

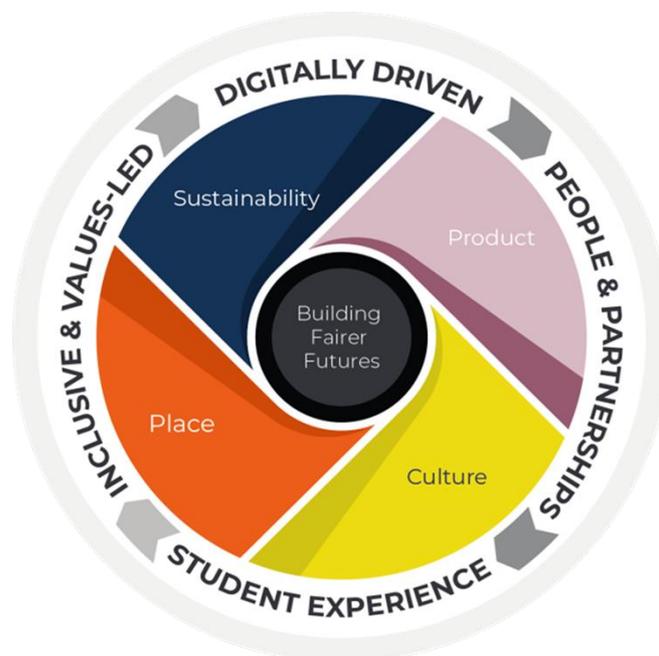
Access and participation plan 2026-27 to 2029-30

Introduction and strategic aim

Milton Keynes College Group (MKCG) is a General Further Education (FE) College with a typical annual intake of 20,000 learners each academic year. It employs over 1000 members of staff over two sites in Milton Keynes and operates an offender learning contract that is delivered across 30 prison locations.

For over 20 years, Milton Keynes College has been central to meeting the need for excellent quality, locally delivered Higher Education (HE) serving over 5000 learners during this time. FE colleges have a significant, and developmental role in the provision of HE. Milton Keynes College sets out to make a distinctive contribution to the higher technical skills landscape of the city, drawing on its own strengths of developing and delivering vocational and technical programmes, linked to the priorities of employers, and reflecting the needs of local, regional, and national economies.

Milton Keynes College Group currently operates under the strategic plan centred upon 'Building Fairer Futures'¹ that spans all provision types in the college, including higher education, and is fundamental to driving further the diversity, inclusion and belonging aspects fundamental to equitable access and participation for all.



¹ [MK-College-Group-Strategy_Overview.pdf \(mkcollege.ac.uk\)](https://mkcollege.ac.uk/mk-college-group-strategy-overview.pdf)

Risks to Equality of Opportunity

We have reviewed the student lifecycle and concluded that the stages which are both most relevant and of most concern to us in the terms of this plan are a) Access and b) Completion. We anticipate that, during the life cycle of this plan, we will also look to focus on Continuation, but at present this is not an applicable stage to us due to the nature of courses we *currently* offer, and the manner in which they are structured.

We have identified that our target groups face the same or similar threats to equality of opportunity in several instances.

For each of our target groups at access stage of the student lifecycle, the most significant risk category regarding equality of opportunity is that of application rates. As a small provider, the volume of applications we receive is unpredictable, but typically low relative to institutions with a larger HE presence. We note that Risks 1: Knowledge and Skills, 3: Perception of HE and 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery mode may apply to both of our key target demographics.

Our further education provision attracts learners with a wide range of academic ability, with a wide variety of reasons for choosing us. Many of our courses at Level 3 / Key Stage 5 have natural progression pathways into Higher Education with us – for example, the BTEC extended diplomas in Public Services and Forensic & Criminal Investigation lead well into the HNC/D in Public Services. Likewise, there are options in the field of Engineering which run from Level 1 up to Level 5. In essence we have both a pathway and a pipeline for learners to progress to higher education in their chosen fields and yet we still see relatively low rates of application from the groups targeted in this plan, as evidenced in Annex A.

We hypothesise that low attainment at key stages 4 and 5 contributes to this for all three of our target groups. While we do attract learners with exceptional GCSE performance, a large number of applicants have not enjoyed such success at that level, and this may suppress aspiration for further study. This, coupled with perceptions of higher education amongst potential applicants in our target groups exacerbate barriers to access.

Milton Keynes College currently only offer a select suite of courses on offer this increases the impact of this risk factor for groups to whom it is an already enhanced risk. Our future strategy is to develop the HE offer at the college, in partnership with a Validating HEI. We acknowledge that this will take time but intend to have institutional approval and our first courses validated within this plan's duration.

In terms of Completion, we identify that provision of additional support at both an academic and personal level will seek to address challenges that learners from our target groups may experience. As a college we recognise our strengths in terms of supporting our FE learners, including those with identified learning needs, across all levels. Replicating and developing this support for the increased need that we see in Higher Education students who may come with a range of obstacles to their learning, is something we seek to address within this plan. One of our key intervention strategies centres around the provision of additional academic and pastoral support.

In the context of the HE offer at Milton Keynes College, continuation and completion are currently very similar concepts; our courses are Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, and we administrate these in such a manner that learners enrol first on the certificate, and then, if they so wish, they enrol on a second and separate year to achieve the Diploma. For the purposes of this plan, it is gaps in rates of Completion which we will nominally seek to address.

We have noted that there are risks to equality of opportunity in terms of progression from Higher Education. Our students join us from the local area, our appeal in a wider geographic sense is limited by a lack of student accommodation and a relatively high cost of living in the city in which we are based). On the other hand, we appeal to our students because we are local. Many of our current learners have family or other commitments in the area which preclude them from travelling further afield for both their higher education journey and subsequent search for either additional education or graduate employment.

Objectives

Our approach to setting objectives and targets is largely based on aggregated data due to the small numbers of students within our datasets. Further details on risks to equality of opportunity identified in our assessment, including those which we are not explored specifically within this plan can be found in Annex A.

