

Children and Families Plan

2021 – 2024



Knowsley
**CHILDREN &
FAMILIES**
Board

LET'S TALK
203Q

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Foreword

As the Chair of the Knowsley Children and Families Board, I am pleased to share with you our vision and priorities for children and families in Knowsley which builds on and replaces the Children and Young People's Plan 2017-2020.

This plan has been developed in what has been a truly challenging time for us all. The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented global crisis of which the true impact is still yet to be fully understood and which has left few untouched by its consequences.

Whilst most children will live a happy and healthy life, Knowsley has a higher proportion of children and young people who face inequalities, largely due to the high concentration of deprivation in the borough. Coupled with the additional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the disruption to the lives of children and their families is likely to have wide-ranging and long-lasting consequences, whilst potentially exacerbating many of the challenges that they already face in their lives.

This plan has therefore been developed with all of this in mind, and with our children and families, to set out all of the things we commit to do to help achieve better outcomes for our children and families in Knowsley.

We want our children to be safe and have the best start in life, we want them to achieve their full potential through inclusive education and we want our families to be able to access support that meets their needs in a more effective and efficient way to support them to go on to be independent and thrive.

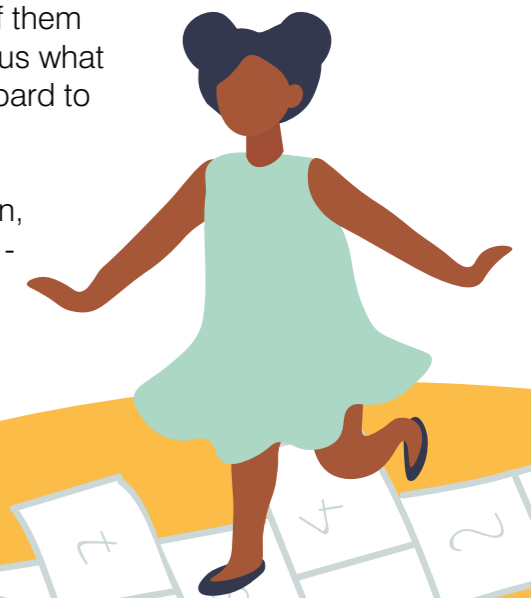
Despite some initial challenges presented by COVID-19 in allowing us to engage with communities in the more traditional ways we are used to, we found ways to overcome this in order to ask children and families in Knowsley what this plan means to them. Through these conversations, they shared lots of their ideas and many of them agreed with the plan's priorities, but more importantly, they told us what support they felt was required from the Children and Families Board to bring about these changes.

So, this is where the important work begins as all of us – children, young people, families, local partners and the wider community - come together to deliver the ambitions set out in this plan.

Cllr Margaret Harvey

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Chair of the Knowsley Children and Families Board

“Knowsley - a place where all our children have the best start in life, where every family thrives and where all our young people aim high and achieve their potential.”



Reflection - Knowsley Children and Young People's Plan 2017-2020

Before looking at what needs to be done now, it is important to take a look back at what was achieved during the course of the three years of the previous Children and Young People's Plan.

The Children and Young People's Plan 2017-2020 was produced in consultation with young people and was focused on addressing some of the greatest inequalities and issues that face children in Knowsley. In reviewing the progress made, it is clear that there have been positive changes in services, and significant successes in supporting children and families to improve outcomes. This section provides an overview of what has been achieved in the last three years, showing the positive direction of travel, and how in areas where there continues to be challenges, that there has been considerable work put in place to establish strong foundations.

We said that we would prioritise	What we did
<p>Giving children the best start in life by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working together to reduce childhood obesity Encouraging expectant mothers and new parents to lead positive, healthy lives Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing in children and families Reducing stigma associated with mental health issues Sharing data and information at the earliest opportunity Mental health awareness raising and training through posters, leaflets, support groups and websites 	<p>Services across Knowsley have worked collaboratively to help families to support the health of children from their earliest days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created an integrated Early Years' service that supports families across health, wellbeing and development needs within their communities Worked with expectant mothers to successfully reduce the proportion of women who smoke during pregnancy Maternity services worked with mothers to increase the rates of breastfeeding 6 to 8 weeks after birth Admission rates for self-harm among young people have decreased More children are receiving their health checks at 2 and 2½ years old

We said that we would prioritise	What we did
<p>Compassionate prevention by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening our partnership approach to early help Working with families as opposed to just working for families, ensuring the whole family network is involved Using insight and intelligence to assist with directing resources and early identification of need Developing emotional intelligence and capacity amongst families to support greater independence and self recovery Utilising community assets to build a 'resilience' that will bring about a sense of wellbeing 	<p>We improved the Early Help offer and created a partnership that works together to identify challenges earlier and develop ways to support families to become independent and to thrive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased the number of children registered and engaging with Children's Centres in their communities More parents reported that following courses run by Children's Centres they have become more confident in their parenting Greater numbers of children have engaged in Speech and Language services in their early years Family First were successful in supporting many families and effectively diverted families in need of support from children's social care The Troubled Families programme has led to 2,010 successful outcomes for families in Knowsley, with 1,889 families identified as having had significant and sustained progress over the course of the programme.
<p>Safeguarding – the community's business by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that every professional understands their role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children Embedding the voices and experiences of children in practice and planning services Greater information sharing between professionals and local agencies for effective identification, assessment and service provision Continuing to develop effective front-line social work practice Making people more aware of what services are on offer and where to go for them 	<p>In 2017, Ofsted confirmed that Knowsley's children's social care had improved, and were judged to be 'Requires Improvement to be Good'. Social Workers have a positive impact on many children's lives, with parents accepting support and making changes that improved their situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted Signs of Safety as a practice model across early help and social care, to ensure that families get seamless and consistent support Became a pilot authority for the development of Contextual Safeguarding – the only authority in the North, and at the vanguard of developing practice Ensured that we supported families to stay together and provided effective edge of care services so that Knowsley's rate of children looked after remains below statistical and regional neighbours.

