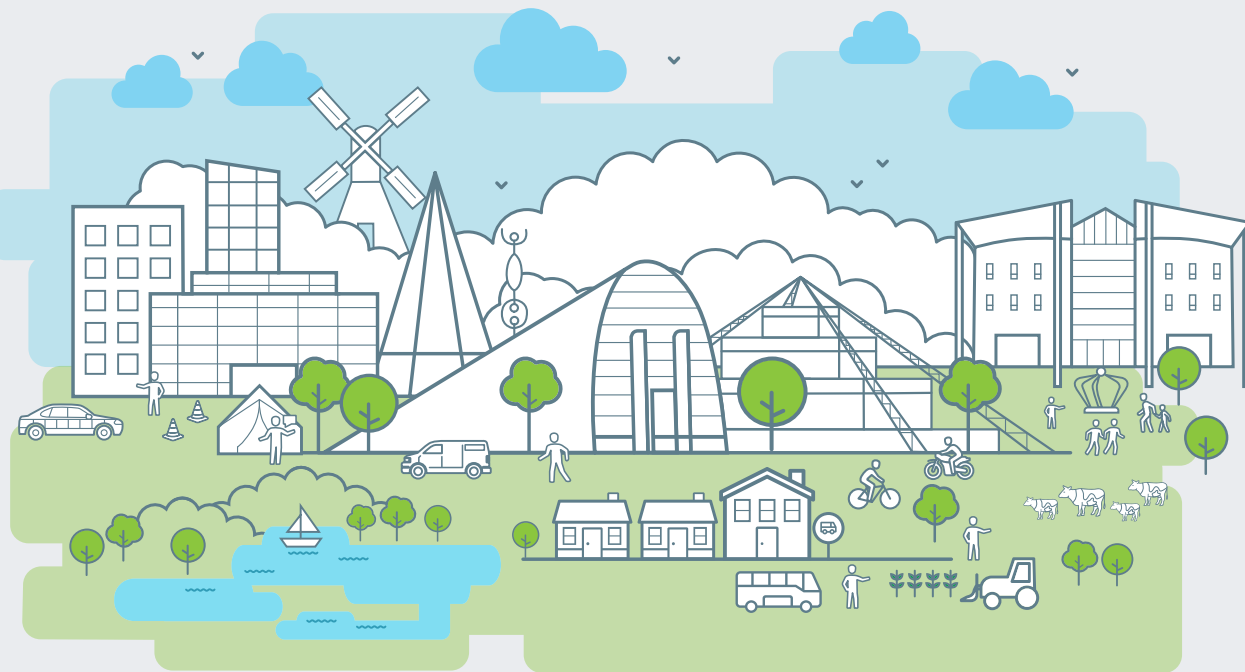




To download this year's Vital Signs Report as well as an extended version with many more statistics and links to all of the sources of the original research, visit: mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk.



Vital Signs 2019



What is Vital Signs?

Vital Signs MK is an annual publication designed to round up and highlight the most current research on the communities of Milton Keynes and present it in an easy-to-read format.

This year's publication focuses on 11 key areas of interest within Milton Keynes, mapping trends, highlighting our strengths and identifying challenges we face. The full Vital Signs report that covers all themes as this one does, is published every three years. During the years in between, a shorter Vital Signs Update report is published, looking at fewer themes.

This year, the report looks at: Strong Communities, Work & the Economy, Education, Diversity, Disadvantage & Poverty, Housing, Crime & Safety, Health & Wellbeing, Transport, The Local Environment and Arts & Heritage.

You can download this report, as well as an extended version with many more statistics included, on our website at www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk/about/vital-signs-2019/. The extended version of this report contains links to all of the original research and sources.

You can also access copies of Vital Signs Reports from previous years on our website. The 'Vital Signs' movement is used widely across the UK, with other Community Foundations taking part in their own local research. You can see some examples of these by visiting www.ukcommunityfoundations.org.

Throughout this report there will be mention of 'The Survey'; this refers to the 2019 survey conducted by Milton Keynes Community Foundation of 205 people living in Milton Keynes, to find out what they think and to have a say about different aspects of their community. The majority of the questions in the survey asked the extent to which the participant agreed or disagreed with a number of given statements about Milton Keynes, across the thematic areas.

Who are MK Community Foundation?

Milton Keynes Community Foundation is an independent grant-making charity working for and at the heart of Milton Keynes, with over 33 years' experience of connecting people and resources to projects to create positive changes in our community.

Our vision is for a thriving Milton Keynes where everyone is contributing to their community; achieved through supporting the growth and development of our local voluntary, community and cultural sector, inspiring our communities to give through philanthropy and other social action, and leading in connecting and growing sustainable communities.



Strong Communities



Strong communities questions the things about a locality that affect its community cohesion, the level of engagement of residents and how well connected people are to one another.

Milton Keynes is one of the fastest growing places in the UK and looks set to continue to grow just as quickly as the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge growth corridor develops. With growth comes the continued challenge of how to develop strong communities in rapidly growing and changing environments.

Vital Thinking

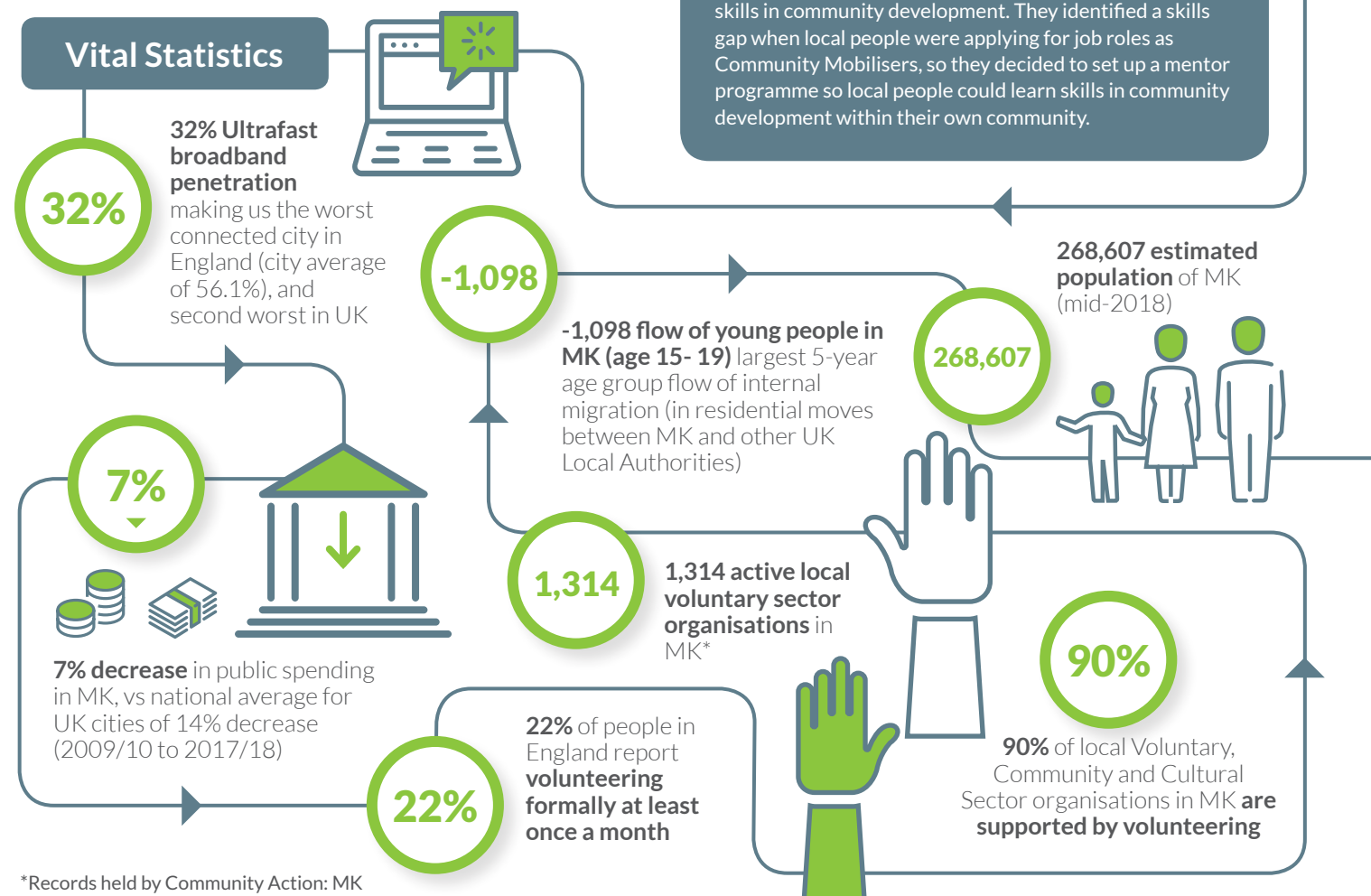
- Communities are still feeling the effects of austerity, with cuts to local services still affecting many across Milton Keynes.
- How much more will be asked of local communities to meet these unmet needs?
- How well connected, supported and engaged are our citizens to meet these challenges?
- How can umbrella bodies support our voluntary, community and cultural sector to build sustainable funding strategies which support volunteering and community development?



