




Draft Report of the Youth Council

2023-2025



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Version 1



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Introduction

This report details the ongoing work being delivered by Milton Keynes Youth Council (MKYC) from February 2023 until January 2025.

Milton Keynes Youth Council is a group of around 50 young people aged 11-18 who live and/or attend school in Milton Keynes. We have 26 elected members from across every secondary school in MK, as well as mentor positions and co-opted places. These were the first youth council elections held since MKYC transitioned from MK Youth Cabinet (YCAB) earlier that year. Following their induction, members of the youth council voted on the issues that they believe affect MK's youth population the most. These issues now form the basis of the two local campaigns that have been at the centre of MKYC's work for the last year: Mental Health & Wellbeing, and Youth Crime.

Additionally, MKYC representatives have also had the opportunity to work on other campaigns and projects, such as the national Food for Learning campaign headed by the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP), and other local events to engage with young people and promote their work.

Our Youth Council aims to raise awareness of the problems young people face across the city and influence positive and effective change.



Campaigns 2023-25

Mental Health and Wellbeing

The aim of the campaign is to understand the issues around access to support services for young people struggling with mental health issues and provide information to MK's youth population as to what help is currently available to them, as well as advice for improving their own mental health.

In October 2023, the Mental Health and Wellbeing campaign group released a survey to secondary schools across Milton Keynes focusing on mental and health and neurodivergence. The survey received over 800 responses from young people across the city, and the campaign action group is in the process of finalising their report.

Report Highlights

We aim to publish our report in the coming weeks and send it to public services including schools, CAMHS, public health, and other charity organisations including Mind, who the group have previously consulted with. The report will also be made available via the MKYC website, www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/mk-youth-council for members of the public and councillors to access, and will be publicised via social media, for instance our new instagram account, @miltonkeynesyouthcouncil.

Mental Health Week

In the week surrounding World Mental Health Day, the campaign's action group designed and released a number of posts to MKYC's instagram account to provide information and advice to young people on how to maintain good mental health, along with quotes and statistics from their report.

Young People's Healthy Network

The campaign group collaborated with the public health team to review and compare the OxWell survey results with their own survey results. They discussed how effectively organisations are currently able to support the mental health of young people, and highlighted the importance of supporting young people in navigating their own emotions and mental health before it develops into a more serious issue.

Opening of the Young People's Sanctuary

MKYC's action group leader for mental health attended the opening of the Young People's Sanctuary in Eaglestone, and delivered a speech to those present. The sanctuary is a designated space for young people aged 14-17 to receive support for their mental health. The campaign group is currently working in collaboration with the charity Mind with the aim of lowering the age at which young people can access this service from 14 to 11 years old.



Youth Crime in Milton Keynes

MKYC defines 'youth crime' as criminal acts that; affect young people and their communities, that young people are commonly involved in, as well as crime which specifically targets the youth population. The local Youth Crime campaign aims to address the feelings of unsafety experienced by young people in Milton Keynes by educating them on the support services available to them, how to keep themselves safe, and the consequences of committing crime.

Report Highlights

Like the Mental Health action group, the Youth Crime group released a survey to secondary schools in October 2023 and have since drafted a report outlining their key findings and recommendations. The report is to be published in the coming weeks, with plans for it to be sent to local services including secondary schools, Thames Valley Police, and other organisations. It will also be made available via our website for members of the public to access.

Thames Valley Police Consultation

In May 2024, members of the Youth Crime action group met with Thames Valley Police (TVP) officers to discuss their survey findings and what TVP are currently doing to support young people. The action group had the opportunity to ask questions about police policy and legal rights when dealing with young people, police responses to certain situations, and their advice to young people on protecting themselves.

Knife Crime Round Table

In January 2024, the Action Group Leader and Deputy Leader were invited to attend a round table discussion at the YMCA on the topic of knife crime and how this affects communities. Sir Keir Starmer (then leader of the opposition) was in attendance alongside the then shadow home secretary, and other community and organisation leaders. Our MKYC representatives were able to speak about their perspective on police relationships and trust with young people and how this must be repaired in order to fully tackle knife crime.

Anti-Social Behaviour Forum

In May 2024, MKYC members attended the Anti-Social Behaviour Forum open to members of the public in the council chamber. It was a great opportunity to network and learn more about the wider effects of ASB across the city.

National Campaign - Food for Learning

Alongside our local campaigns, MKYC's Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs) have been working diligently on the UK Youth Parliament's national campaign, Food for Learning. The campaign worked to introduce universal free school meals for young people across the country.

In July 2023, MYPs attended a residential in Leeds to work and consult on the framework and actions for the Food for Learning Bill debate. The themes to be debated in their parliament sitting later that year were decided upon. The event saw over 200 youth representatives come together from across the UK to participate in workshops, debates, and networking.