We said that we would prioritise

Making education irresistible by:

- Ensuring that the quality of the educational offer in Knowsley schools is at least good
- Making adult education more accessible so that parents are supported to become more involved in their children's learning and in shaping the educational offer in Knowsley and making them more aware of progression and next steps for young people
- Reforming the 'brand' of education and making our schools places that children and young people want to attend
- Providing new and different ways of learning through interactive lessons and the use of more technology, for instance apps
- Involving pupils more in how schools are organised, for instance lesson structure
- Looking at teaching children and young people the practical skills needed for the 'real world', for instance financing and being physically and emotionally healthy

What we did

The focus for education has been on effective partnership working, the provision of programmes to improve educational outcomes for children and ensuring that schools are provided with the best possible support from council services.

- Key Stage 2 results have continued to improve, year on year for Knowsley, in particular for schools that are part of Pathway to Success improvement, who have seen significant improvement in results in 2019.
- The council has provided leadership to school improvement by developing accountability through consistent strategic partnership working.
- Greater focus and emphasis on improving services and experiences for children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities by ensuring that the Council and partners are compliant in applying the SEND reforms.
- The Council has invested in EYES – Early Years and Education System as part of the Children's IT and Intelligence Strategy to Support the delivery of positive outcomes for children and families in Knowsley through the use of effective information technology and business intelligence.

We said that we would prioritise

Knowsley people leading the way by:

- Creating clear pathways into employment and higher education by linking schools with businesses and employers
- Promoting local role models and their success stories using the third sector and volunteer mentoring to provide support and inspire young people
- Delivering services differently for children who are considered SEND, focusing on impact
- Explaining to children from an early age future opportunities and pathways for progression so that they know what they need to do to achieve their aspirations, for instance choosing the right GCSE courses
- Increasing knowledge and awareness of what type of opportunities and employment will be available in the future

What we did

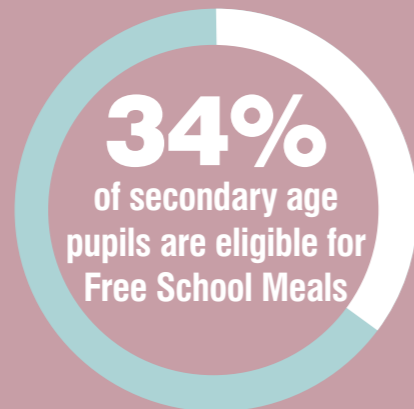
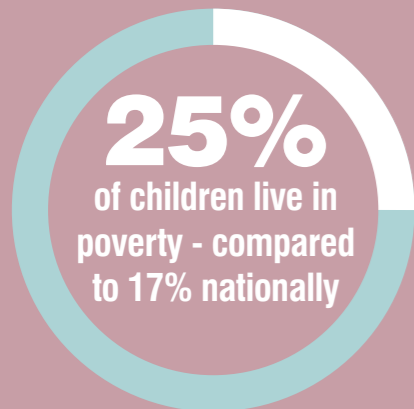
Opportunities for young people as they leave school have been developed taking into consideration their wide ranging needs and ambitions. The development of service offers have created greater opportunities across the borough.

- The development of Flourish, a post 19 provision for young people with complex needs and severe learning difficulties and disabilities, has ensured that learners who would otherwise have had to travel out of the borough can now stay in Knowsley for further education.
- The council, in partnership with the Community College, has also started a supported internship programme for ten learners each year, which has been successfully running since 2016.
- There has been a strong focus on establishing meaningful links with employers, local business owners and schools, with 3 schools joining the Knowsley Chamber of Commerce and all of our schools engaging with the City Region Careers Hub.
- All Knowsley students have improved opportunities to access the world of to better understand work experiences through career events, visits to local businesses and universities and masterclass events.
- The Council's 14-19 team have also strengthened their preventative work with schools; seeking to intervene earlier when young people are identified as at risk of being NEET.

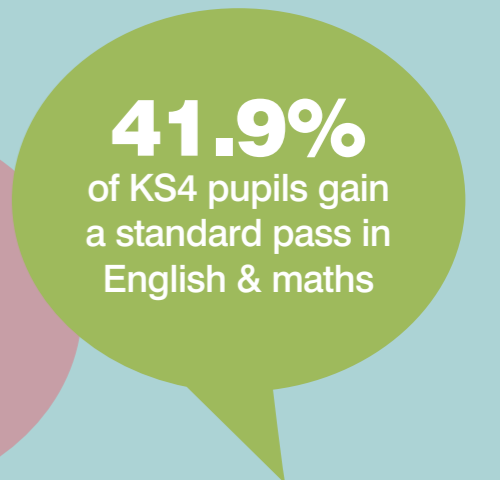


Child Poverty

Growing up in poverty can affect every area of a child's development and future life chances. Evidence shows that disadvantaged children are less likely to achieve their academic potential, secure employment and have future financial security.

