



Vital Signs 2020

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Vital Signs 2020

Vital Signs[®] MK is an annual publication designed to round up the most current research on the communities of Milton Keynes, a short summary version of the report is available in hard copy or to download from our website mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk

Vital Signs is an international initiative supported by many UK Community Foundations. It aims to identify significant research that reflect the vitality of Milton Keynes, measuring several areas critical to the quality of life in the city.

This year we report on four areas of Vital Signs: Diversity; Health and Wellbeing; Poverty and Disadvantage; Crime and Safety. These areas had been selected prior to the Covid-19 pandemic as areas of concern from the 2019 report however with lockdown, their relevance has become even more significant.

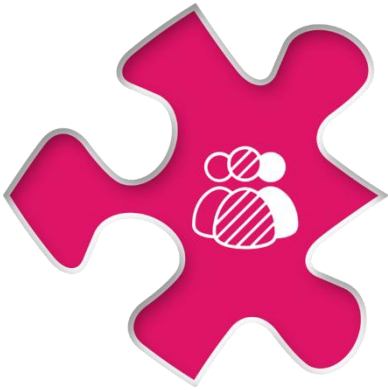
The areas covered by the Report do not stand in isolation, so this year, to show how the areas intersect we have added additional statistics around Diversity in the key facts of the other areas.

Who are MK Community Foundation?

Established in 1986, Milton Keynes Community Foundation is an independent charity working for and at the heart of Milton Keynes. As a team, we are devoted to transforming lives and strengthening our society through various grant giving and philanthropic initiatives, with a vision to support and engage with the diverse community that surrounds us.

It is our mission to connect people with resources, skills, and ideas to enrich lives and create positive growth for Milton Keynes and we achieve this with the help of our donors. We believe in supporting the growth and development of our local voluntary, community and cultural sector, inspiring giving to our communities and improving the lives of the most disadvantaged.





Diversity

Theme Definition

UK Equality and Diversity legislation identifies nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; race (including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality); religion or belief (including lack of belief); sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

Overview

Milton Keynes has a diverse and growing population, with nearly 20% of people over 16 years old belonging to an ethnic minority, as compared to 14% across England as a whole. The figures are higher for school age children which stands at nearer 37%, over the next 5-10-years Milton Keynes will celebrate a much more culturally and diversely rich community.

For this report we have concentrated on Race, Gender and Age and how Covid-19 has impacted on these characteristics. The issues raised as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement has brought to the forefront many of the issues of social injustice experienced by the BAME community. Some of these issues have been included in other sections of the Report, to show the influence of intersectionality.

Key facts

- In Milton Keynes 37% of children in secondary school are from ethnic minority backgrounds, this is more diverse than England (25.8%).
- Last year 29.3% of Black Students, in Milton Keynes, achieved grade 5 or above in Maths and English GCSEs, compared to 38.2% of White pupils. Results were particularly poor for Black boys, with just 25.5% gaining grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSEs
- Men are more at risk of dying from Covid-19 than women, with Black men being 2 times more likely and Asian men being 1.5 times more likely than their White counterparts.
- The number of 16-24-year olds claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or Universal Credit, due to unemployment, rose by 163.3% between March and May 2020.

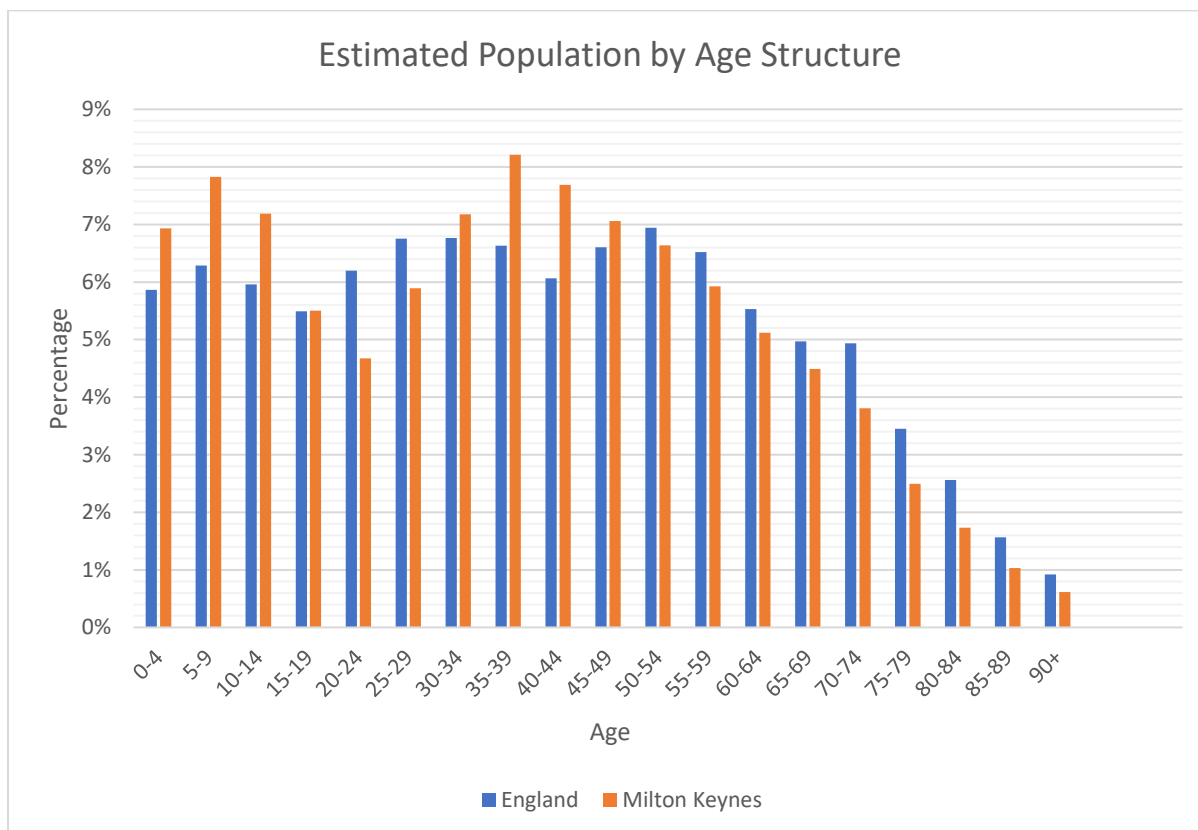
Findings

AGE

On average, Milton Keynes has a younger population compared to England. Population estimates shows that the median* age has continued to rise slightly in the last year, to 38 years. Despite this, it is still below the median age for England, which is 40

years. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

*Median is the middle figure in a range of data.



