

WHO ARE MILTON KEYNES COMMUNITY FOUNDATION?

We are a leading grant-making charity sending funding where it's needed most in Milton Keynes.

- FAIRNESS** We seek detailed understanding to make the right decisions.
- ASSISTANCE** We share our expertise and referrals for those who need advice.
- INSPIRATION** We communicate our unique proposition passionately and with hope.
- RELIABILITY** We deliver what we say, when we say our strategic goal is to build a resilient, creative, inclusive and philanthropic community.

We are proud to be leading the way in supporting community projects and charitable activities to help create a fairer more connected community.

But we can't do this alone.

We rely on your donations, kindness, and generosity so that we can continue to guide businesses, philanthropists and charities to the right giving and grants.

We're on a mission for a fairer community.




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Information in this report has been gathered from a variety of sources. Please read the long report at communityfoundation.co.uk for full details and references.

Since 2013 there have been several changes to the counting methodologies of some datasets used to indicate performance and trends. Some organisations have also not been able to undertake their regular annual surveys during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Comparative data on Northampton, as it has not been a unitary authority since 2021, is not available for the comparative local authority level datasets.

Comparisons are given where possible with the situation in 2013 and with England as a whole and selected places – namely Bedford and Luton as neighbouring unitary authorities, (and part of the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Health and Care Partnership). Northampton, where comparative data is available, has been included. Swindon is covered as a unitary authority that has some similarities with Milton Keynes in the need to manage planned rapid growth.

VITAL SIGNS MILTON KEYNES 2013–2022

Vital Signs is an annual publication designed to identify and spotlight issues facing the communities of Milton Keynes (MK). This year marks the 10th edition, the first Vital Signs Report was published as a news sheet in 2013. We have taken the opportunity in this year's report to review how MK has changed over the past years, identifying its strengths and the challenges we face.

The concept of 'Vital Signs' was pioneered by the Community Foundations of Canada. The aim of 'Vital Signs' is to support local Community Foundations to create a fairer community by using evidence-based data and insights into local needs.

Vital Signs focuses on 12 major themes and combines published data with observations from local community organisations to illustrate the lived experience in MK.

We use this report to advise individuals, families, and businesses in their philanthropic aims. Enabling them to direct their giving to where it's needed most and can make the most impact.

The themes addressed also align with the goals of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development (SDG) blueprint. This is a call for all countries to take actions to help reduce global poverty, reduce inequality, and at the same time tackle climate change. There is thus a close alignment between these goals and those themes reported in Vital Signs, showing how local actions contributes to global change.

IAN REVELL CEO MK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

"One of our volunteers in 2020 said that it felt like Milton Keynes was wrapping its arms around the community to meet the increased demand"

MK FOOD BANK



STRONG COMMUNITIES AND DIVERSITY SDG REDUCED INEQUALITIES

'Strong Communities' is about there being a sense of belonging, trust, and engagement between local people. Strong communities are more cohesive, with members feeling their concerns are represented and voices heard.

MK is one the fastest growing cities in the country, much has been done since its founding to welcome and integrate new communities. The Voluntary, Community and Cultural Sector (VCCS) has been integral in helping to level up disparities between communities, and to support communities in having a voice and sense of continuity with their heritage.

A sense of community and shared purpose is one of the major reasons for individuals voting in elections. Voter turnout statistics for elections since 2015 indicate that in MK about two-thirds voted at national elections, broadly similar rate to England overall.

Clear and stable communications through online connectivity is important for business success and for residents. As of 1 September 2022, the ultrafast broadband penetration for MK is 91.6% compared to 2018, when MK had one of the lowest ultrafast penetration rates in the country.

Vital Thinking

As a Foundation how do we prioritise our grant funding to ensure that we reach those groups who are rarely heard?

Vital Voices

"We have got all the pieces of a jigsaw to make MK the most inclusive city in the UK. But we haven't yet put all the pieces together so that all communities, services, agencies etc are sufficiently working together to make this a reality."

GAMIEL YAFAI FOUNDER AND CEO OF CONSULTANCY DIVERSITY MARKETPLACE, TRUSTEE OF MK PARKS TRUST

Diversity in the City

The vision of MK when it was founded, was that it would be fully inclusive, with the aspiration that all should have freedom of choice, everyone should be welcomed and there should be jobs for all.

The city still has a young age profile compared with the average in England, but the proportion in older age groups is growing more rapidly than younger. As the city has grown, the make-up of the population has changed.

National data shows that people with disabilities are over a third less likely to be employed than people without disabilities (aged 16 to 64 years).



IMAGE COURTESY OF GEMMA FERN PHOTOGRAPHY

£18.4m

MK Community Foundation contributed over **£18.4m in grants and subsidies** between 2013 and 2021 to local charities and good causes

52%

52% of school pupils are from **Ethnically Diverse backgrounds** in 2021/22 compared with 42% in 2015/16

11.9%

11.9% growth rate of the population since 2013 to **287,060 in 2021**

43%

43% growth rate of the over 65s since 2011 which is **over double the rate in England** overall

91.6%

Ultrafast broadband penetration is **91.6%, higher than the average** for the country which is 73.3%

34%

According to the 2021 census, the number of people living in MK from **Ethnically Diverse communities** has increased from the 2011 figure of 26.1%



1.3%

Between 2013 and 2019 there was a decline of 1.3% in the percentage of children in MK gaining **5 GCSEs at grade 4 and above Grades A-C**

Nationally, there was a 5.2% improvement



4.7%

4.7% of the 16-17 cohort in 2021 were **not in employment, education, or training**, down from 5.6% in 2016



27.6%

2020/21 saw an improvement of 7.2% of **young people in MK who receive free school meals going on to university** from 20.4% in 2012/13



45.8%

Nearly 46% of all students **progressed to university in 2020/21**, a growth of 8.9% since 2012/13



90

There are **90 supplementary schools** in MK which help pupils to preserve their community, language, and culture.