Where possible, our targets are measurable by the Office for Students Access and Participation Data Dashboard or supplemented by internal data sources.

The College prides itself in being an anchor institution and taking a significant role in the development of its local, regional, and national community and will continue to serve the entire population and not just a part of it. As well as ensuring that Milton Keynes College is an outstanding employer and education provider, we work with our partners to encourage social cohesion and economic prosperity within the community.

Milton Keynes College is committed to raising aspirations and breaking down barriers to learning for all, including those from recognised underrepresented groups.

We have not included objectives for 3 stages of the student life cycle in the outline below.

Continuation

The structure of our offer is such that currently students enrol onto a one-year HNC, and then a one-year HND programme. As such, the concept of completion is more pertinent to our learners than continuation. During the lifecycle of this APP, we expect to enrol learners onto externally validated FD and BSc Top-Up programmes, and at the relevant point, will be collating and analysing the impact of our interventions on future Continuation data.

Attainment

The programmes on offer at Milton Keynes College are not considered in the OfS Attainment data – which only applies to honours degrees and not to Higher Nationals. As such we are unable to identify gaps and therefore have no key objectives to discuss at length here. We always seek to develop our learners to achieve the best possible outcomes, and in place of data regarding first and second-class honours degrees, we aim to increase the rate at which our learners achieve Merits and Distinctions in the programmes we run.

Progression

The available data do not indicate notable gaps in progression performance between our target groups and their contemporaries.

Learners from ethnically under-represented backgrounds

The Access Stage

At the access stage, data shows that our learner community does not mirror that of our local population. This is of particular concern for a college like ours; where we know that we primarily attract learners from the local area – which leads us to question why minority ethnic groups are under-represented in our Higher Education cohorts.

Our primary objective at the access stage is therefore to not only raise learner numbers, but also the proportions of learners from minority backgrounds enrolling on to HE programmes with us. The target here should be to align our student community demographic with that of the local population. Raising access amongst Black and Asian applicants should be a priority.

	MK College population (4-year aggregate data)	Milton Keynes Population (2021 Census data)
Asian	5.4%	12.4%
Black	4.0%	9.7%
Mixed	5.7%	4.1%
Other	3.0%	2.0%
White	81.9%	72.8%

Completion

Sizeable gaps persist into the completion phase of the student lifecycle. Again, our sample is limited in size so the gaps we have year-on-year data for are highly inconsistent, so we are reliant on aggregate data. The two-year aggregate data for completion indicates a 29.9% gap between White British learners and those from all other ethnic groups. As with continuation, we will strive to significantly reduce this gap over the duration of this plan – from 29.9% to a maximum gap of 6%. We recognise that this gap is still too wide, but we also understand the need for these targets to be achievable and realistic, and to close the gaps we see here is likely to take time.

Learners living in areas of relative deprivation

As indicated in Annex A, a sizeable proportion of LSOAs across the Milton Keynes area are amongst the most economically deprived. Up until 2020, the origins of our learner community reflected this. However, between 2020-21 and 2022-23 a sizeable gap has opened, and we can now see that considerably more learners in our community join us from Quintile 3, 4 or 5 areas (IMD, 2019). There could be several reasons for this change – including the end of a working relationship with a former subcontractor.

The Access Stage

Our primary objective at the access stage for this target group should be to reduce the substantial gap that has opened between Quintile 5 and Quintile 1 learners accessing our courses since 2020. This gap stands at 22.1% as per the most recent available data. Given the complexion of our local area and our knowledge that we primarily recruit locally, we feel it is reasonable that this gap be reduced to 3%, with the aspiration of eradicating it entirely.

Completion

Another area of risk is the gap in completion rates when we compare students from Quintiles 3,4 and 5 against those from Quintiles 1 and 2. Here, the two-year aggregate data suggests a gap of 23.5% in terms of completion. Our target here will be to significantly reduce this gap, with an aspiration that the completion gap will be consistently lower than 6% at the conclusion of this access and participation cycle.

Objectives	Linked Risks (EORR)	Targets	Related Interventions
Access			
1. Improve access for Minority Ethnic Students	Risk 1: Knowledge and Skills Risk 2: Information and Guidance Risk 3: Perceptions of Higher Education Risk 5: Limited Choice of Course Type and Delivery Mode	Increase proportion of minority ethnic learners to meet local demographic (i.e. from 18.5% to 27.5.% over the duration of this plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal progression activities to raise awareness of access to finance and the support mechanisms on offer. Mentoring programme to help raise aspirations for learners who have the ability to succeed at HE but may face perceived barriers (per the EORR, as outlined). Targeted marketing and specific school engagement aimed at raising awareness of our offer and support for our target demographics (external).
2. Improve access for students from IMD Q1	Risk 1: Knowledge and Skills Risk 2: Information and Guidance Risk 3: Perceptions of Higher Education	Over the duration of this plan reduce the access gap from 18% to 3%, with the aspiration to eradicate entirely	
Outcomes			
3. Improve completion rates for Minority Ethnic Students	Risk 6: Insufficient Academic Support Risk 7: Insufficient Personal Support Risk 8: Mental Health	Over the duration of this plan reduce the completion gap from 30% to 3%, with the aspiration to eradicate entirely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance awareness of existing wellbeing and support mechanisms amongst both students and staff (e.g. internal wellbeing team, the Together all platform & our external counselling support). Upskilling of existing Wellbeing colleagues to specialise in the different needs of adult students Appointment of an HE progress mentor.
4. Improve completion rates for students from IMD Q1 & Q2 postcodes	Risk 6: Insufficient Academic Support Risk 7: Insufficient Personal Support	Over the duration of this plan reduce the completion gap from 18.9% to 3%, with the aspiration to eradicate entirely	

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes.