In November 2023, MYPs travelled to London to attend their annual sitting in the House of Commons to debate on the topic of the Food for Learning Bill. The bill was agreed upon. MYPs finalised the final declaration of the campaign before completing their term of office.

Non-Campaign Projects and Events

Residentials

Each year, MKYC holds a residential to give members the chance to work more intensely on their campaigns, develop new skills, and get to know each other.

April 2023

To mark the start of a new term, newly elected MKYC members and mentors attended a three-day residential learning about their responsibilities as elected representatives and the different roles open to them. They also attended workshops run by our mentors, and participated in ice-breaker activities. On the last day, members held elections for the following roles: vice chair, action group leaders (for both campaigns), comms team, committee team, and local events team.

April 2024

In April 2024, MKYC attended their second residential of their term at the Rock UK Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire. Members hosted and attended a variety of workshops over the three-day visit. Key topics included campaign work, reviewing achievements over the last year, and developing key skills such as budgeting, networking, and debating. The group also participated in activities such as an obstacle course which acted as a team building exercise.



BYC Conference, London

In July 2023, MKYC representatives attended the British Youth Council (BYC) conference in London to meet with other youth council representatives from across the South East. Those in attendance participated in a variety of workshops, networked, and even participated in a debate panel to discuss issues such as the environment, cost of living, and SEN.

AG250 - MySayMK Conference

Also in July 2023, MKYC members hosted the 'MySayMK' conference to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the 'Amazing Grace' hymn. The conference was co-produced with the Cowper and Newton Museum and held at the St Peter's and St Paul's Church in Olney, with students from 9 secondary schools across MK in attendance. Representatives had the opportunity to manage the event as well as develop new skills including videography, event management, and supporting the delivery of workshops on the day.

Additionally, a small group of MKYC representatives returned to St Peter and St Paul's Church in December 2023 to attend the final event to mark AG250. They performed poems that they had previously developed with poet and professor Rommi Smith from themes discussed at the 'MySayMK' conference earlier that year. MKYC members also featured in interviews included in the documentary covering the AG250 events throughout the year.



Make Your Mark

MKYC worked closely with secondary schools across Milton Keynes to deliver Make Your Mark, the national youth ballot which helps to decide the campaign focus of the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) for the next year. Members helped to run workshops, count and distribute ballot papers, and provide information via social media about the ballot.

Milton Keynes had the highest percentage voter turnout in the South East of England, with 31.4% of young people aged 11-18 in MK participating in the ballot. The issues most voted for by young people in Milton Keynes were as follows: crime and safety (1981 votes); culture, media, and sport (1877); jobs, economy, and benefits (1396); and health and wellbeing (1369). With MKYC's current campaign focuses being youth crime and mental health, this emphasises that MKYC's current campaigns align with the interests of young people living in Milton Keynes.

Your Vote Week

From the 29 January to the 4 February 2024, we participated in the Electoral Commission's 'Your Vote Week'. This was a campaign focused on getting 16-year-olds to register to vote. MKYC Members delivered in school assemblies for year 10s to year 13s explaining the benefits of registering to vote and how to register. We counted the number of young people who scanned our QR code, and in total over 100 young people registered!

Milton Keynes Central Constituency Hustings

In June 2024, one of our MYPs attended the hustings hosted at MK College in advance of the 2024 General Election to urge young people over the age of 16 to register to vote and encourage adults to vote if they were able. They also spoke to local candidates for the Milton Keynes Central constituency, Emily Darlington, Johnny Luk, and James Cox.

BMKALC

On 17 October 2023, members of MKYC's advisory group in partnership with Bucks Youth Voice presented a talk on youth engagement to an auditorium full of representatives from local councils across Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire. Over the previous months the two youth councils collaborated on the development, scripting and rehearsing of their presentation and chose to focus on the following areas: *'the benefits of involving young people in local council projects and the consequences of not including them in these*

projects', 'barriers to engaging young people', 'how to get young people involved' and a 'call to action'.

In our call to action, we encouraged audience members to: commit to listening to their young residents in at least one project, make sure they planned for how to keep the young people they consult with up to date, and to think creatively.

The presentation was a great success! It was warmly received by audience members, who laughed along, asked questions and we ended with a standing ovation.

The group were asked by the event organisers to do their presentation again for an online Teams event in January 2024. The chair of MKYC delivered the presentation once again receiving a great response.

The Bucks and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils awarded the MKYC members who created and presented this talk with the "Outstanding Contribution Award for work to inspire Local Councillors to engage with young people in their communities".



Good City Plan Consultation

MKYC members attended a consultation to give our perspective on the values central to the development of Milton Keynes and where we see MK in the future. MKYC discussed green spaces, housing, the grid road system, and new developments across the city, as well as the importance of protecting the unique identity of Milton Keynes as a new city.

In both the Mental Health and Youth Crime surveys, young people emphasised the importance of having well-kept and well-lit redways and bus stops, accessible green spaces, and safe, visible seating areas.

