

OPPORTUNITY BUCKS – SUCCEEDING FOR ALL

A local response to Levelling Up



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1. INTRODUCTION

Buckinghamshire is a beautiful place to live and work, famous for its natural environment and its quality of life.

As the 'entrepreneurial heart of Britain' we are home to both global brands and large numbers of small and medium sized businesses which underpin our strong economy. We have robust and effective partnerships which bring together public service bodies, business leadership and the voluntary and community sector, and together we are ambitious for our communities and our residents.

Whilst the majority of our communities are thriving in the county, we know that in some areas of Buckinghamshire people are experiencing significant hardship. As partners, we want to come together with these communities and draw upon our collective resources to enhance opportunities and promote community wellbeing.



LEVELLING UP

The Government has placed 'Levelling up' at the heart of its agenda to recover after the pandemic. The Levelling Up White Paper published in February 2022 sets out 12 national missions designed to spread opportunity across the whole UK and improve everyday life and life chances for people in underperforming places. These missions are grouped into four themes:

- a) Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging - with a focus on living standards, research and development, transport infrastructure and digital connectivity
- b) Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest - with a focus on education, skills, health and wellbeing
- c) Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost - with a focus on pride in place, housing, and crime
- d) Local Leadership - with a focus on devolution deals from national to local government.

"It is about improving living standards and growing the private sector, particularly where it is weak. It is about increasing and spreading opportunity, because while talent is evenly distributed, opportunity is not. It is about improving health, education and policing, particularly where they are not good enough. It is also about strengthening community and local leadership, restoring pride in place, and improving quality of life in ways that are not just about the economy"

(Boris Johnson, May 2021)

SUCCEEDING AS A PLACE, SUCCEEDING AS A COUNTRY



The Buckinghamshire Growth Board has set out a shared strategic vision for Buckinghamshire for 2050.

The vision is underpinned by three interlinked strategic ambitions that will guide a thriving, resilient, successful, connected, healthier and inclusive Buckinghamshire.

Building on the Levelling Up missions, **"Opportunity Bucks – Succeeding for All"** is aimed at spreading opportunity and promoting pride in place in Buckinghamshire. It is a partner document to the Buckinghamshire proposition **"Succeeding as a Place, Succeeding as a Country"** which focuses on our ambition for economic recovery and a devolution deal.

Change will not happen overnight and we know that this is a long term commitment.

This Framework provides a clear statement of intent by Buckinghamshire partners, together with a structure for taking action and providing accountability.

2. SUMMARY

Buckinghamshire is widely known as an affluent county with great outcomes. However, we know that this overall picture masks some significant variations in outcomes, with some areas experiencing significant hardship.

‘Opportunity Bucks - Succeeding for All’ provides a framework for bringing partners together to focus our collective resources on tackling those local priorities that will make a difference to the outcomes of residents.

It will focus on five themes:

- **Education and Skills**
- **Jobs and Career Opportunities**
- **Quality of our Public Realm**
- **Standard of Living**
- **Health and Wellbeing**

Initially, the programme will be focused on 10 wards in three areas – parts of Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham. Local action plans will be developed through engagement with the communities, led by the Community Boards.

The Buckinghamshire Growth Board will provide clear accountability for the programme.



3. THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CONTEXT



AN AFFLUENT COUNTY WITH GREAT OUTCOMES

Buckinghamshire is an affluent county and residents enjoy some of the best outcomes in the UK.



Economy

- **31,470** businesses
- **249,000** jobs
- **553,100** residents
- **£17.4bn** economy



Employment

- **Low** unemployment and **Higher** than average incomes
- **15%** higher average earnings for residents than nationally
- **2.7%** of the working age population claiming unemployment benefits, compared with **3.9%** nationally



Health

Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the England average.