Intervention strategy 1: Objectives and targets - Access

To increase the proportion of learners from Quintile 1 areas (IMD (2019)) accessing our courses. As noted above, the gap is significant (18%). The College seek to reduce this gap year on year, eventually arriving at a 3% gap in both cases by the 2029-30 academic year. Furthermore, we seek to increase the proportion of our learners from minority ethnicity backgrounds accessing our courses – with the measurable target being the demography of our student community aligns with our local population. Specifically, we seek to raise the proportion of Black learners from 4.6% to 9.7%, and Asian learners from 7.7% to 12.4% by 2029-30, with incremental increases being targeted in each of the preceding years.

Risks to equality of opportunity:

Risk 1: Knowledge and Skills

Risk 2: Information and Guidance

Risk 3: Perceptions of Higher Education

Risk 5: Limited Choice of Course Type and Delivery Mode

Census data highlights that several Milton Keynes districts experience a rate of relative deprivation well above the national average, alongside the IMD (2019). It is worth noting that multiple similar areas are present within a commutable distance – Northampton and Central Bedfordshire being prime example

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
<p>The college will implement a programme of mentorship for potential HE applicants as part of our programme of Personal Development currently delivered to Level 3 FE learners. This mentorship will be informed by gaps in the HE student skillset identified by current delivery teams in addition to an incoming HE progress mentor.</p> <p>FE Progress mentors and Course team leaders will be given training around our offer and encouraged to support and inform learners of our HE offer in addition to their current UCAS focus.</p>	<p>Resource for development of the mentorship programme will come from within the team responsible for personal development, under the umbrella of the Quality function within the college.</p> <p>Per Annum Staff time c.£20,000 p.a. (annual incremental salary costs are budgeted)</p>	<p>We anticipate that by providing additional tailored support to students at level 3 who have the ability but perhaps lack the confidence or understanding of higher education, we will empower a subsection of our existing student population to make more informed and aspirational choices about their futures.</p> <p>The mentorship offered may lead to learners choosing to seek HE opportunities either within or outside MK College which otherwise they may not have considered.</p> <p>By improving our in-house messaging around our own higher education offer to colleagues in the institution, we envisage that learners will be made more aware of opportunities for progression internally.</p>	<p>While these activities are aligned to the objective of narrowing access gaps in our target groups, they can be considered to cross with all intervention strategies outlined within this document.</p> <p>Moreover, we anticipate that the strategies we are initiating will, whilst being aimed at target groups, prove to be beneficial to all learners considering, or participating in, higher education programmes at Milton Keynes College</p>
<p>Eligibility thresholds for financial support will be reviewed to make access to bursary options more inclusive (i.e household income criteria for eligibility).</p> <p>In addition, training for staff will be delivered to ensure better understanding of our financial support packages, and internal marketing to potential HE applicants will be increased to</p>	<p>Ringfenced Funds for: [1] Continuation Bursary, [2] Discretionary Bursary and [3] Opportunity Bursary – focused on target low income and ethnic minority applicants.</p> <p>[1] Students joining from a Level 3 qualification obtained from MK College in the year preceding their enrolment OR external applicants belonging to our target groups will be eligible for a grant of £500 to be paid in two instalments in their first year, subject to attendance in excess of 90%.</p>	<p>By raising awareness of our willingness to support applicants who may be daunted by the financial commitment of pursuing higher education, we aim to enhance our appeal amongst quintile 1 IMD (2019) in the region (and potentially further afield in areas such as Bedford and Northampton).</p> <p>Furthermore, whilst we don't have any data regarding specific IMD (2019) areas in which potential learners from underrepresented ethnic minorities live,</p>	

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
<p>raise awareness of financial support mechanisms.</p>	<p>[2] The discretionary bursary will be available to students to apply for, when they are experiencing exceptional support needs or hardship. The sum available is variable and dependent upon the students' need(s). Example cases may include short notice changes to childcare arrangements, transport difficulties or cashflow problems brought about by unexpected changes in employment circumstances.</p> <p>[3] External applicants from households where the total annual income does not exceed £35,000, and/or who come from target ethnic minority groups will be eligible for the this bursary – which will be delivered as £500 over 2 instalments in the academic year, subject to a rate of attendance exceeding 90%. Learners will be able to apply for this bursary for each year of study, while they continue to meet these requirements.</p> <p>Resource: £40,000 per annum (annual incremental inflation costs are budgeted)</p>	<p>government data suggest that black families are the most likely out of all ethnic groups to be managing on a household income of less than £600 per week. This is nationally; but we have used this data to assume that there will not be a significant difference for black families in our local community – and as noted above, our black population stands at almost 10%, which is significantly higher than that reported in national census data (4%).</p> <p>Raising the threshold for household income and eligibility aims to create a more inclusive bursary system which can support more potential candidates who would otherwise find themselves unable to consider higher education options.</p>	
<p>The college will continue its longstanding relationship with local schools through our Schools Engagement team. We have a wide range of initiatives targeting potential FE learners, in addition to several activities that have the scope to reach potential HE applicants.</p> <p>The Marketing and Communications will collaborate</p>	<p>Reallocation and revision of existing schools engagement resource to support the development of more bespoke activity for our target groups.</p> <p>Resource: £7,649 per annum (annual incremental inflation costs are budgeted)</p>	<p>By highlighting our offer in target schools, it is anticipated that we have an opportunity to reach potential applicants who weren't otherwise considering HE as a next step.</p> <p>The schools engagement team will focus on schools in the area with a higher incidence of pupils belonging to our target groups.</p>	

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
with delivery teams to create tailored opportunities to showcase our Higher Education provision to young people within our region who are part of our target demographics for this plan, and current marketing strategies will be reviewed.			

Evidence base and rationale:

Local census data (and data around our FE student population) support the suggestion that our HE populace at present are substantially less ethnically diverse than our catchment area. This, coupled with the reported prevalence of low-income households (regardless of ethnic background) in our local area can be viewed as evidence to suggest that carefully publicised additional financial support for HE applicants will help to enhance accessibility to higher education for our local target groups.

