

2017

Vital Signs

A healthcheck of key local issues informed by national statistics and community voices in order to start conversations, identify hidden needs and take action where it is required.



**Bedfordshire and Luton
Community Foundation**

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Welcome to Bedfordshire and Luton Vital Signs

This is part of a major new project for the Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation, carried out in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire. Our intention is that Vital Signs will inform the development of effective community philanthropy in our area by providing a 'health check' on key local issues informed both by statistics and local knowledge and experience.

This Vital Signs Report provides the data from the University which will inform our Foundation's activities and impact by:

- reporting on the vitality of Bedfordshire and Luton's communities using a range of regionally gathered statistics and evidence from local experts
- identifying the priority issues which present the most significant challenges and opportunities for change
- describing how civil society organisations, i.e. charities, community groups and social enterprises are involved in addressing identified priorities

Bedfordshire and Luton Vital Signs is not designed to be the "final word" on the issues it addresses. We do however need to know what people, businesses, public bodies and local groups think about the evidence and priorities; where they think Bedfordshire and Luton are doing well and where they want charitable efforts by donors and civil society groups to be focussed for maximum effect.

Publication of Bedfordshire and Luton's Vital Signs is just the beginning of a process of discussion. This is not just a report, it is an ongoing commitment to understanding the needs and challenges in the county, a way of bringing people together to tackle those needs and of tracking progress and demonstrating impact.

This is an exciting time for the Foundation and we are delighted with the research that has been produced by the University. But the true value of Bedfordshire and Luton Vital Signs isn't just in the information in this report, it's in what we do with it and our intention is for this to be the catalyst for social change in Bedfordshire, generating discussion and collaboration between all.

Fozia Irfan
Chief Executive
Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation

Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation

“Our mission is to build partnerships which effectively connect donors with community projects through efficient grantmaking and philanthropy in order to strengthen the communities in Luton and Bedfordshire”

Bedfordshire Community Foundation is a registered charity which works to make a difference within the county of Bedfordshire by raising and distributing money directly to local causes, mainly in the form of grants to community and voluntary groups. The Foundation aims to ensure any form of philanthropy, whether from an individual or an organisation is effective and brings greatest benefit to those in need in our local communities.

The Foundation currently manages both national funds from organisations such as Comic Relief and the Home Office as well as funds provided by local philanthropists and businesses. Since our inception in 2001, we have invested over £6.5 million into communities within Bedfordshire and the voluntary sector that supports them.

We provide administration and management support services to make charitable giving easy and tax-efficient. We also offer donor’s independent advice on charitable giving and a professional grantmaking service, which through our local knowledge links them to local charities that are seeking funding.

We have a dynamic new team and vision based on more accessible grantmaking, a deeper understanding of community needs and an effective service for donors.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the research carried out for this report by the University of Bedfordshire. We would also like to thank the UK Community Foundations, London Luton Airport Ltd and London Luton Airport Operations Limited for their support.



How to use Vital Signs

We will be using this Vital Signs Report to inform our strategy and improve our grant making, but we want it to have a wider purpose. Our aim is that it will help groups demonstrate the need for their projects, start conversations between donors and recipients, unite communities over a common purpose and bring together representatives from the private, public and voluntary sectors for the good of the county as a whole.

To achieve that, we've created two Vital Signs reports. This more comprehensive report presents a more detailed review of the research, highlighting key information from the original research, as well as the vast amounts of additional writing and research that exists focusing on the county. It also provides more results from our focus groups and the online survey, offering a fuller picture of what local people told us.

In addition a summary document has been produced for distribution around the county. This is an easily digestible synopsis of the main points, which can be used as the basis for informal discussions. 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 the county

Following this publication, we will also be convening a "Vital Thinking" Forum and to that end, please visit our website for information on the Vital Thinking programme. This will offer a venue for local organisations to look at the challenges and issues highlighted by Vital Signs and will also provide an opportunity to discuss ways we in the voluntary and public sectors might work in closer partnership in order to offer a more efficient and effective response to the need that exists in our community.

Methodology

We are fortunate to have enlisted the University of Bedfordshire in completing this research. They carried out a 3-part approach to this work:

- Collating the various studies and statistics for our area that have been published over the past few years and reviewing the research.
- Investigating the results of our online Vital Signs survey, to gauge the opinions and perceptions of local residents on issues related to that theme.
- Following that, reviewing the feedback provided by our Vital Signs Focus Groups which were held in various areas throughout the county to speak directly to communities.

To prepare this report they used many different sources. The initial data came from the Office of National Statistics, the local councils which gave details of statistics at cities (Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton) and district level. Some of the information also came from the 2011 Census. It allowed the combination of data to form county results, results for the region, (Bedfordshire), as well as access to national rankings. The data covered many topics, including economic, social and environmental issues.

The results were then combined with other data-sets, including data from the various government departments and data gathered from Local Authorities around the county, along with data from health providers and voluntary sector organisations.

The third layer of data was based on Focus Group Discussions and an extensive online survey that was made available through the Foundation, and any of our partners who chose to promote and publicise it. The questions were focussed on the seven core Vital Signs themes.

In total four Focus Group Discussions were conducted in Bedford and Luton respectively because we considered it important to take the views of the people of the county on these important issues, whether they were aware of the local, regional or national picture, and asked for their perceptions and opinions rather than what they knew of 'official' statistics.

For the survey, the self – completed questionnaires were created through using an online survey software, Qualtrics. The surveys were analysed using a statistical software package, SPSS. Statistical analysis involved primarily descriptive statistics on all variables. In total 213 responses were received. We hope that by using wide ranging data-sets, it will present a more coherent picture of the county, and give a clearer indication of actual and perceived strengths and areas for improvement.

In comparison with the total population of Bedford and Luton, the responses to the community surveys and Focus Group Discussions come from a relatively small cohort. Further, due to the nature of the survey, it was more heavily weighted towards people who are already active in their community. They may be more aware of opportunities available to people, whereas the ordinary 'man in the street' may not carry such knowledge of local community opportunities.

Despite this, the responses do represent a significant section of our community, and add a valuable sub-set of data, and so have been included in this report.

Vital Signs Themes

The Vital Signs report is based on the model used by Canadian Community Foundations to identify areas for future community development. Now the majority of community foundations in the UK, carry out their own individual Vital Signs reports in their counties which are all released in October 2017, together with our international counterparts throughout America and Canada.

A number of standardised themes are considered across all the counties and we identified 7 of them to investigate further in our research:

Strong Communities: The 'strong communities' theme seeks to capture and highlight the qualities that foster a sense of belonging, trust and inclusion between local people. This includes both formal and informal relationships that help to advance and build community values. Strong Communities are more cohesive, with members of the community able to rely on one another more.

Health and Wellbeing: Feeling 'healthy' is an important part of our sense of vitality and wellbeing. Health includes both physical and mental health as well as healthy lifestyle choices and opportunities. Additionally, building a greater awareness and understanding of social conditions, including differences in gender, income, ethnic background, education and early childhood development help to inform us about the overall well-being of our communities.

Safety: 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 concerns about different types of crime or other activities in neighbourhoods as well as our general sense of connection to our community and our belief that we can rely on others in an emergency. Building a strong sense of safety and security is central to our success in creating strong and vibrant communities.

Housing: 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.

Learning and Education ; The knowledge, skills and competencies of community members play an important role in promoting the creativity, potential and vitality of communities as well as representing an important asset upon which to build stronger communities for the future. Education and skills should also be defined to include access to opportunities including formal education and training, opportunities for lifelong learning and growth and strategies to promote early childhood development.

Work and Economy Measures of the local economy in a particular area include productivity, presence and diversity of industries, as well as business opportunities available. Prosperity and opportunities to build large and small businesses can contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of an area. The quality and nature of employment opportunities can contribute to the overall sense of vitality and well-being in a community.

Fairness There is a strong focus under this theme on Deprivation. Deprivation can include many types of disadvantage e.g. in relation to housing, education, community safety and employment. However, poverty is not simply about lack of income. Fuel Poverty, for example, is defined in terms of the effect that excessive fuel costs may have in taking households below the poverty line. In some areas of the UK poverty and deprivation will be so widespread that it will show up at local authority level but elsewhere it will be concentrated at neighbourhood level.

Each theme is then awarded a standardised grade by the research team, as a snapshot assessment as to how the situation is under that theme.

GRADING CRITERIA FROM A - E

A = Everything is great. Let's keep things that way!

B = Things are going well, but we can make them better.

C = The situation is OK, but could be improved.

D = Things aren't going well. We should take action as soon as possible.

E = Things are going very badly. We must act now!

Executive Summary

This research considered 7 main themes and grades were used to indicate the issues in the community which needed immediate intervention. In order to calculate each grade, the University took into account three factors— how well Bedfordshire and Luton was doing with the theme subject area compared to similar areas, local research and knowledge of the particular issues affecting the community and the views of our stakeholders including partner organisations and local communities.

The following grades were awarded overall:

Theme	Grading	What they mean
Housing	D	Things aren't going well. We should take action as soon as possible
Healthy Living	C	The situation is OK, but could be improved
Safety	D	Things aren't going well. We should take action as soon as possible
Work and Economy	C	The situation is OK, but could be improved
Education and Learning	B	Things are going well, but we can make them better
Stronger Communities	B	Things are going well but we can make them better
Fairness	D	Things aren't going well. We should take action as soon as possible

The areas highlighted where things appeared to be going well were in relation to education and building stronger communities. The three areas highlighted as requiring the most immediate action were housing, safety and fairness.

Housing

There is a deficit of affordable housing in Bedfordshire and demand outstrips supply. House prices have increased substantially with the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings at 7.23 in 2013, higher than the national average of 3.5.-4.5. There is also a significant issue with homelessness in Bedfordshire with 800 families in temporary housing currently.

Key Needs:

- There is a need for more quality, diversity and affordable housing in Bedfordshire as access to housing play a central role in contributing to complete communities.
- Increased levels of rent, council tax and personal debt are having an impact on housing costs as well as the ability of young people to save for deposits.

Safety

Bedfordshire's budget issues have long been characterised as funding for a rural force, despite the urban problems. 44% of respondents had witnessed, or been victims of crime in the last year. There were variances in the figures which showed changes in crime rates eg figures for recorded robbery had decreased whilst reported hate crimes had increased by 64% from 2014 to 2015.

