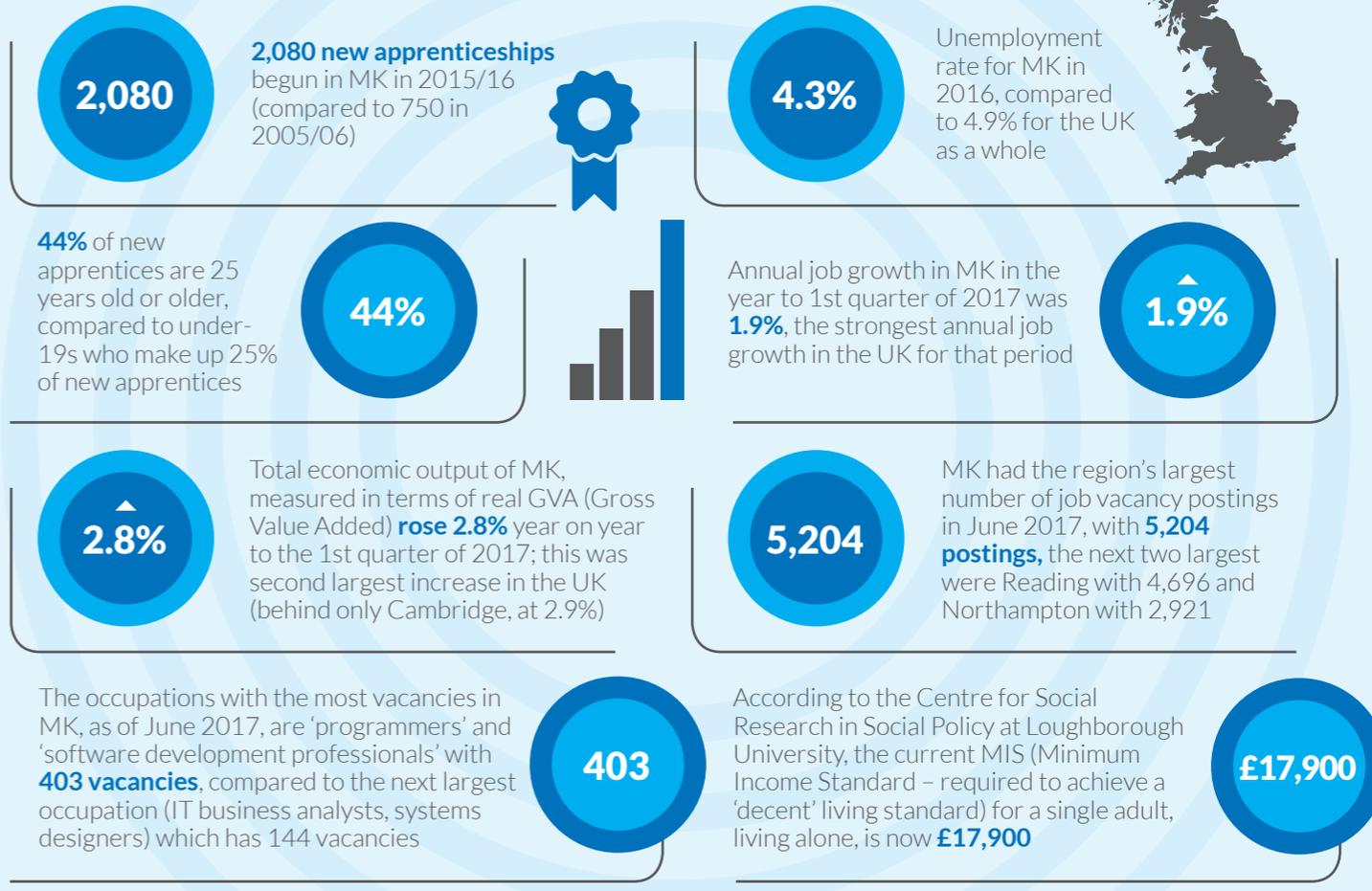
The largest numbers of available jobs in Milton Keynes are in very specific IT careers like software engineering and programming. Are there opportunities for local people from disadvantaged backgrounds to receive the training and working experience they would need to compete for these vacancies? It is estimated that 65% of children starting school this year will eventually work in jobs that don't even exist yet. Are we educating and preparing our local young people to help them adapt and thrive in our rapidly changing workplaces?

## Vital Action

The Milton Keynes branch of Young Enterprise works to inspire and equip young people to learn and succeed through enterprise. Launching last September, their 'Learn to Earn' programme offered students of Leon Academy and MK Academy the opportunity to work on developing their life planning and employability skills. The programme examines the relationship between choices made while at school and future life planning, offering development in eight key competencies: communication, confidence, financial capability, initiative, organisation, problem-solving, teamwork and resilience. Students produced creative business plans and were encouraged to think of themselves as future entrepreneurs.



## Vital Statistics



## Looking Ahead

MK Community Foundation recognises the importance of building new and stronger partnerships in order to better address the challenges outlined in our Vital Signs reports. In the years to come, we will be exploring new opportunities for partnership working and investigating our options for supporting positive change in our community, including encouraging others to pursue collaborations and joined up strategic programmes.

To this end, MK Community Foundation will continue our series of Vital Thinking events in collaboration with our local partners and community groups. Alongside our work on mental health, we plan to launch a new series of Vital Thinking workshops that will focus on disadvantage and poverty, including understanding what we can do, as a community, to address the causes and impacts of these issues on our city's residents.

## What is MK Community Foundation?

MK Community Foundation is an independent charity working for and at the heart of the city for over 30 years. Our Vital Signs publishing programme is intended to inform, to spark discussion and to support our work to develop philanthropy in the community. Vital Signs also helps us to support local charities and community groups by enabling us to offer a better informed and more proactive grant making and property subsidy programme. With the help of local people and businesses in the last financial year we were pleased to offer £1.7 million of support to local community groups and charities, making MK a more vibrant place for all of us to work and live. Vital Signs helps us to ensure that our support is focused on genuine need in the community.

To help us to award grants for important charitable projects across MK you can donate online at [www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](http://www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk) or call us on 01908 690276 to find out more.

## Join the conversation

### Get involved and have your say on the findings in this Vital Signs report

-  Tweet your #vitalsignsMK thoughts to @MKComFoundation
-  Send an email to [giving@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](mailto:giving@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk)
-  Send a letter to MK Community Foundation, Acorn House, 381 Midsummer Boulevard, MK9 3HP
-  Call us on 01908 690276 – we'd love to talk more about Vital Signs with you

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