

Buckinghamshire Economic Ward Profiles 2023: Overview

Background

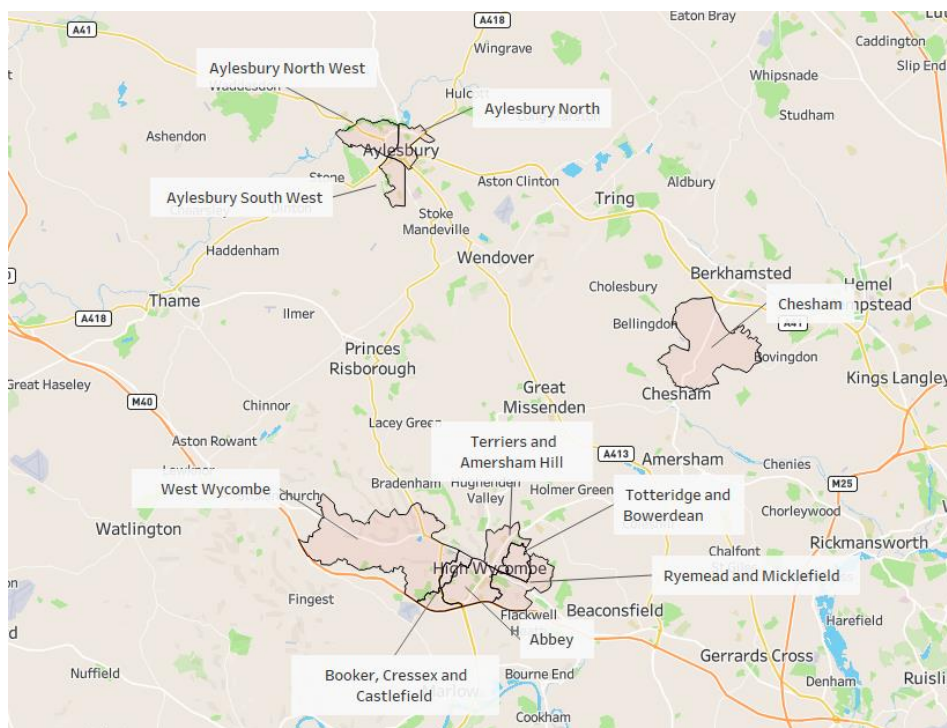
To inform the work of the [Opportunity Bucks programme](#) Buckinghamshire LEP have produced a set of economic profiles for the 10 wards of Buckinghamshire where people are experiencing the most hardship. The 10 wards are listed in table 1.

Table 1: Opportunity Bucks wards and their location

Town	Ward
Aylesbury	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aylesbury North• Aylesbury North-West• Aylesbury South-West
Chesham	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chesham
High Wycombe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abbey• Booker, Cressex & Castlefield• Ryemead & Micklefield• Terriers & Amersham Hill• Totteridge & Bowerdean• West Wycombe

The map below shows the location of each ward. An interactive version of this map can be found [here](#).

Map 1: Location of the 10 Opportunity Bucks wards



Each ward profile provides:

- An overview of the local economy (including key businesses, employment hotspots, high growth firms and key employment sites)
- A profile of residents (including demographics, labour market status)
- Analysis of potential barriers to employment (including health, transport, caring responsibilities, English language proficiency, qualifications and childcare)

The ward profiles can be accessed via the Buckinghamshire Economic Intelligence Observatory website and via the Bucks Data Exchange.

Key findings

Overall, the analysis shows that the 10 wards selected in 2021 as being priorities for the Opportunity Bucks programme remain a priority, from a labour market participation perspective, in 2023. There are some common themes across all of the wards and some key differences between them. These are summarised below.

Common themes

The majority of the wards are in urban areas, with the exception of West Wycombe and Chesham wards which are part rural.

It's not all about unemployment...

It is worth noting that across all Opportunity Bucks wards, and Buckinghamshire as a whole, a larger proportion of the working age population (excluding full-time students) who are not in employment, are classified as economically inactive (i.e. not working and not actively seeking work) than are classified as being unemployed (not working but actively seeking work).

There are a wide range of reasons why individuals are economically inactive, some may have a desire to enter or return to the labour market in the future and others may not. Interventions aimed at this group should therefore target those who would ideally like to work but face barriers.

Long-term versus short-term unemployment..

It is also worth noting that in most wards almost half of those classified as being unemployed at the time of the 2021 Census were long-term unemployed or had never worked. Long-term unemployment is more damaging for individuals and economies than short-term unemployment.