Key Needs:

- Crime remains a key concern in Bedfordshire with 57% of local people surveyed feeling that Bedfordshire has high levels of crime.
- The increase in reported Hate Crimes and Anti-Social Behaviour incidents directly relate to community safety as a whole and building a strong sense of safety and security is central to success in creating strong and vibrant communities

Fairness

Of the 152 local authorities (rank of 1 being the most deprived) the deprivation of each area is: Bedford Borough is ranked 96 and 1 in 6 children live in poverty; Central Bedfordshire is ranked 138; 1 in 8 children live in poverty, Luton is ranked 47 with 1 in 4 children living in poverty 0,800 or 22.4% of children aged less than 16 years in Luton live in poverty.

Key Needs:

- Child poverty is one indicator of deprivation and inequality within a much wider issue of ascertaining if the gap between rich and poor is widening. Further research is needed within this across the county.
- 79% of people surveyed agree with the statement that people do not have enough money to heat their homes. Excessive fuel costs have the effect of taking households below the poverty line, including those that not traditionally considered economically deprived.

Work and Economy

The employment rate was 84.2% for Central Bedfordshire in 2016. 84% for Bedford and 72.8% for Luton, compared to 78% nationally. In Bedford the majority of businesses are sole traders or micro-employers, employing fewer than 10 staff at their site (89%). By contrast, the economic activity created by London Luton airport sustained 27,000 jobs and was equivalent to 10% of the Luton Borough economy

Key Needs:

- Although Bedford and Central Bedfordshire are faring better than the national average for employment rates, Luton is lower than the national rate. Some respondents felt that it was difficult to access training opportunities and for Luton, this need should be investigated to ascertain if there was a correlation.

Healthy Living

Life expectancy is 11.6 years lower for men and 5.3 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Luton than in the least deprived areas. Life expectancy is 8.6 years lower for men and 7.8 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Bedford than in the least deprived areas. In central Beds, in 2010-12 life expectancy was 80.5 years for men (79.5 years in 2008-10) and 84 years for women (83.6 years in 2008-10), which is better than the national average.

There is a £25 million deficit for the healthcare budget in Bedfordshire but at the same time mental health services in particular are in greater demand. In Central Bedfordshire, about 51.8% of adults receiving social care are moderately or extremely anxious or depressed it is estimated that 1 in 10 young people in Luton are likely to have a diagnosable mental ill-health condition

Key Needs

- The demands of an increasingly ageing population have the potential to put huge pressure on local government and health budgets. Mental health is also an important area where lack of funding and services is having an impact, despite growing need.

Learning and Education

Secondary school students who achieved A* - C grades on their English and Maths GCSEs was nationally 59.30%. Bedford students fell a little behind at 59.10%. Luton achieved 59.60% and Central Bedfordshire is well above average with 64.10%. Overall therefore the county is in line or above national figures, indicating good progress.

Key Needs:

- Raising the level of attainment for Bedford and Luton by improving education and skills for children and young people is important as is the facility for adults to continue to develop their existing skills and learn new ones.
- Measuring and tracking social mobility to ascertain if education is facilitating the qualification and progression of those children and young people most in need.

Strong Communities

Wellbeing survey scored Bedford an average of 7.53 out of 10 for life satisfaction, 7.70 for Central Bedfordshire and 7.57 for Luton in 2016. The national average score is 7.70. Voter turnout across Bedfordshire was high in the general election 2017, between 67 to 77%.

Key Needs:

- The sense of belonging, trust and inclusion fostered across the county appears to be strong as respondents felt part of their communities. In areas where this does not appear as strong, funds targeted at building community assets and infrastructure need to be provided, otherwise those who are more isolated will remain so.

Theme 1: Housing

Housing Context in Bedfordshire and Luton

Together the administrative areas of Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Luton form one of the nine housing investment sub-regions identified in the East of England Regional Housing Strategy. Located only thirty miles North of London, the sub-region's housing markets are in many respects similar to those of the South East and London, with demand for housing of all tenures outstripping supply, and high levels of need for affordable housing. The housing and employment profile of the sub-region is set to change radically over the next 25 years, as a consequence of the sub-region's growth area status. Bedfordshire is part of the Milton Keynes South Midlands Growth Area, with two areas identified as the focus of growth:

- *To the north, Bedford, Kempston and Northern Marston Vale*
- *To the south, Luton, Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Linlade*

Housing Issues

The people in Bedfordshire and Luton continue to face significant housing problems. This region has a number of characteristics which are shared with many of the London boroughs including

- overcrowding,
- high levels of homelessness,
- variable conditions in the private rented sector and amongst landlords
- shortage of good quality land suitable for house building.
- low values attainable through new build with many private sites stalled awaiting an improvement in the economic climate.

Bedford Borough

Bedford Borough is a unitary authority which has a mix of both urban and rural areas comprising the urban area of Bedford and Kempston and 45 rural parishes. The population of the Borough is estimated as 163,900, (Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid 2014). This represents an increase of 11% from figure of 148,100 in mid-2001.

Key Facts:

- The housing stock in Bedford grew from 62,078 in 2002/3 to 64,835 in 2007/8. Over 60% of the stock is detached or semi-detached houses while the proportion of flats is slightly higher at 16%.
- 39,360 (70.5%) are in the urban area and 16,500 (29.5%) are in the rural area (House Condition Survey, 2011). Nearly two thirds (65%) of households are owner occupiers, 18% live in the private rented sector and 17% of households live in social housing. (House Condition Survey 2011). These are close to the national averages of 68%, 14% and 18% respectively (English House Condition Survey, 2008).
- The breakdown of property types is 5,290 (9.5%) flats, 13,100 (13.4%) terraced houses, 6,430 (11.5%) bungalows, 18,510 (33.1%) semi-detached houses, and 12,530 (22.5%) detached houses (House Condition Survey, 2011).
- In Bedford Borough, real house prices (adjusted to take account of the impact of inflation) across have increased substantially in the period 2001-2005 (from £81,200 to £154,000 at 2012 values, a real increase of 90%), and prices continued to rise to a peak of £168,800 by the end of 2007.
- Average values reduced to £137,200 by the start of 2010 and have largely plateaued since that time (Bedford Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015). The ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings rose from 4.9 in 2001 to 8.0 in 2008. This declined slightly to 7.23 in 2013 but the significant increase between 2001 and 2008 is still apparent. The ratio is substantially higher than the long term averages of 3.5 – 4.5.

These underlying pressures on affordability have an impact on levels of homelessness as those who might otherwise have bought properties turn to the Private Rented Sector.

In case of Bedford for the period 2012 - 2032 the affordable housing requirement will be 5,110 dwellings (29.4% of the total dwellings required). This requires the provision of an average of 256 dwellings per year. There is a possibility that this could increase as a result of increased requirements arising through the Duty to Co-operate.

Rental Property in Bedford Borough

At 2011 the Social Rented sector accommodated 10,252 households, (16.1%), only 142 more than the Private Rented Sector, (ONS, 2011 Census, table KS402EW). Total Registered Provider stock increased from 10,117 in 2001 to 11,098 in 2011 and further to 11,846 in 2014. There has been a significant increase in the Private Rented Sector households from 5,921 (9.8% of all dwellings) in 2001 to 10,110 (15.9%) in 2011, reflecting the growth in the number of buy-to-let properties, higher purchase costs and difficulties in securing mortgages, (ONS, 2011 Census, Table KS402EW). Statistics from the Valuation Office Agency for 2013 / 2014 show average private sector rents in the Borough to be in advance of Housing Benefit levels for all property sizes with the exception of studio flats, reducing the accessibility of this sector for households who are not working or are on a low income. This increases the need for affordable housing.

Luton

Luton is at the centre of local pressure in terms of demand within the local housing market area. The need of that housing market area was defined first in 2010 by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), refreshed in June 2014 and again in 2015. The Council believes that the Town faces exceptional circumstances. Constrained by its borders, with limited sites for development and associated planning gain difficult choices have been made in balancing housing land and affordable housing provision against schools, businesses, jobs and green space.

Key Facts

- Luton is one of the largest towns in South East England, The official estimate of the population of Luton is 208,000 for 2013 although the council considers this to be an under estimate and considers 210,800 to be more accurate for 2013. A combination of a high birth rate and high migration has led to an increase in the population in recent years.
- With an area of 4336 hectares, this translates into a population density of 48 persons per hectare which is greater than many London Boroughs. In Luton, there is increased demand for affordable housing which is evidenced in the numbers listed on the councils housing register with over 10,000 individuals and families now registered.

This reflects the reduction in delivery of new affordable homes and the lack of available homes in the private rented sector where landlords are experiencing increased demand from families and councils from London. The demand and resulting shortage in supply has forced prices up and has reduced availability to local families and also to the council.

Luton shows an overall need for a further 890 new homes per year to be produced in Luton over the period 2011 – 31 and breaks down into tenure types (see table below):

Types of Homes in Luton	Dwellings (no.)	% Market Homes
Market Homes	12,700	71.6
Intermediate affordable homes	1,300	7.3
Social/Affordable rent homes	3,800	21.1
Total	17,800	100
Per annum	890	

This is broken down further into sizes of homes needed and shows a fairly even spread of 1, 2 & 3 bedroom affordable rent units with a smaller number of 4+ bedroom homes. However it acknowledges that Luton will only be able to deliver 6000 new homes within its boundaries in this period due to land availability, a shortfall of significant proportions.

Luton is a geographically small borough and has very little land available for new development. Residential development has been and will continue to be focussed on brownfield sites. This adds to the cost of development which impacts on viability of schemes in a depressed market. A number of former industrial sites around the town centre have planning permission for small private flats and many of these sites remain undeveloped due to the market conditions and uncertainty about lending although there are signs that the market is improving slightly.

Homelessness

Homelessness is a significant issue locally with over 800 families in temporary housing currently. The lack of supply has forced greater use of Bed & Breakfast regularly. Many families have been forced to stay in B&B for longer than the Governments guidelines despite the council's best efforts to identify new sources of temporary housing. This is extremely unsatisfactory for the families caught in this position and costly for the council.

Homelessness is at record levels in Bedfordshire especially in Luton with many families stuck in poor quality rented units or Bed & Breakfast due to lack of new provision and increased demand within the private sector. The Department for Communities and Local Government released the autumn 2015 figures for rough sleeping on 25th February 2016. These showed that, compared to 2014, there had been a 30% increase of rough sleepers across England as a whole with a 38% increase in the Eastern region.

