

# MILTON KEYNES YOUTH CABINET REPORT 2019-2022

## Introduction

This report highlights key aspects of the ongoing work delivered by the Milton Keynes Youth Cabinet (YCAB) from 2019 to the end of Summer 2022.

These projects could only be done with the dedication of members of the group, who represent young people on issues that matter to them. They work to use their voice under the United Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'For young people, by young people'.

# Year 2019 – 2021

YCAB members were elected with significant support from MK educational establishments. This was the start of a new 2 year YCAB term of office, which turned out to be a very different term from others. The new local campaigns were Affordable things to do and Feeling Safe in MK which sat alongside the UK Youth Parliament led National Campaigns of Votes at 16, Knife Crime and Protect the Environment.

### Feeling Safe In Milton Keynes

#### Knife Crime

A poster with key facts about knife crime was created and shared to the public on social media. This helped spread awareness of the dangers associated with carrying a knife in public. YCAB also supported the MK Gallery who sent in a bid to Safer MK to host knife crime prevention activities with young people. We were pleased that they were successful and have been working with young people creatively.

# "get a life, drop the knife"



#### <u>Bike Project</u>

We wanted to encourage young people to wear helmets and to be safe on redways and roads. To achieve this, we created free safety packs which included lights and bike reflectors to give away. These were given out at four Milton Keynes schools, where YCAB members also took the opportunity to speak about the importance of wearing helmets.



#### Feeling Safe Competition & eBook

Young people's views are intrinsic to all our work on YCAB, and the 'Feeling Safe in MK' creative competition encouraged young people to share their views on safety. Through this, their talent and outlook on the issue was shown to important decision makers who judged their work. To display the entrants' work in an interactive way, an eBook was created by the action group. The book showcased the winners



and included short comments from the judges. Unfortunately, the planned ceremony to reveal the book was cancelled due to the Covid lockdown. Despite this, the eBook has been shared on social media and is available to download on our website.

### Affordable things to do

#### <u>Questionnaires to schools for affordable things & places to go in MK</u>

In order to ascertain the views of young people surrounding the affordability and accessibility of activities in Milton Keynes, questionnaires were sent out in September 2019 to Milton Keynes school pupils. These asked a range of questions, and informed the actions of the group in the following years.

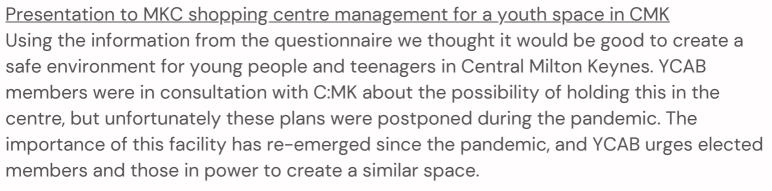
#### Affordable things to do webpage

One of the findings of the aforementioned survey was that young people didn't necessarily know where to go to get information about things to do in Milton Keynes. In order to remedy this, YCAB members turned the "Affordable things to do" section of our website into a hub that listed many popular and inexpensive activities in Milton Keynes. This list was also updated during the pandemic, in order to showcase many of the potential things to do online.



#### Private cinema screenings

In conjunction with YCAB's 10th birthday, a private screening of 'Spiderman: Far From Home' was held in Cineworld. This was open to all young people in the city, and discounts were given to All in 1 card holders.



#### Summer programme

In 2019, we ran more "How to survive life" workshops, ranging from politics to needlework. During lockdown in 2020, we moved our workshops online and created 7 videos focusing on life skills. These videos are still available to the public through the MK Council's website or our Instagram page.

#### Mental Health and Summer Challenges

Over the course of the pandemic, it was vital that young people's mental well-being was prioritised. We created a series of activity based challenges which young people could complete at home. These ranged from activities focused on maintaining positive mental health through to creating videos and comedy sketches. This can be found on our website.

#### <u>All in 1 card - discounts</u>

In order to expand the use of the All in 1 card, local businesses were being contacted and asked to provide discounts to card holders. We are always looking to expand the list of opportunities.

#### Votes at 16

The Votes at 16 campaign group created a performance, similar to Emmeline Pankhurst's famous speech 'Freedom or Death'. This speech, supporting the campaign, was presented at many events to MK students, to councillors and to some international students. This helped to create debate in an imaginative way around the different laws on what young people can do in society. The group also ran a workshop to educate, create discussions and encourage critical thinking about votes at 16 at the MySayMK Conference.

Milton Keynes Youth Cabinet Report 2019–2022





### Protect our environment

#### Our Planet Our Home Video

Despite being unable to meet face to face, we still wanted to educate people about climate change and its effects. We wrote and directed a video which was shared on social media, under the hashtag "#OurPlanetOurHome." In August 2020, we premiered our video at the MKIAC Environment and Wellbeing Spoken Word virtual event.





#### Tree Planting

With the help of Community Trees MK, the Protect the Environment action group planted 148 trees in December. After conducting research on what are good pollinators and the right trees for the environment, we chose varieties of apple, hazel, and damsel trees. These benefit the community as they can be foraged. More recently, newer members of the group went back to the site to check on the trees and tend to their growth.

### During the pandemic

As things started to change across the world, and in MK, we realised that things were going to look different for us too.

Along with our campaigns we also mixed in some fun to keep members' spirits up, with random online games, puzzles, bingo, chats and Joe Wicks exercises!