Education

- **47.5%** of residents have a degree or equivalent qualification or higher, compared to 43.5% nationally
- **66%** of children achieve grades 9-5 in GCSE English and Maths compared to 52% nationally

Data Sources:

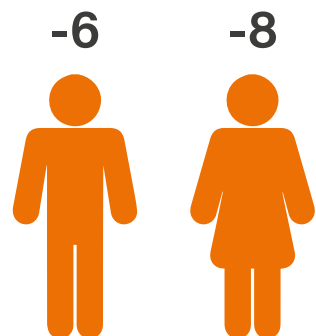
- ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (2020)
- ONS Inter Departmental Business Register (2021)
- ONS Claimant count by sex and age (May, 2022)
- Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (2022)
- Census (2021)
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (LA profiles 2022)
- Department for Education (2016/17 to 2020/21 for Buckinghamshire)
- ONS annual population survey (2021)



SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS IN OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE AND PLACES

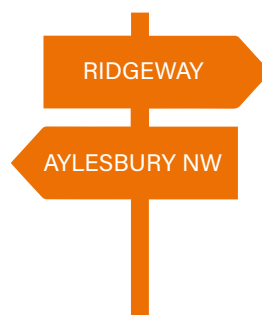
However, we know that this overall picture masks significant variations in outcomes across the county, with some areas experiencing significant hardship. Health inequalities has long been identified as a key public health challenge to tackle in the UK. The lower an individual's socio-economic position, as defined by where they live, their job, qualifications, income and wealth, the more likely they are to experience poor health. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have mirrored, and in some cases exacerbated, existing inequalities, impacting particularly on those who are most vulnerable and putting a spotlight on underlying health and economic challenges within our communities.

Life Expectancy



There is a difference of 8 years for a woman and 6 years for a man depending on where you live in Buckinghamshire.

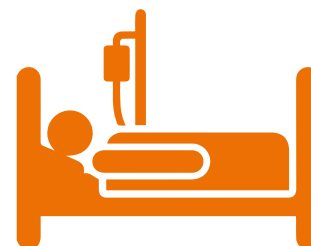
Life expectancy in North West Aylesbury is 80 years for a woman and 78 years for a man.



This contrasts with 88 years for a woman in Ridgeway East and 84 years for a man.

Hospital Admissions

Emergency hospital admissions in Aylesbury and High Wycombe are all well above the average for the county.



Financially stretched



16%

Bucks residents are identified as 'financially stretched' according to Acorn household segmentation data.

Free School Meals



10,856

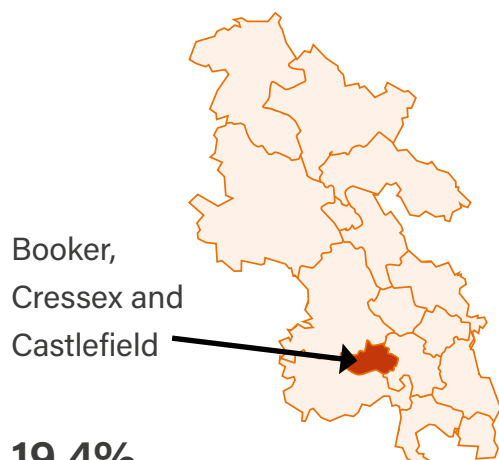
Buckinghamshire Pupils were eligible for Free School Meals (January 2022), 12.3% of all pupils. This is an increase of 1,361 pupils since January 2021.

Data Sources:

- ONS Life expectancy at birth (2019)
- NHS Hospital Activity Data (2022)
- CACI Acorn geodemographic segmentation data (2022)
- Buckinghamshire Council (free school meal data 2021)

SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS IN OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE AND PLACES

Universal Credit



19.4% of the working population in Booker, Cressex and Castlefield claim universal credit (April 2022), compared with 5.4% in Gerrards Cross (8.9% for Buckinghamshire).

27% of residents over the age of 16 in Booker, Cressex and Castlefield have no qualifications, compared with 10% in Gerrards Cross (17% for Buckinghamshire).