Bedford Borough itself reported 51 rough sleepers: an increase of 104% over the previous year. Compared to all other councils across England, Bedford was listed as having the eighth highest number of sleepers. Similarly, rough sleeping seems to be on the increase in Luton with 33 confirmed cases identified in November 2014 and 76 in 2016 which is again more than 100% increase. The vast majority of rough sleepers identified through this process were single people from East European countries. The problem is exacerbated by inward migration into Luton, particularly from London as Luton offers affordable housing compared to many of its neighbours and all London Boroughs.

The level of approaches and acceptances continues to increase (see table of acceptances below, Source: Luton Borough Council) but the council is trying to reduce acceptances where possible whilst still meeting its statutory responsibilities. This shows a year on year increase in acceptances since 2009/10 resulting in 1169 cases in 2013/14 being accepted as homeless.

Reason for Homelessness	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	Total
Parental Rejection	55	108	164	173	213	713
Relative/Friend Ejection	38	77	166	196	195	672
Relationship Breakdown non Violent	4	11	32	35	44	126
Relationship Breakdown Violent	37	68	131	143	151	530
Mortgage Arrears	9	13	32	28	42	124
Rent Arrears LA	1	2	5	6	14	28
Rent Arrears HA	2	3	10	5	17	37
Rent Arrears Private	6	12	39	34	41	132
Loss of AST	10	34	63	46	36	189
Loss of Termination	3	0	73	147	230	453
Other Loss	18	55	72	94	112	351
Institution/Care	2	7	20	44	41	114
Refugee/Asylum Seeker Determination	13	14	20	9	7	63
Other Emergency return from Abroad	5	6	23	29	26	89
Totals	203	410	850	989	1169	3621

Our Surveys Say:

- 76% of people surveyed disagree with the statement that houses in Bedfordshire are affordably priced
- 84% of local residents feel that there is an insufficient supply of low income housing available in Bedfordshire
- 90% feel that Bedfordshire has a problem with homelessness
- 17% of local people believe that housing for people on low incomes is of 'good quality'. 83% disagreed.

Our Community Says:

"We are 9th in the country for national homeless figures. We rank higher than Birmingham, Luton is number 4. We, at the last count in December 2016 counted 59 rough sleepers in Bedford, between a time of something like midnight until 2:00. That doesn't include the 18 people sleeping in the night shelter, it doesn't include the vast number of Eastern Europeans who camp in tents around the outskirts of the town, those in places that are safe, because people don't know that they're there. So is homelessness a problem? It's our biggest social problem and it's only increasing." Bedford Participant

"Absolutely not enough social housing available. A lot of people are staying in mental health units longer than needed because they're waiting for housing. The price of renting is going up and up all around Bedfordshire as well." Participant, Bedford FGD

"We've currently got a family living in a 1 bedroom flat who have got triplets and she is now pregnant with twins. Dad is working, she's had to leave work. So she's going to have 5 children under 2 in a 1 bedroom flat and the local authority can't do anything because they're low priority." Participant 5, Bedford.

"Having people decently and adequately housed is the biggest problem. Luton has got open arms and it does encourage people to come but by the same token what are you coming to so some of the folk who have been rehoused here from Milton Keynes for example are ineffectively covered." Luton Participant

"You can get quite a bit of HMO's for single people but the situation for families is dire, trying to get anything with 3 bedrooms is impossible. But if you are looking for single person housing in HMO's and the like they are evil places." Luton participant

"A sad experience I had last week when I went into work. I parked at Baptist Church and I counted 10 homeless people either in sleeping bags or boxes around them it looked absolutely awful and heart breaking." Luton Participant.

Community Solutions funded by the Foundation

The Kings Arms project, based in Bedford Borough provides accommodation, outreach work and work opportunities to those experiencing homelessness. They have supported people out of homelessness since 1989. Their aim is to break the poverty-cycle and reliance on the benefits system, and move clients into becoming contributing members of their local communities, free from social exclusion. They provide short term accommodation through their Hub and in particular Barton House. Around 35-40 people stay at Barton House each year and receive tailor-made support. Kings Arms also provide training in life-skills and assistance to develop the skills and resources that clients need to realise their aspirations and integrate successfully into the local community.

NOAH Enterprise provides practical, caring and empowering services to homeless people, and those at immediate risk of being homeless. They are based in Luton however their outreach work stretches across Bedfordshire. In 2016 they helped over 1200 people. Their Welfare Centre, for which they received funding from BLCF for has been operating for over 25 years. The centre provides an outreach support team, an in-house team that provide 3 meals per day, clothing, and access to showers, laundry facilities, healthcare services (GP and dentist appointments), housing support, benefits advice, and referrals to other agencies. The number of adults they support is growing each year and the problems their clients face are complex, including homelessness, unemployment, family breakdown, loneliness and poverty.

Theme 2: Healthy Living

Situation in Bedfordshire

Healthcare in Bedfordshire is now the responsibility of Bedfordshire, and Luton Clinical Commissioning Groups. Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group was said to be in the most difficult financial position of any in England in 2014. It was supposed to produce a £4.6m surplus at the end of 2014/15 but now expects to run up a 'very serious and disturbing' £25m deficit (Bedfordshire on Sunday, 4th Dec 2014). By March 2015 the deficit for the year was predicted to be "up to £40m". Contributing factors were said to be a difficult winter, increased hospital activity and a high number of expensive out of area placements for mental health service users (Health Service Journal, 2015). It restated its accounts in June 2015 to record a £12.7m deficit for 2013-14 and £30.5m for 2014-15, resulting in a £43.2m cumulative deficit. It has had an increase in funding of £30 million per year.

There were two Primary Care Trusts for the area: Luton and Bedfordshire. Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire and Luton formed a sustainability and transformation plan area in March 2016. There are 55 GP practices in Bedfordshire CCG and 31 in Luton CCG. Out-of-hours services are provided by Bedford On-Call. Palliative care is provided by Keech Cottage, the Sue Ryder St John's Hospice in Moggerhanger, Bedford Daycare Hospice and Willen Hospice in Milton Keynes.

The main providers of NHS acute hospital care in the county are Bedford Hospital NHS Trust, and Luton and Dunstable University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Circle Health Ltd has a contract in the county for management of musculoskeletal care, which started in 2014. They have reduced the proportion of patients going on to secondary care by 24%.

Healthwatch is an organisation set up under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to act as a voice for patients. There are three separate local Healthwatches in the county covering Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton.

Health status in Luton

Over the next 20 years there will be an estimated increase in the population by some 30,000 people with a large increase in the number of children and those above retirement age. Luton has a high population density and significant inward and outward migration. Between the 2001 and 2011 Census there was around 70% population mobility.

The health of people in Luton is varied compared with the England average. Luton is one of the 20% most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England and about 25% (12,200) of children live in low income families.

Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average. Life expectancy is 11.6 years lower for men and 5.3 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Luton than in the least deprived areas. With regard to Child health, in Year 6, 24.7% (741) of children are classified as obese, worse than the average for England. The rate of alcohol-specific hospital stays among those under 18 is 16*, better than the average for England. This represents 9 stays per year. Levels of GCSE attainment and smoking at time of delivery are worse than the England average.

When we talk about Adult health, the rate of alcohol-related harm hospital stays is 697*, worse than the average for England. This represents 1,254 stays per year. The rate of self-harm hospital stays is 161*, better than the average for England. This represents 365 stays per year. The rate of smoking related deaths is 287*. This represents 238 deaths per year. The rate of TB is worse than average. Rates of hip fractures and people killed and seriously injured on roads are better than average. Rates of statutory homelessness, violent crime and early deaths from cardiovascular diseases are worse than average. Priorities in Luton are healthy start in life, breast feeding at the time of delivery and homelessness.

Luton has high levels of deprivation and relatively low levels of life expectancy (compared with England) and there is a large gap between least and most deprived areas within Luton (7.1 years for males and 5.3 years for females). The major causes of deaths are: a high rate of infant deaths, circulatory disease, cancer, respiratory disease, and mental illness. Sport and physical activity are low and one in three adults are inactive. There will be a large increase in the population over retirement age in Luton over the next 20 years and our population has been increasing its life expectancy over the last decade.

Health status in Bedford

The health of people in Bedford is varied compared with the England average. About 18% (6,000) of children live in low income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is similar to the England average. Life expectancy is 8.6 years lower for men and 7.8 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Bedford than in the least deprived areas.

With regard to child health, in Year 6, 19.9% (347) of children are classified as obese. The rate of alcohol-specific hospital stays among those under 18 is 24*, better than the average for England. This represents 9 stays per year. Levels of GCSE attainment are worse than the England average. Levels of breastfeeding initiation are better than the England average.

When we talk about Adult health, the rate of alcohol-related harm hospital stays is 579*, better than the average for England. This represents 912 stays per year. The rate of self-harm hospital stays is 205*. This represents 342 stays per year. The rate of smoking related deaths is 238*, better than the average for England. This represents 208 deaths per year. The rate of sexually transmitted infections is better than average. Rates of violent crime and long term unemployment are worse than average.

Priorities in Bedford are to improve health and reduce health inequalities by giving every child the best start in life, ensuring good mental health and wellbeing throughout life, and enabling people to live longer and healthier lives.

Health status in Central Bedfordshire

The health of people in Central Bedfordshire is generally better than the England average. About 13% (6,700) of children live in low income families. Average life expectancy at birth in Central Bedfordshire is increasing and in 2010-12 life expectancy was 80.5 years for men (79.5 years in 2008-10) and 84 years for women (83.6 years in 2008-10), which is better than the national average. Life expectancy is 5.8 years lower for men and 5.0 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Central Bedfordshire than in the least deprived areas.

With regard to child health, in Year 6, 15.8% (443) of children are classified as obese, better than the average for England. The rate of alcohol specific hospital stays among those under 18 is 24*, better than the average for England. This represents 14 stays per year. Levels of breastfeeding initiation are better than the England average.

*rate per 100,000 population

When we talk about Adult health, the rate of alcohol-related harm hospital stays is 550*, better than the average for England. This represents 1,446 stays per year. The rate of self-harm hospital stays is 153*, better than the average for England. This represents 409 stays per year. The rate of smoking related deaths is 244*, better than the average for England. This represents 336 deaths per year. Estimated levels of adult smoking and physical activity are better than the England average. The rate of people killed and seriously injured on roads is worse than average. Rates of sexually transmitted infections and TB are better than average. Rates of statutory homelessness, violent crime, long term unemployment, early deaths from cardiovascular diseases and early deaths from cancer are better than average.