Photo by Big Local Conniburrow

Vital Action

BLC (Big Local Conniburrow) is one of 150 areas in the UK that received just over £1,000,000 of funding from the National Lottery Community Fund. The idea behind the project was to mobilise the community to come together and decide how to spend the money to improve their community. MK Community Foundation is the local trusted organisation that manages the funds over the 10 year period of the project. Community Action MK have been brought onboard to help to share their skills in community development. They identified a skills gap when local people were applying for job roles as Community Mobilisers, so they decided to set up a mentor programme so local people could learn skills in community development within their own community.





Work and the Economy



This year we have decided to join the vital signs areas of Work and the Economy as they are so intrinsically linked.

The economy includes the production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money in the local area. Work in this context is paid employment. It does not include voluntary work, unpaid caring duties or other forms of activity that produce goods such as hobbies.

A high level of paid employment opportunities provides an indication of a healthy and vibrant city. Milton Keynes has long been recognised as an entrepreneurial city, with the number of new start-up businesses recorded as one of the highest in the UK.

Vital Thinking

- Is the local workforce flexible and does it have enough mix of skills allowing it to adapt as business needs change?
- It is predicted that many employment opportunities that our children will face when they enter the workforce don't yet exist.
- How will the uncertainty regarding our relationship with the EU affect our local economy?
- How can we encourage more employers to pay the National Foundation's actual living wage?
- How can we, as a community, support women to have equal opportunities in the workplace?

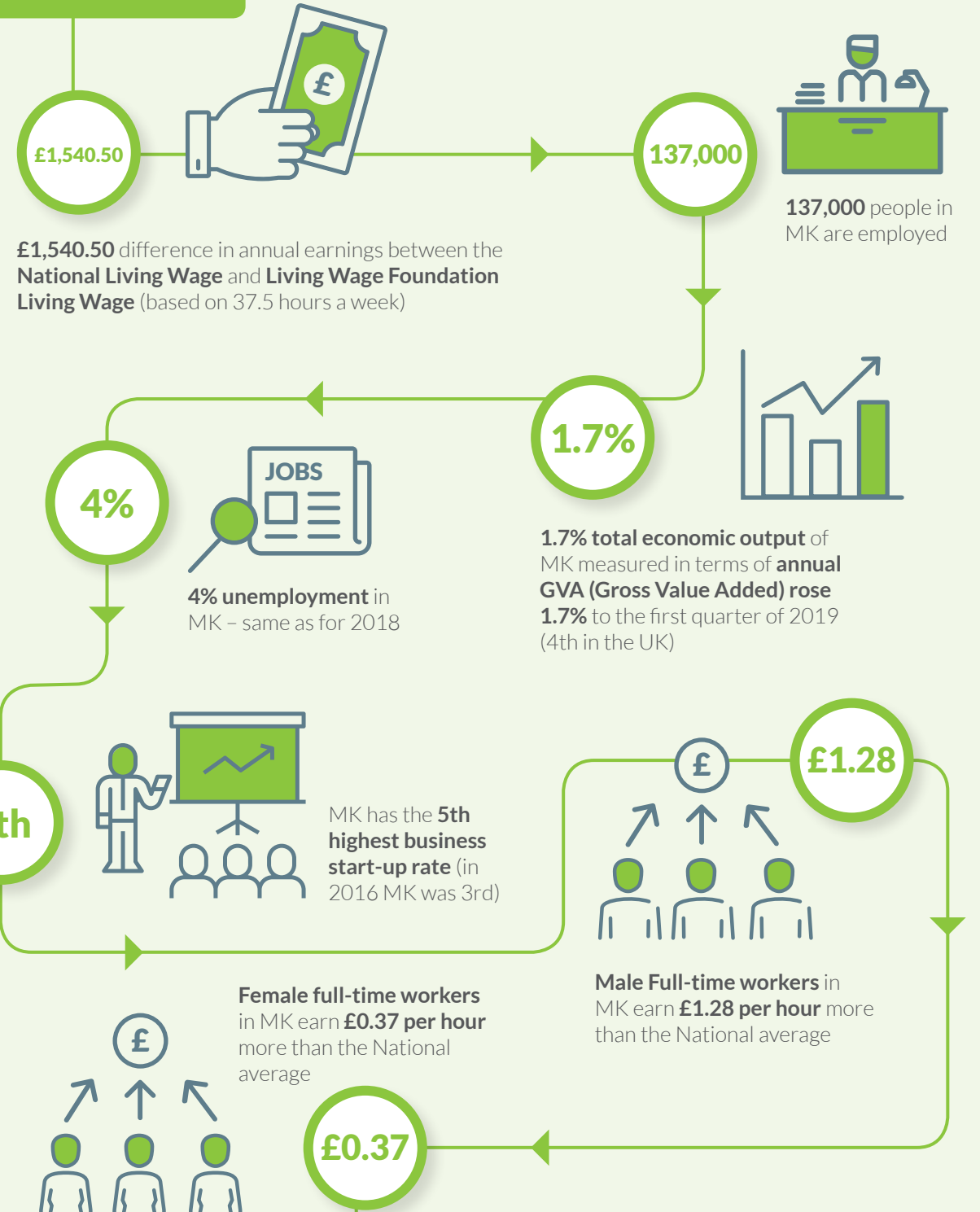
Vital Action

MK Community Foundation funded £4,632 for 'The Work Life Project' which is a series of workshops and talks for young women, run by MK Gallery. The project supports them to discover how they can develop their skills and contribute to the creative industry, run by MK Gallery. The project aims to improve access to creative industries for BAME women and women from disadvantaged backgrounds by supporting participants to develop the skills and confidence to pursue a creative career. Activities have included workshops facilitated by 'Of Our Own' and Conde Nast College of Fashion and Design, which raised awareness of career, education and work experience opportunities.



Photo by ©Jam Patel

Vital Statistics



Education

This section covers learning in its traditional forms, starting with formal education in schools, colleges and universities and apprenticeships.