The demographics of labour market participation...

Generally speaking, those who are unemployed are more likely to be male and are generally younger, whilst those who are economically inactive are more likely to be female and are generally older.

Those from an Asian background are more likely to be economically inactive than those from other ethnic groups and those who are economically inactive are more likely to have no or low-level qualifications than those who are unemployed.

The three wards with the highest Asian and minority ethnic populations (located in central High Wycombe) also have the highest proportion of residents who are economically inactive due to 'looking after family or home.'

Across all 10 wards...

In comparison to the county average, residents of the Opportunity Bucks wards are:

- More likely to be younger and of working-age and less likely to be of retirement age.
- More likely to be of Asian, Black or mixed ethnicity.
- More likely to be unemployed.
- More likely to be claiming unemployment-related benefits.
- More likely to be long-term unemployed or never to have worked.
- More likely to be economically inactive due to being long-term sick or due to 'looking after home and family' and less likely to be economically inactive due to taking early retirement.
- Less likely to be employed.
- More likely to work within the health and retail sectors
- More likely to work in routine occupations.
- Less likely to be self-employed (with the exception of Chesham ward).
- Less likely to work from home.
- More likely to live close to where they work (with the exception of Chesham ward).
- Less likely to have access to a car or van.
- Less likely to be providing unpaid care (with the exception of Chesham ward).
- More likely to be 'not in good health'.
- More likely to not speak English well or at all.

Differences between the wards

The economies of, and therefore job opportunities within, the 10 wards vary considerably. Some contain a number of large employment sites and / or a number of large employers (e.g. Abbey), some have mixed economies (e.g. Terriers & Amersham Hill) whereas others have few employment sites and / or employers and therefore limited very local job opportunities (e.g. Aylesbury South West).

Table 2 compares the levels of labour market participation and potential barriers to work for residents of the 10 Opportunity Bucks wards.

This analysis, along with the detailed analysis presented within the individual ward profiles, suggests that:

- Residents of the **Booker, Cressex and Castlefield ward have the most acute labour market participation difficulties**. Long-term unemployment is particularly high amongst residents of this area and employment rates are particularly low. In addition, unemployment and claimant rates are the highest in the County, and the proportion of working age residents with potential barriers to employment (e.g. no qualifications, poor health and poor English language skills) is higher than in the nine other Opportunity Bucks wards.
- Residents of the remaining Wycombe Opportunity Bucks wards are less likely to be long-term unemployed (or have never worked) but current unemployment and claimant rates are relatively high. This correlates with wider evidence that the **Wycombe area** and key employment locations for Wycombe residents were **harder hit by the Covid-19 pandemic** than other parts of the County.
- There is a relative **lack of industry diversity and job opportunities in Aylesbury**. A higher proportion of residents in the Aylesbury Opportunity Bucks wards usually work in routine roles.

- Residents of the **Aylesbury** Opportunity Bucks wards are more likely to have **poor health** than those living in the other Opportunity Bucks wards (with the exception of Booker, Cressex and Castlefield). They are also more likely to be economically inactive due to being 'long-term sick'.
- Residents of the **Aylesbury** Opportunity Bucks wards are more likely to have **no or low qualifications** than those living in the other Opportunity Bucks wards (with the exception of Booker, Cressex and Castlefield).
- Households in **Aylesbury North** are least likely to have access to a car or van, and therefore residents are more reliant of other means of transport to access employment opportunities.
- Residents of **Chesham and Terriers & Amersham Hill** wards who are either unemployed or economically inactive are more likely to be degree holders than in most other Opportunity Bucks wards.
- Working residents of **Chesham ward** are more likely to work on a self-employed basis than those of all other Opportunity Bucks wards (and the county as a whole).
- Those who are unemployed or economically inactive in the **Terriers & Amersham Hill** ward are more likely to be over the age of 50.

Table 2. Comparison of labour market participation and potential barriers to work for residents across the 10 Opportunity Bucks wards