House prices and rents

Experiencing hardship in an area of relative affluence brings particular challenges. Buckinghamshire has higher than average house prices and rents.



The **average** house price in Buckinghamshire was **£549k** in November 2021.

This figure disguises considerable variation, with the **average** house price in Gerrards Cross **£1.3m**



The lack of affordable housing is a key driver of **homelessness**. There is a growing gap between local housing allowance rates and private sector rents.



£925 per month is the median cost of renting a two bedroomed dwelling in Buckinghamshire, in the private sector rental market, unaffordable for anyone on benefits, including working households on low incomes.

Challenging Landscape

The landscape is becoming even more challenging for those who are struggling with the rising cost of living and fuel crisis.

In 2020, **12.6%** of households in Booker, Cressex and Castlefield experienced **fuel poverty**. We expect that this figure will have grown since then and will continue to grow.



The impact of COVID is likely to be particularly acute in these communities too. Cases of chronic disease that weren't being managed during peak waves are likely to lead to rises in ill health. Children's development and education are likely to be hardest hit in these areas too.

Data Sources

- Department for Work and Pensions; Universal Credit Claimants (May 2022)
- MHCLG Indices of Deprivation 2019
- Land Registry Average House Prices (2022)
- Buckinghamshire Council Education Attainment Measures (2019)
- BEIS Fuel Poverty (2020)
- Valuation Office Agency. Private rental market summary statistics (Table 2.4), 2019



The six food banks in Buckinghamshire have experienced significant increases in demand.

Together, they have distributed:

- **35,477 parcels in 2021**
- **26,386 parcels in 2020**
- **13,503 parcels in 2019**



The top five reasons for people being referred to the food bank (June to August 2021) are:

- **Debt (19%)**
- **Housing/homeless (14%)**
- **Benefits related issues (13%)**
- **Sickness and ill health (12%)**
- **Work-related changes such as reduced hours or loss of work (9%)**



Levels of crime impact significantly on the wellbeing of the population and satisfaction with their neighbourhood.

Areas suffering high levels of deprivation suffer disproportionately from crime. Total crime offences across Buckinghamshire is:

- **69.7 per 1,000 residents as of February 2022**
- **Abbey ward, the rate is 199 per 1,000 residents**
- **Ridgeway East, the rate is 26 per 1,000 residents**

Data Sources

- ONECAN Monthly Food Bank Reports (2022)
- Police UK - Buckinghamshire crime offence rates (2022)



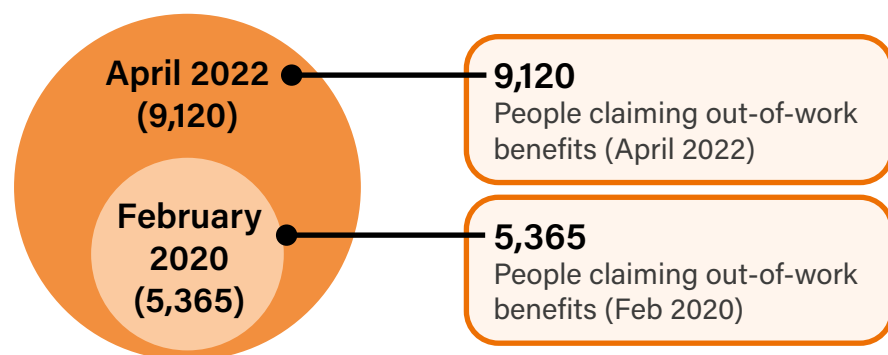
SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS IN OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE AND PLACES

Employment

The number of claimants in Buckinghamshire is almost double that of pre-pandemic levels despite an unprecedented increase in the number of vacancies seen across the county. The high percentage of people unemployed in areas of Wycombe contrasts with the high number of vacancies: Wycombe reported the highest number of job posts in Jan-Mar 2022. In December 2021 the roles with the most postings were admin, nursing, customer service and social care roles.