[\(Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid- 2019, 2020: ONS\)](#)

Estimates suggest that there are over 24,000 young people, aged 16 to 24 years old, living in Milton Keynes. This equates to 8.9% of the population ([Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid- 2019, 2020: ONS](#)). Prior to Covid-19 and lockdown, young people in Milton Keynes were already more economically disadvantaged than their older peers. In 2019 the unemployment rate for 16-24-year olds was 16.5%, compared to 3% for 25-64-year olds. This is a much bigger difference than for England as a whole, where the unemployment rate for 16-24-year olds was 11.7% ([Annual Population Survey January 2019- December 2019, 2020, NOMIS](#)). Research shows that this disparity has got worse, as young people have been some of the hardest hit by Covid-19. This is partly because this age group were two and a half times as likely to work in a sector that was shut down due to Covid-19, compared to other employees ([Sector shutdowns during the coronavirus crisis: which workers are most exposed?, 2020: Institute of Fiscal Studies](#)). The most recent data suggests 49.6% of 16-24 year olds in Milton Keynes worked in industries such as retail, hospitality, arts, entertainment, as well as hair and beauty ([Annual Population Survey January 2019- December 2019, 2020, NOMIS](#)). All of which were heavily impacted by lockdown and are continuing to feel the effects of government restrictions, aimed at reducing the spread of

Covid-19. It is therefore not a surprise that the number of 16-24-year olds claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or Universal Credit, because they were unemployed, rose by 163.3% between March and May 2020, from 700 to 1845 people. This is the highest increase for any age group in Milton Keynes ([Claimant Count March- May 2020, 2020: NOMIS](#)).

Older residents have also been affected by Covid-19, estimates suggest there are over 26,000 people over the age of 70 years old living in Milton Keynes, this equates to 9.7% of the population ([Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid- 2019, 2020: ONS](#)). The government asked all those over 70 years old to isolate at home during lockdown and minimise contact with those outside of their household, which had a large impact on their daily lives ([Staying at home and away from others \(social distancing\), 2020: The Cabinet Office](#)). Local charities and community groups in Milton Keynes responded to the sudden needs of the older population, quickly putting in place support to help them stay safe. Age UK Milton Keynes set up a Covid-19 emergency service, which provided 489 shopping trips and 1699 meals to vulnerable older people from March to July 2020. Data shows the mortality rate of those diagnosed with Covid-19 increases with age people aged 80 years or older are 70 times more likely to die, than those under 40 years old, moreover, 56.3% of deaths were among people 80 years and older ([Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19, August 2020: Public Health England](#)).

GENDER

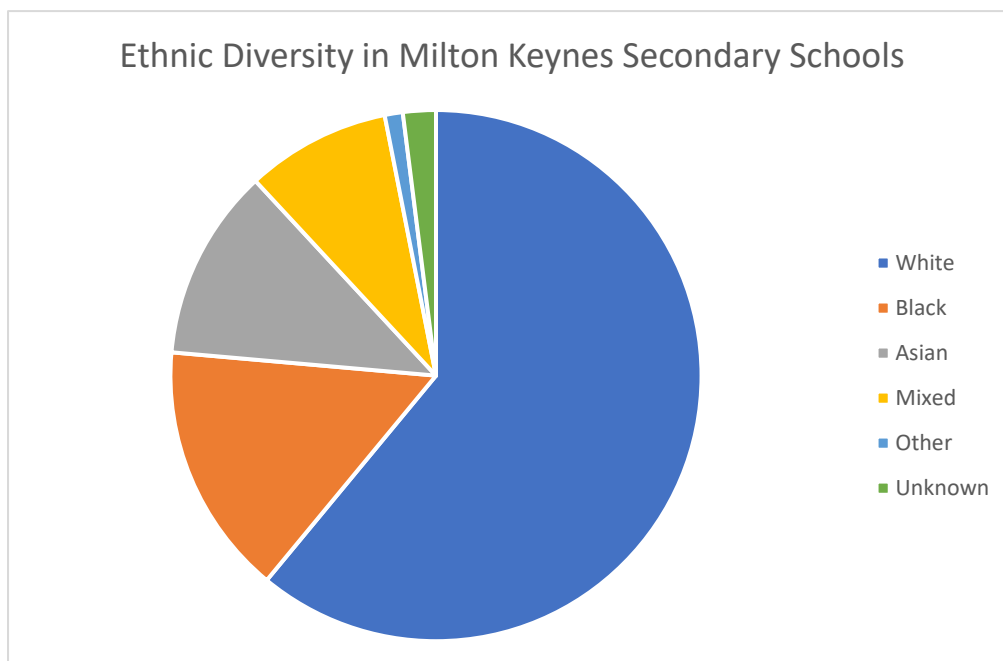
In 2019, the population of Milton Keynes was made up of 49.5% men and 50.5% women. This is very similar to the gender split of England as a whole, which was 49.4% and 50.6% respectively ([Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid- 2019, 2020: ONS](#)).

Estimates suggest there are over 136,000 females living in Milton Keynes, of which 105,471 are aged 16 years or older ([Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid- 2019, 2020: ONS](#)). Research shows that women are one third more likely than men to have worked in a sector shut down because of Covid-19 and therefore suffered a bigger effect on their earnings and job prospects ([Sector shutdowns during the coronavirus crisis: which workers are most exposed?, 2020: Institute of Fiscal Studies](#)). Data shows that 21.3% of working women in Milton Keynes were employed in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector, compared to 15.5% of men. These were some of the sectors hardest hit by lockdown and continue to face government restrictions ([Annual Population Survey January 2019- December 2019, 2020: NOMIS](#)). In addition, women with children are 1.5 times more likely than men with children to have either lost their job or quit since the lockdown began. Coupled with increased childcare pressures disproportionately being placed on women, there is a risk of compounding unequal employment rates and reversing progress made by women in the workplace ([How are mothers and fathers balancing work and family under lockdown?, 2020: The Institute of Fiscal Studies](#)). The employment rate for women in Milton Keynes was 71.8% last year, compared to 84.7% for men, showing there was already a gap before Covid-19 ([Annual Population Survey January 2019- December 2019, 2020: NOMIS](#)). Research shows that women who take time off from work face reduced hours and pay when they do return. There is a potential risk, therefore, that Covid-19 will have detrimental effects for women in the longer term ([How are mothers and fathers balancing work and family under lockdown?, 2020: The Institute of Fiscal Studies](#)).

Estimates suggest that there are over 133,000 males living in Milton Keynes, of which 101,495 are aged 16 years or older ([Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid- 2019, 2020: ONS](#)). Men too have been affected by Covid-19, although differently. Research shows that males are at higher risk from Covid-19 than females, 70.4 % of those admitted to intensive care units and 59.3% of those that die from Covid-19 are male. The Covid-19 age standardised mortality rate in males is 76.1 (per 100,000), nearly twice that of females who have an age standardised mortality rate of 38.8 (per 100,000). It is not yet fully clear what causes the differences in outcomes between males and females, research continues to look into whether behavioural, occupational or biological factors are the key factor ([Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19, August 2020: Public Health England](#)).

ETHNICITY

Children are the most ethnically diverse age group in Milton Keynes, with 35.4% of primary school students and 37% of secondary school students belonging to an ethnic minority. Our schools have more non-white students than England as a whole, which has 24.8% and 25.7% of ethnic minority students respectively ([Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2019/20, 2020: Department for Education](#)).