Ward	Town	Labour market participation					Population characteristics		Potential barriers (working age population)			
		Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Claimant rate	Long-term unemployed or never worked	Usually employed in routine occupation	Of working age	Black or Minority Ethnic origin	Not in good health	No or low qualifications (below Level 2)	Cannot speak English well or at all	No access to car or van
Aylesbury North	Aylesbury	76%	4.6%	3.8%	8%	13%	68%	34%	15%	26%	3.1%	26%
Aylesbury North West	Aylesbury	73%	5.5%	3.9%	7%	14%	65%	32%	16%	29%	2.7%	19%
Aylesbury South West	Aylesbury	72%	5.6%	4.0%	7%	15%	66%	33%	16%	32%	3.3%	20%
Chesham	Chesham	74%	4.9%	3.5%	6%	9%	62%	21%	13%	23%	2.2%	13%
Abbey	Wycombe	71%	7.2%	5.1%	7%	8%	67%	49%	11%	20%	3.9%	21%
Booker, Cressex and Castlefield	Wycombe	66%	7.4%	6.1%	13%	14%	67%	59%	16%	36%	6.8%	22%
Ryemead and Micklefield	Wycombe	76%	5.3%	4.4%	6%	9%	66%	32%	13%	21%	1.7%	16%
Terriers and Amersham Hill	Wycombe	76%	5.2%	4.0%	6%	8%	67%	34%	12%	16%	2.3%	17%
Totteridge and Bowerdean	Wycombe	71%	6.8%	4.8%	9%	10%	66%	48%	14%	25%	3.1%	15%
West Wycombe	Wycombe	77%	4.9%	4.1%	6%	10%	67%	33%	13%	23%	2.7%	12%
Buckinghamshire		81%	4.4%	2.6%	5%	8%	61%	20%	11%	18%	1.2%	11%
England		77%	5.8%	3.8%	7%	11%	63%	81%	15%	22%	2.1%	24%

Ward-by-ward

Abbey (High Wycombe)

- The ward contains a mix of residential and employment areas. Key employment sites include the Cressex Business Park, the Wycombe town centre shopping area, Wycombe Hospital and Buckinghamshire New University (BNU).
- The ward is home to a large number of companies (the 2nd highest number of all 49 Buckinghamshire wards). It is home to more large employers than most other wards within the county and a high number of high-growth companies.
- The population of the ward is much more ethnically diverse than the Buckinghamshire average. The population is also younger than the county average. Likely linked to the presence of BNU, a relatively high proportion of the working age population are students.
- The population is more polarised than the county average in terms of qualification levels and occupations held.
- Ward residents are more likely to have a degree or higher qualifications and are more likely to have no qualifications than the county average. They are also more likely to be employed in both professional occupations and in elementary occupations.
- Residents of the ward are more likely to be unemployed and are more likely to be claiming unemployment-related benefits than the county average.
- A higher proportion of the ward's economically inactive working-age population are 'looking after family or home' than the county average.
- In comparison to the county average, a relatively high proportion of the ward's residents cannot speak English well or at all.
- A high proportion of working residents work very close to home (less than 2km) and a relatively high proportion travel by foot to work.

Aylesbury North (Aylesbury)

- Aylesbury North covers much of the town centre, with key employment sites being primarily retail orientated.
- The largest employer in the ward is Buckinghamshire Council.
- The ward is home to a higher proportion of working-age residents and a more ethnically diverse population than the Buckinghamshire average.
- Working residents are more likely to work in the health sector than the county average, and also in retail / wholesale and public administration.
- Working residents are also more likely to work in routine and semi-routine occupations than the county average.
- Ward residents are much more likely to have no qualifications and are less likely to have degree or higher qualifications than the county average.
- The ward has the highest proportion of households without access to a car or van of all 49 Buckinghamshire wards. However, a higher proportion travel less than 2km to work and travel on foot.
- A higher proportion those who are economically inactive are 'long term sick or disabled' than the county average and a higher proportion of the working age population as a whole report poor health.

- In comparison to the county average, a relatively high proportion of the ward's working age residents cannot speak English well or at all.

Aylesbury North West (Aylesbury)

- Aylesbury North-West has a high number of key employment sites that are primarily industrial.
- The ward is home to a relatively large number of medium and large employers, including three large supermarkets.
- 17 high growth / high growth potential companies, are located within the ward, by far the highest of any Aylesbury town ward.
- A lower proportion of the working-age population are in employment than the county average, and a higher proportion are economically inactive.
- Working residents are more likely to work in the health sector than the county average, and also in retail / wholesale and public administration. They are also more likely to be employed in routine and semi-routine occupations.
- A higher proportion of those who are economically inactive are 'long term sick or disabled' than the county average and a higher proportion of the working age population as a whole report poor health.
- Of those who are economically inactive, a greater proportion are 'looking after home or family' than the county average. It is also estimated that there is less childcare provision within the ward than the county average.
- Residents of the ward are more likely to be claiming unemployment-related benefits than the county average. Claimants are more likely to be younger (aged 16-24) than the county average.
- Ward residents are more likely to have no or low qualifications and are less likely to have degree or higher qualifications than the county average.