46%

Of the children aged 3-4 years old who accessed universal entitlement to pre-school education **46% qualified** for the extended access

EDUCATION SDG QUALITY EDUCATION

Education should enable everyone to maximise their potential and have control over their own life course and help develop the knowledge and skills needed for stable employment.

The strategy outlined in MK Futures by MK Council is to 'accelerate social mobility – making it easier for those in deprived communities to gain further skills.

In MK, 90% of early years education is provided by nurseries, pre-school, and registered childminders. Extended hours entitlement of 30 hours is provided to parents or guardians on lower income during school term time, this equates to 22 hours across the whole year. MK Council predicts that there will be sufficient education overall with 11/17 areas are projected to have sufficient places to meet the demands of their area.

There is a persistent gap in school performance between those from advantaged and disadvantaged homes and between girls and boys both in MK and nationally.

Those who are from disadvantaged families in MK (on free school meals during last 6 years at school) are likely to do less well at school and are less likely to go onto university than their peers. In 2020-21 8% of the cohort in MK progressed on to 'high tariff' universities. The average for England was 11.4%.

There has been little improvement in the participation rate in education, training or work in MK from 2016-2021, among 16-17 year olds, and the rate is lower than Bedford or Luton.

MK College has a key role in facilitating social mobility in its provision of vocationally oriented qualifications and its recruitment of those from disadvantaged communities. 50% of the 16-18-year-olds who live in the 9 most deprived areas of MK attend this college.

MK College is leading a project to run the South Central Institute of Technology (SCIoT). This opened its doors in 2021 and offers higher level technical qualifications, apprenticeships, and short courses in the digital arena to meet local skill needs.

Despite the size and growth of MK, it has been a challenge to establish a face-to-face undergraduate university in the city. Plans for the original building design for MK:U have stalled due to lack of funding, however in conjunction with Cranfield University, MK:U were able to launch an Innovation Hub and will be offering some degree courses from 2023.

Vital Thinking

How can we support the achievement of young people from more deprived backgrounds?



MK Melting Pot

MK Melting pot started life as a small idea by one woman, to run an event for her local community, helping to get children engaged and involved with cooking, music, play and activities. Little did Adewunmi Jade Jaieyola know that this idea would turn into a vital support network for many hundreds of people across Milton Keynes.

MK Community Foundation helped in more ways than just finding the charity a premises, their advice and support has been invaluable. They linked the charity to Fare Share, who redistribute surplus food to charities who turn it into meals – this link has proved to be vital in allowing MK Melting Pot to continue their mission since COVID-19 and into the ‘Cost of Living Crisis’.

One of the other ways that the charity continued to support families during COVID-19 was by teaching cooking lessons online. They realised that supplying families with food was only the first step, many people needed help to cook and provide for their children, some of those cooking skills have been lost over the generations.

MK Community Foundation supported this initiative by funding the creation and printing of a simple step-by-step recipe book that could be given to families.



Milton Keynes Christian Foundation

The Milton Keynes Christian Foundation is a charity that was setup around 35 years ago when the, now city, was still in its infancy. For the last 15 years, the charity has been working on various social enterprise projects helping young people in the community who have struggled with mainstream education for a variety of different reasons.

These young people, aged between 15-24, can come and work with the charity within one of their eight social enterprises. They work three days a week for anywhere between six months and two years depending on their needs.

Three of the social enterprises run from Urb Farm in the very heart of Wolverton. ‘Growing People’ explore sustainable alternatives to growing food for the local community. ‘Urban Beelievers’ is a bee-keeping enterprise who look after eight hives at Urb Farm and two hives in Central Milton Keynes. The last enterprise is ‘The Learning Tree’ which is a forest school offering young people and adults a way to experience the outdoors in Urb Farm’s own woodland areas using holistic and therapeutic learning activities.

MK Community Foundation have provided funding for equipment for growing and harvesting the fruit and vegetables, as well as an additional seasonal beekeeper to work with the young people.

Sarah Mist the Project Manager for the Urban Beelievers project said, “It has had a huge personal impact for several trainees. One young girl aged 17 came to us after not leaving her own house for over two years. She actually progressed so much she is now at Moulton College and not only that, she has also moved out of home and is now in independent accommodation. She’s now able to positively look towards the future, something that just wasn’t even thinkable a few years ago.

Without the funding from MK Community Foundation being made available and allowing us to employ Steve, I just couldn’t have dedicated the time needed to help this young girl make these life changing decisions, support her throughout her journey and now help her as she progresses into the world of education.”



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

SDG GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Health and Wellbeing encompasses both physical and mental health. This is impacted by factors, including hereditary, lifestyles, social and community networks and living and working conditions.

The health of MK residents is similar overall to the average in England. Those who live in the areas of highest deprivation, as measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, are more likely to die younger from specific health conditions, and to experience lifestyles which are less supportive of good health.

Mental health

Local charities that support disadvantaged communities, report their clients' mental health has worsened because of struggles with low and insecure incomes, debt, and lack of food, exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic and now the Cost-Of-Living crisis.

