What is Vital Signs?

We live in the information age, yet despite so many of us having easy access to the internet, the information most useful to us is not always easy to access or even to identify. Anyone wishing to know more about the current health of their community will need to locate and collate a wide variety of research, published by a diverse range of organisations, each written with a different audience in mind.

Vital Signs seeks to provide a single, easily accessible and understandable source of relevant data, measuring the qualities and challenges of our society at a local level. Vital Signs is a kind of health check, illustrating where we can find our strengths and weaknesses as a community; highlighting where we excel and can be proud of our achievements, as well as where we have great need and where future attention and resources should be focused.
In 2013, Milton Keynes was one of a handful of the Community Foundations in Britain to pilot Vital Signs in our country for the first time. Other communities around the nation have subsequently launched their Vital Signs reports and the aspiration is that over the next few years, the whole of the UK will be included in the Vital Signs project. Every three years, each Vital Signs locality publishes a full report, including a wide range of themes, with interim update reports published in interim years, focusing on selected themes or recent developments. This year’s 2016 Vital Signs MK report is our first full report since the launch of the programme in 2013, and was supported by the Open University and David Lock Associates.

**Methodology**

We wanted to ensure that the content of Vital Signs would be as reliable and as current as possible. To achieve that, the team at the Community Foundation reviewed every bit of research we could get our hands on. We scoured the impressive library of data available through Milton Keynes Council and their ‘Intelligence Observatory’, the reporting of the Health Service and Thames Valley Police, we poured through the results of air and water quality testing and we looked in painstaking detail at other independent and reliable sources of research, such as the Office for National Statistics. We examined new independent research from respected organisations like The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and CentreForCities, as well as the annual reporting from local service providers, both public and voluntary. We also utilised the vast networks and databases of Place Analytics to make sure we had the widest reach possible in gathering relevant and reliable data on Milton Keynes in 2016.

We also sought out the views and perspectives of local residents. With the support and guidance of the Open University we held a programme of a dozen Focus Groups, quizzing a diverse and opinionated array of local people on their experience of Milton Keynes. We asked local people about their views on local schools, health care, jobs, transport and poverty. We explored how people view the dramatic changes we have seen in our community, particularly over the last decade.

With the support of our partners at the Open University, we also conducted an extensive online survey, asking a range of questions on each of the twelve Vital Signs MK themes. We wanted to understand how people felt about what it’s like to live in Milton Keynes, as well as what they felt our priorities should be, as a community moving forward in these challenging times.

Approximately 600 local people filled in the survey, giving us a treasure trove of information that helped us to piece together a framework of our community's values and priorities.

So with the results of all of the research conducted on Milton Keynes over the past decade, the insight and input of our focus groups and the results of our comprehensive opinion survey, our task was then to bring all of those elements together and package them in a way that would be accessible, informative and thought-provoking.
To achieve that, we’ve created two Vital Signs reports. A summary document in magazine format has been produced for distribution around Milton Keynes. The document you are presently reading is the other version of the Vital Signs report. This free download report presents a more comprehensive review of the research, pointing out where it all comes from and indicating which organisations and reports were the sources of the data so you can look up the original research for yourself. (Please note that some of the data was obtained through Place Analytics, which is a paid subscription service compiling data from a range of reputable sources. References to their portal have been omitted, everything else comes from the sources specified throughout this report.) This Vital Signs Full Report also provides more results from our Focus Groups and the online survey, offering a fuller picture of what local people told us.

How to Use Vital Signs

We hope that Vital Signs MK will be useful for organisations working in the voluntary sector, as well as our wider community. We believe that promoting a deeper and more meaningful understanding of our shared community and the challenges we face can inspire the civic pride, leadership, informed debate and community action that will lead to a brighter future for all of us who call Milton Keynes our home.

For those of us who operate in the voluntary / community and public sectors, it is hoped that Vital Signs will help point the way towards how we can best allocate our limited resources to deliver the largest, and most needed, impact on the lives of those who live in Milton Keynes.

Themes:

1. Strong Communities
2. Disadvantage and Poverty
3. Diversity
4. Health and Wellbeing
5. Crime and Safety
6. Housing
7. Arts and Heritage
8. Environment
9. Economy
10. Transport
11. Work
12. Education
Theme 1: STRONG COMMUNITIES

Theme definition - The ‘strong communities’ theme seeks to capture and highlight the qualities that foster a sense of belonging, trust and engagement between local people. Strong Communities are more cohesive and less vulnerable, with members of the community able to rely on one another more.

Overview - Milton Keynes has such a rapidly growing population that the task of successfully integrating and engaging with new residents is an ongoing challenge. Local people have expressed the view in our surveys that in some parts of Milton Keynes, there are popular and successful local activities going on that support this work and in others there is the sense that some of the infrastructure needed to support this (e.g. community centres and venues) is lacking or hard to access. Overall, there is a general sense of belonging amongst local residents.

Findings On...

Our Local Population

The latest estimate of the population of Milton Keynes is 259,250 (ONS, 2014)

Milton Keynes was the 14th fastest growing local authority in England between 2004 and 2014, and the 4th fastest outside of London, growing at more than double the national average. Council Population Bulletin; Centre for Cities Outlook 2016
The population of Milton Keynes is projected to grow 19% to 309,400 by 2026. *Council Population Bulletin*

In that same period, our rural population will grow from 24,250 to an estimated 26,000, or by 7%. *Council Population Bulletin*

Net migration for Milton Keynes is highest amongst young adults 25-44 (1.28%) but net migration for adults 45-64 is negative (-0.39%), meaning that more people in this age group are leaving MK than moving into MK. In the oldest age group, 65+, net migration is a positive 0.22%. Net migration as a whole is 0.24% for Milton Keynes, compared to -0.46% for Northampton, -0.91% for Luton and 0.54% for Bedford. *ONS Internal Migration, data published June 2015*

**Local Engagement**

In this year’s Vital Signs MK Community Survey, a large majority of the local population (80%) reported that they have developed a real sense of belonging here and over 90% told us that they would recommend moving here to a friend who was considering it.

Voter Turnout in May 2016 was 61,301 or 33.66% of the electorate. (It was 44.76% in Bristol) *Council website*

The wards with the highest voter turnout in 2016 were Campbell Park and Old Woughton (39.25%), Bradwell (39.35%) and Stony Stratford (41.97%). The wards with the lowest voter turnout in 2016 were Woughton and Fishermead (27.29%), Central Milton Keynes (26.93%) and Tattenhoe (25.73%) *MK Council website*

Wellbeing survey scored Milton Keynes an average of 7.32, based on local people’s responses to questions regarding their life satisfaction and whether they feel happy about things. For comparison, residents of Rugby scored a 7.68, Northampton a 7.5 and Luton a 7.28. The national average score was 7.42. *ONS Subjective Wellbeing APS Published Sept 2014*

**Your Voices**

**Survey Results**

91% of local people surveyed agreed that they would recommend moving to Milton Keynes if a friend were considering it.

80% of local people surveyed agree that they have a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, estate or village.

75% of local people agree that they try to get involved with local events and activities, but 40% feel that there are not enough local activities on offer.
I know that in many of the estates in Milton Keynes there were community centres built but my experience of them is a lot of them get taken over by preschool nursery five days a week and then it’s difficult to get in. Particularly for people who are maybe aren’t working during the day and would welcome activities during the day.

The way the estates have been developed, you might have one local shop but you don’t, on the majority of them, tend to have a parade of shops. So an elderly person couldn’t walk and, you know, spend a morning sort of wandering in and out of a couple of shops within reach of their homes, talking to people. So I don’t think there’s sort of that community set-up around much of the city.

Milton Keynes desperately needs a better nightlife for older teens and adults.

We’ve got a pretty active neighbourhood with a neighbourhood plan that we’re working on to try and sort of bring these things to the table, because unless you actually shout for it, you don’t get it, that’s a simple thing really. So you’ve got to be at the table.

There’s nothing for young people to do apart from hang around and then get caught up in the wrong things. I remember we used to have youth clubs and every youth club I went to as a kid now doesn’t exist, it’s been shut down. It’s gone.

Photo by Michael Ricketts

Photo by Michael Ricketts
Vital Action - “My Voice, My Vote" National advocacy charity, POhWER, delivered an innovative project in Milton Keynes that supported active participation in voting for adults with learning disabilities. The project arranges forums where the service users meet with and question candidates running for local election, speak their own minds and express their views on the issues that affect their lives before being supported to cast their own votes, engaging fully with the democratic process.
**Vital Thinking** - With Milton Keynes continuing its rapid growth for the foreseeable future, how best can our communities accommodate the new arrivals, while maintaining good levels of community engagement and activity? How do we ensure newcomers are not left out and who is investing in engaging with these new residents and getting them involved in their communities?
**Theme 2: DISADVANTAGE AND POVERTY**

**Theme definition** - In order to live out our full potential as individuals, we must all have equal access to education and skill development, meaningful employment and the health care we need. Disadvantage and poverty create barriers that can impact our health, employment opportunities, education and safety.

**Overview** - Despite MK’s record of economic success, poverty remains a growing problem, affecting more and more local families who are not benefitting from the thriving local economy. The indicators for the theme of poverty are, almost without exception, all moving in the wrong direction. In the list of most deprived local authorities, Milton Keynes is climbing the ranks, a growing number of areas within the city are classed amongst the most deprived in the country, and child poverty remains stubbornly at an unacceptably high level. At the same time, we see a concentration of wealth at the upper end of the income scale in Milton Keynes that is unusual in its scale. In this respect, Vital Signs MK sometimes feels like a 'Tale of Two Cities'.
Findings On....

What is poverty?

Poverty is defined by government as having a household income that is below 60% of the median income, after housing costs for the relevant household size.