Evaluation:

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation Include type of evidence you intend to generate e.g., Type 2.	Summary of publication plan When evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take
<p>Ongoing collection of admissions data over the duration of this plan, monitoring the access to and success on our HE programmes from the target demographics. Additionally, learner surveys at the induction point will be adjusted to include questions on how they found out about the course and what led them to choose MK College.</p>	<p>Quantitative and qualitative data that can be analysed and cross referenced to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) whether the relative numbers of learners from our target groups enrolling on, and succeeding in our Higher Education programmes is changing year on year/ ii) what learner motivations were for joining MK College over other providers 	<p>The use of student demographic and survey data to be analysed to assess year on year change.</p> <p>Type 2 – Empirical Enquiry</p>	<p>We will work according to this plan as of the academic year 26/27 Evaluation will be ongoing, with findings to be published on our website in the year 29/30.</p>

Intervention Strategy 2: Objectives and targets – Completion

To continue to narrow the gap in relation to student success between students of minority ethnic backgrounds and White British students. We have identified that there is a gap in terms of continuation between students identifying as belonging to an ethnic minority and their white British counterparts of 27.2%. We pledge to reduce this year on year with an aspiration to reduce the gap to 6% by 2029-30. Similarly, there is a gap in completion rates between these groups, this time of 33.9%. We pledge to reduce this gap year on year with the same aspiration to arrive at a gap of 6% by 2029-30.

Risks to equality of opportunity:

Risk 6: Insufficient Academic Support

Risk 7: Insufficient Personal Support

Risk 8: Mental Health

At both a local and national level, it is noted that HE students from minority ethnic backgrounds are less likely to achieve the highest grades than their White British counterparts. At Milton Keynes College the achievement rates are 7% lower over the last five years for those students from minority backgrounds.

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention
<p>There will be a consistent, college wide approach to academic and pastoral support sessions, with time allocated to this practice for all HE courses. Where learners are facing barriers to success, access to individualised support will be available.</p> <p>This will be accessible to all learners, enhancing success for all who choose to engage with it.</p> <p>The college will employ a progress mentor with a specific responsibility for Higher Education students. This person will have a working knowledge of pastoral and academic support at this level, to include funding and screening avenues in addition to mental health support options available to learners.</p>	<p>The hiring of a Higher Education specific progress mentor / co-ordinator who will have jurisdiction over support throughout the student life cycle, to include internal progression routes, on programme support, and an understanding of mental health and wellbeing services – whether this be direct or as a referral and signposting service.</p> <p>Timetables will be adjusted to allow HE delivery staff time to facilitate pastoral / academic tutorial sessions – inputs include staff time, and room use.</p> <p>Per Annum Staff time c.£20,000 p.a. (annual incremental salary costs are budgeted)</p>	<p>We anticipate that through targeted support and guidance we will be able to better facilitate sustained growth and success in learners who may not be able to access similar support in a more traditional HE setting.</p> <p>Specifically, regarding minority ethnic groups, data suggests that young Black Caribbean people are amongst the worst performers at GCSE level, and in Milton Keynes 10% of the population identified as Black at the last census (compared to 4% nationally). As such, an enhanced package of support can improve accessibility and success for these learners.</p>	<p>While these activities are aligned to the objective of narrowing completion gaps between ethnically under-represented learners and those of a White British background, they can be considered to cross with all intervention strategies outlined within this document.</p> <p>Moreover, we anticipate that the strategies we are initiating will, whilst being aimed at target groups, prove to be beneficial to all learners considering, or participating in, higher education programmes at Milton Keynes College</p>
<p>We will carry out internal events to raise awareness of our existing offer to students in terms of wellbeing and other support mechanisms amongst both students and colleagues (e.g. our wellbeing team, our engagement with the Togetherall platform, and our ongoing relationship with a local mental health support provider).</p>	<p>Use of already existing internal communication channels in addition to bespoke CPD sessions outlining the breadth of support mechanisms on offer and points of referral.</p> <p>Per Annum Staff time c.£24,474 p.a. (annual incremental salary costs are budgeted)</p> <p>This budget figure is calculated as proportionate to the size of the total HE student body. As the student body grows, the incremental cost is budgeted for.</p>	<p>There is currently limited uptake within the higher education community at MK College for wellbeing and academic support and we anticipate that by establishing regular channels of communication we can both increase awareness of support modes on offer in addition to destigmatising those who seek support.</p>	

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention
<p>Upskilling of existing wellbeing teams to best meet the support needs of adult and higher education students.</p>	<p>We will identify and support development routes for existing members of the wellbeing team to help them specialise in the needs of adult students.</p>	<p>We recognise that the wellbeing and pastoral support needs of adults does vary from those raised by 16-19 year olds within our institution, but at present we have limited specific expertise to provide the requisite support.</p> <p>In upskilling of colleagues in order to bridge the gap and help learners to succeed when barriers to success present themselves.</p>	

Evidence base and rationale:

Evidence drawn from our internal data on the student life cycle indicates that:

Persons of minority ethnicity backgrounds are underrepresented in our HE population, and black learners in particular experience a lower achievement rate than their white counterparts. Additionally, we know that there is an academic attainment gap between black and white learners throughout the educational system up to and including Higher Education as per OfS data.

The Equality of Opportunity Risk Register highlights that prospective learners from our target groups are especially likely to be impacted by a lack of both academic and personal support; we envisage our progress mentor being a foundational step in addressing this gap.

Evaluation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation Include type of evidence you intend to generate e.g., Type 2.	Summary of publication plan When evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take
Cross referencing of attendance records with achievement records in addition to learners' qualifications on entry details.	We will be able to create a picture of the relationship between attendance at academic support sessions, success, and qualification level prior to enrolment.	Comparison of the relative success amongst target groups with data telling us the same story from cohorts who completed their studies prior to the initiation of this plan can give us an indication as to whether the provision of in depth, targeted academic support sessions are having an impact.	We will work according to this plan as of the academic year 25/26 Evaluation will be ongoing, with findings to be published on our website in the year 29/30.
Data regarding whether students met the traditionally established entry requirements or not, in addition to records kept regarding their mode of acceptance on to the course should be curated.		Similarly, we can compare data pertaining to traditional entry eligibility and discretionary acceptance to previous years to see if a) we are taking on increase numbers of target groups and b) what their relative success is following initiation of the plan.	