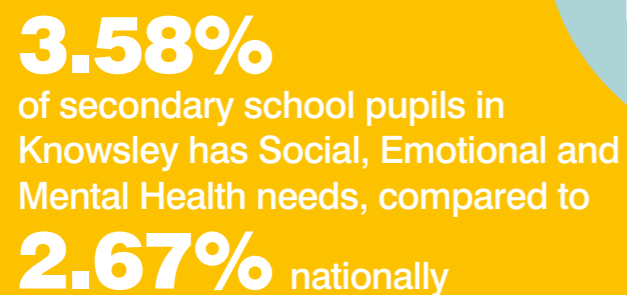
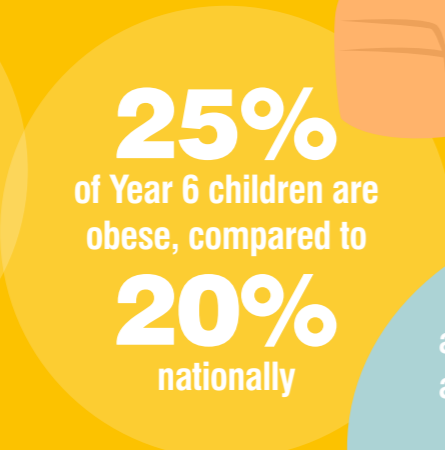
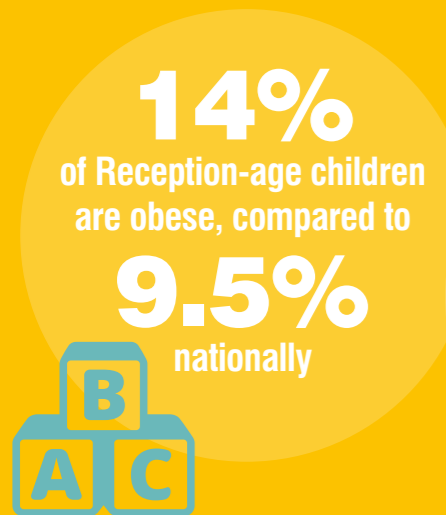


Education



Knowsley Now

Health



Mental health admissions to hospital are high for children in Knowsley, and Knowsley has one of the highest admission rates for self-harm amongst children

Care



Knowsley has the lowest rate of Child in Need in comparison with all statistical neighbours



Of these, **314** are children looked after, this is a rate of **91 per 10,000** children compared to **64 per 10,000** nationally. The number of children looked after has increased, albeit at a lower rate than national and local neighbours

The demand for criminal exploitation services now far outstrips the demand for sexual exploitation services in Knowsley

Policy Landscape

The policy landscape against which services for children and their families in Knowsley are delivered has changed significantly over the last decade. This has arisen both as a result of changing national government policy as well as the development of our understanding of children and families and what works best.

Since the development of Knowsley's Children and Young People's Plan in 2017, there have been a number of reports published which have helped to shape the policy debate nationally and locally. For example, the 1000 Days of Life Report, published in 2018 provided the strongest evidence to demonstrate how nearly every aspect of development is determined in the early years and a child's earliest experience will have lifelong impacts across a range of key outcomes, including physical and mental health, educational attainment and future earnings. Similarly, the Marmot Reports in 2010 and 2020 look at health inequalities and the wider determinants of health which describe how the environment in which we are born, grow, live, work and age impacts our health outcomes and life expectancy.

In line with the increasing focus on the early years, the early years sector has experienced a number of policy changes in recent years. Evidence has shown that disadvantage begins before birth, accumulating throughout a person's life. This growing evidence is mirrored by local and national policy developments, including investment in early help services and, nationally, the Troubled Families Programme. Both are intended to tackle some of the wider challenges and intergenerational cycles of deprivation.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 was part of the Government's broader agenda to strengthen support for vulnerable and looked after children, and introduced a range of duties on Local Government to safeguard children. This was followed in 2019 by the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance for schools mirroring local authority safeguarding developments.

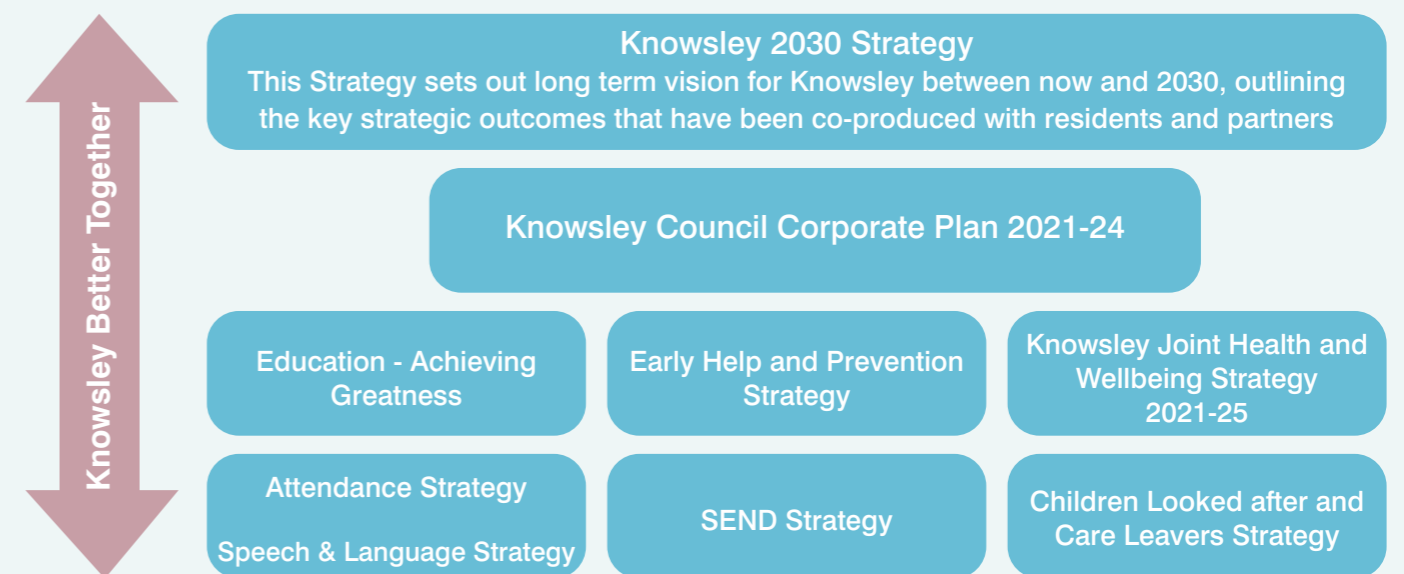
The recently passed Domestic Abuse Act 2021 is a significant piece of legislation which will impact on how local authorities deliver support for survivors and their children. The Act creates a statutory definition of domestic abuse, extending beyond physical abuse to include coercive and controlling behaviours, emotional and economic abuse, as well as placing a legal duty on councils to secure refuge accommodation for all domestic abuse survivors that need it. For the first time, the definition of coercive and controlling behaviours will be expanded to include abuse in which perpetrators and victims are no longer in a relationship.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has, without doubt, significantly shaped the policy landscape, and will continue to do so as the Government move from response into the recovery phase. The Department for Education has placed a strong emphasis on the notion of 'lost learning', providing a range of national programmes to support schools in tackling the educational deficit created by the pandemic. Similarly, recognising the significant impact on children's mental health, the Department for Health has provided funding to improve access to mental health support, expanding the number of mental health support teams within schools. At the time of writing this plan, a national roadmap has been published outlining how the Government envisage moving out of COVID-19 restrictions. It is likely that as restrictions ease and the full scale of the impact on children and young people is uncovered, there will be additional policy and funding announcements which will further inform and shape how Knowsley's Children and Families' Plan is delivered and form an important part of our COVID-19 recovery work.