A family of four with two young children would need to earn more than £336 per week (after housing costs) to be above the poverty line. That’s an annual household income of about £17,500. A single person with two young children would have to earn £235 or less per week to be classified as under the poverty line. Poverty household calculator: http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs/our-blog/use-our-new-calculator-track-shifting-poverty-line

High housing costs impact levels of poverty. When you take into account all costs associated with housing, the child poverty rate in Milton Keynes is estimated at 25%. (2014, Child Poverty Action Group)

16.7% of people aged 60 and over in Milton Keynes are affected by ‘income deprivation.’ Communities and Local Government Index of Multiple Deprivation

Work is no longer the solution to poverty. Nationally, 1.5 million children are in poverty because their working parents’ wages are insufficient to secure a basic standard of living. The risk of living in ‘absolute poverty’ for working families has also increased over the past ten years. The percentage of working people in full-time jobs who earn ‘low pay’ is 20.5% and rising (the OECD average is 17.1%). State of the Nation 2015 Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission

A recent study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation examines ‘destitution’, a form of extreme poverty in which people have little to no income and cannot afford the absolute essentials: food, staying warm and dry, keeping clean. Their research estimates that between 1.5% and 2.1% of households in Milton Keynes are currently destitute. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, ‘Destitution in the UK’, pub April 2016

Changes to Disadvantage and Poverty in MK

Deprivation and poverty are on the increase in Milton Keynes. In 2007, we were ranked 212th among all local authorities (with #1 being the most deprived, #326 the least deprived). In 2015, we climbed 31 places in the ranks to 181st. MK Intelligence Observatory

61% of all local authorities have at least one area in the 10% most deprived in the country. In 2004 Milton Keynes had 5 areas (Lower Super Output Areas, average population 1,500 – defined here) among the 10% most deprived in the country. As of 2015, that number of areas has increased to 9. Intelligence Observatory
In 2004, Milton Keynes had 13 output areas among the 20% most deprived in the country, as of 2015 that number has increased to 21 areas. *MK Intelligence Observatory*

2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation for Milton Keynes and its Geographical Neighbours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>IMD 2015 Ranking</th>
<th>IMD Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Northamptonshire</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>7.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury Vale</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>11.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Bedfordshire</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>12.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherwell</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>12.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daventry</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>13.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>18.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kettering</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>18.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>19.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>24.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corby</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luton</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27.58</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Rankings out of 326 local authorities, 1 = Most deprived area

Local spending on benefits has increased dramatically in recent years. From 2004/05 to 2010/11, Milton Keynes had the largest proportionate increase in the country with a total welfare bill increase of 45%. This has been attributed to the large population increase here, as well as a large increase in housing benefit spend. This kind of housing benefit increase is typical in areas with higher wages, like Milton Keynes. There is a growing demand to live here in order to access good jobs, which creates demand for housing that outstrips the supply, pushing up rents, which in turn pushes up housing benefit costs. *Centre for Cities Outlook 2016*

Nationally, the proportion of people who believe that poverty and income inequality are among the most important issues facing the UK have tripled since 2007. *Ipsos-Mori Issues Index 2015*

Social Mobility and the ‘Class Ceiling’ – the UK has lower levels of social mobility than other western nations. In Great Britain, for example, ‘income persistence’ between fathers and sons is the highest of all the OECD countries. Four times as many UK professionals in their 40’s come from professional families, rather than working class families. *State of the Nation 2015 Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission*
The following graph shows the strength of the link between individual and parental earnings across OECD countries:

![Graph showing the strength of the link between individual and parental earnings across OECD countries.](image)

*Source: OECD, Economic Policy Reforms: Going for Growth 2010*

**Your Voices**

**Survey Results**

86% of local people surveyed report that some sections of our local community are ‘more likely’ to experience disadvantage and exclusion than others, with 83% agreeing that some people in Milton Keynes do not have enough money even for their basic needs, such as food or heating.

73% of local people surveyed believe that the income gap between rich and poor is growing.

78% feel that lack of access to transport is contributing to disadvantage and exclusion in Milton Keynes, with 78% also agreeing that some sections of the community are experiencing difficulty in accessing public and community services.
Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Disadvantage and Poverty:

I've seen mothers selling things from their homes, like their children's bicycles, in order to be able to buy food so they don't go hungry. It's got to that point.

I think what's become more apparent in the last couple of years, where you do see people at the train station begging and then camped out under underpasses in the city centre. But that, I would say has become more noticeable in the last two years.

If you haven't got any money, it's much harder to access services. For example, you need all sorts of ID to go in and actually get yourself on the housing list. I have faced this problem. Obviously, if it wasn't for the YMCA I wouldn't have an address that I could use. As a young person, it's the only option I have. I went to the Council and they said - if it wasn't for the YMCA I would be on the streets.

My Nan was in an awful state at the end. She was going through winter without heating, it was freezing. People just assume, 'right, they've got their pension. They can survive on their own.'

Undoubtedly there are people who are struggling. Just the fact that the food bank is so busy is a good indicator. It's great that we've got it but it's a shame that it's needed. It seems to be that the national living wage is going to make a beneficial difference as it works its way through. But of course that doesn't cover young people and so some of them will definitely continue to struggle, particularly if their parents are not in a position to help.
I think there is quite a bit of segregation in terms of wealth here. And there are some areas that quite clearly are of a different demographic, but because the way that the city’s set up, we don’t see it. It’s hidden.

My observation is that if new car registrations are soaring you know, while at the same time so many people struggle to afford a bus ticket, well there’s something wrong isn’t there?

One of the differences about Milton Keynes and the thing that keeps poverty hidden, is also one of the strengths of Milton Keynes. But the bad thing about the grid roads is that in no other city would you have such stark divisions between different estates, you don’t get a kind of bleed between different areas.

My child, she wants to go swimming every day. I’d love to take her swimming every single day, but I just can’t afford to do that. I could go swimming back in my younger days for literally, I don’t know 80p. Do you know what I mean? You can’t do that now. It will cost you a bomb, your child and yourself; it’ll cost you £4 each, and we just haven’t got it.

Well the richer seem to be getting richer. I mean I go to [local professional firm] and the carpark is just full of ridiculous cars: Ferraris, Lamborghini, Porsches. They’re two a penny.

I don’t know what services are available. I think there’s lots of different kinds of help out there, but I think maybe the problem is that some of us, like myself, I’m not very good with like computers and the internet and stuff like that. There needs to be a better way of getting that information across.
Vital Action - For many local children, free school lunches are the only hot meal they receive each day, and a report last year to MPs noted that 62% of parents with household incomes of less than £25,000 aren’t always able to buy the food their families need outside of school term times. Make Lunch MK is a local community group that provides a daily healthy meal during school holidays to local children that might otherwise go hungry.

Vital Thinking - In the four years since the ‘one in five’ figure for MK children living below the poverty line was first reported, the problem remains unimproved, with growing numbers of families experiencing severe financial hardship. This crisis has been made more challenging as a result of the loss of a number of local charities and not-for-profits that were set up to help families in distress. Homestart, Shelter and a wide range of lunch and social clubs have been forced to close locally due to loss of funding. Other charities, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and the MK YMCA have had to endure significant cuts due to shrinking resources. Funding is increasingly difficult to find. How will we protect those supportive charities that have survived?
**Theme 3: DIVERSITY**

The largest minority group in MK schools is Black African, that's **1 in every 10 students**

The net number of international migrants who settled in MK in 2014/15 was **650**

**Nearly 1 out of 5** people surveyed feel that not all people in MK are treated equally

**Theme definition** - Diversity and difference within communities can be either a source of stability and social enrichment or tension and division, depending upon the extent to which people from different backgrounds strive to build a thriving and cohesive community together.

**Overview** - We last covered the theme of Diversity in our 2013 Vital Signs report. At that time, the 2011 census results had been published, offering a treasure-trove of detail on our local demographics and the diversity of our city. Unfortunately, in the past three years, there has been very little new data published for Milton Keynes on this theme. The one regular exception to this is the Milton Keynes School Survey, which provides some insight into the makeup and potential future of our increasingly diverse community. It suggests that we are growing ever more diverse and that the 'White British' demographic, while still a large majority, is shrinking proportionately. Our own survey results indicate that local people are embracing this, and increasingly view our local diversity as an asset to Milton Keynes.
Findings on....

Our Growing Ethnic Diversity

Milton Keynes Student Census recorded that 62% of local students are white and 35% are members of ethnic minorities, the largest grouping of which is Black African, comprising nearly 10% of all pupils in borough. This is an increase of 1% since the 2011 School Census. The estates with the highest proportion of Black African students are Conniburrow and Fishermead, with 33% and 32% respectively. Milton Keynes Student Census, 2013

Here’s a five year breakdown of the ethnicity of pupils in our local schools:

![Graph showing ethnicity breakdown]

Most ethnicities are seeing their numbers and proportions steadily increase over the past five years, except for White British.

The Local Impact of Immigration

MK Council estimates the year 2014/15, Milton Keynes saw 2,150 new international migrants settle here, with an estimated 1,500 leaving the area, for a net international migration of +650. Council Population Bulletin
Your Voices on Diversity

Survey Results

83% of local people surveyed agree that people of different cultural backgrounds get along well in Milton Keynes and 82% view the diversity in Milton Keynes as a ‘strength’.

64% feel that Milton Keynes is doing a ‘good job’ of meeting the needs of our growing migrant communities, while 36% disagree.

83% of local people believe that people are treated equally in their community, regardless of background.

Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Diversity

I live in Bletchley and in and around Bletchley high street, I think you’re more likely to hear a foreign language than you are English. But I don’t mind that at all and the majority of people you meet in shops and services, that just wouldn’t exist without immigrants, but they’re usually extremely polite and helpful.

I do think Milton Keynes celebrates diversity and seeks to be as inclusive to the varied communities that exist as it can.

Milton Keynes is segregated. Every estate has its own little crew.

Too much focus is put on the minorities and this is exploited.

While different cultural groups get on generally well in the high street, when you get into social functions and community activities you don’t normally see a great deal of integration.

I am more aware now of different languages being spoken which I wasn’t before. I’m fascinated how many times, when I’m in the city centre, I walk from one end to the other and only hear Eastern European languages being spoken. So that also indicates that we have a substantial population.

I agree that for leisure activities different nationalities tend to separate into their own groups, mostly. But I’m hoping that the children who are attending school together will become more aware of the different cultures that exist amongst each other and there will be less separation between the different communities. So on the surface I think we mix well and I think people get along quite reasonably.
Vital Action – Citizens:MK is an alliance of diverse community groups that work together to increase understanding and awareness of our various issues and to create a thriving, fairer and more inclusive future for our city. Recently, Citizens:MK launched their ‘Weaving Trust’ campaign in which they encourage groups to host events at which members of the community each engage in eight short conversations with people they don’t know. These events encourage sharing and greater understanding that generate new trust and help to ‘weave’ communities together. Citizens MK aspires this year to have initiated at least 1,000 new conversations in Milton Keynes through the Weaving programme.

Vital Thinking - As a rapidly diversifying city, what can we do to prevent emerging minority and cultural groups from becoming marginalised and left out of mainstream society? How do we best encourage positive integration and cross-cultural community engagement in Milton Keynes?
Theme 4: HEALTH AND WELLBEING

VITAL STATISTICS

Local people surveyed indicated that their biggest problem with attending medical appointments is that they are not available at the times that they need them.

Milton Keynes had 33% fewer births to mothers under 18 than the national average.

On average, Milton Keynes residents rate their anxiety levels at approximately 3 out of 10, this line with the national average rating.

Milton Keynes had 186 hospital admissions for asthma amongst young people during 2014/15, this is 26% higher than the national average.

For under 18 year olds, there were 56% fewer hospital admissions for alcohol-related conditions than the national average.

156 young people between the ages of 10 and 24 were admitted to hospital for self-harm in Milton Keynes during 2014/15; this is 8% fewer than the national average rate.
Theme definition - Feeling ‘healthy’ is important to our sense of vitality and wellbeing. Health includes both physical and mental health as well as healthy lifestyle choices and opportunities. Building a greater awareness and understanding of social conditions, including differences in gender, income, ethnic background, education and early childhood development also help to inform us about the overall wellbeing of our communities.