Whole Provider Approach

Milton Keynes College is currently operating under a five-year strategic plan informed by the philosophy of “Building Fairer Futures”.

Our Vision: To use the power of education to create opportunities, champion talent and build fairer futures. This, we will achieve by:

- By being an open, inclusive, and successful college that measures our success through the success of others.
- By offering a life-changing and individualised learner experience and journey.
- By building exemplary learning partnerships between our staff, learners, parents (where appropriate), employers, other education providers, voluntary sector and public sector stakeholders.
- By enhancing the effectiveness of our systems, processes, and structures.
- By ensuring higher vocational and technical skills and training are held in high esteem as a driver of our economy and community.

Our Purpose: We inspire positive social change in the people and communities we serve through delivering exceptional learning experiences to transform lives, achieving our vision of a fairer future for all.

- Welcoming those who want to learn and improve. We will seek to meet individual needs where appropriate and possible.
- Building the strongest partnerships with our communities, businesses, and other stakeholders.
- Acting as a catalyst for economic prosperity and wellbeing.

Our Implementation:

- The interventions we have designed for this Access and Participation Plan – while aiming to benefit specific target groups – will be available for the benefit of all students who choose to interact with them.

The college has an ethos which champions equality and diversity. This can be seen through a positive Leaders in Diversity Report in which principles of Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement were highlighted as being core to the organisation’s strategy – specifically referencing Building Fairer Futures. In addition, the college has been forward thinking in employing an equality, diversity and inclusion manager and has accessible and thorough policies around EDI.

Learner consultation

The plan is informed by discussions and feedback gained at HE Learner Forum. This forum is made up of Student Representatives from each programme offered at the College. The group is diverse, reflecting the mix of full time, part time and professional learners, a range of ages, ethnicities and is broadly reflective of the current Higher Education learner community and the wider community of Milton Keynes. In 2025/26 the College will utilise Student Representatives to support the delivery of appropriate activities, we will engage learners at every stage of the implementation and evaluation of the plan. This Access and Participation Plan was reviewed by the HE Academic Board and recommended for approval to Governors. It was subsequently presented to the board of governors, which includes representation from a Student Governor, and was approved.

Evaluation of the plan

We will evaluate our access and participation interventions using a mixed methods approach appropriate to our scale as a small HE provider. Our evaluation will focus on measuring progress toward our specific objectives of improving access for minority ethnic students and those from IMD Q1 areas, alongside completion rates for these same groups.

Given our small cohort sizes, we will primarily use aggregated data analysis across multiple years to identify meaningful trends, supplemented by qualitative insights from students and staff. Each intervention outlined in this plan includes specific evaluation methods detailed in the relevant intervention strategy sections.

Evaluation Timeline and Reporting

Monitoring and evaluation will commence in 2025-26 when interventions begin implementation. Whilst we know that this plan comes into effect from the following year, we intend to begin actioning intervention activity immediately. Progress against key performance indicators in the plan will be assessed during the annual quality cycle and presented at our Higher Education Academic Board proceedings which will take place on a termly basis throughout the academic year.

Key Evaluation Activities

Our evaluation will track the effectiveness of our mentoring programme for FE students progressing to HE, the impact of our enhanced financial support packages on application and completion rates, and the role of our dedicated HE progress mentor in supporting student success. We will use student demographic data, bursary uptake analysis, and feedback from our HE Learner Forum to assess intervention impact.

More specific detail as to how we intend to evaluate each strategy is outlined within the intervention strategies section of this plan.

Provision of information to students

The approved Access and Participation plan will be published on the public section of the College website, along with annual review reports.

All information relating to course fees are communicated to students via the course pages of the College website. Website information is reviewed and updated on an annual cycle after approval via the college fee policy review. All students complete an interview, and fee and bursary information is provided to prospective students during the application stage.

Fee structures are also referenced in the HE Terms and Conditions documents which are shared with applicants prior to enrolment and are signed by students as part of the enrolment process.

Information on bursaries available to students are made available on the college website and finance and bursary staff are available during open events in order to support applicants to understand their eligibility. This information is also provided in application packs, and is reiterated at pre-induction webinars, and also during student induction days.

HE – APP Student Grant

External applicants from households where the total annual income does not exceed £35,000, and/or who come from target ethnic minority groups will be eligible for this bursary – which will be delivered as **£500** over 2 instalments in the academic year, subject to a rate of attendance exceeding 90%. Learners will be able to apply for this bursary for each year of study, while they continue to meet these requirements.

To qualify, you must:

- Be a home or EU (settled status) student
- Be paying the required tuition fee for your full or part time course using a tuition fee loan from Student Finance England (SFE)
- Be in receipt of a maintenance loan or have explored options from SFE for any additional loans and grants available
- Be enrolled and attending as a full or part time student on a Higher Education course at Milton Keynes College
- Be eligible for student support under UK student support regulations.

Completed forms can be emailed to bursary@mkcollege.ac.uk or returned to the bursary team.

HE Discretionary Support Fund

Discretionary Support Fund payment is either a maximum of a £600 cash payment paid in two instalments OR a bus pass/in-college meal allowance (in line with the 19+ meal allowance rules).

- This payment is made at the discretion of the College Management who may ask you to provide details of your household income and outgoings.
- Students receiving the HE APP Student Grant or the HE Continuing Student Grant can claim the Discretionary Support Fund but must include this payment in their assessment.
- The evidence provided must demonstrate that the student is in dire financial need which could impact their study and completion of their course.
- Students are only able to claim one DSF per academic year.
- Students who withdraw from their course between payments will not be eligible for the second payment.
- This allocation is from a limited fund, once the fund has been exhausted, it will not be renewed until the following academic year.