Local charities that support young people have seen large growth in demand for their services since the COVID-19 lockdown.

Milton Keynes Health and Care Partnership is prioritising building capacity for specialist mental health support for young people in MK. The rates of hospital admissions for self-harm have fallen since 2013 and the rates are lower in MK than for other English unitary authorities.

Wellbeing

Healthwatch Milton Keynes' research found that lower income groups have fewer opportunities to lead healthy lives.

Local charities supporting physical activity identified barriers to include low self-esteem and lack of social confidence, as well as lack of time and opportunity, especially among those working in low-paid insecure jobs and shift work.

Hospital admissions for alcohol related conditions are slightly lower than the average for English unitary authorities but have not reduced substantially since 2013.

The death rate from COVID-19, where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate, was lower in MK than England.

Vital Thinking

How can we facilitate wellbeing as a community, educating people for their whole lives about the importance of their physical wellbeing, and how it interacts with their mental health?

How can we empower the community to feel able to influence services provided by the local health authority to best meet their needs?




3.6%

3.6% of children born in 2020/21 in MK had a **low birth weight** compared with the average for England of 2.9%


7.6

Men living in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods are likely to live **7.6 fewer years than men** from the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods


5.6

Women living in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods are likely to live **5.6 fewer years than women** from the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods


40%

40% of children from the most deprived neighbourhoods in MK are undertaking **less than 30 minutes of exercise a day** in 2021, up from 37% in 2017-18


41.7%

41.7% of adults from the most deprived neighbourhoods and 31% of adults in the least deprived neighbourhoods in MK are undertaking **less than the recommended minimum** of 150 minutes of physical activity in a week in 2021


260

There were **260 deaths per 100,000** of the population from COVID-19 in MK compared with 299 per 100,000 of the population for England



9.9%

9.9% of households had **no-one in work in MK** in 2021, an increase of 5.1% from 2013 (Households where someone is age 16-64)

1/5

Around one fifth of those who are not working **would like a job**

10%

10% of MK employers actively target/advertise to **attract diverse applicants**

3.6%

The **unemployment rate fell** to 3.6% in 2022 from 7.4% in 2013

10%

10% of **those at work are professionals** in public administration, education, and health

28%

Part-time **private sector jobs grew** 28% between 2013 and 2020

WORK AND LOCAL ECONOMY SDG RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION, NO POVERTY

Work looks at the extent to which all residents benefit from the strength of the MK economy by having access to secure jobs with employment conditions that support their wellbeing.

Although, on many measures MK has a strong economy, many employees are trapped in low paid and insecure jobs. Women and those from Ethnically Diverse backgrounds are less likely to be in the new, well-paid digital jobs. Local employers' engagement with apprenticeships is limited; and only a fraction actively target/advertise to attract diverse applicants.

The issue of insecure jobs is seen by many of the charitable organisations as having a particularly detrimental impact on livelihoods in MK. Pay is slightly lower for those who work in MK compared with those who commute outwards.

Apprenticeships aim to improve skills, build sustainable growth and stronger communities, and enable individuals to succeed and progress in their careers. The numbers studying apprenticeships have declined in MK since 2015, although COVID-19 Pandemic reduced the uptake, MK College reported an increase in September 2022.

The Local Economy

The local economy examines the local labour market, the skill needs in MK for employment and how these are changing. MK has been identified as one of the country's Fast Growth Cities (alongside Cambridge, Oxford, Swindon, and Norwich) based on economic indicators, including productivity and share of knowledge-based jobs.

MK has a slightly lower percentage than UK average of residents with degree level qualifications, inward commuters are filling the skills gaps. The Gross Value Added per capita (GVA) in MK, a measure of productivity, is in the top 40 of local authorities ahead of the UK average and has grown consistently since 2013.

In 2021 the largest sector was 'science, research, engineering and technology', while in 2015 it was 'elementary business and service occupations, such as hospitality and administration.

Demand by employers has been growing since 2013 for technical skills and especially for specialist digital roles. Demand has been strong consistently for those working in education and health. There is an entrepreneurial culture in MK. There is a higher rate of business start-ups than the national average and other towns in the region.

Vital Voices

"The gig economy and the low skilled labour opportunities of Milton Keynes are something that has enabled us to flourish within the past ten years, but there is a downside to that - the two-speed nature of the city is becoming increasingly marked. Lack of work, uncertainty about income or stability of income, limited sickness pay, inflexible employers around childcare - these all add to mental stress as well as a lack of basic income."

PAUL OXLEY VICAR AT ST MARKS MILTON KEYNES AND FOUNDING MEMBER OF MK CHILD POVERTY PARTNERSHIP

Vital Thinking

Is providing flexible working an opportunity to upskill those in lower paid and insecure jobs, particularly women and those from Ethnically Diverse communities?

What are the barriers for the 20% of unemployed who would like a job and how can employers help to transition them back into employment?



MK University Hospital's Cancer Garden

In early March 2020, the new £15 million, state-of-the-art, Milton Keynes University Hospital Cancer Centre opened, bringing all the cancer services under one roof and meaning that fewer patients had to travel long distances for treatment.

At the time, the piece of land to the rear of the centre was just a building site but there were always plans to create a garden for patients to be able to view and access. In fact, the centre was specifically designed to feature an arc of wide windows giving patients natural light and an uninterrupted outlook onto the 'yet to be built' garden area.

MK Community Foundation funded the hard landscaping for the garden and through additional fundraising including some from patients the new garden was opened in 2022. Samantha Snelus from MK Hospital Charity told us about the impact the garden has had on patients.