Overview – The annual Public Health England report on Milton Keynes was published later than expected in 2016, and so was not available in time for the summary version of our 2016 Vital Signs MK report. As it has now been released, we are able to include it in this full version of the report and this is why the content of the two reports on this theme are substantially different. Most indicators are roughly in line with national averages, but there are some intriguing outliers. For example, the trend in childhood obesity is that it is more prevalent here than the national average, that it is moving in the wrong direction in Milton Keynes and is now approaching 1 in every 5 children (in Year 6). The significantly higher rate of hospitalisation of children for asthma in Milton Keynes is another worrying indicator and merits further examination.

Findings On....

Our Changing Health

![Percentage of Year 6 Students (Age 10-11) Who are Clinically Obese](chart)

After a steady decline in the incidence of childhood obesity, the numbers are now heading in the wrong direction, and appear to be picking up the pace on this new and damaging trajectory. At the same rate, next year one out of every five Year 6 students will be clinically obese. *Unless indicated otherwise, all stats in this section come from Public Health England’s ‘Health Profile for Milton Keynes’.*
The life expectancy gap – men from the most deprived parts of Milton Keynes will die, on average, 6.5 years younger than men from the most affluent parts of Milton Keynes. The difference in the life expectancy for women in the most and least deprived areas is 6.3 years.
Health Deprivation – this indicator is a measure of a combination of factors: premature death, impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health, morbidity, disability. It does not measure aspects of behaviour or environment that may impact health. MK scores a -0.07 in health deprivation, compared to a national average of 0.24. Northampton scores 0.25, Luton scores 0.32, Reading is -0.32 and Rugby is -0.45.

*Department for Communities and Local Government, English Indices of Deprivation 2015*
Excess winter deaths are calculated as a ratio. This uses the number of recorded winter deaths minus the number that was expected (based on the number of deaths during non-winter seasons) to come up with a three-year figure of ‘Excess Winter Deaths’.
Our Mental Health

**Sexually Transmitted Infections per 100k Residents**

**Hospital Admissions for Self Harm per 100k Residents**
Our Local Health Service

Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust’s latest *Quality Accounts* report, shows that for the year 2013/14, the hospital cared for 58,757 in-patients and 296,485 outpatients. During the same period, the hospital’s Accident and Emergency attended to 75,333 people. The hospital also delivered 3,831 babies during that year.

The University Hospital Trust reports that one of their top three priorities for improvement is the incidence of pressure ulcers (sometimes referred to as ‘pressure sores’ or ‘bedsores’) amongst patients.

Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group states in their 2015/2016 Annual Report that their local membership is comprised of all of the 27 GP Practices in MK. Their total spend on local health services for 2015/2016 was £289 million.

Milton Keynes CCG reports that over the past year, they have met many of their ‘cancer wait targets’, including the two week wait standard which the CCG met every month as well as the 31-day first treatment target, which was met in Milton Keynes across all four quarters of the year.
Our local ambulance service successfully stayed within their threshold targets for the year, but still experienced 364 ambulance ‘handover delays’ and 40 ‘crew clear delays’ of over one hour.

The Milton Keynes CCG health services budget for 2016/2017 is 6% greater than the previous year’s. The national average growth is 3.7% year on year.

Central Government set a savings target for MK CCG in the past year. They expected MK to make savings to create a budget surplus of £2.88 million (equal to 1% of turnover). However, during the same period, the hospital required £6.7 million more than it had been budgeted, and there were shortfalls in prescribing budgets and nursing home placements. To meet these challenges, the MK CCG had to use its entire contingency reserve. This enabled it to deliver the 1% surplus, and exceed it by £0.01 million.

NHS sets the targets of 95% of patients waiting no more than 4 hours to be seen in hospital A&E. Milton Keynes narrowly missed that target as the annual result was 94%.

**Your Voices on Health and Wellbeing**

*Survey Results*

To the statement ‘Everyone in MK has equal access to health services,’ 35% disagreed and 65% agreed.

59% of local people report that they are happy with the quality and standard of health care provision in Milton Keynes, 41% disagree.

20% of respondents report that they find it difficult to attend doctor or hospital appointments, and 45% disagree with the statement that they ‘usually don’t have to wait too long’ to see a health care professional when they need one.
Do you go for a pint or go out and getting yourself a bag of weed? A pint over the road is £5, I know because I go there for a pint, but if you want a bag of weed you spend a tenner and you get high off your face for several hours. It’s just a no-brainer, isn’t it? What are you going to do? If you want a high in life, you either drink or drugs. Drugs are going to last inevitably longer. So you would probably turn to drugs. That’s why there is such a big issue in Milton Keynes with drugs.

If I build up a rapport with a GP then obviously I want to stay with that GP. You know, it shouldn’t matter where I live; it should be my choice to go to whichever GP I choose. You know. It shouldn’t boil down to a catchment area. Now, obviously if I’m on the streets I’ve got no address, I’ve got no catchment area so then I’m only allowed to use the walk-in centre. The problem is that my mental health meds can only be prescribed by a GP; the walk-in centre can’t do my medication.

I was with ASTI (emergency mental health team) last year and they discharged me because apparently they said I was less depressed and I would be a lot happier on the streets than with them. It was a pretty crap excuse because the week before I was in hospital for self-harm.

Sometimes you drink just to get the day out of the way. Or you think, 'I'm going to take my sleepers to get this one out of the way.'

Community support for mental health issues is difficult to access. And the economically disadvantaged such as the unemployed of low income need much more help.
Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Our Local Health Service

Three years ago I was with CAMS and whenever I made an appointment I got seen that day. Now, well, before I got discharged from ASTI (emergency mental health team) now I’m trying to get back into it I’ve got to wait six months now before I get seen.

For those of us under 60 who do not have transport, how on earth do we get to hospitals outside of MK if we have no-one to take us? MK stopped transport service. It is a disgrace. I literally cry. We can claim back expenses but cannot get there in the first place for procedure at 8am.

I think that at the hospital you get, at our local hospital it’ll be the best care that they can provide with the facilities they have. I think they are very good.

I broke my wrist just before Christmas, you know, they were always bang on it with their appointments, come to this appointment, come to this appointment, you know, and you can’t fault the NHS staff for that. They are understaffed and you’re looking at a hospital that needs several floors adding to it, needs to be increased in its infrastructure and definitely more staff.

I went into the hospital with my mum a few weeks ago and we saw ‘Doctor Number Four’, I’ve never seen that before in my life. A doctor should have a name, they’re professionals, and that was because they’d actually got four doctors down from Glasgow to work here for just the weekend. I was quite disappointed with that because with doctors you want continuity, and in this case there’s not continuity because in three months’ time when I take my mum back again we won’t be able to see Doctor Number Four, whoever they were.

Routine appointments have to be made almost a month in advance, and emergency appointments are extremely hard to get. This is not right.

Personally in my experience, the hospital had made so many mistakes within my family that have happened to them it’s just not good enough. It really isn’t good enough.

The doctor should probably examine me, you know. I’ve only had contact with her over the phone. She assumes that my pain and mobility issues are due to the drink problem I had years ago. ‘Don’t forget to take your vitamins’ she says. But she’s never actually seen me, ever.
Most of the facilities for elderly people get a reduced rate, but increasingly we’re finding it difficult to find accommodation for some sports such as short mat bowls because of the cost of the hall.

I am disabled, and the footpaths in my area have virtually no surface left. We have requested that the paths be resurfaced, but have been told the potholes are not deep enough. I tripped and damaged my right Achilles tendon two years ago, it is still painful. I have tripped and fallen over loose hardcore. Walking on a sharp stone surface with loose stones is painful for me. My mobility scooter had burst its tyres on the rough surface, making it hard for me to return home. I can no longer go out on my own.

I would like to see some community activity to educate people in better food standards. So much food is wasted and people could live within their means and eat nutritious food with some education, so there should be some communal effort to help people learn how to cook. Yeah, back to home cooking [laughs], stop watching the television and do it yourself!

What I regret, what I’m saddened by is the thought that schools don’t seem to push sports as much as I thought they should do. It was unheard of for boys to go to school and not take part in sports. I have a granddaughter whose 12, she doesn’t get pushed into doing anything.

If you don’t have a fixed address or a permanent address you can't have an actual doctor. You have to register as a temporary but then once that happens you don’t get a doctor; all it is, you register at the doctors and it’s only valid for 14 days, which I don’t think is acceptable. Just because someone’s living in a temporary accommodation they should still have the same rights as someone who’s got a permanent address.
Vital Action - Arts for Health MK has opened a new premises in Kingston where they deliver a range of workshops and programmes for people with various health-related challenges, including mental health problems like dementia and depression. By using arts-based creative activities and encouraging positive self-expression the charity is able to work with individuals to improve their health and wellbeing.

Vital Thinking - Why is Milton Keynes performing so much better than the national average when it comes to teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections? There is some anecdotal evidence that the close partnership between youth sexual health charity Brook East and local schools has paid dividends in supporting our local young people to be better informed and to take appropriate measures to protect themselves. If this is the case, how can this success be replicated elsewhere?

Another issue that we had hoped to focus on this year is mental health, as we have been hearing that there are worrying trends emerging in that field. We were unable, however, to locate any significant recent data on mental health in Milton Keynes (apart from self-harm and suicide rates from Public Health England). We intend to redouble our efforts to deliver more substantive reporting on this issue in the next Vital Signs report.

Physical inactivity is one of the leading causes of death for people living in ‘developed’ countries. People in Milton Keynes share similar lifestyle indicators with their counterparts around the country, but Public Health England estimates that adults in MK are less physically active, more overweight and more likely to be obese than the national averages. What is it about living in Milton Keynes that can explain these worrying trends?
Theme 5: CRIME AND SAFETY

Theme definition - Building a strong sense of safety and security is central to our success in creating strong and vibrant communities. How safe we feel in our community can affect our overall quality of life. A sense of safety and security can be influenced by many different factors. These can include our general sense of connection to our community and our belief that we can rely on others in an emergency.

Overview - After a sharp increase in crime rates from 2012 to 2013, they have remained steady at the new, higher rate in Milton Keynes. With regard to our community consultations, there was a noticeable disconnect between the survey results and the comments made at the focus groups. The survey showed a large majority (84%) reporting that they feel MK is a safe place to live and more than half reporting that MK receives adequate support from law enforcement. In the focus groups, however, a different picture emerged, in which many criticisms of policing dominated the conversations. Those
criticisms were predominantly focused on the capacity and availability of police, rather than any suggestion of a problem with the quality of the policing that is provided in their communities.

Findings On....

Crime Rates in Milton Keynes

*(All stats from Thames Valley Police Reporting)*

Between April 2014 and March 2015, the total number of crimes (excluding fraud) recorded in MK was 18,711, an increase of 3.3% from the year previous.

