

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S

# Vital Signs

2016



# **The village of 100**

If Buckinghamshire were a village of 100 inhabitants there would be:

49 males & 51 females.

25 children & young people.  
23 people aged over 65.

54 married, 29 single,  
10 separated or divorced  
& 7 widowed.

86 white people, 9 asian,  
2 mixed race & 2 black.



# Introduction to Vital Signs

Welcome to Buckinghamshire's Vital Signs; a project brought to you by Heart of Bucks. Through Vital Signs we endeavour to target some of our funding strategically throughout the county and award grants based on the research findings.

Vital Signs brings into focus the aspects of our community that are thriving, and those which need more support. Heart of Bucks has collected and analysed local and national data on Buckinghamshire in order to make comparisons within the county. We've also asked members of the community for their opinions, through an online survey, allowing local residents to have their say.

Focusing on various different topics across our four districts, Vital Signs will inform our friends and supporters on the local needs, however it is by no means designed to be the final word. With our communities changing and evolving all the time, Vital Signs is an on-going project. As well as guiding us, it will support other local organisations in our joint aspiration to build stronger communities.

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**To download the full version of this report, including links to all of the research, please visit our website - [heartofbucks.org](http://heartofbucks.org)**

## Community survey grades explained

- A - Everything is great!
- B - Things are going well
- C - The situation is OK
- D - Things aren't going very well
- E - Things are going very badly

*We asked local people to tell us what they thought about life in Buckinghamshire. You can see their scores for each topic throughout this report.*





# About us

**Heart of Bucks is the community foundation for Buckinghamshire and our main aim is to encourage and enable localised 'giving back', so that together we can fund a wide range of charitable projects across the county.**

As a community foundation, we secure donations from individuals, trusts and organisations that want to make a difference in the areas they are passionate about. Through providing bespoke services to our donors, we can ensure that their charitable giving is maximised throughout the county.

Local charities and not-for-profit organisations are invited to apply for funding for a hugely diverse array of projects. From the initial stages of expressing an interest in applying, through to a grant being awarded, organisations are assisted by our internal grants team. We are proud to offer custom support to ensure applications are of the highest standard before they are taken to panel. Our dedicated grants panel – who meet throughout the year to carefully consider applications – consists entirely of Buckinghamshire-based volunteers, whose experience covers everything from education to business and are a fundamental part of the application process.

## Our achievements

Nearly **£7m**  
distributed in grants  
and loans

Endowment funds  
valued at **£4,471,814**

Nearly **2,300** grants  
awarded to local charities  
and community groups

Figures up to March 2016

*We're part of a network of 48 similar but independent community foundations throughout the UK, all working to encourage and enable local giving.*

### Our vision

To see communities thriving in Buckinghamshire

### Our mission

To encourage and enable local giving and philanthropy

### Our values

Inform - Inspire - Involve



# Work

**Getting more people into employment is important, not only for individuals but for employers and society in general.**

On the whole, employment prospects are good in Buckinghamshire when compared to the UK average. They also seem to be improving for both young people and adults. However, are there also pockets of society which have lower rates of success?

**Unemployment can lead to the risk of isolation, loss of confidence, mental health issues, de-skilling and social exclusion.**

(Gulliford, et al., 2014)

## Vital actions



The **Lady Ryder Memorial Garden** offers help and assistance to those in need, such as the homeless or disadvantaged. Together with a local college they provide courses and work-related activity groups which result in qualifications. Heart of Bucks awarded funding to provide a water and electricity supply to the garden, helping to alleviate practical and health and safety issues.

## Vital statistics

Overall unemployment levels in Buckinghamshire are low, with the exception of Wycombe where it is at 4.5% (higher than the national average of 4.1%).

Buckinghamshire also has low and decreasing levels of youths classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) at 2.8% compared to the UK average of 6.4%.

In Buckinghamshire, the unemployment rate (measuring those seeking work) amongst ethnic minorities is 9.1%, in comparison to 2.5% amongst their white counterparts.

Employment and Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefits – which provide for the long-term sick and disabled – account for the largest proportion of out-of-work benefits across Buckinghamshire.

Employment prospects in Buckinghamshire are lower than the national average for those with qualifications below NVQ Level 4 (Certificate of Higher Education).

*“While overall it is good, disabled people find it very hard to find suitable work as employers have very negative attitudes.”*

Community survey grade: **B**





# Fairness & deprivation

Community survey grade: **D**

*"So many people in our community just do not believe there is a large area here where poverty and deprivation is a real fact."*

**Deprivation can mean many different types of disadvantage and is not purely about income.**

Buckinghamshire as a whole comes out well, with each local authority graded A under the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). It is only when we dig deeper that we discover hidden pockets of deprivation at a local level.

## Vital statistics

Three areas in Aylesbury are amongst the most deprived 20% of the UK.

The latest data suggests that over 1,400 people are using food banks in Buckinghamshire, an increase of nearly 50% on the previous year.

All four districts are below the national average (25.1%) for their child poverty rates. However, Wycombe has the highest score in Buckinghamshire at 18%.

Two areas in Wycombe score the highest for fuel poor households, both reaching nearly 16%. This is above the national average (10.7%).