Regional and local policy drivers

The Children and Families Plan will support the delivery of a number of key strategic documents and plans in Knowsley.

Some of these documents are currently being developed, but each will be aligned with Knowsley 2030 and underpinned by the Knowsley Better Together principles and approach.



Knowsley 2030

The strategic landscape in the borough is set by the new 10-year Strategy: Knowsley 2030. Knowsley 2030 started with a year-long period of engagement and intelligence gathering, working closely with the Knowsley Better Partnership, local residents, businesses, community groups and others to develop a clearer picture of life in the borough and establish what people's aspirations are for Knowsley, by 2030. Gathered through focus groups, information stalls, workshops, mapping and a survey, this collective knowledge and insight is documented in our Knowsley Now Evidence base, which will be reviewed and updated throughout the life of the Knowsley 2030 Strategy. This co-produced evidence base, which provides both data and insight, underpins the Knowsley 2030 Strategy and sets out our shared aims for our future, two of which are directly related to this plan:

- A place where people are active and healthy, and have access to the support they need and;
- A place where people of all ages are confident and can achieve full potential

Knowsley Better Together

Underpinning the way that we work is Knowsley Better Together, a shift in culture that is focused on the council working in equal partnership with residents, businesses, partners and the voluntary sector more than ever before. It involves people coming together to share ideas, skills and time to achieve a shared goal or vision, improving outcomes for Knowsley. This plan has been developed and will be delivered in line with Knowsley Better Together and the principles that underpin it. These principles are:

- Be a strong **community leader** and always champion Knowsley
- Build better partnerships and work with others **co-operatively** to improve Knowsley
- **Listen** to the community when making decisions
- **Spend** locally, **invest** locally and **recruit** locally to build social value
- Help people to be **independent**, doing more for themselves and each other
- **Prevent** problems occurring or step them getting worse
- Use the best way of delivering services that leads to **improved outcomes** for Knowsley

Knowsley residents are best placed to understand the needs of their community and to identify the most appropriate solutions, which is why giving residents the ability to shape their own lives is central to how we do things in Knowsley. From adopting the Signs of Safety framework to ensure that Children's Social Care works in partnership with families to address difficulties, to designing the Council's Practice Standards for providing a better service for all children, young people and their families in consultation with staff and local children and their families: or our comprehensive, year-long engagement process with residents which has provided the evidence base for the Knowsley 2030 strategy, our commitment to this ethos is demonstrated across all areas of council decisions.



Listening to the views of our residents and giving them the power to shape services is fundamental to the Knowsley Better Together approach and how we make sure we are delivering high-quality services that meet local need.

Our commitment to this ethos during the development of this plan was also unwavering during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. National restrictions imposed on the country including the closure of schools, shops and other community settings, as well as the imposition of homeworking policies across the council and partners, restricted our ability to plan for and deliver the full programme of engagement with children, young people and their families which we had initially hoped for. However in order to overcome these barriers and mitigate this impact wherever possible, the use of virtual technology to facilitate conversations with our partners and stakeholders, as well as with children and families has ensured their voices were heard and ideas captured.



Knowsley's Better Together approach advocates that we all have a role to play in delivering good outcomes for children, young people and families and so this plan therefore has a collective responsibility – for services across the Council and for organisations across the Knowsley Partnership. Across the Council and Health Services, there is a commitment for Adult's and Children's services to work more closely together to improve our service offer and provide a seamless service transition both for young people and families who need to move between services. Similarly, the Council's Communities and Neighbourhoods Service have a responsibility along with the Police, schools and health partners for delivering a domestic abuse strategy that supports Knowsley children and families to live in safe, stable homes. Knowsley's Culture Team are working with partners to ensure that Knowsley has a rich programme of activities for children and young people available and taking advantage of the opportunities that Knowsley's Borough of Culture Year in 2022 will bring. Finally, all services and organisations have a role to play in making sure we make best use of our resources in a way which supports early intervention and improves outcomes for children, young people and families across the Borough.



What children, young people and families have told us about living in Knowsley

“A balance is important for keeping a healthy lifestyle”

The Children and Families Plan 2021-2024 is directly aligned to the Knowsley 2030 Strategy and has been informed by the Knowsley 2030 evidence base created with our communities, known as Knowsley Now. Broad insight gathered with children and young people for Knowsley 2030 dovetails well with the priorities of the Children and Families Plan. Relevant themes from these conversations include:

- **Education and skills:** Children in Knowsley are ambitious for their future and being successful in education is a clear source of pride for many children and young people. Lots of children have talked with great insight about how they will achieve their chosen career. However, children have said that it is very important for us to acknowledge that an academic route is not appropriate for every child in Knowsley. Children and young people have lots of different skills and we must celebrate these and provide a wide range of opportunities that meet the needs of all children in Knowsley.