In 2015 there were 71 crimes reported for every 1000 residents

Between 2010 and 2015, the total number of crimes annually reported in MK increased by 25%

The number of rapes recorded in MK over the past three years (2013/14 to 2015/16) have increased from 95 to 156 to 212, an increase of 123%

Racially or religiously aggravated crime recorded in MK over the years 2013/14 to 2015/16 increased from 50 to 129 to 146, an increase of 192%.

In 2015/16 there were 1,509 recorded offences of domestic abuse rising to the criminal level. This was an increase of 14.6% on the year previous. (2,210 Instances of ‘non crime’ domestic abuse were also recorded.)

Last year there was only one recorded homicide in Milton Keynes. In the year previous (2014/15) there were no recorded homicides.

In 2015/16 there were 14 recorded incidents of homophobic, or anti-LGB-related crime. This was an increase of 133% on the year before.

Non-rape sexual offences have reduced 9.8% on the previous year, but total recorded sexual offences in MK increased 59% in the past three years, from 343 in 2013/14 to 545 during 2015/16.

Non-Violent Crime

The 22 instances of robbery of business property last year was a drop of 40.5% on the previous year.

There were 555 dwelling burglaries last year, a reduction of 1.9% on the previous year.

Drug offence rates in MK fell 44% between Mar 2013 and Mar 2016

Vehicle crime was up 12.4% last year on the previous, including an 11% increase on both theft of vehicles and theft from vehicles.
Bicycle theft was down 2.3% last year, and the 2,770 recorded instances of shoplifting was a 4.3% reduction on the year previous.

Your Voices on Crime and Safety

Survey Results

84% of local people feel that Milton Keynes is a safe place to live, but 40% also report that they do not feel safe walking alone at night in their community.

57% agree that their community receives ‘adequate support from law enforcement.’ 43% disagree.

35% of local people surveyed feel that Milton Keynes has high levels of crime, 64% disagree.

43% of local people surveyed report that their community has an active safety group, like a Neighbourhood Watch.

Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Crime and Safety

I definitely do not feel safe walking in the evening like, sometimes in the day, just under the underpasses because it feels like every week you hear about someone being attacked. They’re not well lit, they’re quite murky and there’s often like, broken glass on them then, I don’t know, I just never feel safe walking underneath them.

With myself being female it’s difficult of a night-time because you’re more likely to be followed by gents, which I have in the past, just walking from the bus stop in the city centre and walking back here has been an issue for me quite a few times.

“I keep reading about people being mugged, raped, stabbed and burgled, so crime is an area that could be improved”

Maybe the redways need more lighting and more of the bushes cut back and stuff, so that they don’t seem as scary and as frightening and the young children that come from school and college would be more confident about using them.”

Going out at night, I have not met one lady who’s happy about going out in underpasses on the redways.
Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Policing

“I walk around central areas of Milton Keynes in the middle of the day and there’s stuff going on that shouldn’t be going on quite blatantly in front of people. I’ve been in an incident where someone was hiding round the side of the bridge with a brick in their hand quite clearly waiting for somebody, this was in the middle of the day. I called the Police, they said they didn’t have anybody available. After a few incidents like that where you do call the Police and they aren’t willing to help, you just stop calling the Police.”

“Yobs are out of control in certain areas and the police won’t attend when what they call "small" ASB (anti-social behaviour) is reported.”

“To be honest, you don’t actually see that many community support officers walking around Milton Keynes. You see the odd two every now and again that walk up and back down to the police station, but that’s it.”

“The council say ‘go to the police’. And then sometimes we go to the police and the police say ‘well, it’s a civil matter so you need to deal with it yourself’ and then it’s like well, I’ve come to you because this is an issue that’s being going on so long; you should be able to help.”
**Vital Action** - MK Act offers a ‘First Steps to Freedom’ programme for women subjected to domestic violence and abuse. It aims to offer support and information to help these women to understand the full impact of domestic abuse on them and their children, as well as putting them in touch with the agencies and services that can help them to move on with their lives.

**Vital Thinking** - Vital Signs often highlights a disconnect between crime rates, as measured by the police, and people’s perceptions of them. In our 2013 report, community surveys showed approximately 66% of local residents felt Milton Keynes was a safe place to live. Since then, there has been a 25% increase in reported crimes in MK, but the new Vital Signs survey reveals that now even more local people, 84%, believe that Milton Keynes is a safe place. How much of our local crime problem is hidden from public view and absent from public discussions?
Theme 6: HOUSING

**Theme definition** - Access to affordable, good quality housing plays an important role in contributing to vibrant communities as well as in providing families and individuals with a sense of security and stability. A diversity of housing types can also contribute to the social diversity and vitality of a community and can help to ensure that everyone has a place to call home.

**Overview** – Homelessness is growing at an alarming rate and outstripping the capacity of our public housing stock. Between families being housed in B&B’s and people sleeping rough, the numbers have more than doubled over the last three years. While still lower than many of our regional neighbours, housing prices for sale in Milton Keynes continue to exceed the ability of many local families and households to afford them. The average house price is now more than nine times the average annual income in Milton Keynes. Houses of multiple occupancy are increasingly common options for many low and middle income residents of Milton Keynes as home ownership drifts further and further out of reach.
Findings On....

Homelessness in Milton Keynes

Figures for homelessness per 1,000 residents of MK were released in April of 2016. They showed that the rate is 2.6, compared to 1 in Bedford, 1.3 in Northampton and 0.97 nationally. *Adapted from ONS Data for Department for Communities and Local Government*

The total number of households accepted as ‘homeless’ by MK Council for the year ending 31/03/15 was 672. For comparison, Bedford had 164, Luton had 439, Northampton had 290 and Oxford had 114. *Adapted from ONS Data for Department for Communities and Local Government*

Safer MK reports that as of January 2016 there were 27 confirmed rough sleepers in the city, with another 31 reported but unconfirmed; this is a 237% increase on 2013 when there were 8 confirmed rough sleepers in MK.

Numbers of families being housed in B&Bs for a period longer than 6 weeks by the MK local authority (from *Statutory Homelessness Live Tables, Department for Communities and Local Government, 26 March 2016*):

![Graph showing number of households in B&Bs](image)

Number of households who are accepted as ‘homeless’ who were staying in B&Bs as at 31/03/2015 = 61. There were 20 in Northampton and 7 in Luton during the same period. *Department for Communities and Local Government, National Statistics Website*

The number of households in MK accepted as homeless that were housed in temporary accommodation while they wait for social housing to become available, as of 31/03/2015, was 146. This compares to 61 in Bedford, 862 in Luton and 67 in Northampton. *Department for Communities and Local Government, National Statistics Website*
House Prices in Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes is ninth in the nation in the rise of house prices. The annual growth in average house prices locally between 2014 and 2015 was 7.6%. The national average growth was 3.4%. Centre for Cities Outlook 2016

The average house price in Milton Keynes from July to September 2015 was £274,877

The average increase in house prices in Milton Keynes from 2005 to 2015 was 52%

New Housing in Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes is third in the nation in the growth of our housing stock. Between 2013 and 2014, the stock increased 1.2%, behind only Telford (1.2%) and Cambridge (2.6%). The national average was 0.6%. Centre for Cities Outlook 2016


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Total Milton Keynes Housing Stock

MK Council Population Bulletin 2015/16

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*Note numbers are rounded to the nearest 10, so components may not sum to the totals

The table above indicates that over the next five years, the total number of dwellings in the borough of Milton Keynes will increase by more than 11% and between the years 2016 and 2026, the number of total dwellings will increase by nearly a fifth (18.33%). Council Population Bulletin

The most common type of household in Milton Keynes is a couple with no children (11.7%), followed by households with a single child, single female households, households with two children and single male households. Households with three or more children are among the least common (6.4%). Council Population Bulletin
Your Voices on Housing

Survey Results

77% of local people surveyed disagree with the statement that houses for sale in MK are ‘reasonably priced.’

80% of local residents feel that there is an insufficient supply of low income housing available in Milton Keynes.

42% of local people believe that housing for people on low incomes is of ‘good’ quality. 58% disagreed.

81% of local people feel that private rented housing in MK is not affordable for most people.

90% feel that Milton Keynes has a problem with homelessness.

Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Homelessness

You definitely see more homeless people around, that's an obvious change, you know. I've lived near or in Milton Keynes since I was really little, and I've never seen so many rough sleepers as I have done in the last couple of years. It's getting really stark, yeah?

I suspect the increase in homelessness is due to the way we are structured here. You've got underpasses where you can do that [laughter]. We're attracting them probably; they're probably imports rather than locally deprived people in my view.

Actually the fact that we're attracting more vagrants, more people on the streets, is a sign of prosperity and that means that the town or the city is growing.

All the buildings like the old Sainsbury's, the old Waitrose, all those city centre buildings are being totally wasted. Why can't they at least use them to create safe accommodation for the homeless?

If you are an unemployed homeless person under 35, you're only entitled to £69 per week of housing benefit. Five years ago we had a list of about a dozen local landlords in MK that were prepared to accept that level of benefit in exchange for providing these young people with housing. Since then, it's become such a sellers' market that every single one of those landlords has dropped off the list. Now there is no one left who is prepared to take them as tenants.
There are way too many houses in multiple occupancy, especially in some of the older areas. This is leading to a transient population so there is no chance of building up a cohesive community that is proud of itself and cares enough to take care of the local environment.

Too many houses bought with 'right to buy' are now in the hands of unscrupulous private landlords.

I grew up on Fishermead and I knew everyone on the street and opposite the street as well. Like everyone had families you know, and children and we all used to play out together and stuff. It’s totally changed now. The whole street apart from two houses is now owned by one person, who has made each of the rooms into a flat or a bedsit so there’s like, 13 people in each house. Too many people, a lot don’t speak English and now nobody says hello to each other. It’s taken away the feeling of community we had here.

I would like to see the council having more control and regulations on HMO properties as they are not aware of all the houses that are HMO. It wasn’t until I complained about noise levels in the house next door to me they became aware it was an HMO and it had been an HMO for years.

I have lived in the same house for 34 years. It was a lovely place to bring up children, we had a strong sense of community here, but now feel I need to move away as over fifty per cent of the houses are now HMOs (houses of multiple occupancy) which creates more noise, rubbish problems, parking problems and no sense of community anymore. A high proportion of these tenants don’t stay long and have no wish to try and integrate with the locals. I feel increasingly isolated and vulnerable.
For a young adult looking to move out of their parents’ house the average wage is not enough to afford housing within Milton Keynes and there is very little support for those in full time employment but still struggling financially to afford housing. The support only applies to young adults out of work or on benefits. Those actively contributing to the economy receive next to no support with housing.

And rents are not cheap by any means but then it’s a vicious circle, younger people can’t afford to raise the deposit to get their foot on the ladder. And they spend longer and longer in rented properties, it’s a downward spiral, no doubt about it.