"The garden has absolutely boosted morale with regards to outcomes, it is so important to have a nice environment, which is what the whole cancer centre is about. Improved mental health is such a big part of any illness and recovery. With the garden design we tried to remove any real connection with the hospital treatments; it's a real sanctuary and haven for patients to enjoy."





SOFEA

SOFEA is an education, training, employability, and well-being charity for young people, aged 16-25 years. Focused on working with the most vulnerable in the city, including young ex-offenders and care leavers, SOFEA works with those who are struggling to maintain or gain long term employment.

The aim of SOFEA is to build the skills, resilience, confidence, and emotional health required for young people to not only enter or re-enter mainstream employment or education, but for them to thrive in these environments.

To support this, MK Community Foundation awarded SOFEA with a large strategic grant to continue their work in coaching and mentoring young people. The grant allowed SOFEA to increase their specialist support team and to triple the size of their outreach and in-reach programmes.

With increased capacity, SOFEA are now able to work with 30 young people, each year, for the next 3 years. These are young people identified as those most 'on edge' of criminality.

The results of SOFEA's mentoring programme have been incredibly positive, with one young person saying, "SOFEA makes me feel like it's one big family that supports me. It gives me opportunity and opens the future for me. It's just one big family."

Offering a personalised approach, SOFEA's mentoring programme aims to truly understand the situation of the young person, personalising their experiences and helping them to plan and understand what life could look like through positive opportunity and choice.

As well as improving the wellbeing of young people in the city, SOFEA's coaching has also resulted in an increased attendance to the charity's Education Pathway programme, with all students involved in the pathway participating in GCSE and functional skills exams.

With the current post-pandemic, economic climate making life for young people more and more difficult, SOFEA'S work has been crucial in supporting some of the most vulnerable young people in MK.

In the words of one young person, "SOFEA gives me a place to go and food when I need it. SOFEA makes me feel comforted, safe and happy."



IMAGE COURTESY OF SOFEA



DISADVANTAGE AND POVERTY SDG NO POVERTY

Poverty is defined as when a person's resources are well below what is needed to cover their minimum needs.

There is no single measure of poverty. The data used in this section is based on the definition by the End Child Poverty Coalition (endchildpoverty.org.uk). The measure counts 'households with incomes, net of housing costs that are below 60% of the midpoint.' This method considers the relative high cost of housing in MK.

The high cost of housing, insecure and low paid jobs, low levels of skills, inadequate benefits, high transport, and childcare costs, are all contributing to the poverty rates in MK. These issues are explored further in the relevant sections of the full report.

The sharp increase in the cost of living taking place from 2022 onwards, including fuel and food costs, is already exacerbating the problems being faced by low-income households.

MK ranks 126 out of 372 local authorities for the percentage of children living in poverty. The percentage decreased 0.5% between 2014 and 2021.

12% of neighbourhoods in Milton Keynes are in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in England based on the government measures of deprivation.

Celebrating 10 years in 2022, most MK Money Lifeline clients are of working age, but are not able to work full time, and about one third have children. Increasing numbers of their clients have no likelihood of paying off their debts as a result low wages, low benefits, and high costs, which are exacerbated by high inflation rates.

Child poverty

Over 18,000 children in MK in 2021 are living in poverty – 29.8% of all children, based on data that takes into account housing costs. The UK average is 27%. The numbers are almost double some government statistics which do not take account of housing costs.

Vital Thinking

In 2020 MK Community Foundation held a Vital Thinking event around the issue of Child Poverty, convening a number of organisations that were involved in food distribution.

The outcome was the setting up of the Child Poverty Partnership. The group look at how the various organisations can work effectively to ensure the maximum amount of coverage for their services. Their website signposts people to the different help available and they encourage collaboration.

The overriding aim for the partnership is "Challenging the causes, alleviating the effects and working for the eradication of child poverty in Milton Keynes"



165

MK ranks 165 on a measure of the average **level of deprivation** across the local authority. (A rank of 1 indicates the most deprived Local Authority and 317 the least deprived)

12%

12% of neighbourhoods in MK are in the 20% **most deprived neighbourhoods** in England

18,000

Over 18,000 children in MK in 2021 are **living in poverty** (after housing costs) 29.8% of all children

2%

An estimated 2% of **MK households used the Foodbank Service** in 2021

110%

Over 110% **increase in use in the Foodbank** between 2019 and 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

22

Parents on lower incomes can claim 1140 hours of childcare support a year this equates to 22 hours per week, making it **difficult to work full time**



1/2

Over half of MK first phase housing estates rank amongst the highest 20% in the UK for **levels of deprivation**

9.8

The ratio of the **average annual salary to average house price** in MK was 9.8 in 2021 compared to 6.6 in 2013

27

MK is ranked 27 out of all English Local Authorities in 2021 for the proportion of its **population that is homeless** (a rank of 1 is the highest proportion that are homeless)

In 2018 MK's ranking was 32

80%

In 2021 the Winter Night Shelter reported that 80% of all users have **mental health or wellbeing issues**

2342

MK Council currently have 2342 people on their **housing waiting list**

758

According to MK council's Health and Wellbeing Strategic Group in February 2022 758 households were **living in temporary accommodation**

HOUSING SDG SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Access to affordable, good quality housing provides families and individuals with a sense of security and stability.

There is a gap that is becoming wider in relation to income levels and prices of homes in MK and lack of affordable housing is one of the underlying causes of homelessness.