To qualify, you must:

- Be a home or EU (settled status) student
- Be paying the required tuition fee for your full or part time course using a tuition fee loan from Student Finance England (SFE)
- Be in receipt of a maintenance loan or have explored options from SFE for any additional loans and grants available
- Be enrolled and attending as a full or part time student on a Higher Education course at Milton Keynes College
- Be eligible for student support under UK student support regulations.

Completed forms can be emailed to bursary@mkcollege.ac.uk or returned to the bursary team.

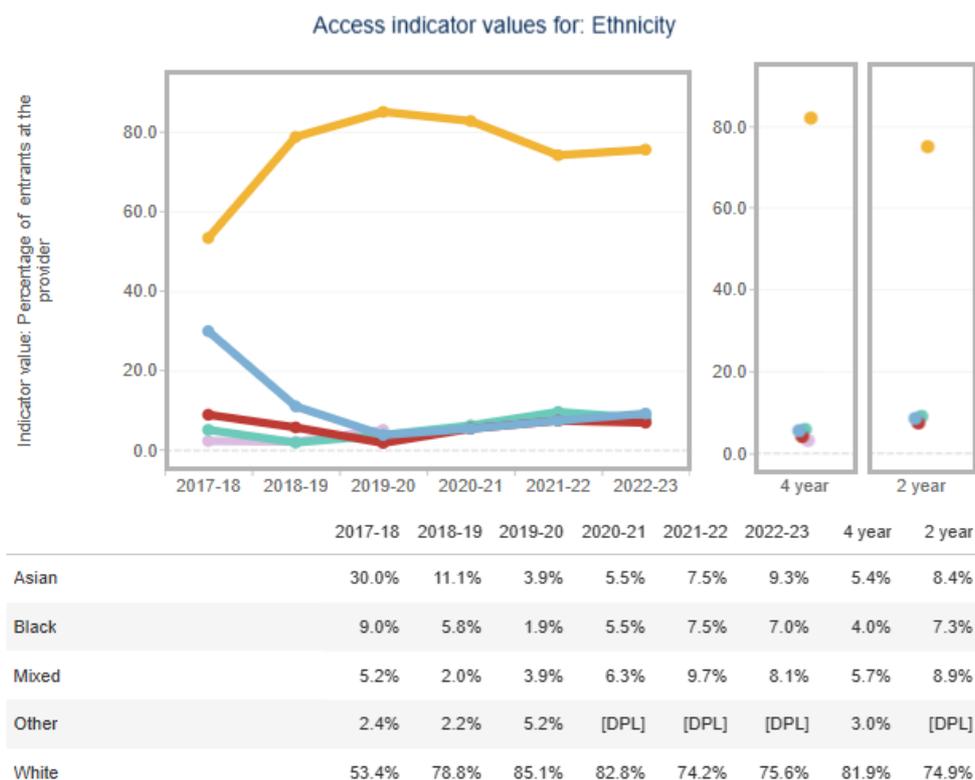
Annex A: Assessment of performance²

Milton Keynes College Catchment Areas:

Access: Learners from Minority Ethnicity Backgrounds.

The Access and Participation Data Dashboard does not have information regarding gaps in rates of Access to HE for learners from minority ethnicity backgrounds. It is possible that this is due to the extremely low rates of access to this provision in Milton Keynes College. This in itself provides us with a rationale for seeking to improve accessibility to our provision for learners from these groups. Whilst we don't have data indicating *gaps*, we *can* see that the relative numbers of learners from non-white backgrounds in Higher Education are not reflective of our Further Education community, nor are they reflective of the local population.

The Equality Challenge Unit's (ECU's) *Equality in higher education: statistical report 2022*³ highlights that the gap in degree attainment between black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in England is starting to close. The gap between white and black graduates getting a first class or 2:1 degree went down from 26.2 percentage points in 2014 to 2015, to 18.6 percentage points in 2020 to 2021. Of all graduates in the academic year 20-21, 39.4% of White graduates achieved a first-class degree compared to only 20% of Black graduates – the highest and lowest percentages of all ethnic groups – so there are still some barriers to success at the highest level.

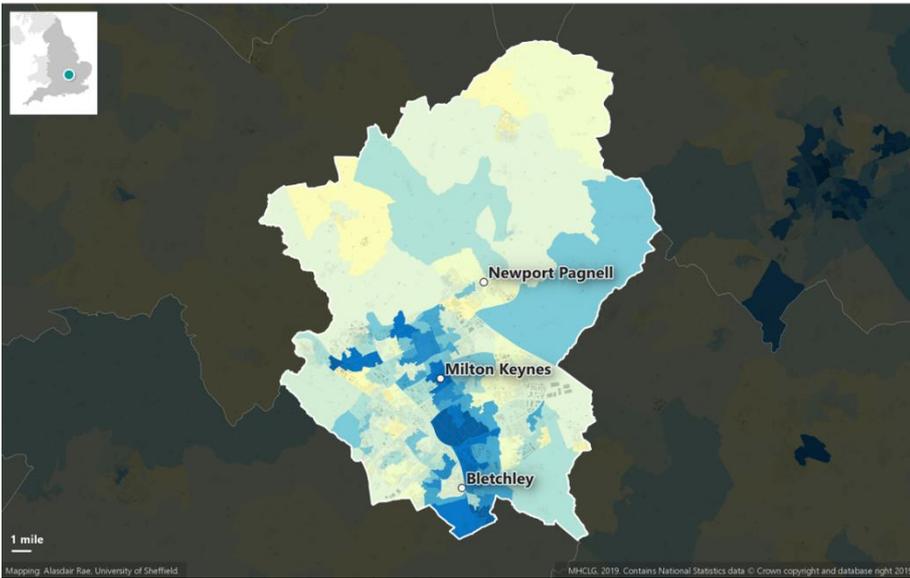


² Data dashboard - Office for Students

³ Equality in higher education: statistical reports 2022 | Advance HE (advance-he.ac.uk)