Housing prices are through the roof and there is not enough good quality help for people on low incomes to help them move into affordable accommodation.

There’s a lot of people that have bought houses, renting them out and using that as a profit making scheme because the rent is a lot higher that way. I own my home and I know so many people that pay more in private rent than what I pay on my mortgage.

We need to provide appropriate housing for young people who have just left care or prison. I have seen some young people being housed in Serpentine Court with no knowledge of budgeting or personal care. This leaves them open to others taking advantage and has led to them losing these homes and either going straight back into prison or ending up on the streets. Serpentine Court has many problems and housing young people here is not the answer. They cause problems for the young families living there. Specialist housing should be provided with an agreement that they attend education or work until they are able to stand on their own feet.
And the other thing I’ve seen is that on the estates where there’s mixed housing, which is the recipe for including lower income housing in each new development, you know, which has to happen now. It’s supposed to be mandatory and I think it’s about ten percent or something, that has to be mixed housing. The reality is, though, that the smaller houses get edged out in the end, they don’t all get built. And the developers are just allowed to get away with it.

Milton Keynes needs to slow down the process of turning all green spaces into urban, packed, concrete jungle housing estates with little or no added infrastructure in addition into just packing people in like sardines.

I think it’s all over the country but the plan is I’ve read in the paper that they’re going to be pulling down some of the council estates and rebuilding them higher and more in an area, so sort of creating these dense, multi-occupancy houses. And I think that they’re going to need to be careful in years to come because again the idea was Milton Keynes was open spaces, nice houses, nice gardens, but if they’re going to pull down a street where there was ten houses and they’re going to build up 20 houses, got to be really careful 50 years down the line, probably not even that long, what they’re creating. They are planning to create the ghettos of the future.
**Vital Action** - Open Door MK is a local charity set up in 1987 to provide support, advice and referrals to the homeless and vulnerably housed. Through their drop in sessions and help into settled accommodation, Open Door provides a critical lifeline to some of our city’s most vulnerable residents.

**Vital Thinking** - Houses in multiple occupation (HIMOs) where several separate tenants will rent out individual rooms in the same house / flat are now a common feature of MK housing stock. Is this an acceptable solution to the lack of low cost housing in Milton Keynes? What strategies can be put into place to offer robust long term solutions to the growing problem of homelessness and the lack of sufficient affordable housing in our city?
Theme 7: ART AND HERITAGE

Arts and heritage events in Milton Keynes recorded in 2014/15 by the Arts and Heritage Alliance MK

3,182 events

140,000 people attended free events at the 2014 International Festival in MK

£7.4 million economic impact on Milton Keynes from the 2014 International Festival in MK

30,000 visitors

MK Museum reported nearly 30k visitors for the year ending March 2015, a 28% increase on their visitors in 2013; with their new expansion plans, they seek to more than treble their visitor numbers in future

Local people surveyed agree that Milton Keynes offers good opportunities for those seeking to explore local heritage

82%

87,212 attended 2015 Rugby World Cup matches at Stadium MK

220 works of Public Art on display across Milton Keynes
**Theme definition** - The contribution of arts and heritage to our learning, our expressions of self, our moments of relaxation, our explorations of the world around us and our sense of place make them vital to the flourishing of any community. Activities that promote these can play an important role in creating greater understanding, fostering diversity and enhancing the richness of community life.

**Overview** – Unfortunately, not a great deal of resource is dedicated to measuring and monitoring the activity / impact of the arts and heritage sectors in Milton Keynes, so new data is difficult to find. One exception to this is the annual survey carried out by our local Arts and Heritage Alliance, an affiliation and forum of 33 prominent art and heritage organisations operating in the city. While the loss of public funding is hitting many small local arts and heritage organisations very hard, the series of events and festivals held here are attracting large and growing audiences.

**Findings On....**

**Engagement With Arts and Heritage Events and Activities**

3,182 Arts and heritage events in Milton Keynes were recorded in 2014/15 by the Arts and Heritage Alliance MK.

MK Museum reported nearly 30k visitors for the year ending March 2015, a 28% increase on their visitors in 2013; with their new expansion plans, they seek to more than treble their visitor numbers in future.

In 2016, the Milton Keynes Heritage Open Days featured 70 events showcasing the wide variety of heritage-related venues and activities across Milton Keynes.

There are currently 220 works of public art on display across Milton Keynes.

87,212 Attended 2015 Rugby World Cup matches at Stadium MK.

**IF the International Festival**

140,000 People attended the free events offered at the 2014 International Festival in Milton Keynes.

The economic impact on Milton Keynes from the 2014 International Festival in MK was reported at £7.4 million.

The 2016 IF Festival brought over 300 artists to Milton Keynes from countries around the world.

Art installations in the centre:mk for the 2016 IF Festival attracted over 500,000 people.
Your Voices

Survey Results

81% of local residents feel that Milton Keynes has sufficient sports and leisure facilities, but 38% believe that we do not have enough libraries.

93% agree that the plays, concerts and other arts events that take place in Milton Keynes are ‘generally of high quality.’

63% of local residents surveyed feel that MK does not offer enough arts and cultural performances through the year.

44% report that they do not attend as many arts / cultural / sporting events as they would like to, because they cannot afford to.

82% agree that Milton Keynes offers ‘good opportunities’ for local people to explore their local heritage.

Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Engagement with the Arts

The best loved local works of art in MK, the concrete cows, the dinosaurs on Peartree Bridge, these were the product of community arts.

The arts can be, should be, a conduit to a healthy community. We know that communities thrive more when their members are engaged with the arts.

Providing ‘community performances’ with cheaper prices would enable those on lower incomes to access some elements of arts and culture that are currently out of reach for many.

There’s a danger if you try to pack too many services in, that you detract from the principle role of the libraries – a safe place for people to engage with literature and other people.

There are a lot of arts and cultural events and activities that have come under threat from loss of funding.
I think we’re really well blessed. The theatre is excellent as a commercial theatre. We’ve got the Stables which is also excellent and all these places like Stantonbury where amateur companies have got space, and the venue at Walton High is also an excellent concert venue. So we’re very well provided I think, and the prices are reasonable.

What we’re lacking in the city centre is a dive, a nightclub or music venue with sticky floors. Because we’re such a corporate city there’s a real lack of diversity in the range of options available for people to experience live music, and for emerging performers to develop their craft in Milton Keynes.

Regarding the arts, it’s a shame that the main theatre only puts on the most mainstream of productions. We need to have a more diverse offering for a more vibrant arts sector.

The only thing that I’ve noticed Milton Keynes is behind on is probably the arts in regards to education and courses. They’ve only just started doing a dance diploma a few years ago and it’s okay, but where you go after that, it is a lot further afield. So I think we are a bit behind on that considering how much you know the community support the arts and all that.

Milton Keynes waited a long time for a theatre, but in recent years it has become more nakedly commercial and I find myself going less and less.

People should be encouraged to look beyond the immediate short term. When the ‘Circle of Light’ copper sculpture was commissioned for the centre:mk at great expense, there was public outcry, but thirty-five years later, there’s another public outcry when it was taken down.
**Vital Action** - MK Museum provides an immersive, hands-on experience, allowing visitors to surround themselves with fascinating historical artefacts in accurate historical settings. This has proven especially popular with local schools, many of whom send groups of students to visit the Museum together. This year, the Museum piloted a new project in which students were invited to the Museum to film themselves with objects of meaning to them. The students were given training on how to make a short film and then given time to explore the exhibits and objects on display to select one that had a special relevance or connection to their own lives and history.

**Vital Thinking** – With more and more emphasis placed on funding large arts events and less and less on funding small and community arts and heritage, what impact will this have on the ability of local people to engage with the arts in their own communities? How can local arts and heritage organisations ensure that they are engaging with diverse audiences in Milton Keynes? This requires a solid understanding of both the interests of diverse communities as well as the range of potential barriers to their participation. It also should include a significant effort to involve a diverse array of artists, performers and other creative people to create the opportunities for engagement.
Theme definition - The environment refers to the natural or built environment of our community, including its design and architecture, agricultural activities, green spaces, and waterways. It also includes the extent to which the air is clean from pollution, how well we engage in recycling and ‘going green’, and how well-maintained we feel our public spaces are.
Overview - Air and water pollution readings across Milton Keynes are generally consistent and well within safety limits. Local people appreciate both the natural and landscaped local environment, but many report that their own neighbourhoods are showing signs of age and neglect.

Findings On....

Our Local Environment

We have had a 23% reduction in Nitrogen Dioxide pollution found in the air of Central Milton Keynes between 2002 and 2014

40% of the MK Borough is classed as ‘green space’ MK Council Equality Audit 2013 v5

Most of Milton Keynes is rural, with only about one third of it comprising the ‘new city’

New Innovations and Strategy

Milton Keynes is in year four of a five year, first-in-the-nation pilot of a fleet of electric buses. Each year, these eight buses transport 775,000 passengers over a total of 450,000 miles, saving 500 tonnes of tailpipe CO2 emissions and 45 tonnes of other tailpipe emissions. Future cities report

MK Council report that nearly 10% of the rubbish put in black bags in MK is recyclable

After the opening of the new Milton Keynes Waste Recovery Park in September 2016, it is estimated that only 5% of household waste from Milton Keynes will go to landfill

If 2% of local people who currently commute to work by car switched to walking or cycling, we would cut 375,000 car journeys per year and reduce our local CO2 emissions

Your Voices

Survey Results

93% of local people surveyed agree that Milton Keynes has ‘enough parks, green spaces and waterways for local residents to enjoy.’

47% local residents agree that their neighbourhood is ‘starting to look rundown and untidy.’

93% report that they recycle regularly.

41% agree that pollution is not a problem in Milton Keynes. 59% disagree.
Vital Signs MK Focus Groups Praise our Local Environment

We have a number of ancient forests within the town boundaries, so it’s a great environment, it promotes walking, it promotes a healthy approach to life, so it’s great to come into Milton Keynes for many visitors.

I know that few other towns in the country would love to re-design themselves to be more like Milton Keynes, but we are lucky that this is here. And we are lucky to be the inhabitants of this place, so I love it.

I have a hedge at the front of my garden and it’s used as a tip by lots of the younger people walking away from the shops, going home. Every week I have to rescue cans, bags, whatever, it’s just there. There’s a bin between the shop and my hedge, my hedge is what, 30 feet long, and 6 feet high but it’s a repository for everything.

I really appreciate the greenery, the lovely walks, the lakes. I think generally it’s very good, I hope we manage to keep it clean.

Milton Keynes makes use of its spaces and places spectacularly well.

Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on the Built Environment

Milton Keynes has a low building density which means that the penalty for green spaces that, it’s sprawling a bit, which means that if you want to go out in the evening, life gets very difficult unless you’ve got your own transport which equals a car because you’re not safe otherwise.