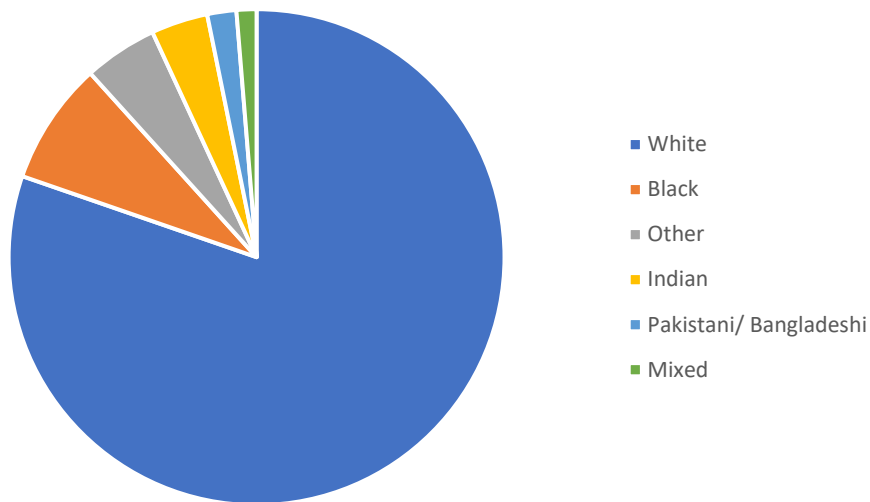


([Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2019/20, 2020: Department for Education](#)).

The negative effects of children missing school because of Covid-19 have been widely discussed in the media, especially as a whole cohort of students were not able to sit key exams such as GCSEs. However, children belonging to ethnic minorities are likely to be particularly disadvantaged. Data shows that those from some ethnic minorities already struggle to match the academic achievements of their white peers. Last year 29.3% of Black Students, in Milton Keynes, achieved grade 5 or above in Maths and English GCSEs, compared to 38.2% of White students. Results were particularly poor for Black boys, with 25.5% gaining grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSEs ([Key stage 4 performance 2019, 2020: Department for Education](#)). With exams cancelled this year and replaced with teacher assessed grades, worries have emerged that those from ethnic minorities will be held back. A national survey of teachers found that only 39.9% believed all students would get a fair deal from the assessment procedure this summer ([GCSEs: Only 39% teachers think 2020 grades fair for all, May 2020: TES](#)), whilst the House of Commons Education Committee has said it is 'concerned about the fairness of this year's system for awarding grades'. Its recent report highlighted possible 'bias' and 'inaccuracy' that will disadvantage those from ethnic minority backgrounds ([Getting the grades they've earned Covid-19: the cancellation of exams and 'calculated' grades, July 2020: House of Commons Education Committee](#)). There are potential long-term consequences when students do not achieve the results that they deserve, restricting their educational journey and ultimately dictating their life prospects.

The wider population in Milton Keynes is also diverse, with data suggesting 42,300 people over 16 years old belong to an ethnic minority - this equates to 19.7%. Once again this shows Milton Keynes is more ethnically diverse than England as a whole, where 14% belong to an ethnic minority ([Annual Population Survey January 2019- December 2019, 2020: NOMIS](#)).

Ethnic Diversity of Adult Residents in Milton Keynes



(Annual Population Survey January 2019- December 2019, 2020: NOMIS)

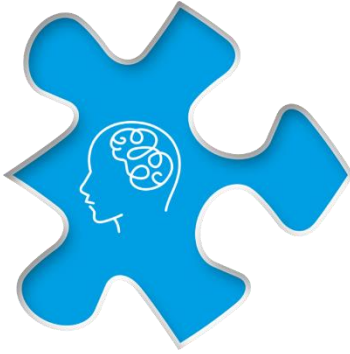
People from ethnic minorities are believed to be particularly at risk from Covid-19. Data shows they are overrepresented among the critically ill and have a higher risk of death. Indeed, the age standardised mortality rate has shown to be 87 (per 100,000) for White men, compared to 255.7 for Black men, 191 for Bangladeshi/ Pakistani men, 157.6 for Indian men and 144.4 for men with Mixed Ethnicity ([Coronavirus related deaths by ethnic group, England and Wales, 2 March 2020 to 15 May 2020, 2020: ONS](#)). The relationship between ethnicity and health is complex, but research highlights a combination of factors play a role in increasing risk. This includes whether those from ethnic minorities have occupations that expose them to the virus ([Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19, June 2020: Public Health England](#)). Despite this, research suggests that, even once you consider social demographic factors, those from ethnic minorities are still at greater risk of death from Covid-19. Compared to White men, Black men remain 2 times more likely to die from Covid-19. Indian men are still 1.6 times more likely to die, whilst Bangladeshi and Pakistani men are 1.5 times more likely to die ([Coronavirus related deaths by ethnic group, England and Wales, 2 March 2020 to 15 May 2020, 2020: ONS](#))

Vital thinking

- How can we ensure we offer equitable and meaningful opportunities for all members of our community?
- How do we as a community support black school student, particularly boys, to fully achieve their potential?
- How should we further support young people to access training, education or employment?

Vital Action – Friends of Caribbean

FOC provide supplementary education for black ethnic minority and disadvantaged students helping to support academic achievement and encourage aspiration. During lockdown there was a need to change the tutoring and mentoring support to an online platform and the need for the supplementary school became more urgent as students had less support from traditional education.



Health and Wellbeing

Theme Definition

Health and Wellbeing is a very broad category that includes both the physical and mental health of people and the factors that affect their wellbeing. A government survey suggests that 50% of all adults had a high level of anxiety in the first week of lockdown. For this reason, we have focussed on Mental Health in this year's report.

Mental Health is defined by NHS England as *"a positive state of mind and body, feeling safe and able to cope, with a sense of connection with people, communities and the wider environment."* NHS England further explain that an individual's mental health can be influenced by the conditions people are born into, grow up in and live and work in. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/blog/geraldine-strathdee-8/>.

Overview

In 2019 Vital Signs reported that two big predictors of lifelong health are physical activity and loneliness. In 2019, we had highlighted that nationally, young people and older people were getting lonelier. These are also the groups probably affected more by imposed isolation and limited physical activity during lockdown. In the initial weeks of lockdown many people were separated from their support networks making issues such as depression and anxiety more heightened.

Key Facts

- England was in complete lockdown for 82 days from 23rd March 2020, before we could form a support bubble with one other household.
- YiS Milton Keynes had the most referrals for counselling ever over a 3-month period April – June 2020, with 180, compared to 86 referrals which they received in 2019 over the same period.
- Age UK MK saw an increase of 153% (23 to 58) in their befriender service between March and June 2020 with many callers expressing feelings of loneliness.
- The results of a Mind (Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes) survey suggest the top three concerns making adult mental health worse during Covid-19 are: being unable to see family, friends or partners that they didn't live with (79%), feeling anxious about family or friends getting coronavirus (74%), and not being able to go outside except for essential reasons (73%).

Diversity Key Facts relating to mental health

- The risks of dying from Covid-19 rise sharply with age because immune systems tend to deteriorate and because older people are more likely to have chronic conditions e.g. the mortality rate from Covid-19 in England and Wales at age 80–84 is about eight times greater than at age 60–64.
- Nationally there has been a 44% increase in calls to suicide prevention helplines in the first 3 months of lockdown from members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Findings

Age UK defines 'isolation' as separation from social or familial contact, community involvement, or access to services, while 'loneliness' can be understood as an individual's personal, subjective sense of lacking these things. It is therefore possible to be isolated without being lonely, and to be lonely without being isolated.