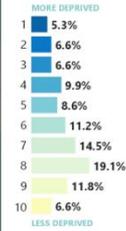
English Indices of Deprivation 2019

MILTON KEYNES



Local deprivation profile

% of LSOAs in each national deprivation decile

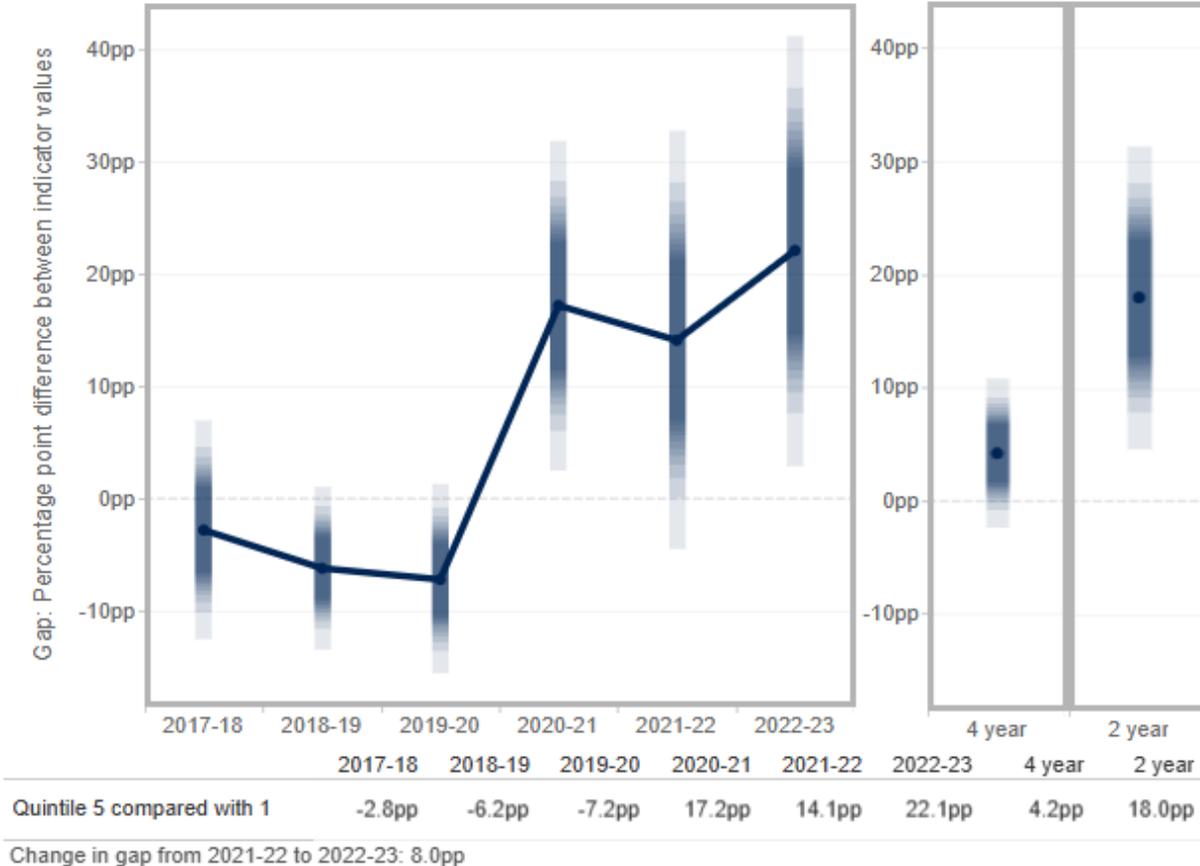


What this map shows

This is a map of Indices of Deprivation 2019 data for Milton Keynes. The colours on the map indicate the deprivation decile of each Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) for England as a whole, and the coloured bars above indicate the proportion of LSOAs in each national deprivation decile. The most deprived areas (decile 1) are shown in blue. It is important to keep in mind that the Indices of Deprivation relate to small areas and do not tell us how deprived, or wealthy, individual people are. LSOAs have an average population of just under 1,700 (as of 2017).



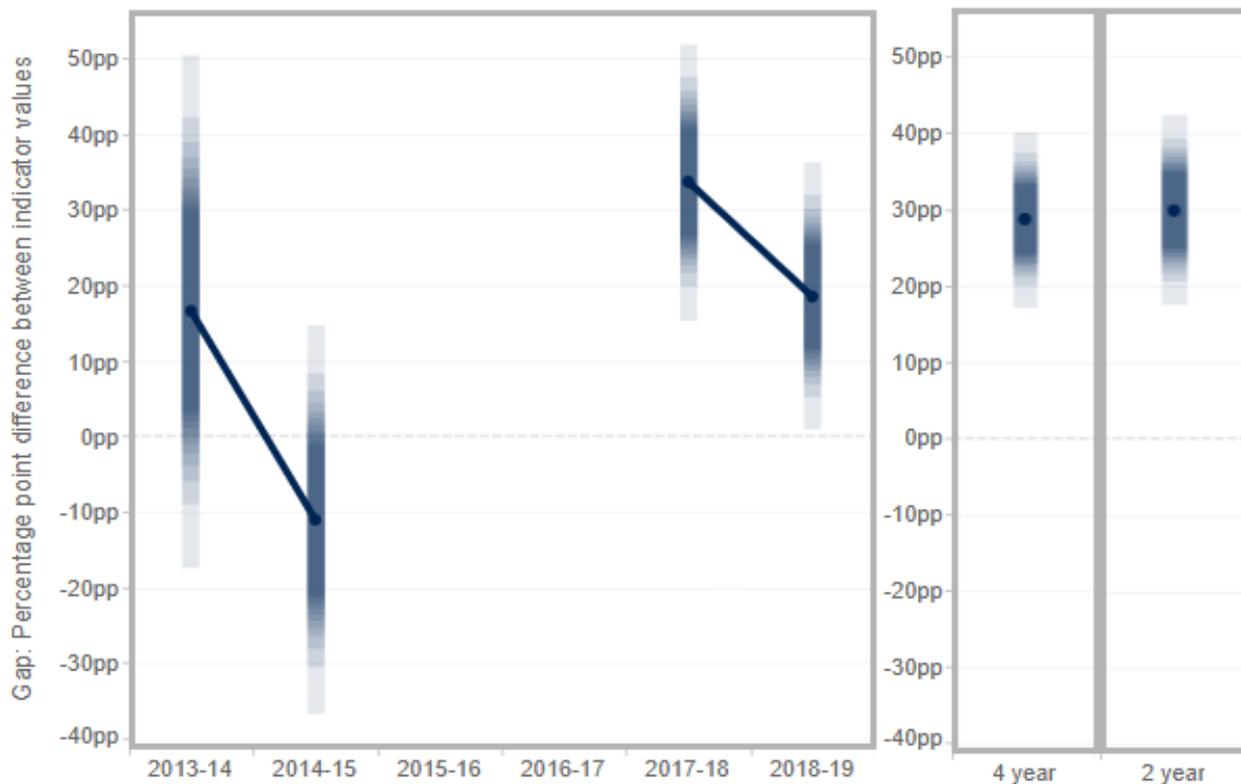
Access gap: Deprivation quintile (IMD 2019) – Quintile 5 compared with 1