Aylesbury South West (Aylesbury)

- The Aylesbury South-West ward is predominantly residential, with few employment sites and few employers.
- The main employment site within the ward is the site that is home to Bucks College Group, Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School and the Bucks UTC. The ward has no high growth companies.
- The population of the ward is younger and is more ethnically diverse than the Buckinghamshire average.
- A lower proportion of the working-age population are in employment than the county average, and a higher proportion are economically inactive.
- A high proportion of residents in employment work in caring roles and the human health and social work sector than the county and national average. This could be linked to the ward's close proximity to Stoke Mandeville hospital.
- Almost a third of Aylesbury South-West residents employed by Buckinghamshire NHS are on the lowest pay band.
- Of those who are economically inactive, a greater proportion are 'looking after home or family' than the county or national average.

- A higher proportion of those who are economically inactive are 'long term sick or disabled' than the county average and a higher proportion of the working age population as a whole report poor health.
- A much higher proportion of Aylesbury South-West working-age residents have no or only low (level 1 & entry) level qualifications than the county and national average. A lower proportion have degree level or above.
- In comparison to the county average, a relatively high proportion of the ward's residents cannot speak English well or at all.

Booker, Cressex and Castlefield (Wycombe)

- The ward stands out as having the lowest labour market participation levels and the greatest proportion of residents facing potential barriers to employment of all 49 Buckinghamshire wards.
- Working-age residents of the ward (excluding full-time students) are much less likely to be in employment and much more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive than in the rest of the county.
- This is despite there being a number of medium and large employers located within the ward offering a range of job opportunities.
- Larger employers situated within the ward include Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) and retailers John Lewis, Lidl and Asda.
- The ward has the higher proportion of residents classified as long term unemployed or 'never worked' of all 49 Buckinghamshire wards.
- A higher proportion of unemployed and economically inactive ward residents are in the 25 – 49 age bracket than the county average and all other Opportunity Bucks wards.
- Almost a quarter of working-age Booker, Cressex & Castlefield residents are economically inactive, with a higher proportion 'looking after home or family' than the county and national average.
- The ward has the highest proportion of employed residents working in 'elementary' occupations of all 49 Buckinghamshire wards. These roles tend to require minimal training and qualifications.
- Almost a quarter of working-age Booker, Cressex & Castlefield residents have no qualifications, much higher than the county average and the highest proportion of all 49 Buckinghamshire wards by some margin.
- The population of the ward is much more ethnically diverse than the Buckinghamshire average and is also younger.
- In comparison to the county average, a very high proportion of the ward's working age residents cannot speak English well or at all.

Chesham

- Chesham ward includes the northern part of Chesham town, plus a large rural area which is green belt land.
- There are fewer businesses registered within the ward than most other Opportunity Bucks wards, and no large employers.
- Employed residents of the ward are more likely to be self-employed than the county average. Chesham is the only Opportunity Bucks ward in which this is the case.
- A lower proportion of the working-age population are employed than the county average, and a higher proportion are economically inactive.
- Of those who are economically inactive, a greater proportion are 'looking after home or family' or are 'long term sick or disabled' than the county average.
- A relatively high proportion of Chesham ward's unemployed and economically inactive residents have a degree level or above qualification.
- A high proportion of working residents work relatively far from home (10 to 20km).
- 1 in 10 Chesham ward working-age residents provide unpaid care, higher than the county average.
- It is estimated that there is less childcare provision within the ward than the county average.

Ryemead & Micklefield (High Wycombe)

- The ward is mainly residential but has some employment sites including four business parks and retail units (mainly occupied by national chains) located along the A40.
- The ward has a mixed economy, with a few medium-to-large employers.
- The ward is home to a younger and more ethnically diverse population than the Buckinghamshire average.
- A lower proportion of the working-age population are in employment than the county average, and a higher proportion are economically inactive.
- Of those who are economically inactive, a greater proportion are 'looking after home or family' than the county or national average.
- It is estimated that there is less childcare provision within the Ryemead & Micklefield ward than the county average.
- Residents of the ward are more likely to be unemployed and are more likely to be claiming unemployment-related benefits than the county average.
- Residents more likely to be unemployed include: men; those with lower-level qualifications; and those from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- A higher proportion of Ryemead & Micklefield households do not have access to a car or van than the Buckinghamshire average. And a higher proportion travel between 2 and 5km to work.