The biggest causes of deaths under 75 are cancer, heart disease and stroke. According to the Central Bedfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy, 2012-2016, fewer people in Central Bedfordshire are dying prematurely from cardiovascular disease (currently ranked 17 out of 150 local authorities). Currently, fewer people smoking (15%), about 28.4% who are inactive, fewer people drinking alcohol to harmful levels and 69.1% of adults with excess weight. There is an increased uptake of Health-checks (78% of target).

Priorities in Central Bedfordshire are to ensure good mental health and wellbeing at every age, to give every child the best start in life, to enable people to stay healthy for longer, and to improve outcomes for frail older people.

Mental health and wellbeing








Mental health and wellbeing is important; good mental health and resilience are fundamental to our physical health, relationships, education, training, work and to achieving our potential. Poor mental health is also common; at least one in six people will experience a mental health problem in any one year and mental health illness is the leading cause of long term absence from work (ONS, 2001). It affects any age group; 10% of 15-16 year olds experience mental health illness, in 50% of people with a lifelong mental illness their symptoms started before the age of 14 and in 75% symptoms started before their mid-twenties. Older people are at increased risk of depression due to factors such as retirement, social isolation, bereavement, physical illness or disability and social isolation (Joint Commissioning Panel for Mental Health, 2013)

National data estimate the rates of mental health problems in males between the ages of 5-10 years is almost twice that of females (10.4% vs 5.9%) and the rate in females increases to narrow this gap by the ages of 11-15 years (12.8% for males and 9.65% for females). There are an estimated 660 males and 360 females aged 5-10 years with a mental health problem in Bedford Borough and 815 males and 550 females aged 11-15. The adult population of 20-64 year olds in Bedford Borough totalled 98,110 (59.4%) and those aged 65 and over numbered 26,559 (16.0%) at the end of 2012/13. Approximately 16,000 residents have a common mental health disorder (anxiety, depression, obsessional compulsive disorder) and 7,000 have two or more mental health disorders.










It is estimated that 1 in 10 young people in Luton are likely to have a diagnosable mental ill-health condition (LBC, 2015). This means that around 1,100 young people in Luton secondary schools may require an intervention to support a level of psychological and psychiatric need above the level that they receive as part of general health and wellbeing. Estimated overall prevalence of mental health issues in young people in Luton is 9.8% and estimates of prevalence of emotional, conduct, and hyperkinetic (attention deficit hyperactivity disorders) disorders for Luton in 2014 as 3.7, 6.1, and 1.7% respectively.

In Central Bedfordshire, about 51.8% of adults receiving social care are moderately or extremely anxious or depressed; and 8.2% feel extremely anxious or depressed. The incidence of all groups of mental illness is expected to rise. According to the Bedfordshire county council, the expected percentage increases in the number of cases 2007 – 2016 are:




Neurotic Disorders

Mixed anxiety and depressive	7%	
Generalised anxiety disorder	8%	
Depressive episode	6%	
All phobias	6%	
Obsessive compulsive disorder	4%	
Panic disorder	10%	
Any neurotic disorder	7%	

Personality Disorder

Obsessive compulsive	8%	
Avoidant	5%	
Schizoid	14%	
Paranoid	5%	
Borderline	5%	
Antisocial	4%	
Dependent	5%	
Schizotypal	8%	
Any personality disorder	9%	



Probable Psychotic Disorder

Schizophrenia	5%	
Manic depression	5%	
Probable psychotic disorder	5%	


Eating Problems

Anorexia Nervosa	4%	
Bulimia Nervosa	4%	

Post Natal Depression

Post Natal depression	2%	
Puerperal psychosis	2%	

Dementia

Dementia	29%	
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*rate per 100,000 population

Health Indicators: Bedfordshire

The table below shows the health indicators for Luton, Bedford and central Bedfordshire. Numbers in black are the national average % and figures in red are higher than the national average and in blue are lower than the national.

Health Indicator	England 2015-16	Luton 2015-16	Bedford 2015-16	Central Bedfordshire 2015-16
Deprivation score (IMD 2015)	21.8	27.6	19.2	12.2
Infant Mortality rate	3.9	5.0	4.4	2.0
Children in low income families (under 16s)	20.1	24.5	18.4	13.3
Obese children (Year 6)	19.8	24.7	19.9	15.8
Recorded Diabetes	6.4	7.6	6.8	6.0
Smoking prevalence in adults	15.5	16.3	15.1	10.3
Smoking status at time of delivery	10.6	14.2	10.3	10.3

Smoking related deaths	283.5	287.3	237.7	244.0
Hospital stays for alcohol-related harm	647	697.0	578.6	550.2
Admission episodes for alcohol-specific conditions (under 18s)	37.4	15.8	24.1	23.8
Suicide Death	10.1	7.7	7.5	5.6
Excess Winter Deaths	19.6	14.8	17.3	22.7
Adults (18 to 64) with learning disability known to Local Authorities per 1,000 population	4.3	4.9	5.6	3.6
Adults (18 to 64) with learning disability getting long term support from Local Authorities	3.73	3.75	4.36	3.43
Adults in contact with secondary mental health services who live in stable and appropriate accommodation.	58.6	59.4	55.4	55.5
Gap in the employment rate for those in contact with secondary mental health services and the overall employment rate	67.2	61.5	72.6	67.8

Our Surveys Say:

- 86% of people surveyed believe there is not enough support for people experiencing mental health issues in Bedfordshire.
- 48% feel that community organisations are well placed to divert young people from drinking and help those with alcohol dependency, 52% disagree.
- 65% of people surveyed know where to go to access advice and support for healthy living in their community.
- 67% agree with the statement that too many people in Bedfordshire smoke and need support for smoking cessation services.
- 60% believe Bedfordshire does not have adequate services to help keep older people healthier as they age.
- 93% of people surveyed feel that people in Bedfordshire need help to improve their diets.
- 51% of people surveyed believe that life expectancy in Bedfordshire is above the national average.

Our Community Says:

"For mental health there is no provision what so ever for the young people in Luton or Bedford, or central Beds. There is no in-patient at all for any young person. There is no provision for any old people either." Luton

"The partnership work does not happen in Luton as it should do, it is starting a little bit better but over the years it hasn't worked very well, and the drug & alcohol service now umm they are losing most of their staff because the staff find it difficult to change because it is not like it used to be." Luton

"If you are addicted to either alcohol or drugs and you have a mental health problem, then forget it. Mental health professionals say that until you've dealt with your alcohol or drug problem, you can't access mental health. It's literally ridiculous. And I've been to too many funerals of people who didn't get the support they needed because they were told to tackle their addiction first." Bedford

"We're frustrated by the lack of funding from the Council and all of the other places we used to be able to go to get funding to set up little projects for children with sexual abuse, children exposed to violence, bullying. There used to be little pockets of money and larger pockets of money but there isn't anything available anymore." Bedford

"Well let's look at our vulnerable service user, let's just say they've got mental health needs, they have drug and alcohol needs, they have housing needs, they've got to see their social worker – they have to go to 5 different places – they are not going to do that." Luton
"Although there is an enormous way to go in mental health, there's a lot of stuff being done behind the scenes in Luton and Dunstable." Bedford

"Our service user is getting left out on the street, nobody is chasing them, nobody is following up on them, they try and make a call every 2 weeks and they can't get hold of the service user when they have sold their phone or whatever to get their next fix and we pick up the pieces, which is what we are not funded to do." Participant, Luton

Community Solutions funded by the Foundation

Mind BLMK is an independent mental health and wellbeing charity, set up 1978, delivering a range of services and support to help build healthier, happier communities. Services include counselling, mentoring, community based peer support, activity and wellbeing groups, workshops, training and specific services for older people, digital inclusion and employment support. With funding awarded for the Youth in Mind project Mind BLMK are engaging with young people aged 14-24. 50% of lifetime mental illness is present by the age of 14. 75% by the age of 24. The project will provide a series of events to work with young people across Luton to design an inclusive and responsive early intervention service for young people struggling with mental health issues.

Rennie Grove Hospice aim is to improve the health and wellbeing of people who have life-limiting or life-threatening illnesses living in Luton Airport Ltd.'s Near Neighbours catchment area. Their Hospice at Home service gives patients the choice to be cared for at home, surrounded by people and things they love. The hospice has seen a continued increased demand for their services – with a 9% increase in patient referrals each year. In 2016 nurses cared for 223 patients living in Luton Airport Ltd.'s Near Neighbours area. People with life-limiting and life-threatening illnesses can feel isolated, anxious and depressed. Carers can also find it

difficult to manage the burden of 24 hour care. Patients have the choice to be cared for at home by their team of nurses, healthcare assistants and therapists. Their holistic approach to mental and physical health improves the quality of life for patients so that their lives are made as happy and comfortable as possible.

Theme 3: Safety

Situation in Bedfordshire

Bedfordshire is the lead force in the tri-force collaboration arrangement including Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, and leads the East as a region in the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU) including our Counter Terror Intelligence Unit (CTIU) and the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU.) Bedfordshire Police have a budget of approximately £100 million. Bedfordshire's budget issues have long been characterised as funding for a rural force, despite our urban problems, principally – though not exclusively – relating to crime in our three largest towns of Luton, Bedford and Leighton Buzzard.

Bedfordshire faces significant challenges that relate more commonly to the very largest city environments. Especially, Luton produces other policing challenges more akin to the capital. It has required high-cost policing of demonstrations by organisations such as the English Defence League and Britain First. The costs of policing these, since 2010, have been approximately £2.9 million. The Counter Terror threat from Bedfordshire as a whole means the county is ranked third in the country, behind London and Birmingham, in terms of risk, and we face other significant issues from Serious Organised Crime, including drug, human trafficking and modern slavery, gun, knife and gang crime. The table below shows the crime statistics across Bedfordshire which is compared with the force average till March 2017:

Type of crime	Force average March 2017	Luton March 2017	Bedford March 2017	Central Bedfordshire March 2017
All Crime	65.29	81.29	68.85	50.59
Drug offence	1.6	2.04	2.41	0.92
Violence and Sexual offences	17.10	22.62	19.10	11.56
Burglary	7.73	9.76	6.30	7.00
Criminal damage and arson	8.20	9.27	8.37	7.26
Shoplifting	6.51	7.51	8.12	4.69
Possession of weapons	0.48	0.82	0.46	0.22
Public Order offence	3.37	4.24	3.98	2.37

Domestic Burglary and Personal Robbery

Levels of Domestic Burglary are on a long-term declining trend, although the period April 2014 to March 2015 recorded Domestic Burglaries rose by 7.1% compared with the previous year. There was a large rise during September to December 2014. The trend is now assessed as improving, with recorded Domestic Burglaries substantially lower than the equivalent months in 2014.