Wolverton Street Sessions Event

In partnership with Future Wolverton, MKYC helped to develop and run the first Wolverton Street Sessions Event. MKYC promoted the event across our social media platforms as well as being one of the main sponsors of the event. Our youth council assisted in the selection of stalls and retailers that would engage young people, as well as recommending local young talent to perform.

Most importantly, a group of six youth councillors volunteered their time to help out on the day, this included running an MKYC stall, directing the public around the event, handing out leaflets and wristbands, and engaging with the local community. We also supported the event organisers in running a mentorship scheme for local young people in the run up to, and day of the event. Professionals employed by Future Wolverton mentored a young person in their area of expertise, including videography, photography, social media marketing, live street art, sound engineering and event management. This provided young people with a unique opportunity to gain experience in an area that interests them.



The Youth Mayor

Background

In June 2023, MKYC elected the first Youth Mayor of Milton Keynes, a new position proposed by a MKCC full Council motion. Members of MKYC worked alongside Democratic Services and councillors to help outline the role and its responsibilities.

It was quickly decided that the role should be more than just a ceremonial one, and the Youth Mayor should also play an important role in speaking on behalf of young people and the Youth Council, including at formal MKCC meetings. In total 11 youth councillors put themselves forward for the position, and after two rounds of supplementary voting Chloe D'Souza was elected as Milton Keynes first youth mayor, and Maggie Beckett was elected deputy. An official Youth Mayor regalia and Deputy Youth Mayor badge was designed and purchased for the role.

Chloe D'Souza (June 2023 - April 2024)

Throughout her term Chloe attended 40+ events along with attendance at full Council and Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee meetings. With a focus on climate action, Chloe championed and spoke on the power young people hold and the consequences of global warming.

Events attended by Chloe included: West Bletchley carnival, Holocaust Memorial Day, White Ribbon and the opening of Watling Primary School.

Maggie Beckett (April 2024 – present)

In the first few months of her term, Maggie has created the first Youth Mayor Instagram (@youthmayor_maggie), with the hopes of promoting the role and the wider youth council. Maggie hopes to emphasise the importance of impartial political education for young people across MK, and work with different organisations to help engage the youth in politics and democracy.

Some standout events Maggie has attended so far include: Falconhurst School Professionals' day, the Lord Lieutenant's Unsung Heroes Garden Party and The Green Roof Project's community lunch in partnership with the YMCA. Maggie also worked in partnership with Future Wolverton to run the first ever Wolverton Street Sessions event at the end of August, officially opening the event.



UK Youth Parliament

Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs)

Deputy MYP Elections

In MKYC's October 2023 formal meeting, two representatives were elected to become the new Deputy Members of Youth Parliament (DMYPs) by their youth council peers. After the changes of constituency boundaries split Milton Keynes into three constituencies, it was decided that the youth council would continue with two MYPs. However, we would no longer have one Member of Youth parliament for MK North and one other for MK South and central, but instead the MYPs would represent the whole city rather than the two separate constituencies.

After the then-MYPs completed their terms in 2024, the DMYPs stepped up to become the current youth parliament members representing Milton Keynes for the next two years. In the coming months, they have an upcoming residential and parliament sitting alongside other MYPs from across the country.

Schools Debate

In January 2024, MYPs and DMYPs helped to judge debates between teams from secondary schools across MK. Debate topics included subjects such as artificial intelligence and the UK's nuclear programme. They then attended the debate final between Denbigh and Radcliffe at the Houses of Parliament, with Denbigh winning the event. After the debate, all those present had the opportunity to tour the House of Commons and House of Lords.

Closure of the BYC

After it was announced in March 2024 that the British Youth Council organisation was closing, the UK Government has since appointed the National Youth Agency (NYA) to be the new body to run the UK Youth Parliament. This ensures that our MYPs can continue their membership as planned and continue to champion the youth voice in the democratic process on a national level.



Next Steps

In the final few months of their 2023-25 term, Youth Councillors, are working to deliver a number of different events alongside finalising their campaign work.

Our campaign groups are finalising their reports and compiling lists of relevant organisations and decision makers who can be provided copies of our report and recommendations. It is our hope that these reports will help highlight the issues faced by young people in these areas and may provide insight for different organisations on how best to tackle these issues.

In November, the Youth Council is planning to host a Youth Summit in partnership with Democratic Services and Children's Services on the theme of collaboration and participation. There is so much work great youth work going on around the city, including Youth Council's run by Town and Parish Council's and we want to play a part in joining up this work.

Our thanks go to everyone who has supported and continues to support Milton Keynes Youth Council.

Agendas for monthly meetings of the Youth Council are available on MKCC's modern.gov pages at [Committee details - Milton Keynes Youth Council | Milton Keynes City Council](#)

For more information about the Youth Council, please contact Lisa Thompson (Lisa.Thompson2@Milton-keynes.gov.uk)