A well skilled and educated population is needed to meet the challenges of a growing workforce. On a personal level, being able to reach your potential contributes to a sense of wellbeing and satisfaction.

Vital Thinking

- One of the main concerns for MK is the growing and challenging need for provision, starting with nursery places. How do we address this?
- The standard of school education is good up to Key stage 3 (up to the age of 14years) but drops at Key Stage 4 (14 – 16 years) and A Levels (16 – 18 years) when Milton Keynes is below the national (England) average.
- There is a correlation explored in more depth in the long report between school exclusions and offending rates. How can we as a community support these young people?
- How can we as a community address the relatively low take up of apprenticeships and a potential skills gap as the number of jobs, and the nature of employment, changes with the growth in technology?
- It has been identified that this is an issue that needs to be tackled in schools and there are currently several collaborations between business and educational establishments: for instance the development of the new MK:U (Milton Keynes University) being supported by Santander and the new institute of digital technology, a collaboration of MK College, Bletchley Park and Microsoft.

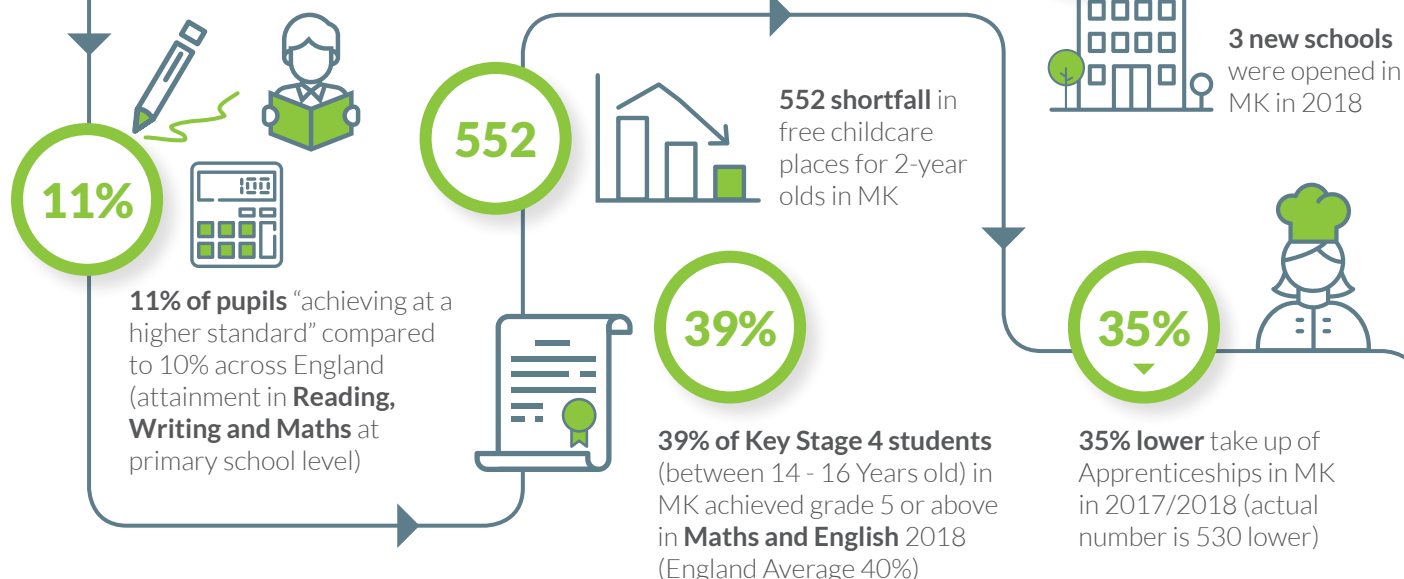


Vital Action

MK Community Foundation has funded Shenley Brook End School £15,000 to deliver the training of teachers in Leadership, Equality & Diversity, at the Training Centre; supporting teachers from BME backgrounds to ensure positive outcomes for students from BME/ disadvantaged backgrounds. Outcomes of the training they offer include: developing one's own leadership style, increased self-awareness and interpersonal skills, increased confidence to progress in one's career and gaining a better understanding of diversity issues.



Vital Statistics



Diversity

Under the equality and diversity legislation in the UK, there are nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, race (including ethnic or national origin, colour, or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, sexual orientation, marriage & civil partnership and pregnancy & maternity.

We last reported on diversity in Milton Keynes in our 2018 Vital Signs report. Unfortunately, it remains the case that it is a challenge to get up to date data across all the protected characteristics.

Data remains elusive between census years on race and ethnicity, and there (at the time of writing this report) is a lack of the same level of detail in the January 2019 school census compared with the 2018 data.

Vital Thinking

- What can we learn in the voluntary, community and cultural sector about the experiences that marginalised communities report about accessing services?
- How do we ensure Milton Keynes is accessible, open, and welcoming to all its communities, whatever their background, experience, or identities?
- How can we meet MK's Creative & Cultural Strategy 2018-2023 that states that we should: "ensure our cultural venues and programmes are disability compliant, removing barriers and actively welcoming people from all backgrounds through accessible education programmes"?

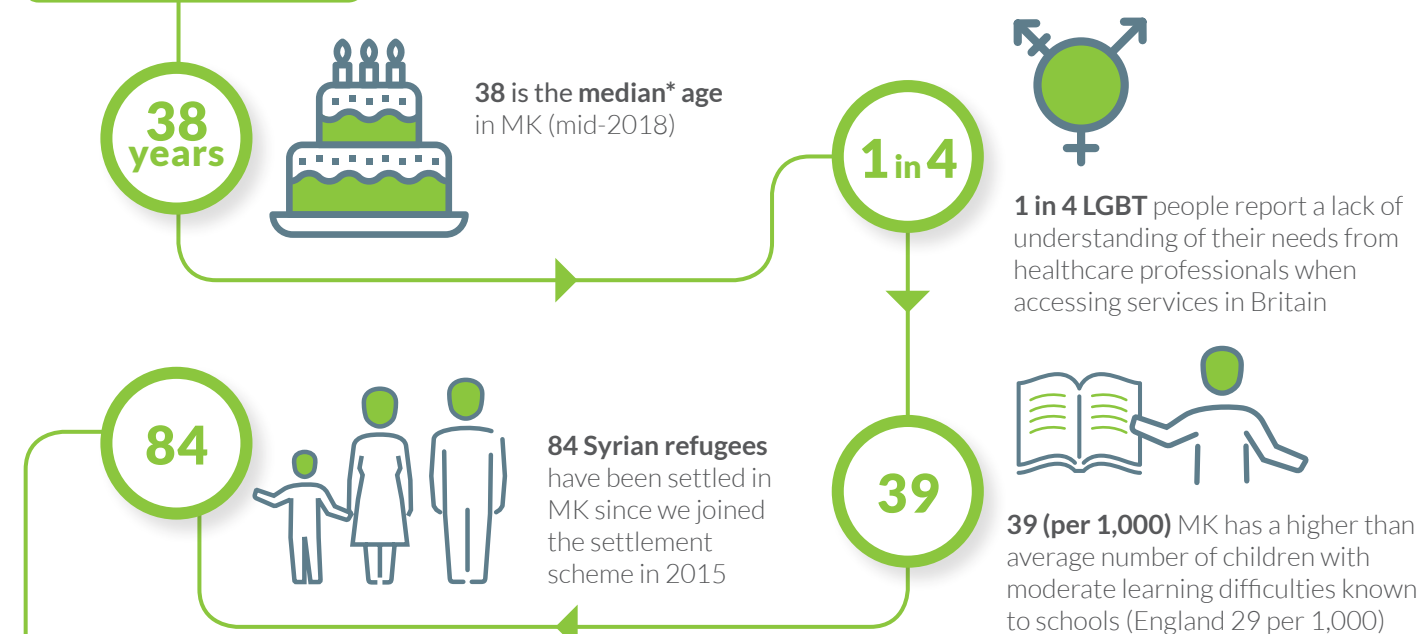


Vital Action

MK Community Foundation are delighted to award The Stables Theatre in Milton Keynes a Large Strategic Grant of £95,000. The grant, which will be awarded over two years, will be used to fund an extensive programme designed to enhance the organisation's approach to working with deaf and disabled communities as participants, audience members and performers.