It is of note that due to the significant reductions over the past five years a 6.5% increase equates to less than half a burglary a day. Levels of recorded Robbery in Bedfordshire in 2014/15 were lower than in any of the preceding nine years. For the period April 2014 to March 2015 recorded Robberies have fallen by 14.2%, compared with the previous year. Operation SHEPHERD was initiated in relation to Robbery, particularly in the South and Town centre areas

and commenced in December 2013, running until February 2014. There were two main strands to this initiative: to provide crime prevention advice and support to the public. This involved a dedicated team of officers and PCSO's being deployed into the robbery hotspot areas in order to give crime prevention advice, and to prevent and deter offences occurring. Robbery arrests reduced during the period of Op SHEPHERD, as offence levels also reduced. Offences against schoolchildren and college/university students also reduced in two of the areas targeted by Op SHEPHERD. Partnership work was highlighted as beneficial, both in terms of raising awareness and in relation to long term prevention tactics involving increased CCTV.

Domestic Abuse

Reported Domestic Abuse incidents increased by 37.1% in the period April 2014 to March 2015, compared with the previous twelve months. In the twelve months to 31st March 2015 16% of incidents were classed at high risk and 67% as medium risk. The Force converted a higher proportion of incidents to crimes compared to the previous year, and is maintaining a strong positive action ethos around protecting victims and arresting offenders. The Force is maintaining a strong intervention policy with almost 80% of suspects arrested within 24 hours of the initial report. The speed of arrests has continued to improve and will be monitored to ensure that Bedfordshire is continuing the positive action approach that has been recognised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). Solved crime rates remain around 30%. The guilty plea rate for Domestic Abuse in February 2015 is the highest for twelve months at 66.7%, which brings Bedfordshire into line with the twelve months rolling national average for guilty pleas which stands at 67.8%.

Rape and Serious Sexual Offences

Recorded offences have risen, in line with objectives. In the period April 2014 to March 2015, recorded rapes increased by 68.5%, to 0.51 offences per day. Recorded Other Sexual Offences increased by 44.2%, to 1.44 offences per day. 28% of rapes recorded in 2014/2015 were 'non recent', that is related to offences committed more than 12 months prior to the date of recording. This is increased from 24% in each of the previous two performance years, indicating a greater confidence in people to come forward to report to police. All forces nationally have seen an increase in Serious Sexual Offences. Recorded levels in Bedfordshire are not high in comparison with similar forces.

Gang Related Crime and Disorder

Operation Boson was formed in March 2013. Partnership activities, focused through Operation Boson, have resulted in firearms incidents returning to long-term levels, with around one to two incidents per year. The Homicide rate in Bedfordshire in the 2014/2015 performance year was lower than at any point in the preceding nine years. Operation Boson is now a brand in Luton, in a similar way to the Trident brand in London. Police activity under the Operation Boson banner continues to tackle gang related violence.

Hate Crime Reported Hate

Crime has increased in line with the Force and Commissioner's objective to increase victims' willingness to report. In the period 1st April to 31st March 2015 reported Hate Crimes increased by 64%. Reported non-crime Hate Incidents are 24% higher. The majority of Hate Crimes relate to Public Order and Violent Crime. Working with partners the Force launched a pan county Hate Crime strategy in May 2014, and published a new Hate Crime Policy in March 2015 to ensure that all hate crimes and hate incidents are identified, recorded, investigated and monitored thoroughly and with due regard to the needs of the victims and those of the wider community, making it easier to prosecute Race Hate.

In addition, Islamophobia is classified and flagged within the Force reporting system and, through the embedding of this flag, will help to ensure it remains a reporting priority. The Force continues to work with agencies such as Tell Mama, The Dunstable Disability Group, Mind, and the Luton Council of Mosques to encourage increased reporting. In line with the five nationally recognised personal characteristics), Police monitors five strands of Hate Crime: Disability; • Race; • Religion (all religions recorded and non-religion); • Sexual orientation; • Transgender.

Vulnerable and Repeat Victims

Bedfordshire has seen an increase in recorded Victim Based Crime during 2014/15, due to increased public reporting and improved compliance with the National Crime Recording Standards. Other forces have seen rises in Victim Based Crime and levels in Bedfordshire are comparable to those in similar forces. Recorded offences have levelled off since early summer 2014. Bedfordshire has introduced new processes for dealing with Mental Health issues, through joint protocols and partnership working. In December 2014 a Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat was signed by a number of local partners, with the intention of improving outcomes for people experiencing mental health crisis, including providing effective emergency response systems when a crisis does occur.

Anti - Social Behaviour

In Bedfordshire, the ASB incidents in April 2014 to March 2015 rose by 5.6% compared with the previous performance year. This is in line with the Chief Constable's ambition to increase the reporting of under reported crimes in order to protect the vulnerable and to fully understand the extent of ASB in the county. The Force works with partners in the three unitary authorities (Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough) to tackle ASB in their areas. Through the use of a standard case management risk assessment and grading system ('Safety Net'). The Priority ASB teams have delivered a greater consistency in managing cases. Whilst the number of ASB cases managed have more than doubled (160 as at 31st March 2015, compared with 77 as at 1st April 2014), fewer cases are being re-opened (4 as at 31st March 2015 compared with 10 as at 1st April 2014), indicating that despite the increased number of cases managed through Safety Net the issues within cases are being successfully dealt with.

Cyber-Crime

Bedfordshire Police is working to achieve full compliance with the National CyberCrime Capability Framework. As at March 2015 the Force is 70-75% compliant, which is comparable to other forces. The Force is planning to establish a Force Cyber Hub during 2015 to build specialist investigative capability. The cybercrime flag was introduced in July 2014; since then there have been on average 28 crimes per month. Flagged cybercrimes have been increasing steadily since July 2014. There were 37 cybercrimes in both January and February 2015.

On-Street Sex Trade

There is a growing concern by partners, residents and businesses about the impact of prostitution on both the town and its communities, and the risks faced by individuals engaging in the sex trade, the Community Safety Partnership developed its first dedicated strategy to address the on-street sex trade. To protect our communities and residents from the harm associated with the on street sex trade, a strategy was outlined in Autumn 2013 by engaging in sustained and co-ordinated multi agency initiatives to remove the on-street sex trade from Luton by 2018. The goal is to focus on three interconnected strands of activity; Tackling and reducing demand for sexual services, Developing Routes. Out for those already involved and Prevention; ensuring individuals, particularly children and young people, are safe from sexual exploitation and can avoid becoming involved in the on-street sex trade. By effectively addressing each of these strands it will be possible to permanently disrupt the supply and

demand dynamic which perpetuates the on-street sex trade, and ultimately bring an end to this activity in Luton.

Reoffending by Children and Young People under 18 years of age

Luton continues to outperform the national and comparative datasets against the reoffending national indicator for 10-17 year olds. Luton has sustained performance that exceeds indicator comparators over a five year period. Latest offending data relates to 2011/12 and looks at reoffending by 10-17 year olds over a one year period. Luton's reoffending rate was 32% compared to a national average of 35% and 36% in similar areas. 2011/12 also showed those 10-17 year olds, who did reoffend, did so less frequently.

Victim Satisfaction and Community Consultation

Victim Satisfaction levels continued to improve slowly through 2014/15, and to climb the national rankings. In the twelve months to January 2015, 82.4% of Victims were satisfied with the overall service. Further progress has been made in two areas: Domestic Burglary have long been a relatively strong area (consistently between 88% and 90% throughout the last year), and Vehicle Crime where 82.3% of victims were satisfied in the twelve months to January 2015, compared with 80.3% in the same period a year previously. In addition, the British Crime Survey shows that victim satisfaction rates are improving and reports of anti-social behaviour are on a slow downwards trend in Bedford.

Based on a consultation by the soLUTiONs Partnership Plan (2014-17), across the town, 19% of respondents had witnessed crime, 12% had been victims of crime, and 13% had been both in the past year; in other words 44% of respondents had witnessed, or been victims of crime in the last year. In terms of perception; 36% of those who took part believed crime had risen a little or a lot, compared to 22% who felt it had fallen. Just over a quarter of responders thought crime levels had stayed the same. Also, six per cent had experienced hate crime, and 18% of respondents thought they knew someone who was experiencing domestic abuse. Burglary was the main concern in all areas except South (Dallow, Farley and South wards) where robbery/theft was higher, and West (Challney, Leagrave and Lewsey wards) where antisocial behaviour was the top concern.

In all but one area (North - Bramingham, Icknield, Limbury, Northwell, Sundon Park wards), respondents felt residents should volunteer, either by setting up or expanding Neighbourhood Watch schemes or taking action themselves. In North, responders wanted partners to improve their communications with the community. Residents from all areas felt police numbers on the ground or police visibility should be increased.

Our Community Says:

"On paper Bedfordshire should be a lot less safe than it feels. I know statistically a couple of years ago Bedford was the murder capital of the UK. But that was statistics and not really a true reflection. I think crime is lower than it could otherwise be compared to other areas of a similar size. Whether it's police enforcement that does the trick, but I feel safer here than I would in other areas". Participant, Bedford

"Though you can go about during the day and it does not feel so bad it feels pretty scary at night. I don't think many people feel safe in Luton". Participant, Luton.

"I have to be honest and say I am the same as you I live in Luton and when I go out with my friends we never come into Luton. I have never been in the hat factory in the evening. I just wouldn't". Participant, Luton.

"I walk around late at night and I personally feel safe. Leighton Buzzard is a bit of a hot spot by closing down the police station. Considering it's a big town, there's nothing. My closest all night chemist is in Luton. If you want an all-night doctor you have to go into Dunstable. Same is with the police services. But I know from my work with the schools, the issue around youth crime is an issue". Participant, Luton

"We've got issues with forced marriage and that's coming out of Luton as the families are moving out of Luton. We've got a good organisation called ACCM in Bedford who are working with victims of FGM, forced marriage, etc. And again it's not really spoken about in the more affluent areas because you don't see it". Participant, Luton

"From a personal perspective I run the neighbourhood watch in my village. So I can say it's safe and a pleasant area in which to live. I think there are huge differences between Bedford and Luton. It's back to what the police do or say, it's back to the fact we have the M1 and A1 and the close proximity to London". Participant, Bedford

"If you look at Luton itself and the night time economy – there isn't any anymore because people are afraid to come into Luton at night. Even though there might be nothing happening". Participant, Luton

Our Survey says:

- 70% of local people feel Bedfordshire is a safe place to live, but 41% report that they do not feel safe walking alone at night in their community.
- 39% agree that their community receives adequate support from law enforcement, 61% disagree.
- 37% of local people surveyed report that their community has an active safety group, like a Neighbourhood Watch.
- 57% of local people surveyed feel that Bedfordshire has high levels of crime, 43% disagreed.
- 71% disagree that racially motivated hate crime is a problem in their locality, 29 % agree.