The rate of new home building has not kept up with the rate of demand, particularly for low cost, affordable options, and rental properties. This is despite MK Council's policy to require developers to build affordable homes as part of new housing developments.

The high rates of those in temporary accommodation reflects the shortage of affordable housing in MK. Many of the estates built in the 1970s are now in need of substantial investment and over half of the first phase housing estates rank amongst the highest 20% in the UK for levels of deprivation.

Homelessness in young adulthood is closely associated with poverty, especially in childhood. Other higher risk factors are health needs, serious drug use, lack of social support networks and living in a high-cost housing area.

The prevalence of rejection and abuse of young LGBTQ+ people by their families is a major contributor to their becoming homeless.

The immediate cause of homelessness in MK is around relationships – family and friends no longer able to accommodate the person/household, or because of domestic abuse or violence and relationship breakdown.

YMCA MK data highlights that since 2013 it is more difficult for young people, when they move on from YMCA MK accommodation, to get into private accommodation due to high rental costs, and reduced access to social housing, and more are having to stay with friends and family.

There has been a reduction in MK in rough sleeping since the establishment in 2017 of a Rough Sleeper Outreach Service funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

People who sleep rough experience some of the most severe health inequalities and report much poorer health than the general population.

Housing and the COVID-19 Pandemic
During the COVID-19 Pandemic more people confronted the possibility of homelessness as a result of reduction in income or relationship breakdown and domestic abuse.

Protections introduced during the COVID-19 Pandemic prevented evictions from rental housing, and numbers becoming homeless for rent arrears fell by 37% in 2021 in MK.

Vital Thinking

How do we support newly arrived communities to be welcomed and integrated into MK?



MK Food Bank

MK Food Bank has been supporting individuals and families since 2014. Louisa Hobbs, Operations Manager at the charity spoke about the 'perfect storm' that they found themselves in when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

The charity relied mainly on public donations to keep their food stocks high, in March 2020, when lockdown was introduced, understandably those donations stopped overnight but the demand due to redundancies, loss of work and other factors quickly went through the roof.

MK Food Bank applied to MK Community Foundation for an emergency grant of £10,000 to buy food supplies to keep their vital service going as the requests for help kept coming, it was very apparent to the charity that this money wasn't going to last long. They applied for an additional grant of £50,000 which was rapidly approved with all involved quickly realising the need for a swift response.

Louisa says, "The Food Bank had never had to buy food before, we'd just never had to, but it was very obvious to everyone involved that we wouldn't be able to meet the COVID demand without taking that action."

An extra £50k grant from National Lottery funding (managed by the MK Community Foundation) was also approved giving the organisation some much needed stability at a crucial time. Louisa continues, "The two grants allowed us to breathe, and gave us the confidence to be able to support everyone who needed it without worrying where the money was going to come from. We were able to lift our standard six parcel limit for a period to allow more people to reach the help they so desperately needed."

In partnership with FareShare/DEFRA, additional food supplies were sourced during the first lockdown, so MK Community Foundation were very flexible and allowed the initial timescales of the grants to be pushed back, which meant the Food Bank didn't have to use the grants all within the first 12-month period.

The charity also investigated ways of providing longer term support for people in need with the launch of their 'Top Up Shops'. These take place weekly at their warehouse and in two locations in MK and allow people in need to buy 10 items of food for just £2. This has meant more people are reached across the area and has given some much needed support to families over the last year.

"One of our volunteers in 2020 said that it felt like Milton Keynes was wrapping its arms around the community to meet the increased demand, whether that be from the funding grants we received or the donations that started coming in again, or through the innovative ways that people kept the food collections going during those difficult lockdown periods. Everyone stepped up and we're so grateful that they did."





CRIME AND SAFETY SDG SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Crime and the fear of crime have physical and psychological effects, for example whether people feel safe and in control in their communities.

The overall crime rate is higher in MK than the average across England. 'Violence against the person' is now the largest category of crime, with a higher incidence than the average for England. The severity of crimes committed is also increasing.

Crime decreased during the COVID-19 Pandemic, but this reversed since the easing of restrictions.

MK Act has seen demand for services more than double since 2016/17 when approximately 260 clients sought help, although the highest demand was during 2020/21 during lockdown when figures exceeded 800 requests, figures for 2021/22 have reduced slightly to just under 700 client requests for support.

There has been an increase in the reporting of hate crime, specifically offences with racial, disablist, and homophobic indicators over the last two years. Knife crime and youth violence are areas of concern to MK citizens. Research shows that these are often a symptom of complex issues around disadvantage and exclusion.

Safety in MK was raised as an issue in survey of young people (by Healthwatch MK 2019). Young people wanted more facilities and youth clubs that were safe.

Vital Thinking

How can we encourage the development of 'safe' spaces for young people particularly those from the LGBTQ+ community?