# Year 2021-2022

When schools went back we were pleasantly surprised that they were very supportive in taking part in Make Your Mark in October/November 2020. Just over 5000 young people took part in this which brought the new campaign issues of Stop Plastic Pollution and Mental Health which were national campaigns and locally Domestic Abuse and Homelessness. These campaigns were started in early 2021 for just over a year.



#### Homelessness

This action group met a variety of organisations who understand the complexity of the issue. YCAB learnt that homelessness isn't just rough sleeping. It also includes those who sleep at friends' houses (sofa surfing) or who are housed temporarily. Over the course of 6 months the action group, aided by designer Kremena Dimitrova, have designed 2 murals which explore this issue of Homelessness. These have been displayed in public areas around Milton Keynes.



### Domestic abuse



The Make Your Mark ballot revealed that young people felt that this was the most pressing issue. YCAB members met with MK ACT (Milton Keynes' domestic abuse charity) and learnt key information about Domestic Abuse in order to make lesson plans for young people in school lessons. YCAB members have worked closely with the Council's Healthy Relationships Team to do this. We hope that this information will make young people more aware of developing healthy relationships and know where to go if they need help or support.

### Stop plastic pollution

This project ran for just under a year. In this time, YCAB worked with the UK Youth Parliament to lobby MPs on behalf of young people to try and introduce a Bill on the ban of single use plastic. Over the summer, YCAB members delivered a few workshops on topics such as upcycling plastic. Also, in a bid to make MK a cleaner place, YCAB conducted a litter pick in Campbell Park, and continue to do so when they can.

### **Mental Health**

Over the summer, as part of the UKYP campaign, YCAB ran a peer research workshop led by the charity Young Minds to better fund mental health services to young people.

In addition, YCAB has talked to local services, to learn about how they support young people with their Mental Health. Following on from this meeting, YCAB created a survey for young people which asked them about their experiences with mental health services. A report from this has been shared with those who make decisions about Mental Health services across the city, including Milton Keynes Public Health, CAMHS and YIS.



# Non campaign projects during 2019–22

In amongst all our main campaigns, we have also worked on some other projects.

### World Vision

In 2019, YCAB started working with the charity World Vision to raise awareness about the realities of Child Marriage. Members shared the report and raised the issues with the local MPs. YCAB members also featured in a video created by the charity, and went to The Houses of Parliament to discuss the issue further at a cross party meeting of MPs. Also, during lockdown, YCAB participated in an international summit held virtually to discuss the impact of lockdowns on young people across the globe with the international CEO of World Vision, and our MP, Ben Everitt.



#### Genocide awareness

During February 2020, YCAB members created, lead and attended a workshop aimed at raising awareness about the Uyghur genocide in China. Following this, YCAB members made a video demanding more action be taken by decision makers in order to protect Uyghur Muslims in China. This video is available on our social media sites.



### Black Lives Matter and Anti Racism

During the summer of 2020, YCAB members wanted to understand more about the Black Lives Matter movement and its connection with racism. Therefore, a series of virtual workshops focused on the history of racism, Identity, White Privilege and Speaking up were held over the course of a week.

Following this, YCAB members wrote a letter to all schools in Milton Keynes requesting that more action be taken to tackle racism in school communities.

YCAB felt that this was a really important issue so made a proposal for this to be added to the British Youth Council manifesto, which has now been added.

At the end of 2020, a YCAB member was also interviewed by BBC News to raise awareness about the movement and the actions taken by YCAB



### Residential

Every year, YCAB holds a residential in order to allow members more time to work on campaigns and to get to know each other. In 2019 this was held at the Caldecotte Xperience, where members were able to take part in watersports activities like water zorbing and ziplining. During 2020, the annual residential was held virtually, with events like movie nights and online bingo. During 2021 YCAB members took part in training over 2 days at caldecotte which included team games. And in 2022 YCAB members went 'back to normal' and had their training conference at the Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire.

### BYC and UKYP

YCAB members work very closely with the British Youth Council and the UK Youth Parliament. Every year, 4 YCAB members attend the BYC Annual Council Meeting where they have the opportunity to change and add to the BYC manifesto, which is used to

represent the views of young people across the country. Also, 2 YCAB members are elected as Members of the Youth Parliament (MYPs), and they attend meetings throughout the year including the weekend annual conference and the annual sitting at the Houses of Parliament.



### Groups & committees

YCAB members sit on the Arts and Heritage Alliance; Planning Cabinet Advisory Group, and the Children and Young People's committee at Milton Keynes Council. They attend each meeting and this ensures that young people's views are being represented in meetings about the current and future running of the city. YCAB members were also involved in the writing and submission of the City Status application, we were very proud to be part of that.



THINK IT: YCAB

#### **Emberton Park and Queens Canopy**



In 2021 YCAB members met with the Emberton Country Park committee who are trying to improve the park. Those members went on a tour to then offer their thoughts from a young person's perspective. From these discussions YCAB members facilitated design students from a London University to create an interactive App for the Park. And in Feb 2022 YCAB members planted 6 oak trees and attributed it to the

Queens Canopy in Emberton Park and met with the Mayor and the Emberton parish council to discuss various environmental issues.

#### **Board Games Café**

In conjunction with the Affordable Things To Do Campaign, YCAB have arranged a space at the MK Gallery café for young people to meet up. At the games café, young people can meet others, play games and enjoy a free drink as well. We are really pleased MK Council staff have been continuing to run this especially as there is a big need for safe places for young people to go. The concept has just been expanded to include Stony Stratford too.