These areas have high proportions of people from Ethnic Minority groups compared to the rest of the county, as well as a high proportion of people with no qualifications, lower levels of people with degrees or higher qualifications, high numbers of children receiving free school meals and high rates of children living in areas of deprivation.

The number of unemployment benefit claimants is still much higher than pre-pandemic levels

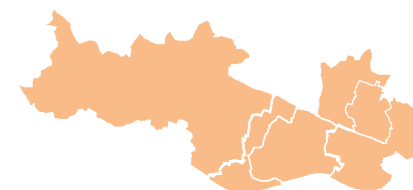


Data Sources

- ONS Claimant count by sex and age
- Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (2022)

High number of job postings reported in High Wycombe, including in areas where unemployment is highest

Upskilling unemployed people in areas of High Wycombe could help fill job vacancies.



Number of job postings in High Wycombe as follows:

- 4,460 Oct-Dec 2019
- 5,210 Oct-Dec 2021
- Increase of 17%

Skills needed



Nursing



Business Admin

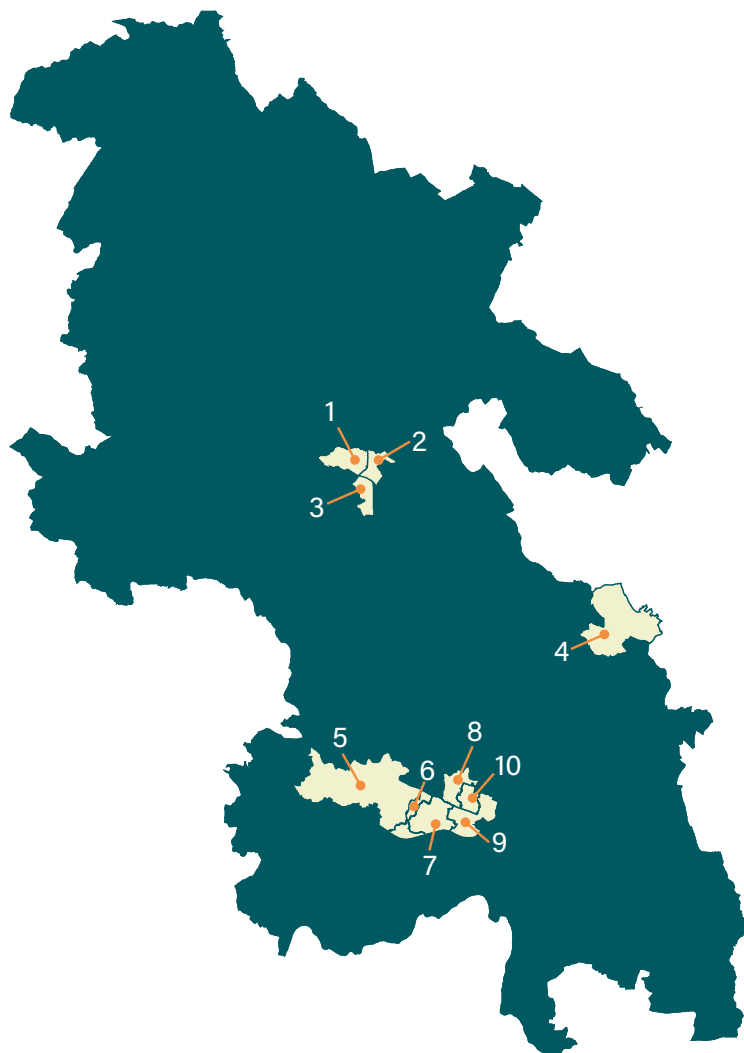


Customer Services



Social Care

SIGNIFICANT VARIATIONS IN OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE AND PLACES



Together, the mix of factors result in poorer outcomes for the individuals, pressure on public services and constraints on the growth potential of the county.