“Schools should help in getting you ready for work, looking for work and applications”
Secondary School Student

“It’s important for young people to see what’s out there. But also in Knowsley generally, it’s important to be the best you can be and you should have ambition”
Youth Practitioner

“Being aspirational means having lots of different lifetime goals”
Kirkby Primary School Student



“It’s important to have places to walk the dog where there’s flowers”



“Young people need somewhere to go and things to do”



“Need to listen and involve us, whilst making sure it’s genuine”



“Being aspirational means having lots of different life time goals”

- **Leisure and culture:** Youth provision in Knowsley is widely considered to be lacking. Young people have told us they have to travel far away, often on several buses, to access fun things to do, like the cinema or trampoline parks. Transport issues were often discussed as a barrier to accessing these opportunities. This was reiterated by practitioners and professions in youth services who talked about the importance of bringing opportunities closer to children in Knowsley. Many children and young people in Knowsley feel very strongly about the green spaces and parks in the borough and have talked about this as a priority for their future.
- **Home and family:** Care-experienced children and young people were consulted as part of the Children Looked After strategy. There was a strong belief that having a happy and stable home, whether with birth parents or foster carers, was a very important factor in determining whether a child would grow up to be happy and successful. Young people talked about the difference between having what they want, for instance new trainers and phones, and having what they need and there was a clear recognition that love and emotional support is key to a happy, successful childhood. Insight gathered during the Knowsley 2030 engagement supports the importance of family for children and young people, and many talked with pride about the care they have shown to those in their community, particularly older family members. We recognise this compassion and care for one another as a real strength of the Knowsley community.
- **Mental and physical wellbeing:** Access to support and signposting to help and advice was raised as important in discussions. Green spaces were discussed as ways to improve wellbeing. Young people discussed the importance of tackling the stigma associated with discussions of mental health and the importance of prevention of crisis points, particularly considering over-stretched mental health services for young people. Opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem were also discussed by young people.
- **Place and Space:** A balance between social rented and private house- building is important to residents, as well as the different types of properties available. The infrastructure (roads, schools and transport) of Knowsley is believed to be a crucial element of housing development and needs to match the rate of house-building. The sense of community in and around new housing developments was also raised as important in conversations with our communities and protecting green space and parks was discussed as important when planning new developments. Feeling safe in the community is very important for children and their families and many have talked strongly of the impact of anti-social behaviour on communities, their sense of security and wellbeing.

Local insight on the ambitions of the Children and Families Plan 2021-2024

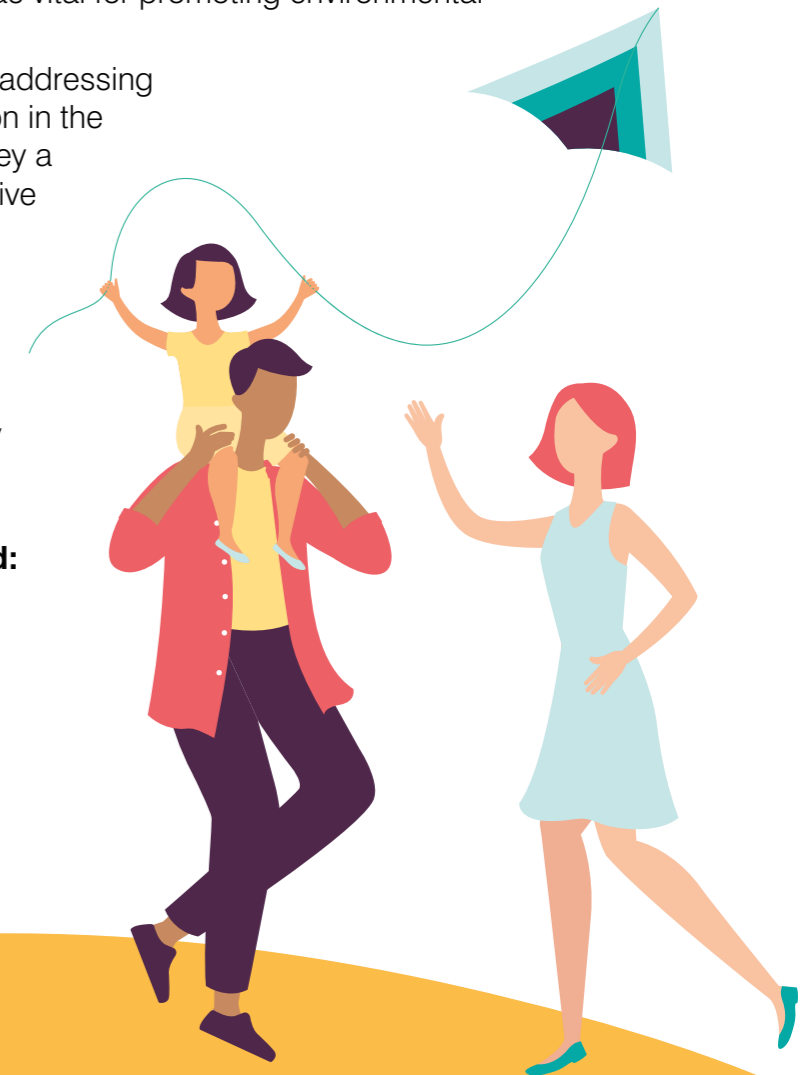
As well as being able to draw on the insight gathered through the development of our Knowsley 2030 evidence base, between Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021, a number of additional virtual conversations with children, young people and families took place in order to gather their views and experiences specifically on the ambitions of the Children and Families Plan.