<https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2015/12/08/loneliness-and-isolation-social-relationships-are-key-to-good-health/>

A report published by the Office of Civil Society at the beginning of the year determined that 6% to 18% of the population often felt lonely.

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20200322202602/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/loneliness-annual-report-the-first-year/loneliness-annual-report-january-2020--2>

Before lockdown many mental health services were being stretched with funding reductions from local authorities. https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Mentalhealthfundingreport2_0.pdf. Couple in the demand for services with a pandemic which forced social isolation and many of the mental health services saw the level of need increase <http://www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/News/nhs-providers-mental-health>

Government statistics in April 2020 noted that 53.1% of responders to the "Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain" survey said that the pandemic was affecting their well-being. With nearly half of adults commenting that the pandemic was creating heightened levels of anxiety.

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20200417235556/https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/coronavirusandthesocialimpactsongreatbritain/16april2020>

A survey by Mind concluded that 73% of adult (1,1680) respondents rated "not being able to go outside except for essential reasons" as a factor which has made their mental health worse. https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5929/the-mental-health-emergency_a4_final.pdf

Milton Keynes has a younger age profile than England as a whole. 27.4% of the Milton Keynes population are aged 19 and under compared with 23.7% in England. <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/your-council-and-elections/statistics/population-statistics>. For young people aged 13-25 a report by Young Minds uncovered that 87% (1,1771) of the young people in the UK that they spoke to agreed that they had felt lonely or isolated during the lockdown period of between Friday 5th June and Monday 6th July 2020. Furthermore 80% of young people with a history of mental health agreed that the coronavirus pandemic had made their mental health worse.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/about-us/reports/coronavirus-impact-on-young-people-with-mental-health-needs/>.

The YiS Milton Keynes confirmed that they have had the most referrals for counselling than they have ever had over a 3-month period, with 180 referrals for counselling since April 2020- June 2020. Compared to 86 referrals which they received in 2019 over the same months. Many of the reasons include depression, loneliness, disappointment about leaving university early and not being able to see friends.

A local youth support group, Service Six Milton Keynes also confirmed that they received an increase of 15% (August 2020) in referrals over lockdown, with anxiety now being one of the top presenting issues compared to August 2019.

"Anxiety over not being able to see friends, cancellation of exams, uncertain futures, home issues and change to routine has impacted a number of children and young people" Katie Byrne Milton Keynes Service Manager at Service Six

For young people who are also carers, enforced isolation meant that the support clubs they regularly attended were no longer happening and that in turn meant that many had limited respite from their caring duties. A study by the Carers Trust which surveyed 961 young carers (aged 12- 17) and young adult carers (aged 18-25) found that 58% of young carers were spending on average ten hours a week more on their caring responsibilities

<https://carers.org/news-and-media/news/post/51-steep-decline-in-mental-health-of-young-carers-and-young-adult-carers-following-coronavirus-outbreak> Locally Carers Milton Keynes report their young carers lifestyles and commitments at home resulted in them already being social isolated before the pandemic, and the enforced lockdown meant that the small amount of socialising they did do was put to a halt.

For many LGBTQ+ young people, lockdown meant being confined with relatives who were prejudiced, unsupportive and hostile. As a result, for many this meant hiding their sexuality. A survey by the University College London and University of Sussex found that of those surveyed, younger people exhibited high levels of stress and depressive symptoms. <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2020/08/08/lgbt-mental-health-lockdown-queeratine-study-university-college-london-sussex/>

Nationally there has been a 44% increase in calls to suicide prevention helplines in the first 3 months of lockdown from members of the LGBTQ+ community, this includes the younger demographic.

<https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2020/07/03/lgbt-suicide-rate-increase-coronavirus-pandemic/>

The pandemic has had adverse effects on adults in Milton Keynes also. Last year in 2019 Mind BLMK directly supported 857 people in Milton Keynes, resulting in 3,341 sessions of individual support across the year. During the time of the lockdown they have seen the need for their work increase by over 20% in terms of individual people approaching them for support. They state that it is likely that this figure will continue to rise over the coming year.

Mind BLMK also reported that those who were accessing their services had higher mental health and wellbeing needs, receiving an increased amount of calls from people who were showing suicidal intent and behaviours, and the need to de-escalate crises. Mind BLMK's Crisis Café which was set up during lockdown recorded that during the month of July 2020 60% (34 out of a total of 56 calls) of individuals calling into the café noted feeling less lonely or isolated when speaking to an advisor.

Those aged 65 or over were most likely to be shielding which in turn meant longer social isolation periods. In Milton Keynes, those aged 65 and over make up 13.8% of Milton Keynes' total population. Age UK note that during the lockdown their Silver Line (24/7 friendship phonenumber) saw an increase of up to 31% with many of the callers expressing feelings of loneliness. Locally Age UK Milton Keynes offer a befriending service. Last year during the period March to June 2019, they had 23 referrals for support, in the same period this year they have had 58 referrals for support – a 153% increase in their service use.

https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/health--wellbeing/behind-the-headlines/behind_the_headlines_coronavirus.pdf

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/parliamentaryconstituencymidyearpopulationestimates>

A report by LGBT Foundation found that 40 older LGBTQ+ people (aged 50+) were likely to be isolating alone. This demographic group would usually rely on their close friends or family for mental health support. [Hidden Figures: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on LGBT Communities in the UK](#)

A survey from Mind (July 2020) identified that the inequalities members of the BAME community already receive with regards to housing, employment, and finances, have resulted in their mental health being furthermore negatively impacted on during the coronavirus pandemic. 61% of BAME people noted that employment worries had negatively affected their mental health, compared to 51% of white people. Mind go on to raise concern that the aftermath of the pandemic may disproportionately affect some communities more than others in the future.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/existing-inequalities-have-made-mental-health-of-bame-groups-worse-during-pandemic-says-mind/>

This is coupled with the cultural differences which sometimes act as barriers for BAME communities to understand mental health and seek professional support. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/b/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-bame-communities>

FURLOUGH

Before the pandemic furlough was an unfamiliar word for many. Data shows that 33,900 people in Milton Keynes had been furloughed as part of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme by the end of May 2020.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-june-2020>

The NHS backed campaign Every Mind Matters notes that work can provide a routine and sense of purpose. <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/possible-causes/#money-work-housing> For many the furlough scheme brought about feelings of stress and uncertainty over the future and the security of employment. Mind who surveyed more than 16,000 people reported that those who were furloughed, changed jobs, or lost their job due to coronavirus saw their mental health and wellbeing decline more than those whose employment status didn't change.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

With physical health being linked to good mental health we wanted to further explore how mental health has been affected by the Coronavirus outbreak.

