Women and girls in Buckinghamshire
A status report
51% of the county are females

This equals 273,300 women & girls

12% are from ethnic minority groups

60% are of working age

79% are economically active
Introduction

The aim of this project is to understand the barriers, needs and required support for girls and women in different stages of their lives in Buckinghamshire. The extensive research identifies the areas that are vital to the health and wellbeing of women and girls and finds the gaps occurring due to gender differences, which in turn have an effect on our society itself.

Nationally, many research projects have been carried out on the issues that modern women face, but never have women’s issues at a regional level been covered.

We hope that this research will become a primary resource for anyone working towards improving the lives of girls and women in Buckinghamshire, and will present an opportunity for community dialogue, more collaborative working and targeted intervention on the identified gaps.

In this report we will look at the life long journey of being a woman during three different development stages:

- Childhood (from birth to 16 years)
- Adulthood (17 - 64 years)
- Retirement (65 years and above)

Many of the issues overlap, continuing onto the next phase of a woman’s life. The purpose of this research is not just to find the shortcomings, but to help us become aware and be able to evaluate both the strengths and weaknesses.

The last section of the report is entirely based on findings from a community consultation. This has enabled us to better understand the needs of girls and women from the viewpoint of those who are regularly working alongside them.

To download the full research report, which includes further local and national data please visit our website:

heartofbucks.org/research
Childhood (birth - 16)

20% of the total female population of Bucks is aged between 0 and 16. The health of young girls is a concern with 1 in 6 girls aged 4-5 and 1 in 4 girls aged 10-11 having excess weight. As young girls move from primary to secondary education, a large number of them stop partaking in PE and other sporting activities. Bucks girls are attaining higher grades than the national average, but aspiration gaps lead them to gender based careers and lower salaried jobs. Nationally, social media expectation is high, with young girls bombarded with up to 5,000 digitally enhanced images a week that suggest how they should look.

More awareness is required during these early stages of life on leading an active lifestyle and improving physical and mental health. Access to local role models can enhance their self-confidence and raise aspirations.
Adulthood (17-64)

The majority of the total female population fall into this age group. Teen births are decreasing but so are health screening rates in all four districts. The employment rate is high with the majority of females in employment, however they are earning less than males. Domestic abuse is increasing at an alarming rate in deprived areas with younger women more at risk.

Childcare, networking support, access to job clubs and low cost vocational courses have been identified as barriers for working age women in Bucks. Accessible childcare, needs-based activities and setting up a social enterprise are amongst many recommendations to solve these barriers.

- 79% of women are in employment. The highest rate in the whole of the UK
- 3/4 of women don't participate in sports
- 101 women used refuges. A further 187 could not be placed due to a lack of spaces (During the year 2015-16)
- 75% of adult carers are female & the highest proportion are aged 50-64
- More than half of adults are obese or overweight
- Girls aged 16-19 are more likely to be sexually assaulted than any other age group

Women working full time earn nearly £4000 less than men, per year

Domestic violence offences have increased 118% in Walton Court and 175% in Quarrendon (2017-2018)

Just over 1/3 of county councillors are women

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20% of the total female population in Bucks are aged 65 and over. Healthy life expectancy is five years better than the national average, however, at the age of 65 a woman will spend on average 47% of the rest of her life in poor health. A quarter of people aged 85 and over are considered ‘frail’ in Buckinghamshire. Older women are also at high risk of isolation and loneliness, particularly those aged 75 and above.

Engaging older women in social activities of their choice may improve many of the conditions they are facing. Intergenerational activities and neighbourhood projects are recommended to help reduce isolation and loneliness.

In Chiltern wards, women live 14 years in ill health, on average.

Over 1/4 of women aged 95-99 have dementia.

The risk of loneliness is higher in urban areas.

Older women are more likely to fall and injure themselves than men.

The average age of those affected by doorstop crime is 77 years. 54% of victims are female & 57% live alone.

Over 6,000 older women need help in looking after themselves.

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Community consultation

As part of our research we carried out a county-wide consultation to better understand the needs of girls and women from the viewpoint of those who are regularly working alongside them. The participants selected were from a range of women’s groups and organisations and included group leaders or coordinators, youth club leaders, council officials, councillors and professionals working with diverse community groups. A simple questionnaire was developed to collect information on local issues and barriers, local needs, the support required, and suggestions to improve the lives of girls and women. As a result we were able to identify marginalised groups and their needs.

Needs identified & support required

- A safe place for regular meetings
- Advice on and provision of cost-effective childcare
- Practical workshops and training for self-employment
- Access to role models in their community
- Intergenerational activities for elderly women
- Peer mentor support to increase confidence
- Those affected by domestic violence
- Those with a disability
- Rough sleepers
- Ex-offenders
- South Asian & Eastern European women
- Those aged 75 and above
Recommendations for Buckinghamshire

Setting up a women’s social enterprise
Facilitating programmes of intergenerational activities
Mapping of services available in Bucks
Annual events for women

Our next steps

The needs of women and girls are significant and the creation of a dedicated fund that meets these needs will be a unique asset for Heart of Bucks and for Buckinghamshire. A women’s fund can serve to expand women’s philanthropy and empower women as philanthropists. If you are interested in supporting this fund then please get in touch.

Acknowledgements

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All of the participants who kindly took part in the community consultation
For the full list of acknowledgements, please refer to the long report

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Visit our website: heartofbucks.org
As long as girls and women are valued less, fed less, fed last, overworked, underpaid, not schooled and subjected to violence in and out of their homes – the potential of the human family to create a peaceful, prosperous world will not be realised

- Hillary Clinton