There is a mixture of quite poor housing within some estates as well, they were poor when they were built and obviously over a period of time, they’re even worse you know, and when you’re living there, you just don’t have a passion for where you live, you know, you just feel like why bother, nobody else does and that’s quite, you know, quite a problem in these estates, and that then feeds down to the kids.
Vital Action - In 2003, local volunteers from the surrounding community mobilized to revitalize a derelict allotment site in the centre of Wolverton that had become a common site of fly tipping. The Wolverton Community Orchard group transformed a dangerous eye sore into an active and peaceful oasis in the heart of Wolverton. Now, the Community Orchard hosts school allotments, a wildlife pond and bog garden, sculptures and fifty different varieties of fruit trees.

One of the things I find most annoying is that the contractors just seem to drive their vehicles over the redways, over the paths and onto the grass verges. They wreck the paths because of the weight they carry, the paths cannot take the weight of these vehicles, and they park them anywhere they like. It digs up all the grass verges, especially in the winter and it’s absolutely terrible. The barriers that they put up are left there for months before they are cleared away which encourages rubbish being dumped. So you’ll find rubbish collects all over these places.

Vital Thinking - Are the new expansion areas to the east and west of the city being designed in a way that is sympathetic to the established Milton Keynes ‘style’, with ample green spaces and innovative landscape design?

If 2% of local people who currently commute to work by car switched to walking or cycling, we would cut 375,000 car journeys per year and reduce our local CO2 emissions.
Theme 9: ECONOMY

Local people surveyed reported that they have recently had to cut their household spending. The proportion of local companies that are in the Information and Technology sectors (compared to 34% nationally) is 46%.

Productivity per worker in MK is 18% greater than the national average, putting us fourth in the nation for Gross Value Added per worker. MK is the third most successful city in the country for the creation of new startup businesses (per capita).

Milton Keynes local economy as a whole is 25% more productive than the national average.

Average weekly income in MK is £577, the 10th highest in the nation. The median weekly income in MK is £419, which is exactly the same as the national median wage. (This big difference – 27% - between the local mean and median demonstrates how our very high wage earners are dramatically dragging up the local average.)

Theme definition - Prosperity and opportunities to grow businesses contribute greatly to the vitality and vibrancy of an area. As one of the most recession-proof local economies in the nation, Milton Keynes has proven itself to be a natural home to creative enterprise and innovative business practice with both new and well-established companies. Measures of any local economy include productivity, presence of diverse industries, and opportunities for enterprise and innovation.
Overview - The MK local economy continues to be a ‘tale of two cities’ with some strong and thriving sectors providing substantial uplift and growth while others struggle. The striking discrepancy between our local mean income and local median income also suggests an unusually high concentration of wealth at the upper end of the wealth spectrum.

Findings On....

Our Continued Growth and Success

Our Business and Enterprise Score is calculated on three factors: new business formation rate, the change in registered business stock and new business survival rates. Milton Keynes has an enterprise score of 126.25, compared to the national average of 100.00 and the South East regional average of 101.46.

Milton Keynes has become the third most successful city in the country for the creation of new start-up businesses, with 75.4 per 10,000 population. Northampton was in second place with 80.6 and London was in first with 100.1. Centre for Cities Outlook 2016

We are productive. The GVA (Gross Value Added) per worker in MK is 18% greater than the national average and puts us fourth in the nation, behind Slough, Reading and London. Centre for Cities Outlook 2016

Our Productivity Score is calculated based on average gross weekly earnings and GVA per head. Milton Keynes Productivity Score is 124.87, compared to the national average score of 100.00 and the South East regional average of 116.82.

Milton Keynes has the fourth highest number of businesses per capita, with 413 per 10,000 population. This puts us behind only Brighton (431), Reading (441) and London (519). Centre for Cities Outlook 2016

Milton Keynes was 9th in the nation for the number of patents registered per 100,000 population (8.5). Centre for Cities Outlook 2016

MK is 3rd in the country for ratio of private to public sector jobs with 4 private sector jobs for every one public sector job. The only cities ranked higher were Slough (5:1) and Crawley (7.5:1). The national average is 2.8:1. Centre for Cities Outlook 2016
The numbers of new businesses registering for VAT per 10,000 residents in Milton Keynes continues to increase dramatically:

Wages in Milton Keynes are relatively high, placing 10th highest in the nation, with an average weekly wage of £577. The highest is London with £675 per week and the lowest was Huddersfield with £399 per week. *Centre for Cities Outlook 2016*

Business Closure Rate – The percentage of businesses that have de-registered for VAT in the previous year (10.08%) continues to improve, but is still greater than the national average closure rate of 9.72%. *Business Demography, ONS*
Our Unusual Balance of Business Sectors

What percentages of local businesses are retail enterprises?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Name</th>
<th>Enterprise: retail (2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury Vale</td>
<td>5.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>7.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>11.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luton</td>
<td>9.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes</td>
<td>5.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>6.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>8.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>6.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>5.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>5.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>7.83%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart shows the percentages of local businesses that fall within the Information / Communication, Professional, Scientific / Technical, Business Admin and Support Service Sectors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Name</th>
<th>K Int Bus (%) (2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury Vale</td>
<td>38.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>33.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>31.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luton</td>
<td>32.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes</td>
<td>45.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>29.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>41.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>51.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>32.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>42.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>34.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Economic Inactivity – This term is used to describe people of working age who are not in employment and have not sought employment in the past four weeks and/or are unable to start work in the next two weeks. This chart shows the proportion of local people of working age who economically inactive:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Name</th>
<th>Economically inactive (Jan- Dec 2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury Vale</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luton</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your Voices

Survey Results

81% of local people surveyed believe that new businesses have a ‘good chance’ of surviving in Milton Keynes.

73% report that shops and businesses in their community are doing well.

84% feel that MK is recovering well from the recent economic downturn, but 57% also tell us that they have had to recently cut their household spending.
I think it’s quite easy to do business here. You don’t have to have been to a college or school or something like that in terms of being accepted, so I think in that respect it’s not difficult to break into it.

I’d say we’re more prosperous than five years ago. In fact, I’ve been out to see some dealerships and the cars are definitely flying off the shelves and also historically where people would be driving a certain level of car it seems more the norm to have a different sort of car now.

We obviously had Network Rail came in, a big employer in the city centre, but since the recession, the roads seemed to get quieter and stuff, suggesting there were less people in work, but I think certainly in the last two to three years it seems as busy as it ever was, so I think that suggests doing well and starting to see new professional firms opening up in Milton Keynes which for a while that didn’t happen, weren’t prepared to make that investment. So I suspect it’s stronger now than it was five years ago, but I don’t have the evidence for that.

I think as far as shopping is concerned, living outside of Milton Keynes we’ve got the option of going to London or coming here or, say, Birmingham. Milton Keynes is really easy to get to. And you can pretty much park up and have everything you need on foot. So yes, very convenient, shopping-wise.

We do seem to attract larger businesses. If you look at the shopping centre, it’s considered to be very pricey. We don’t seem to have local high streets as some big cities do, so I imagine for the smaller businesses they might be priced out a little bit in terms of that.

I think the employment situation is interesting, lots of customers we talk to are struggling to recruit due to low local unemployment and so a lot of our companies are using people that are new to the country, if you like. And it’s working well for them.

With a young, dynamic population, it’s almost as if you can’t survive in Milton Keynes, you won’t survive anywhere really. It’s got a lot of opportunity.
Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Economic Challenges in MK

We haven’t got a great Chamber of Commerce in the area. That’s Number One. We are sort of on the tailcoat of Northampton and it doesn’t feel, rightly or wrongly, it doesn’t feel like it belongs to Milton Keynes. And so there isn’t really a hub for businesses to see as a central place they’d go to. In any other town we’d have a strong chamber.

I think the absence of a university can have an negative impact on the local economy as well, because we haven’t got people that are actually on the patch benefitting from the creative ideas coming out of it. If you think about Cambridge and Oxford, I know that’s at the other end of the spectrum, but those spin-outs, university spin-outs, you just won’t get any of that here.

Local employers are not flexible enough for single parents.

We all had cable television originally didn’t we, and at the time Milton Keynes seemed to be at the cutting edge, ahead of the game with all of that and then that’s all disappeared. In other towns obviously got people have got access to services like Virgin Interactive and that, but not in Milton Keynes. I’m not sure whether that’s a viable option or not but certainly the infrastructure in terms of technology is very lacking, and that’s not very good for businesses coming here in our rationale.

A classic example of the lack of local economic leadership is the old Sainsburys which has been empty for three years now and nothing seems to have been done there. Something could have been done to that place. If we’re not careful the whole place will look very, very bad.
**Vital Action** - MK Christian Foundation has developed a range of social enterprises that work with vulnerable young people to improve their skills, confidence and life chances. These programmes include the Growing People horticulture project, Childcare Pathways creche and activity/support programme for young children and their parents, Think Food catering and Cycle Saviours refurbishing and repair programme. Most of the young participants have no qualifications and almost half have additional learning needs. 70% of them go on to further education and employment after participating in these important social enterprises.

**Vital Thinking** - Our local economy continues to grow, but more than half of local households report that they are currently reducing their monthly spending. This demonstrates how the growth and success are largely focused on our thriving information, technical and business support sectors. At the same time, large numbers of people employed in the service, public and community sectors fall outside the portion of our city that is benefitting from the improvements to the local economy.
Theme 10: TRANSPORT

Theme definition - Robust and sufficient transport infrastructure is critically important to the functioning of any economy, and the availability and accessibility of transportation greatly impacts the range of goods and services that the public can access. By ensuring an effective and affordable public transportation system is available, a community can provide the means for low-income residents to fully engage with the services, employment, education and other opportunities they need.

Overview - Milton Keynes unique transportation infrastructure continues to feature innovative experimentation, including wirelessly charged electric buses, driverless pods, cycle hire schemes and the planned Redway Super Routes. The cost and inconvenience of public transportation, however, is proving too much for many local vulnerable and disadvantaged people.
Findings On....

Our Transport Infrastructure

At the current rates of growth of the numbers commuting by car in MK, it is projected that there will be a 57% increase in journeys by car at peak travel times by 2031.

The capacity of our current grid road network’s junctions / roundabouts can only be increased by 25% at peak times, and this will require junction improvement measures.

Milton Keynes offers over 200 miles of ‘Redway’ cycling and walking routes across the new city.

Public Transportation

There were 10.4 million bus passenger journeys in Milton Keynes in 2015/16; this is an increase of 10% on the number of passengers in 2012/13.

Commuting By Car

Most local workers commute to work by car – estimates vary from 62% to 77%.

It’s estimated that one in five MK residents do not have access to a private car, with approximately 50% of the working age residents not having access to a car for at least part of the day. MK Council JSNA 2014/15

Residents of estates featuring higher levels of deprivation are also significantly less likely to have access to a car, with some estates reporting as many as 66% of their residents having no access to a car.