A report by Sport England notes that physical activity levels across England were on the rise before the Coronavirus outbreak hit in March 2020. <https://www.sportengland.org/activelivesapr20>

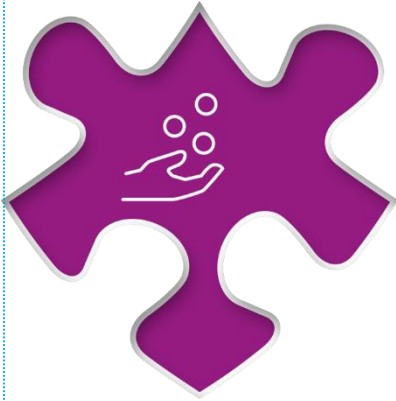
At the height of lockdown with physical activity being restricted to once a day, many exercise opportunities became non-existent. Data gathered by Sport England, over an eight-week period within lockdown, found that those from lower socio-economic groups, women, older adults, people with a long-term condition, illness or disability, and people from some BAME communities were still finding it harder to be active. https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/demographic-knowledge/coronavirus?section=the_story_so_far#page

Vital Thinking

- How can we build on the way communities came together to support the more vulnerable during lockdown?
- Since physical activity is important to mental health, how do we encourage children to develop good habits for the future?
- As a result of the pandemic anxiety has increased amongst the general population, how do we reassure and build resilience?

Vital Action – Youth information Service (YiS)

YiS provide free and confidential BACP accredited counselling for young people aged 11-21 in Milton Keynes. They work with a range of issues including anxiety, depression, anger, recovery from abuse, family problems, relationship difficulties and many more. As lockdown started, they identified the need for online mental health and wellbeing support for young people with existing mental health difficulties. With a grant from MKCF they were able to respond quickly to set up an online messaging service whereby their team of highly skilled counsellors and wellbeing coaches were on hand to provide advice and guidance. This service proved to be popular, with daily messages from young people seeking help on a range of topics from anxiety, friendship breakdowns and returning to education fears.



Disadvantage and Poverty

Theme Definition

Relative poverty has been redefined and the threshold is now set at 55% median* of total available resources. A key principle of the new measure is that poverty should be related to the extent to which people have the resources to engage adequately in a life regarded as the norm in society. Previously it was based on income versus expenditure, however this did not consider that some families had access to resources such as saving.

Overview

Disadvantage and Poverty is affected by many factors: access to education, income and resources. All of these have been affected by the lockdown however the full effect on employment, particularly amongst young people, will not become evident until the Government job retention scheme ends in October 2020.

Key Facts

- Overall an estimated (10,900) 17.7% of children are living in poverty, although some areas of Milton Keynes show child poverty rates as high as 32%.
- The latest Index of Multiple Deprivation, published in 2019 suggests that
 - eight areas of Milton Keynes are within the 10% most deprived in England.
 - two areas of Milton Keynes are among the 2% most deprived in England.
 - Milton Keynes is ranked 23rd out of all 317 local authorities in England for barriers to housing and services; it sits within the 10% most deprived areas when being assessed on indicators such as housing affordability, overcrowding and homelessness.
- MK Foodbank provided 11,400 food parcels in 2019, equivalent to 950 per month. Between March and July 2020, they gave out over 12,400 food parcels, an average of 2480 every month.

Diversity key facts relating to Poverty and Disadvantage

- The employment rate for women in Milton Keynes was 71.8% last year, compared to 84.7% for men, showing there was already a gap before the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Women with children are 1.5 times more likely than men with children to have lost their job (England)

Findings

RELATIVE DEPRIVATION

The Index of Multiple Deprivation splits England into small areas, called Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), to assess relative poverty across the country. The latest report, published in 2019, shows that Milton Keynes has 18 areas that are within the 20% most deprived and 8 areas in the 10% most deprived areas in England. Furthermore, two areas ranked 626th and 651st out of all 32,844 LSOAs, which means they are within the 2% most deprived in England. These areas are where disadvantage is worst, but there will be others facing the challenges of poverty in other parts of Milton Keynes too ([English indices of deprivation 2019: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)).

*Median is the middle figure in a range of data

WORK AND INCOME

At first glance, Milton Keynes continues to appear prosperous. Of the 170,700 residents aged 16-64 years old, 78.3% were employed in 2019. Over 65% of people were working in one of the three main sectors: Public Administration, Education and Health; Banking, Finance and Insurance; Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants ([Annual Population Survey: January 2019 to December 2019, 2020: NOMIS](#)).

However, Milton Keynes is very much a city of two halves. In 2019 the unemployment rate averaged 4.8%, which was higher than the 4% average unemployment rate seen across England ([Annual Population Survey: January 2019 to December 2019, 2020: NOMIS](#)). Furthermore, whilst the overall average gross weekly pay was £545.50 in Milton Keynes, during 2019, earnings data shows the 10% lowest earning residents took home an average gross weekly pay of just £165.60 ([Annual survey of hours and earnings, 2019: NOMIS](#)).

Between March and May 2020, the number of people in Milton Keynes claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit, because they were looking for work, rose from 4,495 to 10,520. This is an increase of 134% ([Claimant count by age and sex, March 2020- May 2020, 2020: NOMIS](#)). Furthermore 33,900 people in Milton Keynes were furloughed as part of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme since its launch ([Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme Statistics May 2020, June 2020: HMRC](#)). It is predicted that the UK is heading for a recession in 2021 and the negative effects of this are likely to be concentrated on those with the lowest incomes. Research shows low earners are the least able to work from home ([Doing what it takes: Protecting firms and families from the economic impact of coronavirus, 2020: Resolution Foundation](#)) and most likely to have worked in a sector shut down because of Covid-19 ([Sector shutdowns during the coronavirus crisis: which workers are most exposed?, 2020: Institute of Fiscal Studies](#)). Data would show that, before Covid-19, 25.4% of the Milton Keynes workforce were employed in the three lowest paying occupational groups. This means there are potentially over 34,000 people in Milton Keynes who maybe particularly vulnerable to losing all or part of their pay, with jobs such as: cleaning, catering, sales and customer service ([Annual survey of hours and earnings, 2019: ONS](#)) ([Annual Population Survey: January 2019 to December 2019, 2020: NOMIS](#)). In addition, those on the lowest incomes are also least likely to have the financial buffers to fall back on, with 60% of those on low-to-middle incomes reporting to have no savings at all ([A problem shared?, 2019: Resolution Foundation](#)). Indeed, demand for the services of MK Food Bank have increased substantially since the outbreak of Covid-19. Over the twelve months of 2019 they supported approximately 2,180 households, providing over 11,400 food parcels. This equates to an average of 950 food parcels per month. Between March and July 2020, they had helped 2,800 households and gave out over 12,400 food parcels, an average of 2480 every month.

HOUSING

Homelessness is a major issue in Milton Keynes. Between October and December 2019, 303 households were assessed as being threatened with homelessness. This equates to 2.81 households for every 1000, which is higher than the 1.45 households for every 1000 recorded as threatened with homelessness in England. In addition, 319 households were assessed as currently homeless by Milton Keynes Council, in the same three-month period last year. These figures are much higher than in England as a whole, with 2.96 households per 1000 compared to 1.42 per 1000 ([Number of households by initial assessment of homelessness circumstances and needs Oct - Dec 2019, 2020: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)). The 2019 rough sleeper count suggests that 35 people were living on the streets of Milton Keynes ([Annual rough sleeping snapshot in England, 2019: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)), however Winter Night Shelter MK supported 81 people over the 138 nights they were open between November 2019 and March 2020 ([Winter Night Shelter MK, 2020](#)). Whilst this data offers a mere snapshot, Milton Keynes has a problem with homelessness, being ranked 23rd out of all 317 local authorities on the Index of Multiple Deprivation domain for Barriers to Housing and Services. This means it sits within the 10% most deprived areas in the country, when being assessed on indicators such as housing affordability, household overcrowding and statutory homelessness figures ([English indices of deprivation 2019: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)).