Terriers & Amersham Hill (Wycombe)

- Terriers & Amersham Hill is predominantly residential, with few key employment sites.
- The ward has a relatively mixed economy containing employers from a diverse range of sectors and employers of all sizes.
- In many respects the ward is more 'average' in terms of the labour market situation of residents than most other Opportunity Bucks wards.
- However, Terriers & Amersham Hill has the 7th higher proportion of residents claiming out-of-work related benefits of all 49 Buckinghamshire wards.
- A higher proportion of the ward's unemployed residents are aged over 50 than in all other Opportunity Bucks wards, and as are a high proportion of the ward's economically inactive population.
- Also of note is that a relatively high proportion of Terriers & Amersham Hill's unemployed and economically inactive population have a degree level or above qualification.
- A higher proportion of Terriers & Amersham Hill's working-age residents are economically inactive due to 'looking after home or family' than the county and national average.

Totteridge & Bowerdean (Wycombe)

- The Totteridge & Bowerdean ward is predominantly residential, with few employment sites and few employers.
- The ward has a younger and much more ethnically diverse population than the county as a whole.
- A lower proportion of the working-age population are in employment than the county average, and a higher proportion are economically inactive.
- A higher proportion of working-age residents are economically inactive due to 'looking after home or family' than the county and national average.
- It is estimated that there is less childcare provision within the ward than the county average.
- A high proportion of those who are economically inactive have no qualifications.
- The ward has the second higher proportion of residents classified as long term unemployed or 'never worked' of all 49 Buckinghamshire wards.
- A relatively high proportion of working residents travel between 2 and 5km to their place of work.
- A much higher proportion of residents travel by 'bus, minibus or coach' to work than the Buckinghamshire average.

West Wycombe (Wycombe)

- West Wycombe ward includes Wycombe town's western residential area, plus a large predominately rural area of land to the west.
- The ward contains a number of employment sites and a good mix of medium and large employers including Focusrite; Grant & Stone and Wycombe Wanderers Football Club.
- In many respects the ward is more 'average' in terms of the labour market situation of residents than most other Opportunity Bucks wards.
- However, West Wycombe has the 5th higher proportion of residents claiming out-of-work related benefits of all 49 Buckinghamshire wards.
- A relatively high proportion of those who are economically inactive do not have any qualifications.

- A higher proportion of residents travel 'less than 2km' to work than the Buckinghamshire and national average, likely reflecting the relatively high number of larger employers.

Issues for exploration

Please note, the suggestions below are based on the quantitative evidence presented within the ward profiles. There are likely to be local factors that also need considering or that mean some of the suggestions are not feasible.

All Opportunity Bucks wards

- Improving connections between local employers and the resident population. Working with employers to understand their recruitment challenges and providing support to help them develop more flexible recruitment approaches to attract and develop pathways into work for lower skilled residents.
- Targeting of tailored interventions for who are unemployed or economically inactive but would like a job but face specific or multiple barriers.

Specific wards

- Raising skills and qualifications levels [the **Aylesbury Opportunity Bucks wards** plus **Booker, Cressex & Castlefield**]
- Helping residents achieve their first qualification [**Booker, Cressex & Castlefield**]
- Increasing childcare provision to make it easier for parents to work, given that higher proportions of economically inactive residents of working-age are 'looking after home/family' and indications are that childcare provision is relatively scarce. [**Ryemead & Micklefield; Abbey; Chesham; Totteridge & Bowerdean**]
- Maximising occupancy of local business parks to provide more jobs within walking distance for residents, given lower than average levels of access to a car or van and lower than average proportion of residents travelling less than 2km to work. [**Ryemead & Micklefield;**
- Expansion of local business parks to provide more jobs within walking distance for residents, for the reasons outlined above. [**Ryemead & Micklefield**]
- Understanding the extent to which bus services are connecting residents to key existing and future employment sites, to ensure routes / timetables are maintained, or are improved. [**Ryemead & Micklefield; Aylesbury South West, Totteridge & Bowerdean and Chesham**]
- Developing employment sites / attracting new employers [**Aylesbury South West, Totteridge & Bowerdean, Chesham**]
- Trialling interventions aimed at older workers (50+) in **Terriers & Amersham Hill** where a high proportion of unemployed or economically inactive residents fall within this age group.
- Trialling labour market interventions aimed at highly qualified residents in **Chesham and Terriers & Amersham Hill** where a high proportion of unemployed or economically inactive residents are degree holders.
- Targeting initiatives aimed at those who are long-term unemployed in wards where long-term unemployment is most prevalent [**Booker, Cressex & Castlefield, Totteridge & Bowerdean**]