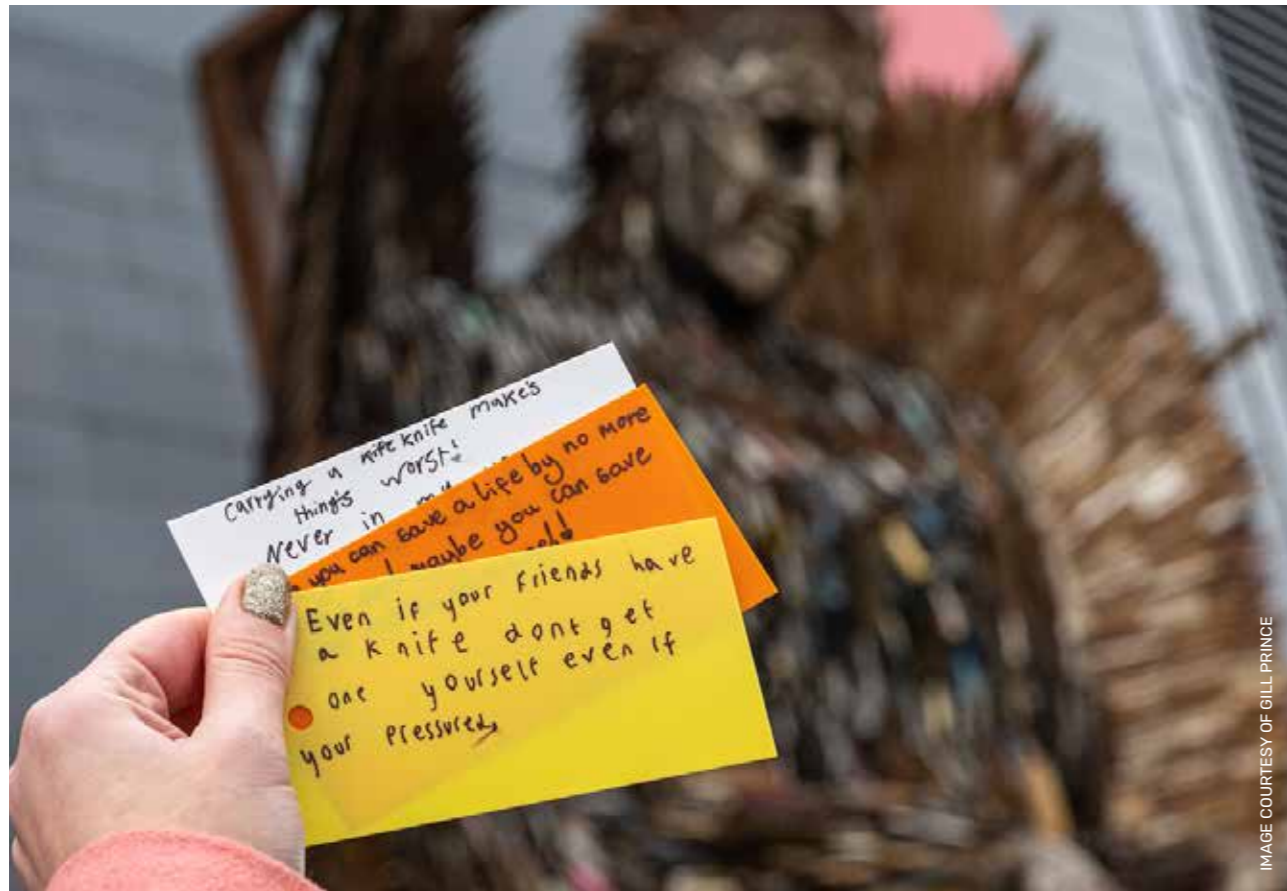


IMAGE COURTESY OF GILL PRINCE



Between 2013 **recorded crime in MK increased** from 72 offences per 1,000 of the population to 97 offences per 1,000 of the population in 2022



'**Violence against the person**' is the largest category of crime in MK in 2022 (39 offences per 1,000 of the population)



Theft was the largest category of crime in 2013, with 42 offences per 1,000 of the population



Between 2013 and 2022 the **crime severity score in MK increased** from 8.2 to 14.8. The score across the South East for 2022 is 12.9



In 2020, 1 in 5 young people from the LGBTQ+ community **experienced hate crime**



Surveys by Citizens:mk 2019-2020 show that among **young people distrust in the police doubled** from 20% to 45% between primary and secondary school age



😊
60%

Over 60% of MK neighbourhoods are rated in the top two categories in England in terms of their **access to green spaces**

😞
4%

4% of employers in MK have **committed to become net-zero** by 2030

ENVIRONMENT SDG SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

The environment theme encompasses the **natural and built environment, including its design and architecture, green spaces, and waterways.**

Innovative solutions

A programme to pilot the application of emerging technologies to help MK become carbon neutral by 2030 is being sponsored by MK Council. Projects funded include sustainable mobility, renewable energy, and air quality, among others.

MK Council has stated its aspiration to make MK the world's greenest city and to be carbon neutral by 2030. The City is well known for the integration of green spaces and water into its design. However, the low-density layout creates a comparatively high level of greenhouse gas emissions from transport.

MK Council set itself a target of 70% recycling by 2024/25. Rates for recycling household waste are currently at 54% above the average for England.

Vital Thinking

How do we raise the awareness of the issues around climate change to encourage all citizens to contribute to MK Council's aim to become carbon neutral by 2030?

😊
53.8%

53.8% **household waste recycling** rate in MK in 2021 (England average 42%)

😞
16

Bus usage per head of population has reduced since 2013 when it was 32.9 to 16 in 2021

😞
41%

41% of **greenhouse gas emissions** in MK are from transport – the single largest activity which is contributing to emissions
This is above the England average of 36%

😊
133

133 **Electric Charging Points** per 100,000 of the population – the highest density of anywhere in the UK





TRANSPORT SDG SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Access to affordable transport enables participation in work, education, and social networks.

One of the seven ambitions for MK for 2050 is to: 'Make it easier for everyone to travel on foot, by bike and with better public transport, recognising both the undesirable impacts of high levels of car usage and the need to improve accessibility.'