Local children, young people and families have shared their insight on the important considerations to be made within in the plan in relation to a number of themes, alongside some thoughts on how things could change in the future. Below is a summary of this insight:

- Education **“isn’t one size fits all”** so it’s important to remember people learn and develop differently.
- **Beyond academic achievement and exams:** It’s important to recognise that learning is about more than just grades and exams, although they are important.
- There are **lots of pathways to success;** school and exams can be a pressurised experience, local professionals or employers could share their journeys beyond school and show students there are many ways to achieving goals which might not have been part of the ‘original plan’.
- **Skills for independent living, social skills, developing CVs and accessing work experience** are important.
- **Confidence and self-esteem** can help people to achieve at school, as well as outside of school. Extracurricular activities can help build confidence, as can positive feedback from teachers.
- **Showcasing the achievements of local young people** could help to encourage young people to work towards their own goals and could help to highlight Knowsley’s positives.

Knowsley as a place for young people and families

- **“What’s out there for me?”** support to help young people access wider opportunities for the future are important, including work experience, placements and apprenticeships. Access to networks of local, national and international businesses to help match and support interests with training opportunities would be welcome. To support young people to find jobs there should be a focus on people’s assets; employers could potentially work more closely with schools and young people to scout for potential. **Knowsley as a place for young people and families:** the below themes were raised as important to young people when thinking more broadly about growing up and living in Knowsley, thinking of Knowsley as a place to live long-term for young people and adults:
 - o **Housing:** it is important that housing is affordable to existing residents in Knowsley, of good quality and environmentally sustainable, including avoiding negative impact on green space.
 - o **Green space and the environment:** green space is a really important aspect of what makes a good place to live. For the young people spoken to, having green space within walking distance from home was felt to be good for physical and mental health. Protecting green space is seen as vital for promoting environmental sustainability.
 - o **Tackling deprivation and inequality:** addressing inequalities and high levels of deprivation in the borough is important to making Knowsley a good place for children and families to live now as well as in the future.
 - o **Sustainable jobs:** for young people it is important to see opportunities for secure jobs locally, with ethical working conditions and business operating fairly in their treatment of employees and the local area.
 - o **Safe, welcoming and well-connected:** being safe when spending time locally is important in Knowsley, as well as feeling welcome and being able to travel as easily within Knowsley, as well as outside Knowsley.



“It’s important to feel that your perspective matters”

Listening to Children, Young People and Families

In order to deliver the Children and Families Plan we will continue to work with and listen to our local children and young people through the Children and Families Board and will keep conversations going through our networks of children and young people’s organisations. Young people we spoke to shared their thoughts on how they could be kept informed and included in the development of the Children and Families Plan.

To do this, they suggested:

- Discussions with existing youth groups and others; discussions are important for young people because this “sparks ideas and boosts social skills”
- Through schools: directly into classroom discussions, through School Councils and through informal drop-in sessions and suggestion boxes
- Online surveys
- Raise awareness through social media engagement with existing channels, organisations and local businesses
- Learn from the Make Your Mark Campaign results to inform some of the priorities and delivery plans

Some of the above suggestions will be used to inform how the Children and Families plan is delivered and importantly, how children and young people can shape the strategic landscape in the future.

Taking these suggestions and ideas on board, plans are underway to consider the ways in how we strengthen our engagement with children, young people and families. These plans will be developed alongside partners and local children and families as there is already the potential to springboard from the brilliant work already started by our local young people. Harnessing the existing engagement taking place in a way which helps us to regularly capture young people’s and families’ insight will help to better inform the work of Children and Families Board in a way which aligns as closely as possible with our community’s experiences.

We already know that COVID-19 pandemic has had widespread impact on many of themes in the lives of children, young people and families in Knowsley and this was only further evidenced as part of this engagement. During our conversations, young people talked passionately about the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their lives across a range of themes which we have the opportunity to address through the Children and Families Plan. For instance, children and young people highlighted the added pressure that remote learning has added to their experience of education, concerns for the wellbeing of themselves and others during this time and the impact the pandemic may have on their future opportunities. These impacts will therefore continue to be explored during the ongoing delivery and monitoring of this plan, as well as through the recovery work being undertaken by the Council and its partners to aid our understanding of the depth and breadth of the impact of the pandemic on our communities.



- **Improving and maintaining good mental health:**
 - o build on **what already exists** by working with groups already in the community, help these groups **connect** more.
 - o **link up people who need people;** a forum where people can link up, safely.
 - o a good example of support is **Mental Health ambassadors in schools**, providing peer-to-peer support for students who may need someone to talk.
 - o it is important to have someone or a **space to talk** and knowing **where to get support** if it’s needed.
- Keeping in touch with **family, not being lonely**, having a **voice** and **planning** are ways to help people to be **happy**.
- **Togetherness, connections and community:**
 - o **networking opportunities** allows people to share their experience; people realise they’re not ‘odd ones out’ helping to highlight the **diversity of families**.
 - o help people to have more of a **stake in their communities** and the **future; work with, don’t impose**. This will help people feel **involved, connected** and **protective** of their local areas.
 - o if people **know their local area** and **community** better, they can feel **happier** and **safer**.
 - o School offers you a **community**, so if you don’t go to school in Knowsley, it can be difficult to replicate that sense of community in your local area and sometimes that feeling of **belonging** is missing; local **activities** can help with this.
- **Activities** already exist across the borough but often people aren’t aware; the creation of an online hub **sharing information** about out of school offer/clubs/ apprenticeships would be welcomed.

“Knowsley - a place where all our children have the best start in life, where every family thrives and where all our young people aim high and achieve their potential.”

Our vision for children and families

From our consultation and engagement with children and families and from work undertaken with services, we know that children and young people are ambitious for their future and that one of Knowsley's key strengths is the resilience of families. Yet, whilst many children and families are able to live happy and healthy lives in Knowsley, there is still a high proportion who face greater challenges and inequalities.