The Stables will work with national accessibility and disability specialists including Attitude is Everything and Graeae Theatre Company to create a bespoke training programme for The Stables' staff and its 200-strong volunteer base. It will also open up sessions to the wider cultural sector.

Vital Statistics



*Median – The middle value of a set of dates when the figures are written in order



Disadvantage and Poverty



Poverty is when one's resources do not meet one's minimum need. There is no single measure of poverty, but the UK governments' definition of relative poverty is those whose income is less than 60% of the median* income after household costs, relative to that household's size. This is also the definition used by End Child Poverty, whose local statistics for Milton Keynes are cited in this section of the report.

Last year, we also reported on homelessness under this theme — this year, an update on our findings in this area can be found under the Housing section of this report.

Vital Thinking

- Unfortunately, the trend that Milton Keynes has seen through the 2010s continues, and we report worsening statistics across child poverty putting pressure on local services and more importantly on communities and families.
- Almost half the clients seeking advice from Citizens Advice Milton Keynes last year were in paid employment. What is causing this and what help can we offer as a community?
- What does this say about the pressures working families are facing? Are high rents and unprotected tenancies causing working families to slip into poverty?

Vital Action

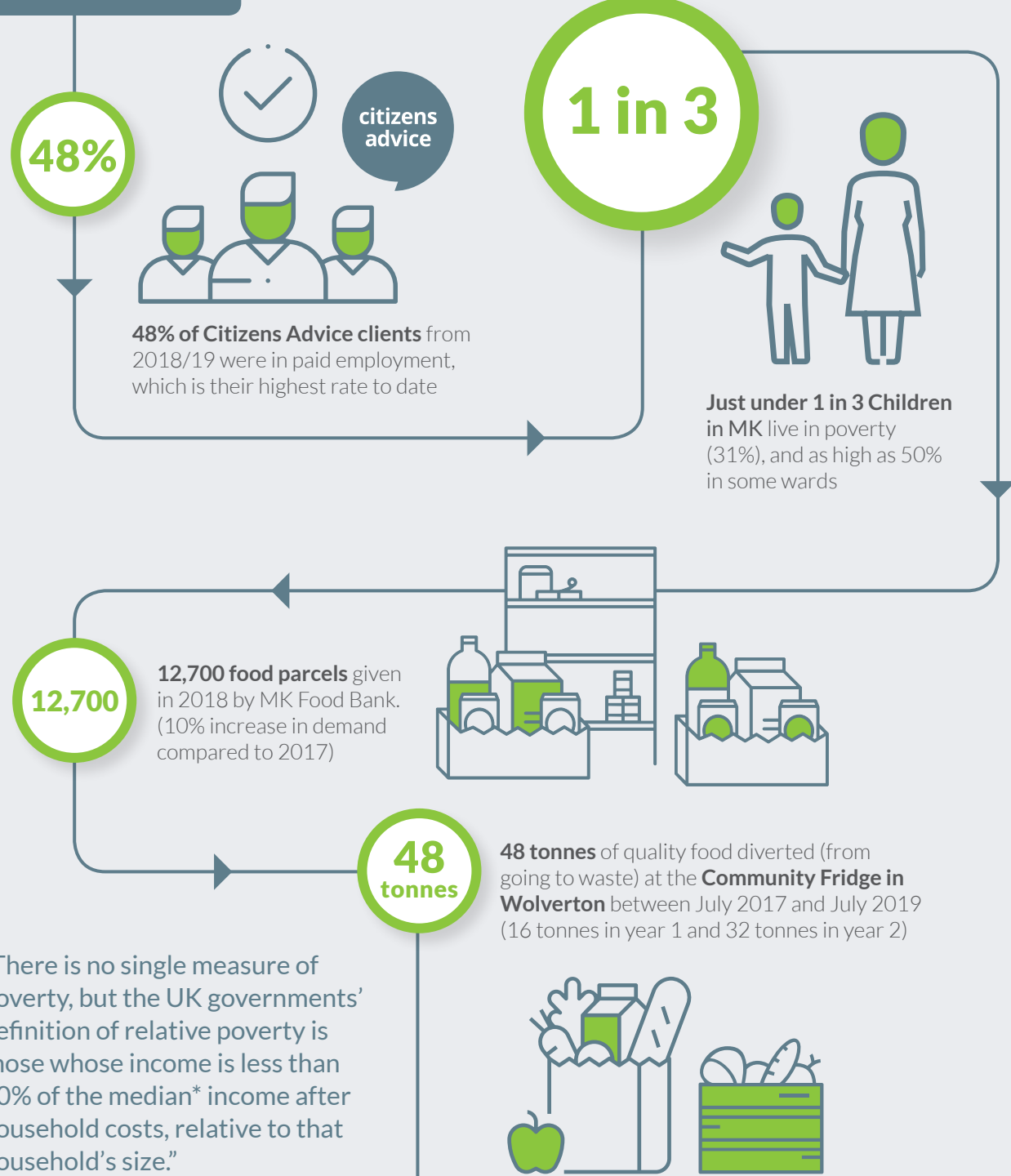
MK Community Foundation have recently funded £4,979 for the Fun in School Holidays (FISH) which is a programme run by Service Six that provides activity sessions throughout the summer holiday for children whose families would otherwise not be able go on holiday or provide other activities. The programme provides a safe space over the six weeks, where young people can take part in sport, education, recreation and personal development activities, make friends, grow skills, and get a healthy meal each day.

MK Community Foundation have also supported Citizens Advice Milton Keynes with £20,763 to fund The Mix Development and Sustainability project that will enable The Mix to enter into a productive relationship with Citizens Advice to help provide strong governance, business development, fundraising and support with recruitment and selection of volunteers.



Photo by Kelly Sikkema on Unsplash.