## Vital actions



**Buckingham, Winslow & District CAB** offer specialist benefit advice for some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Heart of Bucks funded training for staff and volunteer advisers to provide a specialist service to those completing claims.

**A large number of children in poverty say that they are missing out on things that other children take for granted, such as going on school trips and having a warm coat in winter.**

(Padley & Hirsch, 2013)





# Local environment

## Contact with nature can improve our health and help to treat common health problems such as depression.

Buckinghamshire comes out well overall, and we are privileged that over a quarter of the county is within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding National Beauty. But how does our leafy county fare when we dig a little deeper?

Community survey grade: **B**

*"We are lucky to live in a beautiful county ... whether we are looking after it well enough would have a very different answer."*

## Vital statistics

More than one in 10 areas scored worse than the national average for indoor and outdoor environment indicators such as housing and air quality. These were primarily in Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe.

The latest data shows that South Bucks has had a notable increase in the number of fly-tipping incidents. The rest of Buckinghamshire and the UK as a whole has seen a decrease.

Nearly half of Buckinghamshire's household waste was sent to landfill in 2014/15. This is the 15th highest out of all UK councils.

CO2 emissions per capita for Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern and Wycombe are below the national average. South Bucks on the other hand, is almost double.

Aylesbury Vale and South Bucks are well below the national average for their Natural Beauty Score. This measures the number of publicly accessible natural beauty 'assets' such as National Parks and Ancient Woodland.

## Vital actions



**The Aylesbury Society** received funding from Heart of Bucks to enable a youth action group to paint a mural on the wall of the canal bridge in Aylesbury. The mural entitled 'Aylesbury past and present' is an attractive feature and helps stop unwelcome graffiti.

**Litter and graffiti can depress property prices, increase the fear of crime and impact on economic development.**

(How Clean is England, 2014)



# Health & wellbeing

Life expectancy is 7.5 years lower for men and 4.8 years lower for women in the most deprived areas, such as Southcourt and Castlefield, compared to the least deprived areas such as Gerrards Cross and Marlow.

In Buckinghamshire 7.3% of children aged 4-5 years and 14.1% of children aged 10-11 years are classified as obese. However, these levels are lower than the national average.

Across Buckinghamshire there are low levels of binge drinking, obesity and smoking compared to the national average. Although obesity appears to be more common in Wycombe than elsewhere in Buckinghamshire.

Compared with the national average, Buckinghamshire as a whole has very low mortality rates for those aged under 75.

Community survey grade: **B**

*“Health services are under pressure and emergency services are less responsive than used to be the case; there are too few mental health services and special needs may not be catered for locally.”*

**Health is a dynamic process because it is always changing. We all have times of good health, times of sickness, and maybe even times of serious illness.**

As our lifestyles change, so does our level of health. The data suggests that Buckinghamshire has very good levels of health across most indicators when compared to the national average. However, within the county there appears to be some areas which may be cause for concern.

**Many factors influence our state of wellness, including nutrition, physical activity, stress-coping methods and career success.**

(Macdonald, 2016)

## Vital actions



**Empower to Cook CIC** is a social enterprise that provides cookery classes, food education and consultancy to children, community groups, families and corporates. They received funding from Heart of Bucks to assist with setup costs, in order to help establish the organisation.





# Education

**For individuals, the acquisition of skills and knowledge can have a strong impact on life chances.**

In Buckinghamshire there are two types of secondary schools - upper schools and grammar schools and opinions on this system seem to divide the county. Overall, the level of education in Buckinghamshire is higher than the national average, but are there still significant numbers under-performing?

Community survey grade: **B**

*“Everyone thinks grammar schools are a great idea, but they hide significant under performance and contribute to a two tier system that disadvantages large numbers.”*

**If we are to deliver a fairer society, in which opportunity is shared more widely, we must secure the highest standards of education for all young people, regardless of their background.**

(Nick Gibb MP, 2015)

## Vital statistics

Attainment at GCSE level is significantly higher than the national average throughout Buckinghamshire.

The proportion of residents educated at or above NVQ Level 4 (Certificate of Higher Education) is significantly higher than the national average, across all four districts.

Aylesbury Vale has the highest proportion (7%) of residents without any qualifications. This is around 10,300 people.

At the end of year 11, the majority of students classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) are from upper schools, however this number has consistently fallen.

## Vital actions

**The ToolShed's** main aim is to encourage creativity and entrepreneurial spirit in young people by offering them multi-trade traineeships which suit a more hands-on approach to learning. Heart of Bucks funded the participation of 16 young people on this course.



# Strong communities

**Community cohesion is thought to be achieved through five main factors: sense of community, similar life opportunities, respect for diversity, political trust and sense of belonging.**

It appears that communities in Buckinghamshire are strong. There is high participation in terms of voting, and generally crime rates are low, whilst personal reported wellbeing figures are very positive. However, there are some signs of dissatisfaction and figures that may suggest neglect or unrest.