The Knowsley Children and Families Plan 2021-2024 therefore sets out to address these challenges, which is why for:

Children in their early years

We want children to be safe and have the best start in life by having access to pre-school support and high-quality nursery and children's centre provision which supports children and their families as early on in a child's life as possible.

Children in primary schools

We want children to be ready to learn when they start school and thrive in settings which provide them with a solid foundation for future learning, including their transition to secondary school.

Children in secondary schools

We children and young people to have access to high quality education provision in an environment which supports and promotes good mental health and wellbeing, clear careers guidance and pathways, and access to continuous learning.

Young people

We want them to have the chance to fulfil their ambitions regardless of what pathway they follow by ensuring that the right advice, support and opportunities are available to help realise these ambitions and achieve success in a way that is meaningful to them.

All families

We want them to know how to access the right help at the right time and feel comfortable and confident in accessing service provision that is streamlined, easy to navigate, meets their needs at every stage and puts families at the heart of the service.

Making it happen - our key priority areas

More than 37,000 children and young people live in Knowsley and this plan is about enabling each of them to achieve their full potential. A focus on **prevention** is key to this, as we know that by equipping children and families to build upon their strengths from an early stage, enabling them to be independent and to seek help for problems early, that they are then far more likely to stop problems becoming too difficult and entrenched to overcome.

Prevention is the central focus of this plan, not only as an individual priority, but it is embedded throughout our approach to ensure that early intervention and prevention is placed at the heart of how we work with our children, young people and their families.

Education continues to be common theme during our discussions with children and young people. They understand that good education leads to good opportunities and a positive transition to adulthood. They are also clear that what is on offer needs to meet the varied needs of all pupils. Education providers and children's social care are keen to ensure that children and young people are supported to achieve their educational aspirations whatever they may be.

What we also understand is that our children and young people need to be supported by their **families** and those environments need to be nurturing and enabling. There are times when parents and carers need support to undertake their roles. It is important that support is offered without delay and is accessible for all. To make this work partners need to make sure that they work together to provide families with the right support at the right time.



Why is this important?

Early intervention focuses on preventing problems occurring, or on tackling challenges head-on before they get worse. Effective early intervention enables children and families to build on their personal strengths and skills to become more independent and resilient to the challenges that they face. Whilst early interventions are often focused on the early years of a child's life, interventions can improve children's life chances at any point during childhood and adolescence.

In Knowsley, we have a good understanding of the risk factors that can threaten children's development, limit future social and economic opportunities, and increase the likelihood of mental and physical health problems, criminal involvement, substance misuse, or exploitation or abuse in later life. These risk factors exist at different levels within the child's environment and are often associated with the challenges of intergenerational deprivation faced by families in Knowsley.

While the challenges faced by families can be complex, and often have their roots in socio-economic deprivation, our early intervention work is focused on mitigating the impact of inequalities, working well with partners, equipping our workforces with skills and opportunities to help families at the right time, and ensuring that our communities have a voice and are supported to help each other.

How we will deliver this:

1. We will deliver the Early Help and Prevention Strategy which is focused on the Knowsley key principles of prevention: effective partnerships, workforce development, improving use of data and communication.
2. We will take steps to further integrate Early Years services, including health, children's centres, and early education to create a holistic early years' service that offers seamless transition between pregnancy and early stages of parenting, promoting child development, parenting, healthy lifestyles and increasing the number of working families in Knowsley.
3. Funding used to establish a new Mental Health Support Team to ensure children and young people who have mild to moderate emotional wellbeing issues are given timely access to talking therapies to prevent escalation.
4. Development of the Youth Offer to ensure that young people in Knowsley have opportunities to take part in activities that they enjoy, build friendships and enjoy their leisure time safely.
5. Raise awareness of young carers, and their needs and deliver the Carers' Strategy.
6. Recognising the impact of adverse childhood experiences on mental health in children and young people, and training professionals in trauma informed practice to ensure that the behaviours of children at risk are understood and preventative work.
7. Further develop our edge of care services, so that families are supported to stay together and reduce the numbers of young people requiring residential care.
8. Develop and commission a fit for purpose and co-produced service provision for Children and Young People with disabilities and complex needs across Knowsley.
9. Working more closely with Adult's services to improve the experience for young people who are transitioning to Adult Social Care services.
10. We will refresh our Healthy Weight strategy to support families to reach or maintain healthy weight.

Outcomes

1. More children accessing high quality Early Years provision;
2. Early Help effectively reduces demand on Children's Social Care;
3. More children referred to psychological therapies;
4. Fewer children are placed in high cost placements in Health or social care provision.

Priority One

Prevention to give children the best start in life

How we'll know if we have been successful

- By 2024, we will have an Early Years delivery model, which has multi-agency pathways to support speech, language and communication; parent and infant mental health; physical development; and social, emotional and behavioural needs;
- Evidence of an effective early help offer, that reduces the demand placed on higher intervention services, including CSC;
- Fewer children looked after requiring residential accommodation;
- Seamless service for children and young people with complex disabilities as they transition to adult services.



Why is this important?

All children and young people have the right to achieve their full potential through inclusive education that meets the needs of all learners. In Knowsley education providers recognise the importance of academic and vocational education to prepare young people for the next stage in their lives, and offer variety in education and learning.

We know that education and the transition into training and employment can maximise the life chances of children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, if we prepare children with cognitive, social and emotional skills which will impact on later life outcomes. During the next three years, we will sharpen our focus on the most disadvantaged learners and place children with SEND, young carers and children who have a social worker at the heart of our efforts to improve education and life chances.