Vital Statistics



*Median – The middle value of a set of dates when the figures are written in order

Housing

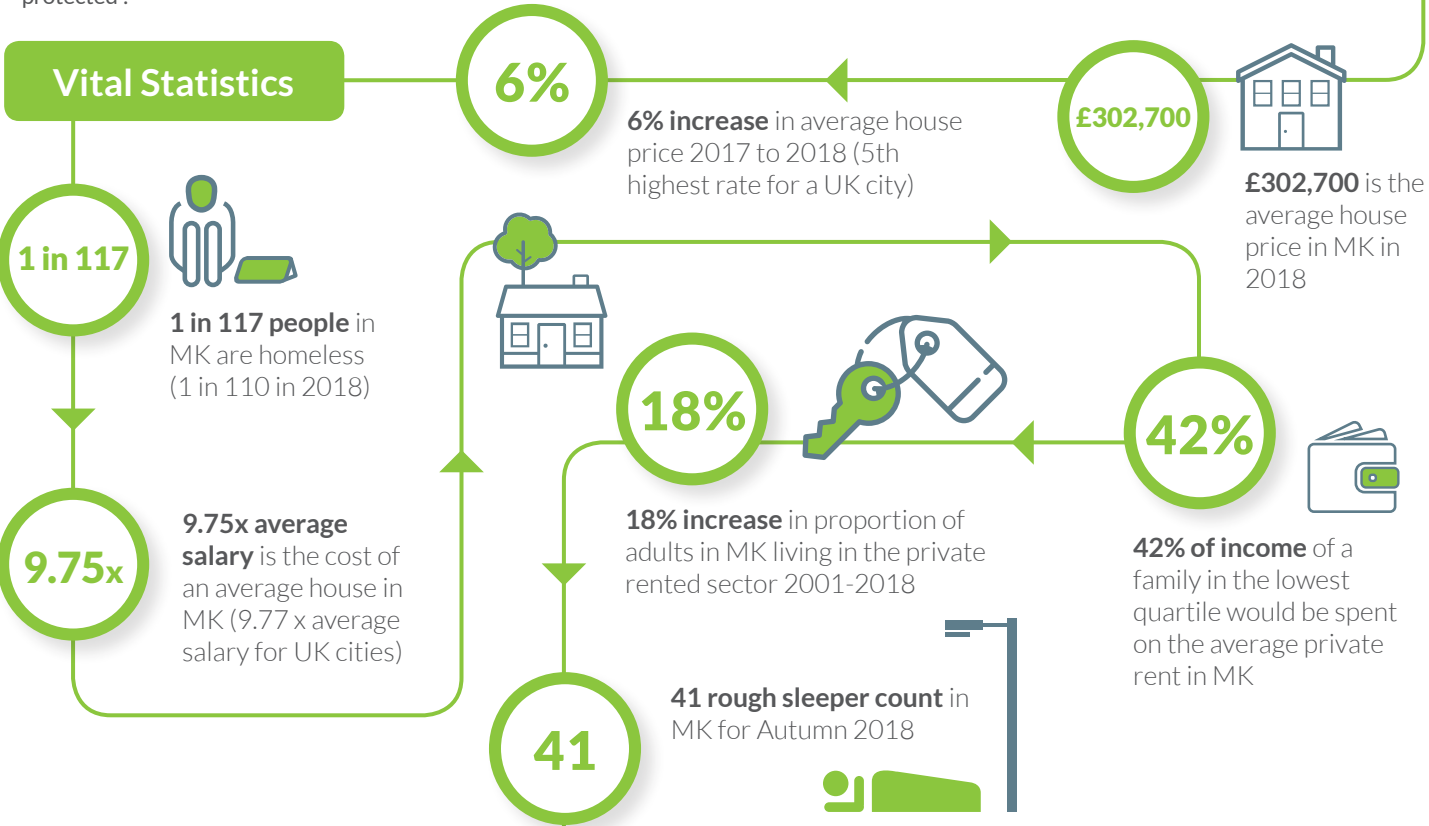
Last time we focussed on Housing in the Vital Signs report of 2016, we noted trends around the increase in house prices, the decreasing rates of home ownership, and the increasing rates of homelessness, both in terms of visible rough sleeping, and less visible numbers of families in temporary accommodation.

Our findings in this report show many of these trends continuing. Homelessness is perhaps one exception to this, with indicators showing that some reported rates are slightly less now than when we reported in Vital Signs 2018's report in Disadvantage and Poverty. Those rates are, however, often still higher than they were just a few years ago, and we need to monitor this to see if a general downward trend continues in the years to come.

With the cost of housing a significant factor in the rates of families living in poverty, any increase in the cost of living in Milton Keynes will continue to be of importance.

Vital Thinking

- With the average house price at £302,700 needing a deposit of £30,000, it is not surprising that many young people are living with their parents or guardians to maybe either save money or avoid high rental prices. What impact does this have on aging households?
- What happens to those people in MK who do not have family support? What can we do as a community to influence affordable housing stock and social housing to make sure the most vulnerable people are protected?



Vital Action

YMCA MK is the main provider of supported housing to young people in Milton Keynes. Milton Keynes Community Foundation has awarded a grant of £27,921 to YMCA MK fund the development of a space dedicated to mental health well-being within their new modern campus in Central Milton Keynes which is due to open shortly. YMCA MK said:

"The suite, which has access to a rooftop garden, will provide a private, tranquil space for young people to access one-to-one counselling. 70% of the young people who come to the YMCA have mental health issues, with the most common being depression and anxiety. Providing mental health support in a safe, confidential environment will enable us to tackle the deep-seated issues many of our residents face, ensuring they are equipped to access our other support services and make a positive change in their life."



Crime and Safety

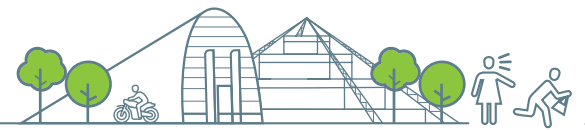
This theme looks at local and national trends in crime from Home Office and police data.

In light of recent reports across national media on the increasing levels of hate crime (largely credited to higher reporting rates and the political climate post EU Referendum and 2017 terror attacks), we report how this is reflected locally. There are some mixed results across the different types of hate crimes.

We also update on the rates of domestic abuse and other trends that we reported on when we last covered this theme in the Vital Signs MK 2017 report.