MK's low-density grid system was designed for car use and the resulting high levels of car usage compared with low usage of public transport is creating unsustainable levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

Bus passenger use is lower in MK than in England and since 2013 it has steadily decreased in MK and in the rest of England.

Safe walking and cycling routes to schools are being promoted by MK Council, along with piloting cycle and pedestrians only access to certain schools to encourage walking.

Innovation for sustainability
MK won £9m of funding as part of the Low Carbon Cities scheme for initiatives which launched in 2016 to drive the awareness of ultra-low emission vehicles and incentivise their uptake. An outcome is that MK now has the UK's strongest Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure.

Vital Thinking

How can MK residents be further incentivised to choose 'green' travel?



IMAGE COURTESY OF JANE RUSSELL

IMAGE COURTESY OF JANE RUSSELL

Safety Centre

Established in 1992, the Safety Centre based in Kiln Farm, Milton Keynes is the region's leading and the world's first interactive, immersive, and memorable safety education charity. Specialising in teaching children, young people and adults about how to stay safe, understand risks and avoid accidents using realistic learning experiences, the charity are pioneers in safety education.

To support the Safety Centre in their vital work with refugees and asylum seekers arriving in the city, MK Community Foundation recently provided the charity with a Community Grant. With 280 Afghan Refugees residing in two hotels in the city alone, the charity was being increasingly approached by professionals to support newly arrived communities in providing essential safety education.

The grant has allowed the Safety Centre to run a programme for 350 new residents in Milton Keynes. Topics covered on the programme, specifically designed for those recently arrived in the city, include choices and consequences of knife crime, bullying and shop theft, personal safety and home safety.

Maya Joseph-Hussain, CEO of the Safety Centre said, "With the funding we've received from MK Community Foundation, we have developed and are delivering safety education for 350 refugees and people from recently arrived communities from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Hong Kong and China. This vital education helps newly arrived individuals integrate into their communities in a meaningful, safe and positive way.

As Milton Keynes continues to rapidly expand, the work of the Safety Centre is vital in helping its new residents integrate in their new community. As Maya says, the grant has allowed, "Opportunities to share our lifesaving safety education with the wider community across Milton Keynes and beyond, ensuring that we all live in safe, flourishing communities today and in the future."



IMAGE COURTESY OF SAFETY CENTRE, MK



IMAGE COURTESY OF JANE RUSSELL



MK Cycle citizens

Funded by MK Council from the post COVID-19 recovery fund, the CyclingCitizensMK project began in January 2021 with an aim to increase cycle usage among CitizensMK members which included many secondary schools, faith groups and The Open University.

Monthly rides and competitions were organised in and around the city to encourage cycling and physical activity and to promote the mental health benefits and sustainability element.

From January to July 2021, the project saw a 30% increase in cycle trips via the Love to Ride App and the project was extended into 2022. In collaboration with MK Community Foundation the project was promoted to the highly active business community in MK; this resulted in many businesses getting involved including Volkswagen Financial Services (VWFS), Gemini Rail Services and Red Bull Technology.

Richard Scott, Chair of the Employee Forum at VWFS, led an exercise of postcode mapping to discover that 230 of its 1200 staff live less than 8 minutes away from work by bicycle.

VWFS registered with Cycle to Work schemes, relaxed staff dress codes, helped inexperienced cyclists practice riding in the company car park and they even lent e-bikes for journeys to business meetings. Richard said, "We got involved because it's good for colleagues' health, physical and mental wellbeing, we have teams going out in the evenings which helps staff camaraderie and we're also raising money for the local community through cycle rides, so for us it's a real win-win."

The MK Community Foundation's continued support linking up relevant and interested organisations has been vital in the overall success and impact of CyclingCitizensMK. In July 2022, over 120 cyclists from all walks of life came together for a mass ride in central Milton Keynes to celebrate the awarding of official city status.

10-year-old Luca Galeanu, a pupil at Bradwell Village Primary School, won two Golds and one Bronze in the inaugural Bikeability Olympics 2022, organised by Cycling CitizensMK.

In an interview for ITV Anglia News, Luca said, "Cycling is important because I learn new things, make new friends and it keeps me healthy."

The success has meant the project has now been extended to the end of 2023.



ARTS AND HERITAGE SDG HEALTH AND WELLBEING AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Opportunities to participate and engage with the arts and heritage are important for the positive effects they can have on personal wellbeing, on community building and cohesion, place-making and on developing a creative mindset among individuals.

Creativity is now one of the most in-demand skill sets among employers as it helps drive innovation and change.

MK Futures 2050 states as one of its seven Big Ambitions: 'Make MK a leading cultural city by global standards.' The Milton Keynes Creative and Cultural Strategy 2018-2027 seeks to address the challenge that the cultural offer in MK neither reflects the city's size nor the diversity of its communities.

Inclusion and diversity

The low level of engagement among some communities in mainstream activities is a result not only of cost, but also of perceptions that the offerings are not sufficiently relevant to them and do not reflect or represent them and their lives.

The Arts and Heritage Alliance MK (AHA-MK) is driving a programme of change to embrace what different communities bring to the cultural landscape in MK, as well as building relationships between community-based groups and the mainstream cultural sector, which is increasingly delivering a diverse cultural offer.

As part of this, funded by MK Community Foundation, six diverse artists were co-commissioned in 2022 to develop creative projects which will occupy mainstream cultural spaces/networks in MK.