Covid-19 has had some positive impacts on homelessness, although these are limited in scope and scale.

In late March 2020, the Minister for Local Government and Homelessness, Luke Hall, wrote to local authorities requiring them to urgently find all rough sleepers suitable accommodation, so they too could adhere to guidance on hygiene and self-isolation aimed at reducing the spread of Covid-19. ([Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): letter from Minister Hall to local authorities on plans to protect rough sleepers, March 2020, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government](#)). As a result, Milton Keynes Council put in place a Covid-19 Rough Sleeper Protocol, by June 2020, they had supported 127 people that were either rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping, providing emergency accommodation across Milton Keynes. To help with this, they commissioned 50 rooms at a centrally located hotel, full wrap around services were provided on site, working with other organisations to provide this ([MKHP Quarterly Partnership Meeting Minutes June 2020, Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership](#)).

Furthermore, after years of campaigning by homelessness charities, Covid-19 caused the government to change the way in which Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are calculated. The LHA rate, and therefore the maximum amount that had been paid in housing benefit, for a two bedroom property in Milton Keynes in 2019/20 was £698.41 ([Local Housing Allowance \(LHA\) rates applicable from April 2019 to March 2020, 2020 : Valuation Office Agency](#)), despite the median monthly private rental price for this type of property being £895 during the same period ([Private rental market summary statistics in England April 2019 to March 2020, June 2020: ONS](#)). For the financial year 2020/21 the LHA for a two bedroom property has increased to £824.99 ([Local Housing Allowance \(LHA\) rates applicable from April 2020 to March 2021: amendment as instructed by The Social Security Regulations 2020, March 2020: Valuation Office Agency](#)).

Lockdown seems to have put increased pressure on relationships. Breakdown in relationships was already one of the main causes of homelessness in Milton Keynes before Covid-19. Indeed, 30.1% of those assessed as homeless or at risk of homelessness, between October and December 2019, stated the reason as 'family and friends no long willing or able to accommodate' ([Households initially assessed as threatened with homelessness or homeless Oct- Dec 2019, 2020: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)). A recent survey conducted by Relate showed that 23% of people in a couple believe the current circumstances are placing pressure on their relationship. Furthermore 12% of those currently living with a partner agree that staying at home made them doubt their relationship ([We must be ready to support relationships after lockdown, Relate, 2020](#)).

In addition, Covid-19 may cause rental prices to rise, while average rental prices may fall slightly in the short term, forecasts have predicted they will potentially increase by up to 5.5% in 2021. ([Impact of Covid-19 on social housing supply and residential construction, 2020, Savills](#)). Furthermore, even if there is a temporary fall in rental costs, many will be committed to fixed term contracts, which will be particularly challenging for those facing a loss of income as a result of Covid-19 ([Build, build, build social housing: to stimulate our economy and unlock people from poverty and homelessness, 2019, Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)). With average private rental prices in Milton Keynes higher than those seen across England as a whole, at £900 compared to £695, it is likely that increasing numbers of people will be priced out of the market and potentially find themselves homeless ([Private rental market summary statistics in England April 2019 to March 2020, June 2020: ONS](#)). Indeed, Winter Night Shelter MK has helped approximately 15 people each day, at its Unity Park Station hub since March 2020. They have been providing wide ranging support, such as hot meals, laundry facilities, benefits advice, and housing guidance.

In addition, Covid-19 may amplify the shortfall in social housing. Forecasts suggest that the gap between demand and supply will substantially increase over the coming years, as the longer-term effects of Covid-19 take hold ([Build, build, build social housing: to stimulate our economy and unlock people from poverty and homelessness, 2019: Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)). There was already a great need for social housing in Milton Keynes pre-Covid-19, out of the 187 households deemed unintentionally homeless and in priority need during October to December 2019, only 19 were found longer term accommodation by Milton Keynes Council ([Households assessed as unintentionally homeless and priority need \(owed main duty\) Oct - Dec 2019, 2020: Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)). Meanwhile, 691 households were recorded as living in temporary accommodation in Milton Keynes. This equates to 6.41 households for every 1,000, higher than in England as a whole, where 3.78 households per

1,000 are living in temporary accommodation ([Households in temporary accommodation, December 31st 2019: Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government](#)). Provisional homelessness data suggest the number of households living in temporary accommodation had risen to 908, by July 2020. This number does not include those provided with emergency accommodation as part of Milton Keynes Council's Covid-19 Rough Sleeper Protocol ([Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership Briefing Series July 2020, 2020: Milton Keynes Homelessness Partnership](#)).

CHILD POVERTY

The way in which child poverty is measured has been remodelled, data still shows approx. 10,900 (17.7%) children in Milton Keynes are growing up in poor households, although some areas of Milton Keynes show child poverty rates as high as 32%. ([Children in Low Income Families - local area statistics, 2014/15 to 2018/19, 2020: DWP](#)).

In January 2020, there were 697 two-year olds benefiting from funded early educational provision in Milton Keynes. This is a government scheme accessible to children that have certain extra needs, although 99.7% of two-year olds utilising the places in Milton Keynes were from families in receipt of income-based benefits. Three- and four-year olds are universally entitled to early educational provision across England, which benefits 7271 children from all socio-economic backgrounds across Milton Keynes ([Education provision: Children under 5 years of age: January 2020, June 2020: Department for Education](#)). The latest data shows that last year there were 4149 primary school aged children and 2823 secondary school aged children known to be eligible for free school meals in Milton Keynes. This equates to 15.1% of all children at primary school and 14.2% of children at secondary school. Both figures are proportionately less than seen across England as a whole, where eligibility for free school meals is 17.7% and 15.9% respectively. ([Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2019/20, 2019: Department for Education](#)).

There were already sizeable attainment gaps between children from the poorest and wealthiest families in Milton Keynes, before the outbreak of Covid-19. For example, 56% of children aged five and under, who were eligible for free school meals, achieved at least the expected standards across all learning goals in early years foundation stage last year. This compares to 74% of all other children ([Early years foundation stage profile results: 2018 to 2019: Department for Education](#)). In addition, 20% of key stage four students, who were eligible for free school meals, gained level 5 or above in English and maths GCSEs in 2019, compared to 41.7% of all other students ([Key stage four performance 2019, local authority characteristics data: Department for Education](#)).

With the majority of children spending more than a term out of school this year, there are concerns that Covid-19 will have particularly negative effects on the learning and development of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and widening existing inequalities. Research shows that poorer children suffer most from breaks in formal educational provision, such as school holidays. While children technically worked from home throughout the extended Covid-19 school closures, those from disadvantaged backgrounds faced unequal barriers to learning ([COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown, 2020: The Sutton Trust; Inequalities in children's experiences of home learning during the COVID-19 lockdown in England, 2020: Institute of Fiscal Studies](#)).