Milton Keynes ‘Social Inclusion Unit’ has reported that 31% of local people without a car have difficulty travelling to the hospital.

Transport Innovations

The new Santander cycle hire scheme has 500 bikes available from 50 different locations across MK.

13 Cross-city ‘Redway Super Routes’ are planned to enhance and improve redways linking popular and high-traffic destinations across MK, this will comprise 100km of the existing redway network.

The local CARSHARE scheme continues to grow, according to the Transport Vision and Strategy for Milton Keynes Local Transport Plan (2011 to 2031), membership has more than doubled since their last report to over 3,000 registered members.

Milton Keynes is one of the first three cities in the country to be made part of the government’s £30 million ‘Plugged In Places’ scheme.
Your Voices on Transport in Milton Keynes

Survey Results

69% of local people agree that transport by bus in MK is too expensive.

74% of local residents surveyed feel that the roads in Milton Keynes are poorly maintained.

51% agree that public transport in MK runs reliably and on time.

71% feel that Milton Keynes lacks good quality public transportation options for those who want to travel without a car.

58% do not believe that bus routes in Milton Keynes are conveniently located.

Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Parking in MK:

All the new estates in MK are being designed with tiny roads and zero parking.

I would say that parking actually has become the top problem in Milton Keynes. If you have to get the kids to school, you’re restricted on how early you can leave and by the time you get to the city centre you’re driving around and around trying to find a space. I know they’ve made some concessions with them, some space is available after 9:15 but I don’t know how they’re working. I think it is a problem.

Transport and parking is becoming an issue for local economic growth. And that’s going to continue to impact on growth and the rest of it.

My take on the parking problem is, make it better for local residents to commute by public transport and let the people from outside MK come in and use the parking spaces. We want your business!

The parking charges in central Milton Keynes are pretty awful and to be perfectly honest I never go there unless I really have to.

There’s not enough standard parking and the premium parking is always empty because nobody wants to pay that amount of money for it. You’d need to make more standard parking areas purely, because even if you get here after half eight you’re struggling to find somewhere to park in a standard parking, and that’s what your permit is used for, you can’t use it in the premium.
Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Public Transportation

As far as the bus service is concerned, where I live, is quite good and I can’t really complain but the bus doesn’t go to, for instance, the GP surgery. I can’t get there very easily because the bus doesn’t go down there, so the surgery is in a place which is off a main bus route. If you were feeling ill, you couldn’t do it.

You’d think that with the grid roads it would be really cheap to run a really effective public transport system that included buses that just ran up and down all the grid roads. Nobody lives that far from a grid road, you’d think that you would be able to walk there quite easily and that that would be something that would be cheap, fast and easy to run and that would be great for loads of people.

The main issue is most of the bus services go around different estates so it takes you a lot longer to get to the city centre. Whereas my walk would be ten minutes, my bus trip would be about forty minutes.

I don’t use buses because they don’t get me where I want to go, I rely on my car, purely because when I start work in the morning, no buses run, and I’d probably have to get three buses each way to get to work and back again, there’s no direct bus.

It’s fine for us in the towns, but in the villages outside of the city, it’s a very different story. The public transport system is really poor.

It’s often cheaper to pay a taxi than to use public transport, if there’s more than one of you. Particularly if you’ve got multiple children going to school by bus, then it costs a fortune.

The bus fares are ridiculous, I mean from here on Conniburrow to the City Centre is £1.70 and it’s about 5-10 minutes’ walk. The prices are too much, so I just drive myself around. Sorry.

To get from Tattenhoe to the OU campus by bus, you have to go via Newport Pagnell and it takes an hour and a half. Plus, for a family of four to take a two mile return-trip journey by city bus costs £13.80.

I am shocked at the cost of taking the bus now as children's tripper tickets were doubled overnight. Travel for children under age 11 should be free as in London. There should be at the very least an option to buy a monthly travel ticket for them to cover the whole week not just daily school trips. There should be a better cheaper option for adults to travel by bus- I am now going to learn to drive and buy a car as it will eventually be cheaper for me than travelling by bus in MK.
Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Transport Infrastructure

As someone without a car, I am constantly exasperated by the poor public transport and lack of footpaths in MK. The redways are a fantastic concept, but they are not well maintained and should not be considered a substitute for good footpaths.

The trouble with it, we’re in a bit of a, we’re made a rod for our own back because we expect to drive to work, get out of our cars, walk into the office, get back into our cars, drive to the shopping centre, get back in the car, drive back to the office and then drive straight home. The idea that I might have to walk anywhere or do things, the expectation is such that we just don’t do that here.

I think the difference is if you compare it to other cities, Birmingham, etc., people wouldn’t dream of driving in and parking, they’d use the transport links, as they are so much better.

I think some of the routes into Milton Keynes get particularly snarled coming into Milton Keynes, coming in from Bedford, coming in from Olney, coming in from Junction 13, Junction 14, coming in from West Bletchley, you can queue quite significantly at certain times.

The whole idea of the city design was the whole thing kept flowing and the whole idea was cars, town, city, everything flowing and dual carriageways and that’s how it was supposed to be. But they seemed to have been back tracking on that now.

They went through a phase of dual ‘carriageway’ a lot of the roads and they’ve seemed to have stopped that. There are now really busy roads that are still single carriageways. I’ve been told it’s just because the roundabouts can’t cope with the dual carriageways going into them.

I think we still do a lot better than most towns and cities, but I think having seen the volume of cars on the road, especially over recent years, I worry where we’re going and that we’re approaching saturation. Once upon a time you’d never sit in traffic on the way to work and now you do. And it is just getting worse and worse.

I get everywhere I on my bike. The only thing, in the winter, the lights in the roads and some of the lights are out on the cycle path. So it’s not, cycling, it’s not too much of a worry but if you used those redways to walk, in certain areas you probably wouldn’t want to, as it’s overgrown, so you don’t feel visible and secure.
**Vital Action** - The Big Local Con niburrow community group has launched a walking school bus programme for families on the estate. Each family that signs up for the walking school bus is added to the route and all children are collected by the walking bus as it winds through the estate.

**Vital Thinking** - The theme of transport has been added to Vital Signs MK for 2016, the first time this theme has ever been covered by any Vital Signs report in the UK. The decision to add it was taken because it was the most mentioned theme in our focus groups in both 2013 and 2016. The most commonly expressed concerns amongst focus group participants were related to the cost and quality of the local bus service, as well as concerns about the cost of parking in Milton Keynes. There was a general perception that both matters are further isolating vulnerable and low income families in our city, making it more difficult for them to access the services and support they need.
Theme 11: WORK

Theme definition - The quality and nature of employment opportunities can contribute to the overall sense of vitality and wellbeing in a community. Our local workforce is relatively highly skilled and unemployment is less problematic here than in some other communities. Even so, there are many thousands of people of working age living locally with no qualifications whatsoever. Language and cultural barriers sometimes add to the challenges faced by these individuals who struggle to find work suitable for them at their skill and communication level.
Overview - Unemployment remains impressively low in Milton Keynes and youth unemployment has dropped significantly in recent years. Our wages are amongst the highest in the nation, but since our median wage is exactly the same as the national median wage, there is clearly a greater than normal concentration of local wealth in the city’s highest earners.

Findings On....

Our Local Workforce

The total estimated workforce for Milton Keynes as of 2016 is 143,750

The local workforce comprises 53.9% of the total population in 2016. By 2026, it is estimated that the workforce will comprise 51.8% of the total population, a proportionate drop of just over 2%. Council Population Bulletin

The proportion of the local workforce who were in employment in 2015 was 79.21%. The national average was 74.39%. Annual Population Survey, ONS

The proportion of the local workforce who were employed in part time jobs in 2015 was 21.27%. The national average was 25.46%. Annual Population Survey, ONS

The proportion of the local workforce who were self-employed in 2015 was 9.9%, relatively close to the national average of 10.16%. Annual Population Survey, ONS

The proportion of full and part-time employees in Milton Keynes who have received work-related training in the past 13 weeks is 17.7%, compared to 19.03% nationally. April 2016, Annual Population Survey, ONS

Unemployment

Our unemployment rate taken over the whole of 2015 was 5.0% in Milton Keynes, compared to 5.4% nationally. Unemployment in young people 16-24 during the same period was 16.2% in MK, compared to 14.3% nationally. Annual Population Survey, ONS

The proportion of working age people claiming job seeker’s allowance for at least 12 months or longer in Milton Keynes was 20.04% last year, compared to 30.75% nationally. ONS April 2016
Proportion of 16-24 year olds who are unemployed:

There has been a 10% reduction in youth (16-24) unemployment since 2013. It is now 16% This number does not include young people who are studying, as they are not classed as unemployed

77% of 16-64 year olds are currently in employment in Milton Keynes

Wages

Real wage growth is stagnant in Milton Keynes, with the growth from 2014 to 2015 at -£1 per week on average. *Centre for Cities Outlook 2016*

Milton Keynes currently boasts 43 employers that are officially accredited with the Living Wage Foundation as Living Wage Employers. The current UK Living Wage is £8.25 per hour outside of London. This is not to be confused with the Government’s recently created ‘National Living Wage’ which was set at £7.20. *Living Wage Foundation website*

The difference between full time employment at the minimum wage vs the Living Wage is £2,184 per year. It is calculated that this is the difference between being able to provide oneself with a basic level of subsistence or not.

Wages in Milton Keynes are relatively high, placing 10th highest in the nation, with an average weekly wage of £577. The highest is London with £675 per week and the lowest was Huddersfield with £399 per week. *Centre for Cities Outlook 2016*

However, in Milton Keynes, the average weekly earnings (gross of tax) in 2015 were £576.50 while the median weekly earnings (also gross of tax) were £475.80. The national average
was £503.40 and the national median was £419.30. This greater local discrepancy between the mean and median earnings show that those earners at the top end have incomes that concentrate an unusual amount of wealth amongst the top earners in Milton Keynes.

Our Unusual Mixture of Jobs

*Occupation Levels:*

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<tr>
<th>ONS Skills Level</th>
<th>Occupation Skill Level 1</th>
<th>Elementary Occupations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation Skill Level 2</td>
<td>Process, Plant and Machine Operatives; Sales and Customer Services; Caring, Leisure and Service; Administrative and Secretarial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation Skill Level 3</td>
<td>Skilled Trades; Associate Professional and Technical Occupations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Occupation Skill Level 4</td>
<td>Professional Occupations; Managers, Directors and Senior Officials</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What is a Level 1 ‘elementary occupation’? Elementary occupations involve the performance of simple and routine tasks which may require the use of hand-held tools and considerable physical effort. For competent performance in many elementary occupations, completion of primary education or the first stage of basic education are required. A short period of on-the-job training may be required for some jobs. Occupations classified as elementary include office cleaners, freight handlers, garden labourers, and kitchen assistants.

Your Voices

Survey Results

53% of local people surveyed report that they believe it is easy to find good quality employment in Milton Keynes. 47% disagreed.