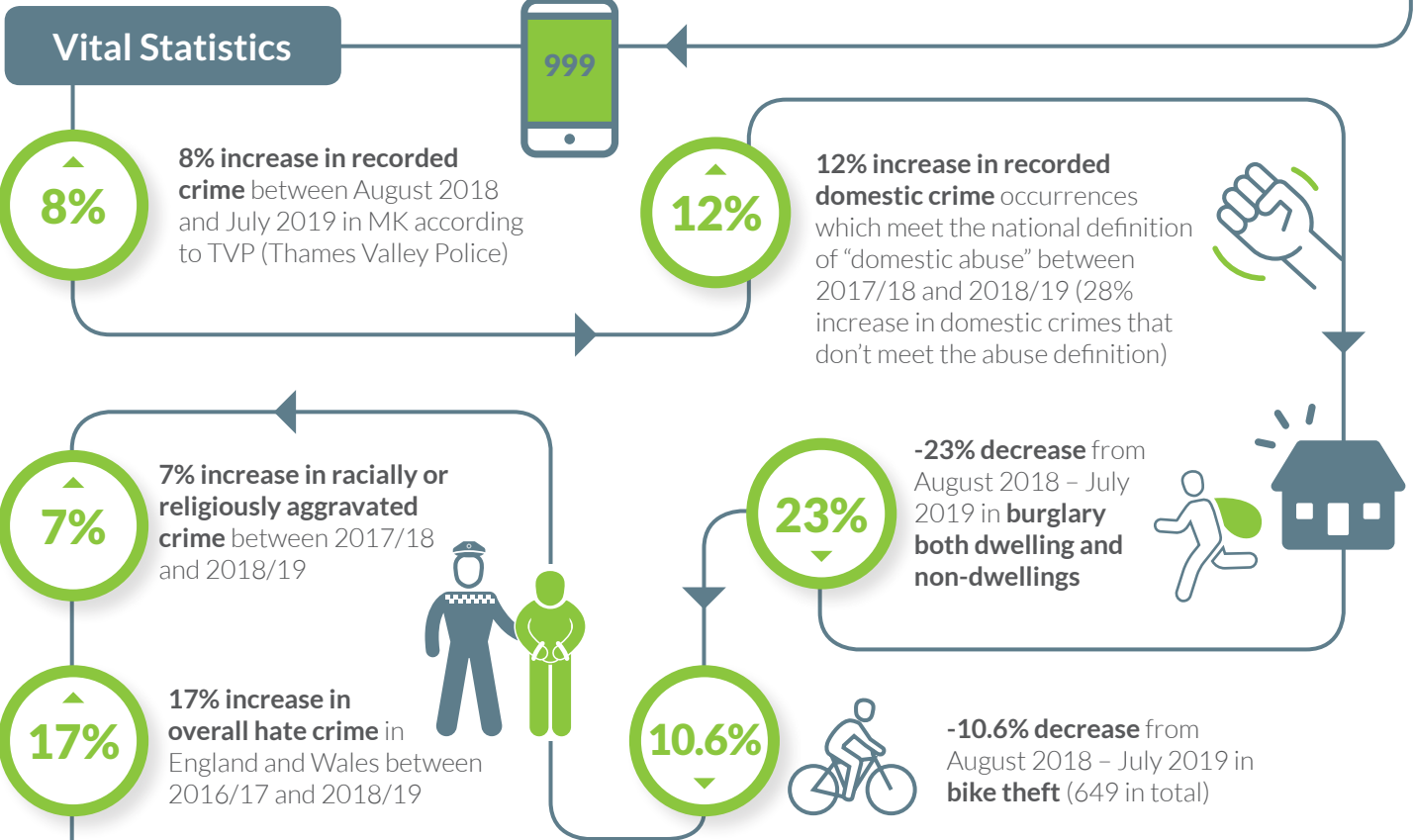
Vital Thinking

- How can we support the diverse communities in Milton Keynes to feel safe?
- The drop in burglaries (domestic) is welcome, but we must be cognisant of other forms of crime that may be harder to quantify (e.g. cybercrime) where data is harder to produce.
- How can we support our security agencies to help them keep our communities safer?
- The recorded rise in domestic crime is alarming; how can we as a community shed light on the issues so actions can be developed to start to address this issue?



Vital Action

MK Community Foundation have supported Thames Valley Partnership with £5,000 for the New Leaf Project where volunteers provide support and mentoring for adult offenders released from prison who settle in Milton Keynes. Volunteer mentors support them "through the gate", providing advocacy through probation meetings and other appointments, and support them to meet their goals for rehabilitation in the community for a minimum of 12 weeks after release. Mentoring support of this nature has been shown to reduce reoffending and improve community safety. You can find out more about the project at www.newleafproject.co.uk.





Health and Wellbeing



Health and Wellbeing is a broad category that includes the physical and mental health of local people and the factors that affect their wellbeing.

The survey questions on this theme investigated the activities and services in Milton Keynes that support residents' health and wellbeing, including quality and availability.

As well as exploring some of the trends we regularly review in this category, this year we look at physical activity and loneliness - two big predictors of lifelong health and wellbeing that can be greatly affected by one's ability to access their local community.

Nationally, young people and older people are getting lonelier, with 9 million people (including 40% of young people) saying they feel lonely often or very often. Local data on loneliness is sparse, though we have some idea of the areas and demographics at most risk.

Locally and nationally, deprived and marginalised communities are less likely to be physically active.

Vital Thinking

- How do we address the challenge of getting our young people to be more physically active?
- How do we nurture positive attitudes around physical activity in young people that will improve the likelihood of them remaining physically active throughout their lives?
- How can we, as a community, capitalise on our European City of Sport 2020 status in getting residents engaged and active?
- In an ever-connected society why are 1 in 4 people in our community feeling lonely and how should we address this?



Vital Action

Through the Tampon Tax Community Fund*, this year we supported All People Active CIC with £8,150 to deliver the Us Girls Get Active programme, which aims to engage with women and girls in Milton Keynes, particularly teenagers, young mums, and families, to develop physical activity programmes which meet their needs and reduce the barriers that they may otherwise face to living healthy active lifestyles. Participants contribute to the design of programmes that fit their interest and lifestyles, whether that is through dance, yoga, fitness classes or sports. Find out more about All People Active on Twitter and Instagram @AllPeopleActive or go to allpeopleactive.com.

*Tampon Tax Community Fund - a fund generated from the VAT on sanitary products to go towards projects to improve the lives of disadvantaged women and girls.



Vital Statistics



21%

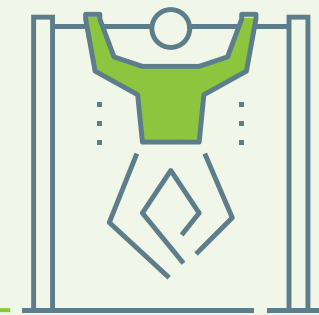
The percentage of children between 10-11 years old in Milton Keynes are obese

"Nationally, young people and older people are getting lonelier, with 9 million people (including 40% of young people) saying they feel lonely often or very often."



33%

Of adults from the MK communities in the 10% most deprived areas are inactive, compared with 19.9% for those in the 10% least deprived areas



MK adults reach recommended 150 minutes moderate to vigorous physical activity per week (higher than England average of 62.6%)

66%

32%

Milton Keynes children are "inactive" (partaking in less than 30 minutes physical activity per day)



1 in 4

Out of the 205 respondents to our Vital Signs 2019 Survey, agreed that they often feel lonely for long periods

Transport

The theme of transport was added to Vital Signs MK in 2016. 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 that 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.

Vital Thinking

- MK is at the forefront of many innovations in transport, including autonomous vehicles such as the Star Ship delivery pods and testing of driverless cars, and multiple options for green bike share schemes now available with Santander and Lime bikes. However, we have collated data that shows that Milton Keynes has more to do to ensure that we improve provision and use of public transport and reduce our reliance on transport that pollutes.
- How can we do more to ensure that we improve provision and use of public transport and reduce our reliance on transport that pollutes?