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds may not have had the resources required for home learning. Children from poorer families were shown to be less likely to have a suitable learning environment, without a dedicated study space or their own desk ([Inequalities in children's experiences of home learning during the COVID-19 lockdown in England, 2020: Institute of Fiscal Studies](#)). Access to technology, such as a laptop and stable internet connection, may also have been an issue for many ([COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown, 2020: The Sutton Trust](#)). Research shows that 20% of those eligible for free school meals had no access to a computer at home, compared to 7% of all other children ([Schoolwork in lockdown: new evidence on the epidemic of educational poverty, 2020: Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies](#)). This appears to have been far worse for children attending the most deprived schools, where teachers report 39% of students have little or no IT access. ([Pupil engagement in remote learning, 2020: National Foundation for Educational Research](#)).

Those from poorer families were far less likely to receive active learning resources, such as online classes, despite these being the most engaging way for children to learn at home. This may be because schools with high numbers of

disadvantaged students were hesitant to provide online resources, in case they marginalised those with no IT access, however some have argued this choice proved more of a barrier to learning than the lack of equipment itself ([Inequalities in children's experiences of home learning during the COVID-19 lockdown in England, 2020: Institute of Fiscal Studies](#); [COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown, 2020: The Sutton Trust](#)). Moreover, poorer children were less likely to receive as much offline support, with 15% of children eligible for free school meals receiving four or more pieces of offline schoolwork a day, compared to 21% of other children. ([Schoolwork in lockdown: new evidence on the epidemic of educational poverty, 2020: Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies](#)).

As a result, children from disadvantaged backgrounds were far less likely to be engaged in learning. Schools with highest levels of deprivation have reported lower levels of engagement, with fewer students getting involved in learning activities ([Pupil engagement in remote learning, 2020: National Foundation for Educational Research](#)). Research suggests that children from the poorest families were likely to spend 1.5 hours less on learning activities each day, compared with children from the richest families ([Inequalities in children's experiences of home learning during the COVID-19 lockdown in England, 2020: Institute of Fiscal Studies](#)). Furthermore 11% of those eligible for free school meals spent more than four hours a day on homework, compared to 19% of other students ([Schoolwork in lockdown: new evidence on the epidemic of educational poverty, 2020: Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies](#)). As a result, there are concerns that the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers will widen as much as 36%, as a result of Covid-19 ([Impact of school closures on the attainment gap: rapid evidence assessment, 2020: Education Endowment Fund](#)).

Vital thinking

- Between March and May 2020, the number of people in Milton Keynes claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit, because they were looking for work, rose from 4,495 to 10,520 people a 100% increase. How is this going to affect poverty in Milton Keynes over the next few years?
- Lockdown has proved positive for rough sleepers under the Covid-19 rough sleeper protocol: 127 people at risk of rough sleeping have been given emergency accommodation. What will happen to these people as lockdown is lifted?
- From our research the negative effects of lockdown on employment of women with children has been greater than for men with children. How can we as a community support woman who are often the pivot point of a family?

Vital Action – Foodbank Xtra

At the start of lockdown, the Foodbank experienced a sharp increase in demand for food parcels. The usual sources for referrals and the limit of 6 weeks support was no longer fit for purpose. In conjunction with MK council Foodbank Xtra was formed using closed council venues to set up smaller collection points and redeploying some staff and volunteers to become delivery drivers for those shielding. The traditional methods of food supply from donations dried up with shortages at supermarkets. MKCF were delighted to be able to provide an emergency grant to enable them to purchase food direct from wholesalers.

*the middle value in a data set



Crime and Safety

Theme Definition

This theme looks at local and national trends in crime from Home Office and police data. In 2019 we highlighted increases in crime and how we can feel safe in our homes. Ironically, the figures we have focussed on this year is about how for some people home is not a safe place and lockdown has put additional strains on relationships. The local statistics only tell part of the story since Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence victims may often be afraid or reluctant to come forward.

Domestic abuse is defined as “an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It is very common.”

Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Coercive control
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Financial or economic abuse
- Harassment and stalking
- Online or digital abuse

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/>

Overview

Last year we reported on the increasing gang related crimes, county lines and increase in knife crime. To date there is limited data on the effect of lockdown on these issues. The restrictions in movement imposed in March, led to an overall drop in crime in April according to Thames Valley Police regional statistics, however most areas of crime in July 2020 were reported at similar levels to July 2019 with the exception of violent crime which has risen by 18%.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales suggests an estimated 2.4 million adults experienced domestic abuse, between March 2018 and April 2019. This equates to 5.7% of the adult population. Whilst 2% of the population experienced abuse carried out by a family member, 4.2% were abused by a partner. Nonsexual abuse is the most common type of domestic abuse, with the data suggesting 5.2% of the adult population were victim to physical, emotional and/ or financial abuse. Domestic stalking affected 1.1% of adults, whilst 0.4% were sexually assaulted during the same 2018/2019 period (*Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales, November 2019: ONS*).

However, throughout this section of the report it is important to know that domestic abuse is largely under reported. Out of the estimated 2.4 million people who noted that they had experienced domestic abuse in the Crime

Survey for England and Wales (November 2019), only 31.1% were reported to the police. Between March 2018 and April 2019, 746,219 domestic abuse related crimes were reported - this is a 24% increase from the previous year, thought to be caused by improved police reporting and victims increasing likelihood to come forward. Of the cases referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), 74% resulted in a charge. However only 13.2% of domestic abuse related crime got this far through the prosecution system, due to difficulties in securing evidence. In 51% of cases, the victim did not support action being taken. Overall, only 11% of domestic abuse related crimes resulted in a charge. (*Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales, November 2019: ONS*).

Key facts

- Thames Valley Police reported that violent crime is still the highest issue with 6565 case reported in July 2020 compared to 5542 in July 2019 an increase of 18%
-
- Between April and June 2020, Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes Sexual Assault Support Service saw 53 referrals, compared with 35 for the same period last year. This is a 51% increase.
-
- The period April – July 2020 compared with the period April – March 2019 saw an increase in Domestic Violence from 2.6 to 10.7 per 1000 population or household according to Thames Valley Police data
-
- In the last quarter of 2019, 12% of those who approached MK Council for support, cited domestic violence as the reason they became homeless or at risk of homelessness

Diversity

- Citizen: MK in a Vital Thinking event, with 6 members of the Syrian refugee community settled in Milton Keynes, highlighted digital poverty as a real issue to their young people's education during lockdown.

Milton Keynes findings

Data from Thames Valley Police shows that 2,710 domestic abuse related crimes were recorded in Milton Keynes during 2019/2020, up 4% from the 2018/19. As a result, domestic abuse related crime was the fourth most common type of offence occurring in Milton Keynes last year (*Crime Summary for Milton Keynes April 2019 To March 2020, Thames Valley Police*).

For domestic abuse victims, home is often not a safe place. During the last three months of 2019, 622 households were assessed as owed a homelessness duty by Milton Keynes Council. This means that the local authority had a legal responsibility to find them safe housing. <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/> Of these, 12% cited domestic abuse as the reason for homelessness. This is higher than seen across England as a whole, where 9.3% cited domestic abuse as the reason for homelessness during the same period (*Households initially assessed as threatened with homelessness or homeless Oct- Dec 2019, 2020: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government*).

Local domestic abuse specialist group MK Act provide a range of support services for the survivors of domestic abuse, including crisis intervention and a refuge. Between April 2019 and March 2020, they supported 603 new clients who were in crisis and experiencing domestic violence. This figure covers clients accessing the groups services in a variety of ways such as over the phone, email and walk ins.