Community Solutions funded by the Foundation

Azalea a registered charity who support women trapped in or vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Their support services help to relieve poverty and violence. They encourage and support women to be drug and alcohol free. Azalea's Befriending Project is run by a member of staff along with alongside a number of dedicated volunteers. Regular support is provided to women and they also operate a 24 hour emergency phone service.

For those women wishing to move on personalised care is given to them from the befriending service, by either calling, visiting or meeting up with them. The relationships that build up over time are vital in improving the women's ability to cope with huge challenges they face in their daily lives and in giving them the strength and self-belief to break free from poverty, violence, addiction and exploitation. All the women accessing the project suffer from poverty and many are homeless or stuck living in places which are not safe and leave them vulnerable to violence, theft and other criminal activity.

Azalea helps women to access benefits and safe accommodation, making phone calls, writing letters and advocating for them with other agencies. Most importantly the team are a gateway to exit for the women, they encourage and support them practically and emotionally to take the necessary steps to leave violence, addiction, poverty and exploitation behind them.

Theme 4: Work and Economy

Situation in Bedfordshire

Bedford Borough contributes £3.2 Billion Gross Value Added (GVA) into the national economy of the UK. GVA is a measure of economic activity and is the value generated by any unit engaged in the production of goods and services. Bedford's GVA per head in 2015 was £23,109. The majority of businesses are sole traders or micro-employers, employing fewer than 10 staff at their site (89%, compared to 82% across the South East Midlands). Just 1% of all businesses employ 50 or more staff at their site. This reflects the UK business population profile. There are nearly 5,500 businesses employing some 80,000 people.

Central Bedfordshire (CB) generates £5.4 billion Gross Value Added (GVA)(2014). Central Bedfordshire's level of GVA per capita in 2014 was £20,200, below the national level of £25,400, indicating that the local economy is operating at a level equivalent to 79.6% of the national average performance. The high levels of out-commuting (50% of residents) are a contributory factor to the apparently low levels of GVA in Central Bedfordshire. 66,400 Central Bedfordshire residents travel outside of the area to work, while 32,500 people travel to work in Central Bedfordshire from other areas. This means there is a net commuting level of 33,900 (ONS, 2011 Census, Origin- Destination tables). There has been a notable increase in the number of migrant workers entering CB, with an increase in the number of workers from the EU, particularly the EU Accessions States, referring to the 12 states that have joined the EU since 2004, most of which are in Eastern Europe. The national insurance number (NINo) registrations were 750 in 2010 to 1500 in 2015.

Luton's economic growth as measured by GVA rose by 4.8% in Luton between 2014 and 2015, which was faster than national and regional growth at 2.6% and 2.7% respectively. It grew from £4,665 to £4,888 million. GVA per head in Luton grew by 2.9% between the years 2014 to 2015 from £22,114 to £ 22,766. Distribution, transport, accommodation and food contribute the highest proportion of GVA in Luton at 23 per cent which reflects the importance of the airport. The manufacturing sector generates 20 per cent of GVA in Luton in comparison to 10% nationally.

In 2013, the economic activity created by London Luton airport contributed some £1.3 Billion to UK GDP and sustained 27,000 jobs. This included £425 million in direct impact, which is equivalent to 10% of the Luton Borough economy, £338 million in indirect impact within the supply chain of the airport, and £506 million in induced impact as employees of the airport and its supply chain spent their wages (Oxford Economics, 2015).

Luton's population has a higher proportion of people without qualifications; however the proportion of people in Luton without qualifications has been falling. The proportion of 16-19 year olds in Luton with no qualifications is 16.2% and is higher than the national (12.6%) and regional averages (12.3%)(ONS Annual Population Survey, 2015).

Both the economic activity rates and employment rates are higher in Central Bedfordshire than the England averages. Economic activity includes both people in employment and those who are unemployed but actively looking for work. This is for all people aged 16-64 years. 153,000 were economically active in 2016 (84.2%) compared to 80.3% for the East of the country and 78.0% nationally. The employment rate was 79% locally and 74% nationally in 2015.

Bedford had 89,300 (84%) economically active residents in 2016 compared to 80.3% in the East of the country and 78% nationally. The proportion of the local workforce of Bedford who was employed in part time jobs in 2016 was 31.5%. The national average was 39%. The proportion of the local workforce of Bedford who was in employment in 2016 was 68.5%. The national average was 69.1%. The proportion of the local workforce who was self-employed in 2016 was

13,600 (11.7%) and the national average was 10.6%. Bedford's job density in 2015 was 83,000 (0.79%) compared to .081% regionally and 0.83% nationally.

Luton had 104,600 economically active residents in 2016 with 98,200 (72.8%) in employment and 5,500 unemployed. It has 38,100 who are economically inactive. The proportion of Luton's workforce who was in employment in 2015 was 61,000 (70.1%) and that in part time jobs was 29.9%. The national average is 69.1% and 30.9% respectively. The proportion of the population who were self-employed in 2016 was 13,000 (8.8%) compared to 10.6% nationally. The job density of Luton in 2015, which represents the ratio of total jobs to population aged 16-64, was 98,000 (0.71%). The regional density is 0.81% and nationally it was 0.83%. The total number of employee jobs in 2015 for Central Bedfordshire was 92,000.

Unemployment

From February 2016, new, single, claimants received Universal credit, rather than job seeker's allowance. Luton's unemployment rate taken over the whole of 2016 was 5.9% compared to 5.1% nationally (Annual Population Survey Unemployment, 2016). In August 2017 Luton had 2,565 (1.8%) benefit claimants, compared to 1.3% regionally and 1.9% nationally. Bedford's claimant count in August 2017 was 2,395 (2.3%), compared to 1.3% regionally and 1.9% nationally (Nomis, Official Labour Market statistics).

Unemployment is lower in Central Bedfordshire than in England. 1,280 people were claiming unemployment benefits in Central Bedfordshire in December 2016, a rate of 0.7%, compared to the England rate of 1.7%. In August 2017 the claimant count for out-of-work benefits was 1,380 or 0.8%, compared to 1.3% regionally and 1.9% nationally.

Wages

Bedford currently has 12 employers, Luton has 26 employers and Biggleswade has 5 employers that are officially accredited with the Living Wage Foundation as Living Wage Employers. The current UK Living Wage is £8.45 outside of London and £9.75 inside London. This is not to be confused with the Government's recently created 'National Living Wage' which was set at £7.20 but isn't linked to cost of living and therefore is not a real Living Wage (Living Wage Foundation website, 2017).

In 2015, the average weekly workplace wage in cities was equal to £545, compared to the UK average of £508. Earnings are calculated by place of residence and place of work. (Place of Residence) Bedford has an average weekly income of £588.20 compared to an average weekly income of £505.50 for Luton. In Central Bedfordshire gross weekly pay is £594.10. The national median gross weekly earnings is £541 (2016).

By Place of Work

Bedford has an average weekly income of £532.9, Luton is £543.4 and Central Bedfordshire is £487.0 (2016). The national median gross weekly earnings (2016) is £540.2. Luton has levels of productivity measured by GVA per worker at below the national average of £53,700, measuring £51,100 (Cities Outlook 2016). Private sector job growth between 2013-2014 8.4% increase 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.

Luton was ranked 54th city with the highest percentage of residents with no formal qualifications 12.2% (NOMIS, 2015). Bedford has 6,585 enterprises and 7,720 local units. An Enterprise is the smallest combination of legal units (generally based on VAT and/or PAYE records) which has a certain degree of autonomy within an Enterprise Group. An individual site (for example a factory or shop) in an enterprise is called a local unit. These range from

micro (0-9), small (10-49), medium (50-249) to large (250+). Luton has 6580 enterprises and 7,715 local units. Central Bedfordshire has 12,645 enterprises and 13,755 local units (ONS, Inter departmental business register).

Our Survey says:

- 68% of people surveyed agree with the statement that people's skills in Bedfordshire and Luton do match what employers need.
- 64% of local people feel that unemployment is a big problem in Bedfordshire and Luton.
- 68% believe that it is not easy to find good quality employment in Bedfordshire and Luton.
- 69% feel that people with disabilities in Bedfordshire and Luton face particular disadvantages in the labour market and workplace.
- 44% of people surveyed agree that wages in Bedfordshire and Luton are good enough to allow a decent standard of living, while 56% disagreed.
- 58% disagree that there are many training opportunities for unemployed people in Bedfordshire and Luton.
- 39% of people surveyed report that shops and businesses in their community are doing well. 61% disagreed.

Our Community says:

"The whole benefits trap in a low wage economy means that you can train to your hearts content and you won't get a change in the outcome because ultimately the worst thing that could happen is that they won't get a job". Participant, Bedford.

"Exploitation of young people how we expect them to do the same job of someone who is much older but pay them a much lower wage – internships and apprenticeships. That is no incentive". Participant, Luton.

"It's the same focus on single mums and benefit dependent mums back into work. There's this whole emphasis on it which gives them less time to work with their children to teach and pass on skills". Participant, Bedford.

"What I see specifically in Bedford Borough is that there are a lot of skills out there; however the language barrier can sometimes be quite problematic. People don't know how to access different services. They also don't know how to improve their English. There are a lot of migrants that have come to Bedford and they have a lot of skills to offer but the language barrier is problematic". Participant, Bedford.

"I just know too many people who are on minimum wage, who many years ago would have been earning more than the minimum wage. It just seems quite shocking". Participant, Luton.

"One of the things we know is that the cores of unemployed people is not young people but are people aged 46 and over and often the reason they find it difficult to get back into work is that they have been carers or they have had marital issues". Participant, Bedford.

“On a personal level, salary increases over the past three years have only been 1%. Which doesn't sit with national inflation costs, so it's increasingly becoming that the nuclear family of a wife and two children, with both working; it's increasing difficult to make ends meet”. Participant, Luton.

Community Solutions funded by the Foundation

Diverse FM provides vocational education, life-long learning and training to young people in the Luton and surrounding areas. They aim to develop capacity and skills of socially and economically disadvantaged persons with a focus on those aged 19-25 years.