The 10 wards experiencing the poorest outcomes across multiple indicators of inequality within Buckinghamshire are:

- **High Wycombe**
 - Booker, Cressex & Castlefield
 - Totteridge & Bowerdean
 - Ryemead & Micklefield
 - Abbey
 - Terriers & Amersham Hill
 - West Wycombe
- **Aylesbury**
 - Aylesbury South West
 - Aylesbury North-West
 - Aylesbury North
- **Chesham**

Ward areas

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Aylesbury North West | 6. Booker, Cressex and Castlefield |
| 2. Aylesbury North | 7. Abbey |
| 3. Aylesbury South West | 8. Terriers and Amersham Hill |
| 4. Chesham | 9. Ryemead and Micklefield |
| 5. West Wycombe | 10. Totteridge and Bowerdean |

4. OUR AMBITION AND PRIORITIES



AMBITION

Reduce inequality whilst improving outcomes for all

Together, our public, private and voluntary sector services have played a vital role in responding to the pandemic in Buckinghamshire. Throughout this period, we have delivered at speed, working in partnership together locally to support communities.

As we turn our attention to tackling the significant challenges ahead, **we are ambitious for Buckinghamshire.**

We have an innovative recovery and growth proposition that will accelerate economic growth and prosperity for the county. Our plans will build on our distinctive and internationally recognised economic assets to deliver quality jobs, a strong talent pipeline, and quality, low carbon and connected communities for people to live and work. Through investing in regeneration schemes in our town centres, we want to create vibrant town centres that meet the needs of residents and businesses.

But we also want to ensure that nobody gets left behind. We want to reduce inequality within our communities, whilst improving outcomes for all our residents.



Everyone in Buckinghamshire should have the opportunity of achieving:

- A good quality job, that pay enough money to support a decent quality of life
- Good standard of attainment and skills
- Learning and career progression
- Good mental and physical wellbeing and independent living
- Decent, warm home and good quality food
- Involvement in shaping their community, with strong social connections
- A feeling of being safe where they live
- Pride in where they live

We want to ensure that all Buckinghamshire residents have the opportunity to succeed in life, to play their part in and share in the success of the county. But this is not the position today and we know that things will get worse if we don't come together as partners and take action.

Our ambitions of developing the local economy and reducing inequalities are intrinsically linked. By breaking the cycle of disadvantage, we will improve health outcomes and grow our economy.

The purpose of this framework is to establish a shared vision for what levelling up means in Buckinghamshire and to translate it into specific initiatives and strategies locally which will improve living standards and opportunity across the county.



OUR PRIORITIES

We will focus on five key themes:

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

- Helping the under 5s catch up post Covid-19
- Joined up skills and careers system that offers young people and adults access to quality education and training opportunities in Buckinghamshire

JOBS AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- Good quality positions that pay a decent salary and provide progression opportunities, combined with active support for residents to secure employment

QUALITY OF PUBLIC REALM

- Public realm improvements which will promote a sense of wellbeing in our communities

STANDARD OF LIVING

- Assistance for residents in finding sustainable solutions to difficulties with decent housing, warmth, food and debt

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Engaging communities in mental and physical health initiatives, and supporting businesses with a healthy workforce and reduced absenteeism

In tackling these priorities, we will initially focus our action on those wards where residents experience a combination of inequalities:

- **High Wycombe**
 - Booker, Cressex & Castlefield
 - Totteridge & Bowerdean
 - Ryemead & Micklefield
 - Abbey
 - Terriers & Amersham Hill
 - West Wycombe
- **Aylesbury**
 - Aylesbury South West
 - Aylesbury North-West
 - Aylesbury North
- **Chesham**

Where possible, we will draw on the initiatives and learning being developed through the Levelling Up White Paper.