MK Act's data shows that for those who did choose to complete the ethnicity data request (301 respondents out of 603), 37.7% of respondents noted that they were from BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) demographic groups.

Whilst Women's Aid report that there is no evidence that women from BAME backgrounds are more at risk of domestic abuse than others, they do recognise that there may be additional barriers to them accessing support. MK

Act have identified the following reasons this may be the case for BAMER (Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugees) victims: Isolation – the victim may not speak English as their first language or may not have a support system outside of their abusers community; Unstable immigration status – the victim may feel that their immigration status is dependent on them staying with their partner and lastly there may be multiple perpetrators within the victim’s community.

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/women-from-bme-communities/> and MK Act.

Within the definition of domestic abuse, physical and sexual abuse is included as a form of the crime. Therefore, it is important to note that Rape Crisis Centres report that 75% of survivors that access their service do so a year or so after the rape has taken place. (*VAWG, Access to justice for women and girls during the covid-19 pandemic*). Given this information, local Rape Crisis Centre Aylesbury Vale Milton Keynes Sexual Assault & Abuse Support Service (AVMKAASS) are expecting to see an increase in their demand for services over the coming months and year.

Source AVMKAASS

The impact of Covid-19

Whilst Covid-19 did not cause domestic abuse, it created an environment for the abuse to escalate and during the height of lockdown when many support avenues were closed this also meant that routes to safety for victims to escape were limited. A Women’s Aid survey of women currently experiencing abuse, conducted in June 2020, showed that 91% believed Covid-19 had affected their experiences. While 51% of survey respondents said abuse had got worse during lockdown, 52% felt more afraid and 58% believed they had no one to turn to for help. Perpetrators of domestic abuse very quickly learnt to use the pandemic as a tool for enacting controlling behaviour and abuse. Survey respondents said perpetrators were using Covid-19 to prevent them from leaving the house, moving back into their home and abuse them in a new way. For example, 6% said that perpetrators had coughed or spat at them to increase the fear of catching Covid-19.

[Women’s Aid. \(2020\) A Perfect Storm: The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Domestic Abuse Survivors and the Services Supporting Them. Bristol: Women’s Aid.](#)

The impact of the stay at home policy is reflected by MK Act’s data – they saw referral numbers drop between March 2020 – May 2020. With many victims looking for other mediums for support. A report by Violence Against Women and Girls found that many women’s organisations saw a spike in the use of web-based support and information services (*VAWG, Access to justice for women and girls during the covid-19 pandemic*). This is something which Milton Keynes MK Act concur with – they saw a 68% increase in people logging onto their website for support during the lockdown period. They state that due to victims being trapped at home with their perpetrators they would have had reduced access to speaking on the telephone or seeking support in person.

AVMKAASS also added a chat function to their website in order to be able to support those within trapped environments.

Whilst MK Act saw a decline in the number of referrals over the lockdown period it is worth noting that this is still an increase of 35% over April 2020 – June 2020, compared to the same quarter in 2019.

AVMKAASS also saw their referrals increase, they state that some of the reasons could be because their clients have had time at home to reflect on the sexual violence they had received prior to lockdown or come to acknowledge the childhood sexual abuse they had experienced. During the quarter of this year 1st April – 30th June 2020 AVMKAASS saw an increase in new referrals to 53 compared to the same quarter last year of 35 new referrals. Of those 53, 10 clients were presenting issues associated with domestic violence. However, it is important to remember that these 10 have been open about their domestic abuse, the number could be higher as domestic abuse is a predominately hidden crime.

AVMKAASS also noticed an increase in referral numbers over July 2020 and August 2020 - which are traditionally the groups quieter months for receiving referrals. During this time frame, they received 48 new referrals compared

to the 29 new referrals over the same two months in 2019. This equates to an average of 24 referrals per month compared to an average of 10 referrals per month over the same time. Anecdotally the group have noted that the needs of the individuals who were referred were more complex. MK Act also note that due to their victim's complex needs the team were submitting more safeguarding alerts. This is also something which has been identified by mental health service providers.

As noted earlier, domestic abuse is likely to be a hidden crime and it often takes victims a long time to accept the abuse which is happening to them and to seek support. Given the timeframe of this publication we expect to see more detailed reporting on this subject area and particularly the impact Covid-19 has had, over the coming months when more data is available.

Vital thinking

- Last year we asked the question 'How can we as a community shed light on the issues surrounding domestic abuse so actions can be developed to start to address this issue'? This is more relevant and urgent this year.
- Violent crime is still an issue in parts of Milton Keynes, how can we work with our law enforcement agencies to make our streets safer?
- The Vital Thinking event held in December 2019 – highlighted the need for early intervention and education for both children and parents – how do we make useful partnership to enable this change?

Vital Action – MK Act

MK Act is a charity which supports local families in fear from abuse, by providing an Emergency Refuge, offering counselling and signposting additional support services. When the national press reported increasing levels of domestic abuse, MK Act wanted to make sure that as many people as possible were aware of their service. The Emergency Refuge was full, so they needed funds to be able to respond to emergency situations for families in crisis. Through two emergency grants MKCF was able to support a media awareness campaign and provide the additional funds to support other families in crisis.

Looking ahead

This snapshot of Milton Keynes provides initial data on some of the issues arising from lockdown. This has already provided Milton Keynes Community Foundation with insights into where our funding can be most effective. Our Emergency fund was launched on 20 March 2020 and to date we have provided over £500,000 in grants to more than 110 groups. We now move into the Recovery phase of our funding where we will need to support the community and voluntary organisations who have been affected by lockdown but provide essential services to the most vulnerable in our community.

We will continue to facilitate Vital Thinking Events throughout 2020/21 to inform our grant making, if you are interested in taking part in any of these events please register your interest by emailing info@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk.

We can only continue to fund these vital projects thanks to our fundholders, members, corporate supporters and the generous donors who responded to our appeal. We still need your support to enable us to deliver our recovery funding. If you want to get more involved with please email giving@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk

Case studies from Emergency Appeal



Dreamsai were funded to adapt their model of delivering 'home cooked food' to that of supplying essential item packs. They aimed to double their efforts and deliver to those over 65s who were self-isolating two days a week, working in conjunction with the Foodbank.



As a result of the funding from Milton Keynes Community Foundation, Puzzle Centre has been able to provide a weekly support telephone call to parents and teletherapy sessions for children from a Specialist Teacher and Occupational Therapist.



As a direct result of the funding, The Lewis Foundation have extended their usual service and created a self-isolation pack, containing items for both physical and mental wellbeing for adult cancer patients.



The funding from Milton Keynes Community Foundation meant access to technology for Macintyre. The purchase of iPads has meant that those they support can not only see their friends and family, but also access online activities and virtual groups to take part in some of their normal learning activities.



Funding received allowed Future Wolverton to take activities, such as their Sewn Together project, into local homes and enabled those wishing to take part to stay connected; delivering a much needed distraction of everything that has been going on in the world.



Funding meant that Sands were able to develop an urgently required toolkit of guidance and compliance, enabling bereaved parents and families in Milton Keynes to access vital bereavement support services online.

We are always looking for ways to improve and develop our Vital Signs report, so please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to participate in future Vital Signs research.

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
-  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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www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk

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