As well as broadcasting a full-time radio show they also deliver over 35 different accredited, non-accredited and vocational training courses. In addition to this they also run a programme of other social action and health and wellbeing activities, these include weekly job clubs, youth drop-in sessions, football coaching, swimming, Zumba, Zenga-Zenga classes.

Brighter Futures is a recent initiative to provide support to young people using a Youth Engagement Worker and mentors. A series of training/workshops and accredited courses are being run for young people who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health, drugs and alcohol addiction, gang culture, lack of aspiration, unemployment, poverty and other social injustices. The programme will also provide mentoring to help improve young people's self-confidence, raise aspiration, overcome challenges and barriers and develop key lifelong and employability skills.

Theme 5: Learning and Education

Situation in Bedfordshire

In January 2017 there were 44,403 pupils in Central Bedfordshire at 137 schools including nursery schools to free schools. The key stage 4 GCSE achievement was 0.9 points above the national average in January 2016. Bedford had 32,484 pupils at 89 schools. Luton had 39,660 pupils at 79 schools. There were 1745 school leavers in Bedford, with 64% going into further education compared to the national average of 65%. In 2016 Luton had 1460 school leavers and 77% stayed in education for at least two terms after 16-18 study. Central Bedfordshire had 1535 school leavers and 67% stayed in education for at least two terms after 16-18 study.

Ofsted Inspections

Looking specifically at local primary schools, the proportion of students who achieved 'Level 4' or above in reading, maths and writing was 42% across Bedford, below the national average of 53%. One local primary school scored 80% and three others were over the national average, while several others fell significantly below, including one school that scored 9% and two schools not meeting the expected standard at 0%. The proportion of pupils who achieved 'Level 4' in reading, maths and writing was 43% across Luton, below the national average. One school achieved 100% and another 73% and a number were above the national average, but two were significantly below the national average at 0%. The proportion of student who achieved 'Level 4' or above in reading maths and writing was 51% across Central Bedfordshire. A number were significantly above the national average, but three schools reporting 0%.

Primary school attendance in Central Bedfordshire is in line with the national average, with a 4.1% overall rate of absence compared to 4.0%). '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, 8.4% locally compared to 8.2% nationally. Bedford is similarly in accordance with national averages with an overall rate of primary school absence at 4%. However, it is slightly below the national average for persistent absence, 7.8% compared to 8.2% nationally. Luton is slightly above the national average for the overall rate of absence, 4.5% locally compared to 4.0% nationally. It is above the national average for persistent absence, 10.2% compared to 9.2% nationally.

Student's Performance Secondary Schools

Moving on to secondary schools in Bedfordshire, 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 70.40%, while Bedford students achieved 74%. Luton achieved 69.1% and Central Bedfordshire 74.70%.

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 65.30% in 2015-2016, while Bedford achieved 69.90%, Luton achieved 62.3%, Central Bedfordshire achieved 70.30%.

The proportion of secondary school students who achieved five or more A*- C grades on their GCSEs (including maths and English) in 2016 was 49.9% (state funded only and 48.5% all schools) nationally and 49.3% in Central Bedfordshire. It was 47.5% in Luton and 49.4% in Bedford. The proportion of secondary school students who achieved an English Baccalaureate last year was 23.10% nationally (all schools and 24.70% state funded schools only) and 19.80%

in Central Bedfordshire. It was 17.70% in Bedford and Luton. The proportion of secondary school students who achieved A* - C grades on their English and Maths GCSEs was nationally 59.30% (all schools) and only state funded schools at 63%, while Bedford students fell a little behind at 59.10%. Luton achieved 59.60% and Central Bedfordshire is well above average with 64.10%.

Education, Skills and Training Deprivation

The Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain measure the lack of attainment and skills in the local population. The indicators fall into two sub-domains: one relating to children and young people and one relating to adult skills. 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 deprivation score is directly proportionate to the level of deprivation in the area, higher the deprivation score, the greater the level of deprivation. There is only one Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in the most 10% deprived nationally for Luton which is in Biscot. However, there are no areas in the top 10% least deprived. The indices of deprivation for Education, Skills and Training 2015 are highlighted in the map for Bedford. Bedford Borough has 6 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which fall within the 0-10% most deprived areas in England on the Education, Skills and Training Domain of the Indices of Deprivation 2015. These are located in Cauldwell, Goldington, Harpur, Kempston North, Kingsbrook, and Queens Park wards. Central Bedfordshire has 157 LSOAs and five of these areas are in the most deprived 10-20% in England: Parkside, Dunstable Manshead, Parkside, Houghton Hall/ Tithe Farm, Sandy (DCLG, 2015) Grade C in English 59.10% compared to 59.30% nationally (all schools).

Our Survey says:

- 69% of people surveyed believe that their local schools are performing well and provide good quality education.
- 53% believe that literacy levels in Bedfordshire are very high, 47% disagree.
- 68% agree that they can access the education they need to help secure the job they want.
- 62% of people surveyed feel that they can access the relevant training that they need in order to secure the job they want.
- 50% of local residents are able to get their children into the local schools that they want them to go to.

Our Community says:

"Despite all the work we put in in Bedford Borough, there's still a low level against national average of development when children start school. And we're ranked 8th out of our 10 statistical neighbours. We're not the worst, but I cannot see, because the borough invests so much money in their 0-5 provision, why we just cannot work out why that is". Participant, Bedford.

"And on the literacy level, Bedfordshire is one of the highest areas in the country for home education. So those, and the fact we have a lot of private schools too, they skew some of our educational tables". Participant, Luton

"In Bedford Borough we have over 100 different ethnic groups and in Central Bedfordshire it's been registered as over 100 different languages that are spoken in schools. So how does a teacher cope with that?" Participant, Bedford.

"People from poorer backgrounds simply don't have the same opportunities. There's not that idea that if you work hard you'll be successful, that's just not the case. The barriers are too strong for people to climb up. Higher Education costing loads of money is just one example". Participant, Luton

"I see that curriculum has a really big impact, and I'm just thinking about friends that have told me about schools where there child isn't even able to pursue a career because they're so stuck for teachers that they have to take the subjects available in the timetable, instead of the timetable being flexible to the subjects people want to do and are passionately interested in. So if they can change the curriculum then that could be quite positive". Participant, Luton

"We see children coming in far more multi-cultural than we were, and so often English is 2nd or 3rd language. So huge speech and language delay, so you're starting in a school and you can't understand the language. That's an immediate barrier to them accessing their education". Participant, Bedford

"Using creative curriculum with that group of children can support but the staff are so tired that they don't have the time to look to see what is available, and their budgets are being squeezed even more". Participant, Luton

Community Solutions funded by the Foundation

Schoolreaders was founded in 2013 in response to the poor reading attainment levels across Bedfordshire. Trustees saw the impact of poor literacy on children in schools. They identified one cause as insufficient 1-1 reading time at home and school for children to practice with an adult. They aim to help children improve their literacy by providing volunteers to listen to children read in schools with the support of organisations including WI, U3A, Inner Wheel and Age UK. Schoolreaders match reading volunteers with local primary schools to listen to children read on a 1-1 basis. They operate in a number of counties with over 100 schools in Bedfordshire having joined the scheme so far. They have over 190 volunteers in Bedfordshire and 700 volunteers across all of their schemes in total. In their first year as a charity, 93% of schools rated volunteer's impact as good or excellent and commented on improvements to reading confidence, expression, fluency, even motivation of the children.

The School Support Fund distributes over £40,000 each year to primary schools in Luton. The aim of this fund is to provide financial support to primary school pupils throughout Luton who need additional support to offer them the same opportunities as those who are not in receipt of benefits or require additional support and are at risk of negative educational outcomes as a result of poverty. Parents can apply through the school for grants for the purchase of clothing purchase of educational activities, ie. Music lessons, specialised equipment and extra Curricular activities especially out of school and holiday clubs. It is estimated over 4,500 primary school pupils have benefited from this fund each year.

Theme 6: Stronger Communities

Situation in Bedfordshire

The latest estimate of the population of Luton is 216,800 (Luton Business Intelligence, 2016). The projected growth rate is 1% per year. 55% of the population is White, 30% Asian and 10% Black, 4% Mixed, 2% Other (UK Census, 2011). Luton has a younger population than the national average. Both natural change and international migration are contributing to the increasing population in Luton. It has grown by 11,000 since 2012 or a growth rate of 5.3% (Business Intelligence, Luton Brought Council, 2016).

Luton is an ethnically diverse population with around 55% of the population from black and minority ethnic groups and 75% of school pupils from black and minority ethnic groups. Half of Luton's children do not speak English as their first language. Net internal migration for Luton is -1.30%, where more people are moving out than in.

Bedford has an estimated population of 168,751 (ONS, 2016). Its population is projected to increase to approximately 182,499 in 2023, an increase of 8% over 2016. The older population is projected to increase at a much higher rate. The 65+ age group is anticipated to rise by 16% from 2016-2023, and the 85+ population by 26% (Bedford Borough Council, 2016).

In 2015 there were 2,824 National Insurance registrations to foreign nationals in Bedford Borough. This measure is only indicative of the scale of international migration since the data excludes those who have moved to the locality after registering elsewhere in the UK and takes no account of dependants and provides no information about the numbers who may have left the locality for other UK destinations or to return to their country of origin. The 2011 census indicates that 27,700 people in Bedford Borough were born outside the UK, representing 17.6% of the population. The largest number of residents born outside the UK was from Poland. The pattern of births to mothers born outside the UK is another indicator of the level and origin of in-migration.

Central Bedfordshire has an estimated population of 278,900 (ONS, 2016). It has a greater proportion of people who are White British at 89.7%. It is the 15th largest unitary council in England by population size. It is classified as 'largely rural' with 58% of residents living in rural areas. This includes 'hub towns' like Dunstable, Biggleswade, Houghton Regis, Flitwick and Sandy, which are towns with populations of 10,000 to 30,000 that play an important role in providing services, employment and businesses to the rural area around them (Central Bedfordshire Council, 2017).

Local Engagement

Voter turnout across Bedfordshire was quite high in the general election 2017. In Luton North it was 68.83% and Luton South was 69.96%. The turnout in Bedford was 67.5%. In the other constituencies' turnout was high. In Mid-Bedfordshire it was 76.7%, NE Beds was 73.8%, Beds SW was 69.8% (BBC Election Website, 2017).

Wellbeing survey scored Bedford an average of 7.53 out of 10 for life satisfaction, 7.70 for Central Bedfordshire and 7.57 for Luton in 2016. These results are based on local people's responses to questions regarding their life satisfaction and whether they feel happy about things. The national average score is 7.70. (ONS Subjective Well-being APS, 2016).