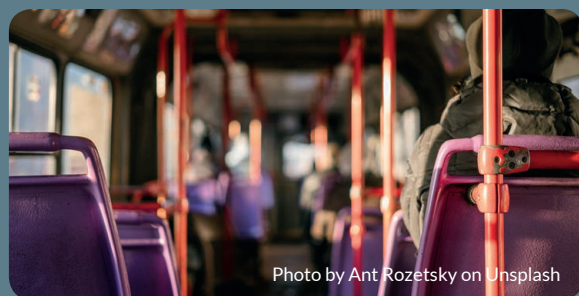
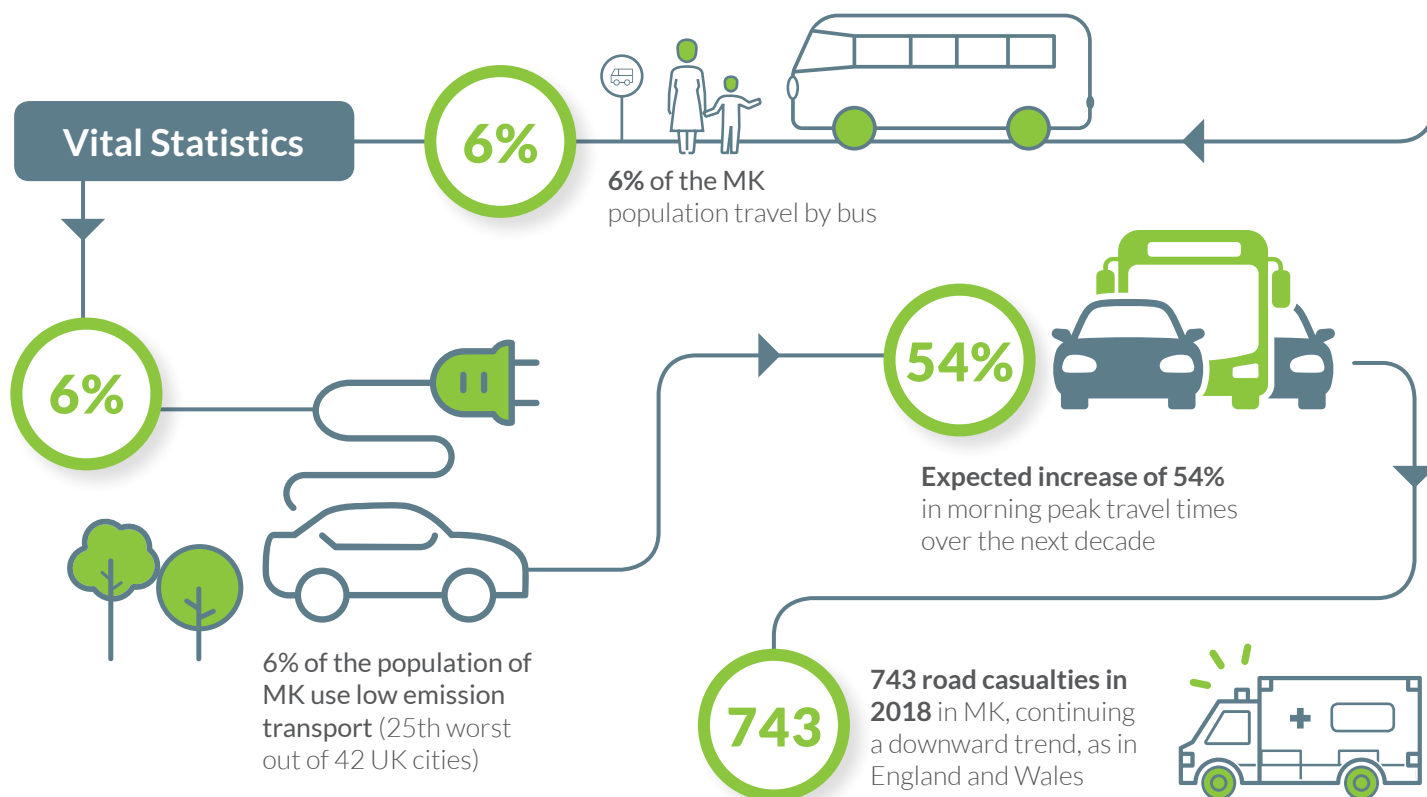


Photo by Ant Rozetsky on Unsplash

Vital Action

The Bus Users Group were supported by the MK Community Foundation who provided conferencing facilities free of charge for a debate about driverless vehicles.

The Bus Users Group work to make public transport inclusive and accessible, while promoting high standards of transport planning and delivery. The organisation also raises awareness of the effects transport poverty has on loneliness, isolation and social exclusion.



The Local Environment

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.

Vital Thinking

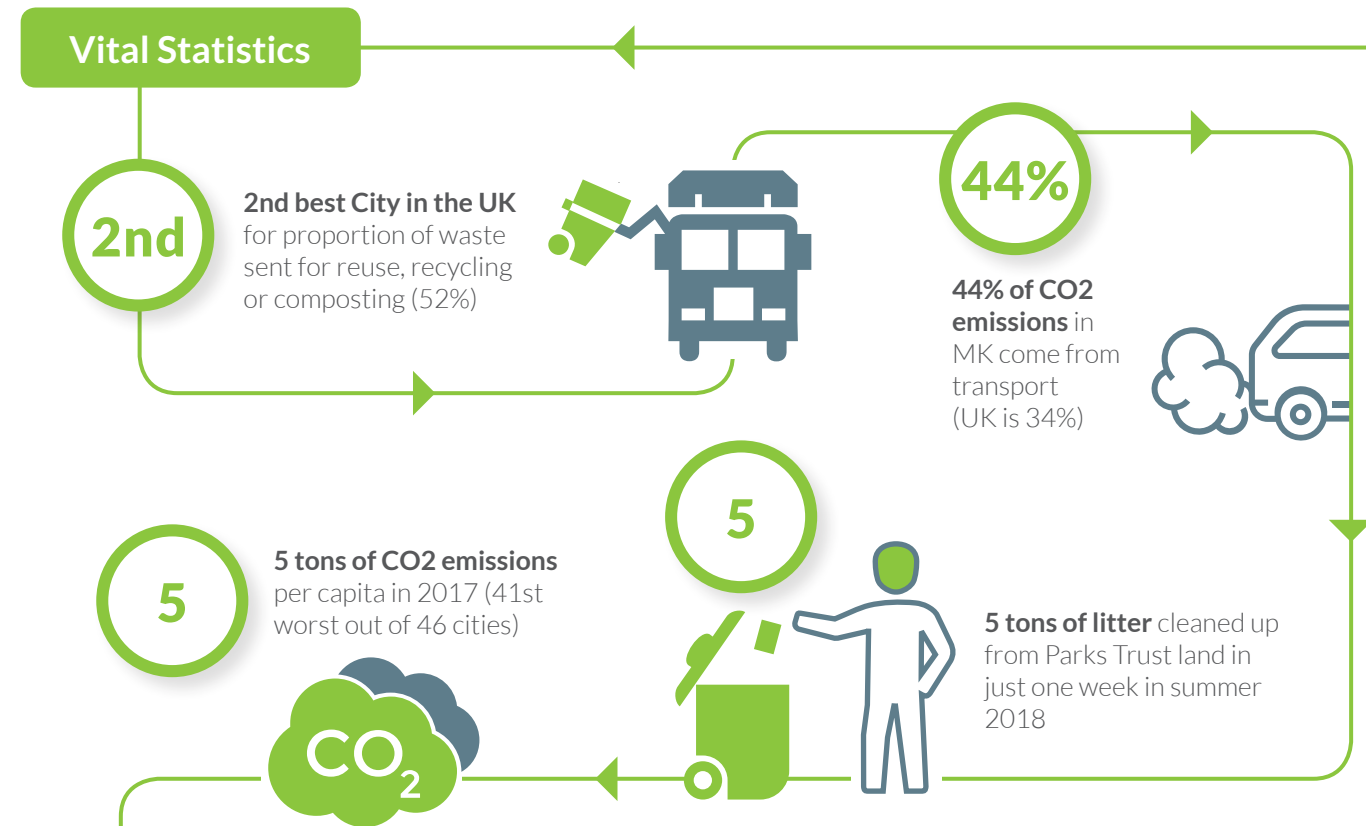
- MK is often thought of as a green city but are we doing enough to encourage and incentivise the use of our Redways and growing infrastructure for electric cars?
- With Milton Keynes set to grow, with the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc bringing more people and commuters to the city, access and participation in healthy and green ways of getting around will be important to ensure the sustainability, health, and wellbeing of our communities. What can we do to promote this as a community?
- How can we maximise the opportunities this provides for our community?



Photo by Future Wolverton

Vital Action

MK Community Foundation have supported MK Christian Foundation with £4,000 for the 'Urban Bee-lievers' project at the Urb Farm in Wolverton that supports young people to learn about bee-keeping, how to produce, market and sell honey and beeswax wraps as well as bee-friendly products like seed bombs and bee houses. This project supports young people to gain valuable skills and Milton Keynes residents can learn about the amazing life of bees and take action to slow their decline.