There is a track record of successful events hosted by diverse communities celebrating their own unique cultural heritages, including Milton Keynes Islamic Arts and Culture (MKIAC) which has delivered inclusive arts and cultural programmes for 20 years. The African Diaspora Festival Day MK was launched in 2017. India Day MK was launched in 2019 and the 2022 festival attracted 11,000 visitors.

Milton Keynes Cultural Education Partnership (MAKE) was launched in 2016. This advocates for the importance of creative skills and cultural wellbeing of children and young people across Milton Keynes.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

This had a major impact on the cultural sector with some venues closing for up to 18 months. National government and MK Council funding helped these organisations survive the Pandemic and supported their long-term sustainability.

Many organisations pivoted to online delivery methods during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Vital Thinking

Given the pressure on costs for arts, heritage, and cultural organisations, and on affordability for many residents, what can be done to support participation so that all can enjoy the enrichment offered by these cultural experiences?



☹️
206

MK's overall ranking is 206 out of 316 Local Authorities.

(Ranking on RSA Heritage index 2020 which measures relative performance of each LA on the different heritage domains based on national lottery fund interest areas. 1 is the highest ranking)

☹️
5

Five venues in MK are in receipt of **Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding**, out of 990 nationally, for three years from 2023

😊
4TH

MK ranks 4th in the UK in 2022 for the number of **heritage venues open** as part of the 2022 Heritage Open Days festival

😊
1m+

Over a million people have attended the **International Festival** curated by the Stables since its inception in 2010

😊
2

MK Gallery has two 2 nationally recognised awards for its **inclusive arts practise** work

😊
250TH

This year sees the 250th anniversary celebration of the hymn **'Amazing Grace'**, the words of which were written by John Newton, then curate of St Peter & Paul's Church, Olney



MK Pride

Milton Keynes Pride Festival – Back in 2019, the community in Milton Keynes was crying out for a Pride event to celebrate LGBTQ+ achievement, life and love, and to create a ‘safe space’ where the community can be who they want to be without fear or prejudice.

The charity Q Alliance oversaw the event in 2019 and thanks to a grant from the MK Community Foundation they were able to invest in their accessibility offer by bringing in sign language interpreters which had a big impact on how the event was perceived.

In 2021, the Milton Keynes Pride Festival was moved over to an independent, not-for-profit, Community Interest Company. MK Community Foundation were keen to move the funding arrangement to a partnership.

Helen Pritchard, director at MK Pride Festival, talks about the impact the partnership had, “First and foremost, it enabled us to raise our profile. We had a partner and more importantly a trusted partner within the local community.

The MK Community Foundation has such a positive reputation and does such good work, we were able to go to other interested sponsors and show them this commitment and it solidified people’s trust in us as an event.”

Helen continued, “The Community Foundation’s approach to the partnership was different to other sponsors, it was very much about what works for the community, going both ways ... how we can help in the training and advocacy, and how they can support the festival to, in turn, support the local community.”

“The funding partnership has allowed the festival not only to secure our longevity but some of the funding still supports our accessibility. This year, we were able to introduce a sensory, calming space on site, this really helped to reassure visitors to the festival that they were in a safe space. It gave them time to think, to be calm and to contemplate when other areas in their lives seemed chaotic and sometimes very challenging.

Another positive legacy story to come out of the Pride Festival is the new Faithfully LGBTQIA+ church group which formed after the 2019 Festival. After such a positive response the new group was formed to support people of Christian faith and they now regularly hold inclusive and affirming local church services and have an ongoing Christian presence at MK Pride.

For the LGBTQ+ community seeing a local funding organisation investing in social action gives them confidence that they care, which means an awful lot to a sometimes-isolated community. The Pride Festival is seen as a very safe space in a city where safe places are very few and far between.



THANK YOU

We would like to thank the following organisations and individuals who contributed their time to provide the insights and data in this issue of Vital Signs

Arts for Health - artsforhealthmk.org.uk

Arts and Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes - aha-mk.org

Age UK Milton Keynes - ageuk.org.uk/miltonkeynes

Bletchley Park - bletchleypark.org.uk

Camphill Communities - camphill.org.uk

Citizens: MK Alliance - citizensmk.org.uk

Fresh Inspiration - freshinspiration.org

Friends of the Caribbean - friendsofthecaribbean.co.uk

Healthwatch Milton Keynes - healthwatchmiltonkeynes.co.uk

LEAP - leapwithus.org.uk

Milton Keynes City Council - milton-keynes.gov.uk

Milton Keynes Community Action - communityactionmk.org

Milton Keynes College - mkcollege.ac.uk

Milton Keynes Hospital Charity - mkhcharity.org.uk

Milton Keynes Theatre - atgtickets.com/venues/milton-keynes-theatre

MK:act - mkact.com

MK Child Poverty Partnership - mkcpp.org.uk

MK City Discovery Centre - mkcdc.org.uk

MK Heritage Association - mkheritage.org.uk

MK Gallery - mkgallery.org

MKIAC MK Islamic Arts and Heritage - mkiac.org

MK Foodbank - mkfoodbank.org.uk

MK Homeless Partnership - mkhp.co.uk

MK Money Lifeline - mkmoneylifeline.org.uk

MK Rose - miltonkeynesrose.org.uk

Milton Keynes Business Improvement District - mymiltonkeynes.co.uk

Q:alliance - alliance.org.uk

Pooleyville - pooleyville.uk

SEMLEP - semlep.com

SOFEA - sofea.uk.com

The Parks Trust Milton Keynes - theparkstrust.com

The Stables - stables.org

Worktree - worktree.org

YIS - mkyis.org.uk

YMCA Milton Keynes - mkymca.com

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