According to the Report of the Luton Commission on community cohesion (2011), for constant vigilance and sustained effort from local public and voluntary agencies to maximise the gains and minimise the losses. The Commission believed that framing community cohesion in these terms going forward would deliver huge benefits, empower individuals, bridge multi ethnic and

multi-cultural communities. The evidence presented to the Commission showed that the majority of local people regarded the town's diversity as a positive attribute. But the evidence – including from events connected to international terrorism at the end of last year, and the real possibility of a major national demonstration sited in Luton this year – also showed that, if it is left to just happen, diversity can be perceived as having some very negative consequences. Extremism is roundly condemned by the vast majority of people in Luton but other negative consequences can result from cultural differences – not only from different races living side-by-side but also from different faiths, and other aspects of people's identities, such as sexual orientation, that can be used to underline differences rather than what binds people together in community.

Our Survey says:

- 81% of people surveyed have a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, estate or village.
- 84% of local residents try to get involved with local events and activities.
- 76% feel that there are enough local activities on offer in Bedfordshire, such as fetes, faith group events, school events, sports recreation or arts activities.
- 69% of people surveyed feel that all ethnic groups in Bedfordshire mix and get on well together.
- 85% of local people surveyed agreed that they would recommend moving to Bedfordshire if a friend were considering it.

Our Community says:

"Although we embrace diversity I think that is a big problem in itself. When we look at different communities do stick to their own communities. I think a lot of the stigma that is created that they believe is created outside of that community is actually held within those communities". Participant, Luton

"There are cultural challenges sometimes segregate us and separate us to the extent we choose to do them in our lives. Since there's been an influx of the Polish community specifically, I think there's more celebrations put on, things, events we can go to. I think there are desires within the community to mix and I think there are some opportunities". Participant, Bedford

"The reality is that it is not but equally I think you are right there are lots of mono cultures going on and there are lots and lots of sub-sets some of which are very small". Participant, Luton

"Sometimes I feel like people have got blinkers on. They don't want to talk about it because they know it's an issue and if they talk about it they've got to do something about it. And they don't have the money to do anything about it. But sometimes it's not about the money; it's about trying to get the communities together". Participant, Bedford

"The younger people go by what they hear. If they're in a house where people are open to mixing and have friends from all different cultures, then they'll probably go with it. But there are some families where its institutional racism over the generations and that goes on. Their children hear that and that's what their beliefs become". Participant, Luton

"In terms of community groups, I think there are community hubs around Bedford and quite a bit is central. It's great to see things like the food festival and the different voluntary groups doing outreach for the homeless. You've got sports groups and churches, art groups and that kind of thing". Participant, Bedford

Community Solutions funded by the Foundation

Queens Park Community Orchard (QPCO) is a group working in their local neighbourhood to encourage community cohesion. QPCO provides a means by which local people can help tackle local social deprivation, prejudice, racism and isolation in the Queen's Park area, by involving the whole community in various planned activities. They run a number of annual events including the very successful multi-cultural parade that takes place in July. Over 300 visitors attended the event in 2017 with a huge variety of local groups being represented including the MK Chinese Fusion Dance Group, Fusion Youth in Bedford, Parvati & Dancers, Music 4 Memory, Bedford Salvation Army, Bedford Community Gospel Choir, Promethidion Bedford, Kenyan Community Choir & Rinceoiri le cheile.

The multicultural parade celebrates the diversity of Queen's Park with a showcase of different culture, languages and nationalities. The aim of the parade is to enable people to learn about their neighbours and an opportunity to learn about different cultures and help to put people's fear at rest.

Theme 7: Fairness

Situation in Bedfordshire

Child poverty is about children living in households suffering from a lack of material resources. It is defined by the government as those children living in families earning less than 60% of the current median income, after housing costs for the relevant household size. According to Barnardo's a family with two adults and two children under 15 needs to have £375 per week, after paying for housing to be above the poverty line. That is an annual household income of about £19,500. The reality of living in poverty equates to having only about £13 per day per person.

10,800 or 22.4% of children aged less than 16 years in Luton live in poverty (Public Health England, Child Health Profile, June 2015). This is one of the worst rates of child poverty in the East of England. Of the 152 local authorities (rank of 1 being the most deprived) the deprivation of each area is: Bedford Borough is ranked 96 and 1 in 6 children live in poverty; Central Bedfordshire is ranked 138; 1 in 8 children live in poverty, Luton is ranked 47 with 1 in 4 children living in poverty. In January 2016 Bedford had 90 pupils in receipt of free school meals, Luton had 80 pupils and Central Bedfordshire had 143 pupils, with a total of 2,802 pupils for the East of England. The total for England was 24, 288. These are the inclusive figure for state funded nurseries, state funded primary and secondary schools, special schools, pupil referral units, and independent schools (Department of Education, 2016).

Work does not provide a guaranteed route out of poverty in the UK. Approximately 66% or two thirds of children growing up in poverty lives in families where at least one member works. (Households below average income, an analysis of the income distribution 1994/95 – 2014/15, Table 4.5db. Department for Work and Pensions, 2016).

They cannot afford to buy the absolute essentials that we need to eat, stay warm and dry and keep clean. There is a problem of using free school meal status as a valid proxy for economic status, on the basis that infants receive three years of universal free school meals irrespective of economic background until key stage 2. That is every child in reception, year 1 and 2. Older children can only get them if parents or carers are in receipt of qualifying benefits. Is it an unreliable indicator? Free school meal eligibility is still used to measure pupil socio-economic disadvantage.

Most Deprived Areas

Deprivation is a broad measure of poverty and looks at income based measures along with social issues such as crime, education, employment and health. It is measured at the small area level. These areas are known as lower super output areas (LSOAs). Overall, levels of deprivation in Central Bedfordshire are relatively low, with many areas being among the most deprived in England. However, five LSOAs are in the most deprived 10-20% in England and a further eight LSOAs were in the most deprived 20-30% in England. Nine Luton areas are in the top 10% most deprived in the UK.

Nationally, the proportion of people who believe that poverty and income inequality are among the most important issues facing the UK was 20% in December 2016, but arguably other important issues like Brexit and economy are about income related topics. Ipsos-Mori Issues Index, 2017.

Fuel Poverty

A fuel poor household is one that cannot afford to keep adequately warm at reasonable cost. Fuel poverty is defined as a household that needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth.

In Central Bedfordshire 7.3% of households experienced fuel poverty. The number and proportion of households in fuel poverty in 2015 was 7,182 and 6.3%. This is lower than the England average of 10.6%. Fuel poverty tends to be more of an issue in rural areas and in those areas with high levels of private rented accommodation (Fuel Poverty statistics, 2014). The percentage of households experiencing fuel poverty increased from 12.8% in 2011 to 13.4% in 2012 in Luton. The inequality gap with England has widened as nationally a decrease in fuel poverty was seen. Luton's rate was significantly higher than England at 10.9% in 2011 and 10.41% in 2012. In 2015 Luton's number of estimated fuel poor households was 6,827 and the proportion of households fuel poor was 8.9%. For Bedford the figure was 5,582 households and 8.5%, compared regionally for the East at 194, 527 households and 7.8%.

Food banks

Food banks provide three days' nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people who are referred to them. They work to combat poverty and hunger across the UK. Dunstable food bank gave 3086 three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis in 2015. Bedford food bank provided 5,488 three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis in 2016. Food banks are not encouraging dependency, according to a recent report by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (Lambie-Mumford et al., 2014). Food aid providers are informally meeting increasing need and are trying to help. 87% of users of Luton's food bank are reportedly backed on their feet after only one or two visits.

Our Surveys say:

- 73% of local residents disagree that people in Bedfordshire make too much use of food banks, while 27% agree.
- 79% of people surveyed agree with the statement that people do not have enough money to heat their homes, while 21% disagree.
- There are difficulties in accessing public and community services for some sections of Bedfordshire, which is confirmed by 84% of people surveyed.
- 74% of people believe that some people are more likely to access free school meals.
- 80% of local people feel that the gap between rich and poor is wider than ever before.

Our Community says:

"Those who are affluent should have a bit of a reality check sometimes, because it helps their children wake up a bit and realise what's going on. My children will never be lucky enough to go to a private school, but I do want them to know what's going on". Participant, Bedford.

"I have sat in so many homes with my coat on because it is just so cold. They've got no money to put in the electricity, it's shocking. I've been in the voluntary sector for 20 years, working with disadvantaged people and I have never seen it this bad". Participant, Luton.

"Free school meals are not always a good indicator of child poverty because some migrant families aren't eligible. So it wouldn't actually show up on the statistics. It's the same for new families that come here; it takes a number of years for them to apply for benefits. I know of

one family that the community supported that didn't even have enough money to warm their house over winter". Participant, Bedford.

"Giving every child should have the opportunity to access those services. To get more schools involved, and I know they're doing a bit of that. And give every child the opportunity to access those resources. And the training the staffs have. I know there's still a huge difference in pay and they've retained those staff that have got the skills and experience. Unlike the state schools, we've just got to make it fairer". Participant, Luton.

"Food banks are a newish thing in the last few years. I've a lot to do with food banks and it seems to me that loads of people are using them, and I think it's very sad that people have to go there and receive free hand out because of the economy, or because there's no work in the area. Too many people are using food banks". Participant, Bedford.

"They'll be examples within the county where you've got instances of outrageous child poverty. They're not just isolated. And there's also families experiencing domestic abuse. We're all seeing plenty of cases that should not be happening with our laws and the wealth we've got in our country. But it's become quite commonplace". Participant, Luton.

Community Solutions funded by the Foundation

FACES (Family and Children's Early-help Services) is a Bedford Borough based charity offering practical and emotional support to families under stress. They do this by recruiting and training volunteers who work alongside one of their Practitioners in delivering a unique menu of tailored services directly to a family, in their own home.

FACES aims to support families during difficult periods in their lives, they operate a number of services which include; Early Help Home Visiting Service, Baby FACES, Family Groups, Crisis Aid, Family Learning, FACES talk safe, BDASS (Bedford Domestic Abuse Support Service), Faces 2 Faces and Cope and Recover. They offer both practical and emotional support for issues such as: Domestic Abuse, Help with family finance, Help with pregnancy and infants, Support with parenting issues, Signposting to our partner agencies - such as debt advice, Depression, Isolation and Victim Support.

FACES undertake some excellent work in the local area and work with a number of other organisations including the local children centres.

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