In Knowsley, we are focused on raising aspirations for children and young people in Knowsley, celebrating their achievements and ensuring that, as set out in the Knowsley 2030 strategy, the borough is a place where people of all ages are confident and can achieve their full potential.

How we will deliver this:

1. The recovery from and mitigation of the impact on children and schools of COVID-19 will be reliant on collaboration between schools, health providers, families, and the local authority providing a joined up and graduated response to the challenges and minimising the impact on learning goals.
2. Utilising the council's resource and expertise to support schools in maximising opportunities for children and families.
3. Providing holistic and joined up support for children and families through the Social Worker in School programme.
4. Targeting placed based support to the borough's most deprived areas through the Liverpool City Region's Right to Succeed project.
5. Attendance in school is the foundation for achievement, for building friendships and preparing for adulthood. Low attendance can be an indicator of wider issues in the child's experiences or of difficulties within the family or community. To address this, a new Attendance Strategy will be launched focusing on removing barriers to attendance.
6. Being a confident communicator is a crucial for a child's development and future, and the implementation of the new Speech and Language Strategy that runs from early years to secondary school will support and facilitate this.
7. Increasing opportunities for young people who are at risk of becoming NEET and developing a careers strategy that provides learners with knowledge and inspiration, and empowers them to take positive steps to developing their future and careers.
8. Through the development of a new SEND Strategy, that builds on the positive progress made in the last three-years and is focused on co-production with children and families.

Outcomes

1. Attendance in primary, secondary and special schools improve, narrowing the gap with regional comparators;
2. More children are identified with Speech and Language Needs at SEN Support, with fewer requiring Education, Health and Care Plan;
3. Fewer young people become NEET or unknown;
4. Children with SEND make better progress in school.

How we'll know if we have been successful

- If the gaps between Knowsley and national comparators do not increase, and are narrowing;
- If attendance improves in Knowsley in the long-term;
- If there is more work on preventing young people becoming NEET from an earlier age, and ultimately fewer young people who are NEET;
- That parents and carers of children with SEND, children with social workers tell us that services meet their needs.

Priority Two

Education to improve life chances



Why is this important?

Families provide the positive nurturing and care needed to ensure that children are safe and enable them to lead healthy and happy lives. For children who experience and establish positive, safe and stable relationships early in life, this helps them to go on to build secure attachments, develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-reliance and contributes to a strong sense of identity and belonging which often helps secure positive long-term outcomes in education, health and overall wellbeing.

Through the provision of effective universal services in the community, most families will thrive. However, within our communities some families will need extra support to address the challenges they face. It is recognised that where families have multiple and complex needs, historically services have worked in isolation of each other. By working collaboratively, services can be more effective in supporting a family to prevent needs escalating and families requiring more intensive or specialist interventions and build on the strengths within families.

This means breaking down multi-agency barriers, facilitating better communication between professionals and smoothing the journey for families with complex needs. By taking an integrated approach, we will be able to meet needs in a more effective and efficient way and support families to be independent and thrive.

How we will deliver this:

1. Building on the learning of the Volunteer Hub and the Early Help Hub, we will explore the development of a Community Assets programme that will provide support to families and that families can become involved in to develop their own skills and confidence.
2. Work in partnership with housing providers to ensure that there is good communication and information sharing to help families earlier.
3. We will develop a new multi-agency strategy to address domestic abuse, that considers healthy relationships, and the impact of domestic abuse on families and how services will work with young perpetrators.
4. Supporting families out of poverty through adult skills and careers development support.
5. Development of the parenting offer, by using the learning from recent programmes on reducing parental conflict and new digital ways of working with families to increase capacity and consider other models of support.
6. Working collaboratively across services to support improved mental health in families, harnessing the cultural and green assets in Knowsley to help families.
7. Care Leavers are part of our family, and in the plans for the next three years, we are ensuring that they have access to high quality housing and education, employment and training support.

Outcomes

1. More partners provide Early Help Assessments successfully and without further intervention;
2. More effective multi agency working to support victims of Domestic Abuse;
3. More children looked after in suitable accommodation.

Priority Three

Family supporting families to thrive

How we'll know if we have been successful

- There will be more volunteer programmes that support families, and more opportunities for adults to volunteer;
- Care leavers will tell us that they feel safe in their homes, and have good opportunities for education and/or employment;
- We will be able to evidence that the domestic abuse reduction strategy is effective.



The Role of the Children and Families Board

The Children and Families Board is responsible for owning and driving the delivery of the Children and Families Plan. The Board provides strategic oversight and direction for children and young people's services in Knowsley and brings together a range of senior public service professionals who are authorised to make decisions on behalf of the sector that they represent.

The Board is Chaired by Councillor Margaret Harvey, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and has a young person's representative who acts as the Chair's advisor and ensures that all discussions consider the perspectives of children in the borough. The Board is directly accountable to the Knowsley Better Together Board and the Chair of the Children and Families Board sits on the Knowsley Better Together Board to act as a conduit between the two and report information as required.

The Board provides a forum at which accountability for the overall delivery of Knowsley's Children and Families Plan and associated strategies is secured. The Board therefore monitors and evaluates the contribution that partners make towards the plan via performance update reports which allow all partners to assess progress against the delivery of the priorities in the plan and to drive forward its delivery.

In addition to monitoring the plan, the Board work together to identify innovative and effective practices to improve services for children and families and the Board aims to ensure that resources are being used in the most effective and efficient manner.

The Board also recognises the importance of active engagement and consultation with service users ensures that the young people of Knowsley receive a platform to express their views and have the opportunity to inform the work of the Board. Going forward, the Board are committed to working even more closely in engaging with Knowsley's children, young people and families to regularly capture insight in order to help with the delivery of the priorities set out in this plan, as well as better informing the work of the Board in a way which aligns as closely as possible with our community's experiences.



Knowsley
**CHILDREN &
FAMILIES**
Board

LET'S TALK
2030