Arts and Heritage



As in our last report in 2016, it is difficult to gather specific statistics around activity, engagement, and impact of arts and heritage, particularly on a more localised level. However, the cultural sector in Milton Keynes is still active and appears to be thriving, with the newly expanded MK Gallery opening its doors in March this year. The International Festival, that MK Community Foundation supported, delivered nearly 300 performances across MK last summer, selling 14,000 tickets and seeing 60,000 free attendances.

Some of our local arts and culture providers have shared with us some of their own statistics as well as providing us with some guidance as to what they think are the pressing issues for engagement with the arts in Milton Keynes, from placemaking (the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in) to education.

Vital Thinking

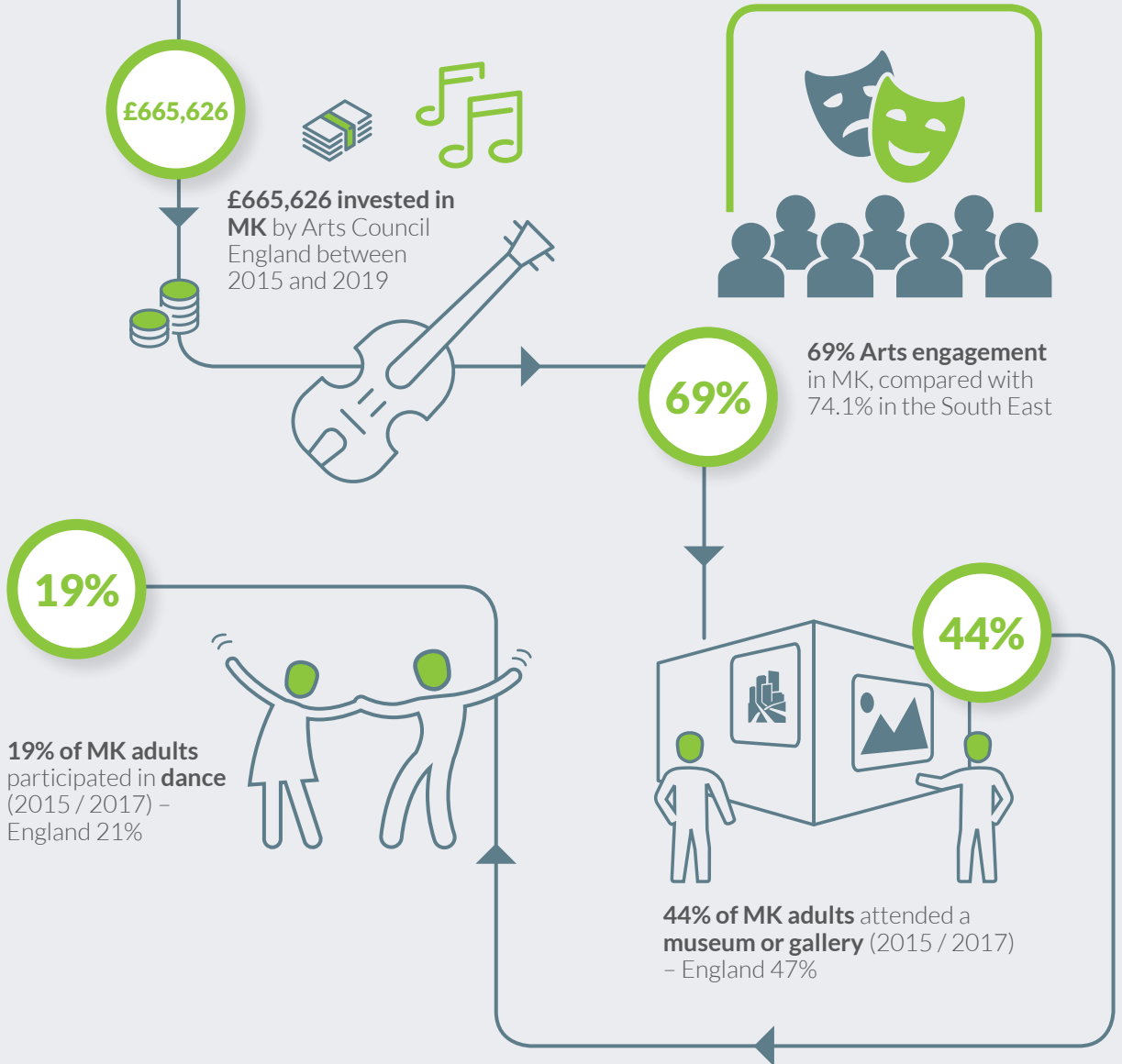
- Last year we reported on the significant contribution that cultural and creative organisations make to the local economy. With cuts to statutory arts education, it has fallen to arts organisations to provide sessions of arts education rather than it being embedded within the curriculum.
- Will this lack of statutory arts education affect our workforce and our economy? How can we make sure our local arts organisations can remain supported and sustainable?
- Do we need a better understanding of the importance of creativity for many areas of life including work and wellbeing?

Vital Action

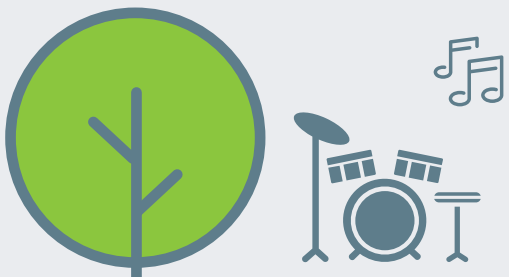
In 2019 MK Community Foundation funded MÓTUS £5,000 for 'Fluid in Flight' part of a ten-week festival/dance programme. The MÓTUS team, working in partnership with the Milton Keynes Theatre, created the opportunity for over 500 young people to be involved in an intensive 2-and-a-half-day workshop working from concept to performance with 10 professional choreographers in a professional theatre. 'Fluid in Flight' was the last performance of the festival/dance programme 'Journeys' that focused on increasing the reach of dance throughout Milton Keynes, with inclusivity and accessibility at its heart.



Vital Statistics



“The cultural sector in Milton Keynes is still active and appears to be thriving, with the newly expanded MK Gallery opening its doors in March this year. The International Festival, that MK Community Foundation supported, delivered nearly 300 performances across MK last summer, selling 14,000 tickets and seeing 60,000 free attendances.”



Vital Signs 2019

→ Looking Ahead

Across all 11 themes, the Vital Signs 2019 report describes an often vibrant, dynamically changing, but sometimes extremely challenging picture of our community in Milton Keynes.

However, it is essential that Vital Signs 2019 is not seen as a one-off piece of insight that generates short-term interest and comment but does not change or impact our communities.

During the remainder of 2019 and into 2020, MK Community Foundation will be examining and highlighting several Vital Signs themes in more detail; in particular, we will be looking for insightful answers and potential solutions focused on some of the more challenging aspects of this year's report.

We will be facilitating Vital Thinking Events (face to face and online) bringing together people with 'lived experience' and specialists from across our communities and beyond.

We aim to explore solutions and identify potential policy, practice and behaviour changes which will make a real positive difference to the lives of the people of Milton Keynes.



If you would be interested in participating in one of these events please email giving@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk



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



Join the conversation

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



Tweet your #vitalsignsMK thoughts to @MKComFoundation



Send an email to giving@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk



Send a letter to MK Community Foundation, Acorn House, 381 Midsummer Boulevard, MK9 3HP



Call us on 01908 690276 – We'd love to talk more about Vital Signs with you!



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Charity Registration Number 295107

A special thank you to our Philanthropy Team who collated the research presented in this report, and to our external editorial support: Dr Vasco Fernandes and Professor Ruth Farwell CBE DL, who contributed their time and expertise to this year's Vital Signs.



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