**Social networks are a valuable asset, and a sense of belonging brings with it a shared set of values, virtues and expectations within society as a whole.**

(Field, 2003)

## Vital actions



The **Caribbean Movers and Shakers** were awarded funding from Heart of Bucks for their activity group which includes an activity or talk, gentle exercise, and lunch. This group reaches out to the Caribbean community; however all are welcome to attend.

South Bucks has the highest level of crime, followed by Wycombe and then Aylesbury Vale. Chiltern has by contrast a very low crime rate. However, all are below the national average.

According to the Annual Population Survey (2015), residents in South Bucks and Aylesbury Vale seem to have higher levels of anxiety, compared to the national average.

Minority ethnic groups scored worse than their white counterparts on all areas of personal wellbeing in the Annual Population Survey. As well as happiness and anxiety levels, this looks at how satisfying and worthwhile people's lives are.

Voter turnout in Buckinghamshire was higher than the UK average in the last two parliamentary elections. Wycombe had the lowest turnout at 67%, whilst Chesham and Amersham had the highest at 72%.

Community survey grade: **B**

*"[There is] division between cultures and ethnicities [and a] lack of understanding from all parties."*





# Arts, culture & heritage

**Availability of and access to a high level of arts, culture and heritage facilities brings both social and economic benefits to society.**

National engagement in arts and culture is higher on average amongst the wealthy, white and non-disabled, although this gap appears to be closing on all areas except ethnicity. In Buckinghamshire we are lucky that London is close by, which is rich with arts and culture. However, this is not always accessible for all. So, how does our local provision fare?

Community survey grade: **B**

*“For museums, the theatre and concerts it's best to go to London which is costly and time-consuming.”*

**Participation in arts and culture contributes to community cohesion, makes communities feel safer and stronger, and reduces social exclusion and isolation.**

(The Arts Council, 2014)

## Vital statistics

All four Buckinghamshire districts are above the national average for the proportion of the population employed in creative industries.

All four Buckinghamshire districts have at least 70% fewer arts and cultural amenities than the national average.

Chiltern's arts and cultural amenities score is exceptionally low at 85% below the national average.

44% of our community survey respondents rated the arts and culture provision in their area as either 'good' or 'excellent'.

## Vital actions



**Penguin Musicals** is an organisation that produces a community show, run by local people - from the performers to costume designers and backstage crew. This organisation was awarded funding by Heart of Bucks to support their "Emperor's New Clothes - Nothing to Wear" project.



# Housing & homelessness

Community survey grade: **C**

*“Quality of housing is good but high prices are off-putting to young families who often cannot remain in the area in which they grew up”*

## Vital statistics

South Bucks ranks at almost the worst in the UK for its affordability score. This measures the average cost of homes compared to the average weekly earnings.

There were 1420 additional dwellings built in Aylesbury in 2014-15. This is compared to 420 in Wycombe, 140 in South Bucks and 120 in Chiltern.

Rough sleeping is notoriously difficult to define. However, data from Aylesbury Vale suggests that 15 people were sleeping rough at any given time. In Wycombe, the number ranged from 11 to 22.

The latest data suggest that there are a total of 351 households accepted as homeless in Buckinghamshire, the highest proportion of which are in Aylesbury Vale.

**People can lose their homes for many different reasons, such as a medical condition or family tragedy, yet we often view homeless people in a negative way.**

House prices in the South East are widely known as being higher than the national average. In Buckinghamshire there appears to be a lack of affordable homes in Chiltern and South Bucks. Various residents who took part in our community survey commented on the difficulty first time buyers have in these areas.

**Rough sleeping is just the visible tip of the iceberg, there is no easy way to be sure how many people exactly there are that are sofa surfing with friends, squatting in empty buildings or sleeping in cars or tents.**

(James Boulton, Wycombe Homeless Connection)

## Vital actions



**Wycombe Homeless Connection** were awarded a grant to support the work of their volunteer coordinator, who is responsible for recruiting, training and managing WHC's vital team of volunteers.





## Key findings



There is a higher number of ethnic minorities seeking work.

It is harder for those with qualifications below NVQ Level 4 (Certificate of Higher Education) to find employment.



Three areas in Aylesbury are amongst the most deprived 20% of the UK.

Residents in South Bucks and Aylesbury Vale have higher levels of anxiety.



Life expectancy is nearly 8 years lower in a deprived area such as Castlefield, compared to Gerrards Cross.



Nearly half of Buckinghamshire's household waste ends up in landfill.

Minority ethnic groups believe their lives to be less worthwhile and satisfying.

The number of arts and cultural amenities is very low across all four districts.



A total of 351 households in the county are defined as homeless.



South Bucks is the only district to see an increase in the number of fly-tipping incidents.



# CEO's reflections

As community leaders we are committed to ensuring that our funding reaches far and wide across Buckinghamshire. Every year we receive hundreds of applications for a diverse range of projects, but never before have we been able to use official statistics in order to strategically target our funding.

Vital Signs is a key tool for highlighting areas of concern within the county and has drawn our attention to aspects of our community which, without this project, may have continued to be overlooked.

We will strive to help improve these areas wherever we can, and where we can't we hope that by bringing them to the foreground they can then be matched with the right person or organisation who can help.

**Peter Costello**  
CEO, Heart of Bucks



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*If you'd like  
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