Local people were split 50/50 when asked if unemployment is a ‘big problem’ in Milton Keynes, with half in agreement and half disagreeing.

45% agree that people’s skills in Milton Keynes ‘do not match what employers need.’

46% feel that there are ‘many training opportunities’ available for unemployed people in MK.

Vital Signs MK Focus Groups on Working in MK

More people now commute into Milton Keynes than out, that’s the current situation. It used to be the other way round, but where we are now, Milton Keynes’s success is bringing people into Milton Keynes.

A number of visually impaired people I know are finding it difficult to cope with the changes to benefits. One person specifically is constantly being told they have to find work whereas that person is not able to work.

These employment opportunities in Milton Keynes are not necessarily for Milton Keynes residents. A lot of people travel in so again, I think it needs to be made clear, who are we looking to improve opportunities for? I think a lot of people from Wellingborough and places like that benefit, I’m not saying they shouldn’t but again, have we got a focus?
Vital Action - Local charity Worktree engages with young people across our city in a programme designed to support the development of their employability and the skills they will need to secure work. By partnering with a wide range of businesses and organizations, Worktree’s Career WorkOut sessions are able to engage with real employers who directly participate and give students a chance to practice their interview skills and improve their career awareness.

Vital Thinking – Citizens:mk is in the middle of a campaign to encourage local employers to commit to paying their workers a ‘living wage’. The Living Wage Foundation has set the current living wage at £8.25 an hour, which has been calculated by the Social Policy Unit at Loughborough University, using the ‘minimum income standard’ that measures the minimum amount needed from full time employment to maintain a basic standard of living. Milton Keynes currently has only 30 employers accredited as Living Wage Employers, and Citizens:mk is aiming to increase that number to at least 50 by the end of MK’s 50th birthday year, 2017.
Theme 12: EDUCATION

Local people surveyed agree with the statement, “Local schools and colleges are performing well and provide good quality education” - 75%

The proportion of MK Key Stage 4 students who achieved 5+ A*-G grades on their GCSE’s, including English and Maths was 91.6%. This is 6% higher than the national average in 2015.

Of the 26 Ofsted school inspections in MK for the 2014/15 year, 73% (19) were rated Good or Outstanding.

MK Key Stage 1 students outperform national averages by 3% for achieving Level 2B+ in reading, writing and maths in 2015.

Key Stage 4 students in MK have moderately improved their GSCE results but still fall 3% behind the national average for the proportion of students who achieved 5+ A*-C grades in 2015.

Every year, 3,500 students leave school in MK, with 55% going on to higher education (compared to 49% nationally).
Theme definition - Access to good education and skill development is key to gaining access to good employment opportunities in life. A strong local school system promotes lifelong learning and personal growth, as well as strategies to promote early childhood development that can have a significant impact on young people's long term educational attainment.

Overview - Milton Keynes schools continue to report steady, modest improvements in most categories. Ofsted inspections have been largely positive, but 26% highlighted improvements required. Our community consultations indicated a divided perception of local schools, with many families who use them reporting that local schools are doing a good job and providing good quality education. To a large degree, this appears to be borne out by standardised testing, exam results and most Ofsted inspections. Taken individually, many of our local schools score very well when compared to the national averages. More affluent families that send their children out of Milton Keynes to attend private or grammar schools elsewhere have expressed the view in our focus groups that there are no suitable schools in Milton Keynes for their children and they generally have a lower opinion of the quality of state education on offer in the city.

Findings On....

The MK Student Population

The 2015 Milton Keynes Schools Census recorded 45,453 students attending local schools. As the population of Milton Keynes continues to grow, this is reflected in the increasing numbers of students attending local schools. In September 2014, 3761 students started mainstream school in Milton Keynes, this is 43% greater than the number that started ten years earlier in 2004. In 2015, that number had increased again somewhat to 3793. In 2015, there were 18% more children joining primary schools than leaving year 6, and 30% more children joining primary schools than leaving year 11.

Every year, 3,500 students leave school in MK, with 55% going on to higher education (compared to 49% nationally).

7,481 Students attended MK College in 2014/15.

The MK Ofsted Inspections for 2014/15

Of the 26 Ofsted school inspections in MK for the 2014/15 year, 73% (19) were rated Good or Outstanding.

None of the 26 MK schools inspected by Ofsted in 2014/15 were rated Inadequate.
MK Students’ Performance – Primary Schools

Looking specifically at local primary schools, the proportion of students who achieved ‘Level 4’ or above in reading, maths and writing was 80% across MK, exactly the same as the national average. Two local primary schools scored 100% and many others were significantly over the national average, while several others fell significantly below, including one school that scored 39% and another that scored 44%. Both of those schools are in areas with high levels of poverty. (These and the following education stats all came from the Gov.uk website on school performance.)

MK Key Stage 1 students outperform national averages by 3% for achieving Level 2B+ in reading, writing and maths in 2015.

Also regarding our local primary schools, the percentage of students achieving the expected level of progress between key stages 1 and 2 were as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Maths</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England – All Primaries</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes Primaries</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primary school attendance in Milton Keynes is in line with national averages, with a 3.9% overall rate of absence, compared to 4% nationally. ‘Persistent absence’, defined as the percentage of pupils missing 15% or more of the mornings or afternoons they could attend (for most pupils this means missing 56 or more mornings or afternoons in a year) is also in line with national averages, 2.2% locally compared to 2.1% nationally.

MK Students’ Performance – Secondary Schools

Moving on to secondary schools in Milton Keynes, pupils achieving a level 4 by the end of key stage 2 (usually the end of year 6) are expected to achieve at least a C grade on their GCSEs. Pupils reaching level 5 at key stage 2 are expected to achieve at least a B at GCSEs. The national average for secondary school students achieving this in English was 71.1%, while Milton Keynes students fell somewhat behind at 68.1%.

The expected secondary school progress for students between key stages 2 and 4 in maths is as follows, “pupils achieving a level 4 by the end of key stage 2 (usually the end of year 6) are expected to achieve at least a C grade at GCSE. Pupils reaching level 5 at key stage 2 are expected to achieve at least a B at GCSE.” The national average for students achieving this level was 66.9% in 2015, while in Milton Keynes the average was 62.1%.

The indicator to include those achieving an A*- G score, the proportion of MK Key Stage 4 students who achieved this on their GCSE’s, including English and Match was 91.6% This is 6% higher than the national average in 2015.
The proportion of secondary school students who achieved five or more A*- C grades on their GCSEs (including maths and English) in 2015 was 53.8% nationally and 52% in Milton Keynes.

The proportion of secondary school students who achieved an English Baccalaureate last year was 22.9% nationally and 20.7% in Milton Keynes.

The proportion of secondary school students who achieved A* - C grades on their English and Maths GCSEs was 55.8% nationally and 54.3% in Milton Keynes.

**Education, Skills and Training Deprivation in MK**

One of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation is ‘Education, Skills and Training.’ It gives a neighbourhood / output area a score that is based on indicators related to the lack of attainment and skills in that area. These include: Key Stage 2 attainment, Key Stage 4 attainment, secondary school absences, staying on in education past the age of 16 and entry to higher education. It also takes into account the proportion of adults in an area with low or no qualifications and the levels of proficiency in the English language. The higher the deprivation score, the greater the level of deprivation. The education, skills and training deprivation score for Milton Keynes is calculated at 18.09, compared to the national average of 24.54.

There is an informative map compiled by MK Council that shows the relative levels of education, skills and training deprivation in the estates across the MK Unitary Authority Area. The darker the shade, the higher the levels of this type of deprivation. You can find this map [here](#).

**Your Voices**

**Survey Results**

75% of local people surveyed agreed with the statement, “Local schools and colleges are performing well and provide good quality education.”

63% do not agree that local literacy levels are ‘not very high.’

72% of local people report that they feel they are able to access the skills and education that they need to help secure the job they want.

48% feel that local people are able to get their children into their preferred local schools.
For my little boy, he’s at junior school and he gets to know all sorts of different people and I think that’s really important from a young age to get to know different kinds of people and yeah, so apart from what I feel about the education system generally, all the exams and stuff that kids are put under, which is just obviously a UK thing not a Milton Keynes thing, I think that generally the schools are pretty good.

I am concerned about the number of faith schools - these don’t aid integration or tolerance at all.

I know a lot of people are a bit worried about the Academies but from my experience of having two sons that have come through like Milton Keynes Academy, they’ve had amazing opportunities to link into things that they are particularly good at and passionate about as well as having good support with their core subjects.

Schools in Milton Keynes are linking in with families a lot more, bringing home and school together and supporting the kids with everything.

I mean my daughter didn’t go to school in Milton Keynes because there isn’t a grammar school here and there wasn’t a public school, so she ended up going somewhere in Bedford. A lot of the kids commute out to Bedford.

Milton Keynes has a strong need for an excellent school - a grammar school would be most welcome.

And the other thing is we haven’t got a university. So lots of children go out away from here to go to university and then don’t come back.

The schools in MK are good. A lot better than when I was at school.

I live in Wolverton and my children go the local schools and we made a conscious decision to do that because I think it’s really important if you can, to send your children to the local school. My daughter is a teenager now and she, as well as all the sort of academic stuff, she’s obviously developing into a person in her own right and I think the social links that she has with friends who all live like a couple of streets away or whatever, I think that’s really important for her.
**Vital Action** - Ride High is an innovative local charity that works with disadvantaged children and young people in need of extra support. The children at Ride High have generally been referred to them after other interventions have failed. Since the charity was set up in 2008, they have worked with over 700 local children and young people and the service measures a strongly positive impact of their work in 85% of cases. ‘Health checks’ conducted with service users six months after leaving the programme show they have not reverted to requiring agency intervention and 90% of leavers are back in full time education or work experience.

**Vital Thinking** - Our Vital Signs MK 2016 Focus Groups featured a number of comments from members of the community that suggest there is a perception amongst many local families, particularly at the higher end of the income scale, that the school system in Milton Keynes is poor. Given that Ofsted inspections here generally rate the majority of our schools as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ why does this perception persist?
FINALLY

Looking Ahead

Vital Signs is intended to spark conversations and debate, to inform our public discourse and to make local people more aware of the needs and challenges facing their community. We are eager to engage with individuals and groups who are inspired by Vital Signs to speak out and seek partners in helping to build a stronger Milton Keynes that offers a decent standard of living to all its residents.

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

Our local Council has created the MK Futures 2050 Commission to investigate the qualities that make Milton Keynes successful and vibrant, as well as those that present challenges and disadvantages. This is with an eye to creating a new forward-thinking Plan:MK and informing the policies and strategies of our Council in the years to come. If you would like to get involved in this project and express your views on our city and its future, please consider contacting the MK Futures team at MKFutures@milton-keynes.gov.uk or visit the council website for more information.

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 info@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

Make a difference to local lives today! Make a donation online at www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk
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Connecting and growing our community for 30 years