As indicated by the figures above, not only does Milton Keynes have a high prevalence of areas of relative deprivation, but we as a college are experiencing widening gaps in terms of access to our higher education provision from learners living in these areas.

Completion: Learners from minority ethnicity backgrounds

Completion gap: Ethnicity – White compared with all ethnicities except white



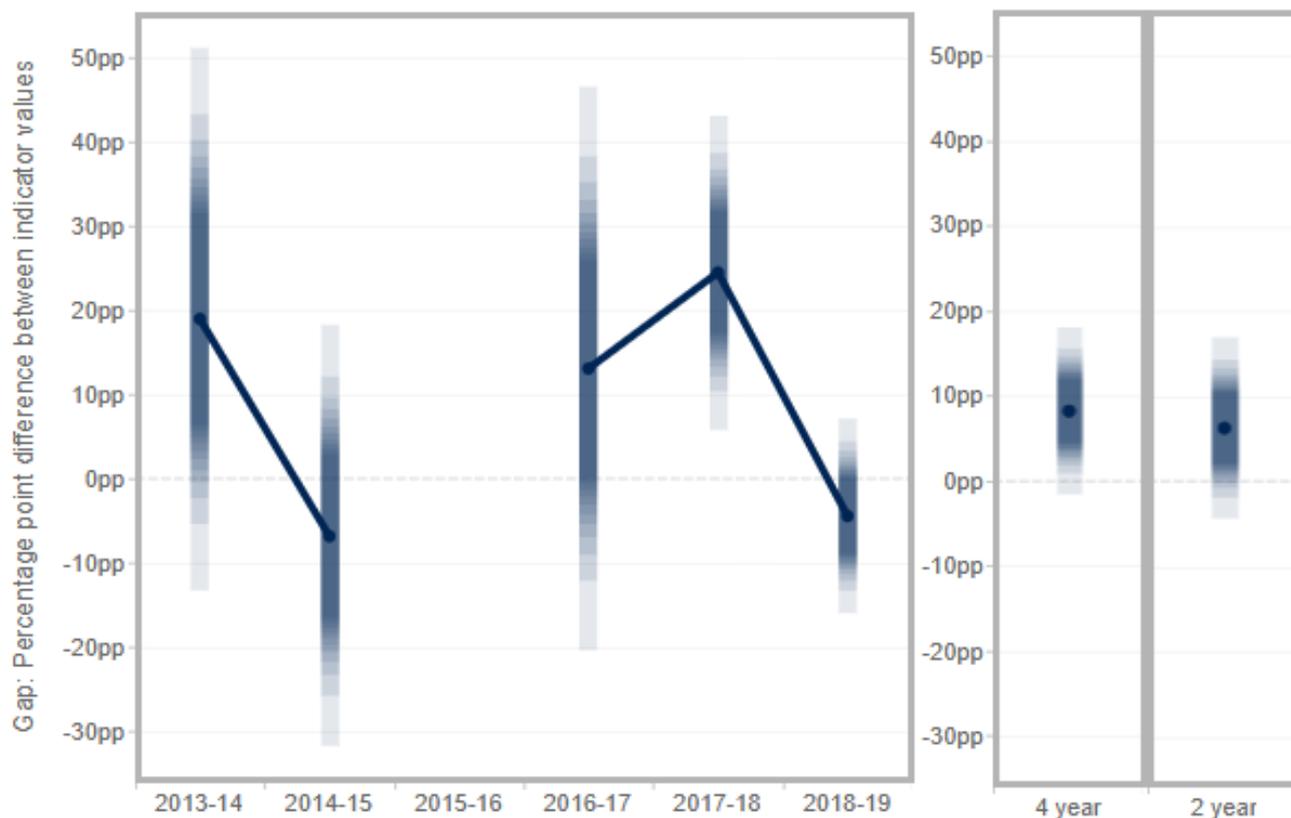
	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	4 year	2 year
White compared with all ethnicities except white	16.6pp	-11.0pp	[low]	[low]	33.7pp	18.5pp	28.7pp	29.9pp

Change in gap from 2017-18 to 2018-19: -15.1pp

Data regarding completion gaps in terms of ethnicity are inconsistent, with insufficient data being available for 2 of the last 6 academic years on the data dashboard. However, we do see consistent, and significant gaps in completion rates when looking at aggregate data.

Completion: Learners from areas of relative deprivation

Completion gap: Deprivation quintile (IMD 2019) – Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with 1 or 2



	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	4 year	2 year
Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with 1 or 2	19.0pp	-6.8pp	[low]	13.1pp	24.5pp	-4.4pp	8.2pp	6.3pp

Change in gap from 2017-18 to 2018-19: -28.9pp

As indicated in the above figure, our completion gaps in terms of the socioeconomic backgrounds of our learners is inconsistent, with significant year on year variance. As with a lot of our analysis this is probably due to our small cohorts. However, we do consistently see a gap here when looking at aggregated data.