5. OUR APPROACH



PLACE BASED PARTNERSHIP

Buckinghamshire is an aligned county, with a shared geography between the Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Healthcare NHS Trust and Buckinghamshire Business First. Our universities, further education providers and voluntary and community sector are also closely tied in, giving us a unique ability to unite key organisations to deliver coherently for the benefit of all. This strong collaborative model means that we are able to take effective action to tackle inequalities on a place basis.

RECOGNISING LOCAL IDENTITY

Our commitment to localism is a key strength that we can draw on. We recognise that our communities are distinct places, with their own local sense of identity, and their own definitions of success. Local residents need to be at the core of what we do. In developing levelling up plans, we will work with residents at a local level to ensure that action builds on local strengths and responds to the needs, ambitions and experiences of the specific individual communities. Our Community Boards will play a critical role in this.

INNOVATION

As partners, we already have a range of services and initiatives in place in the identified communities. Many of these will be focused on responding to the result of inequality, rather than tackling the root causes. We need to take account of these but also be prepared to try new ideas that can build sustainable change. We will develop pilots that we can learn from, evaluate and, where appropriate, scale up. We will also learn from the initiatives developed nationally, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper.

EVIDENCE BASED

We want to ensure we have a firm evidence base for developing our approach. We have a wealth of statistical information which will support us but we also want to expand our insight into the barriers experienced by the identified communities and the approaches that are most effective. We will invest in qualitative research and insight to inform our strategy. We will also use and develop this evidence base to monitor the impact of any interventions that are delivered.

6. TAKING ACTION



Working with the communities, we will identify key priorities and develop local action plans which tackle each of the five themes. In Year one, this could include:

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

- Develop localised skills plans, matched to the needs of local employers
- Develop a local version of the National Youth Guarantee concept tailored to the needs of the communities

JOB AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand the number of apprenticeships taken up by residents in partnership with local businesses
- Identify entry level job opportunities and paid internships that can be targeted at the communities, working with DWP restart providers
- Develop 'work readiness' programmes for residents in the communities who have limited work experience

QUALITY OF OUR PUBLIC REALM

- Develop and deliver a Regeneration plan for each of the three town centres
- Produce a delivery plan for public realm improvements in each of the communities

STANDARD OF LIVING

- Through our 'financial insecurity' partnership, roll out a scheme that provides advice and support and helps people out of debt
- Working with the Buckinghamshire Food Partnership, implement the recommendations of the 2020 Sustain report
- Review our approach to 'affordable warmth' and develop an action plan for 2022+

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Undertake public health projects targeted at the particular needs of the communities (including cardiovascular health)

By strengthening coordination across partners and collaboration with local communities, we will seek to maximise the benefit of the existing multi-agency resources already deployed in these communities. Where appropriate, we will build business cases for investment in specific projects and bid for external funding to support our objectives.

7. OVERSEEING DELIVERY



Governance

The Buckinghamshire Growth Board will be responsible for the governance of the programme, underpinned by a partnership steering group which will oversee the detailed development and delivery of our approach. This will include a lead champion for each of the five themes.

The Community Boards in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham will play a key role in overseeing the development and delivery of the local action plans.

Monitoring and Evaluating Impact

Levelling up is not going to happen overnight. This strategy requires long term and sustained commitment and it would not be appropriate to set targets at this stage. To assess progress, performance will be tracked against key metrics measured at community level in order to understand the direction of travel, including measures that evidence:

- Healthy life expectancy
- Unemployment rates
- Early Years and Primary education attainment
- GCSE performance
- Completion of skills training
- Number of children eligible for free school meals
- Crime and anti-social behaviour
- Quality of the environment
- Number of people living with multiple morbidities
- People's satisfaction with their neighbourhood and community connectedness (measured through an annual survey and focus groups)

Views and feedback will also be gathered from communities and partners to evaluate impact.

Progress will be reported to the Buckinghamshire Growth Board and the Council's Cabinet on a regular basis.

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OPPORTUNITY BUCKS – SUCCEEDING FOR ALL

A local response to Levelling Up