

# Start Well

## Overview and key messages

To Start Well, we want all children and young people in Knowsley to have the same opportunities, life chances and potential to lead safe, healthy and happy lives. Children and young people should be supported to fulfil their ambitions, irrespective of where they live or where they were born. This means reducing inequalities in-between different parts of Knowsley, and the inequalities that exist between Knowsley and other parts of England.

While most children live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives throughout the Borough, there is a higher proportion of children who face greater challenges and inequalities throughout their lives in Knowsley than in other local authorities. Knowsley has a higher proportion of children who face inequality, largely connected to the intensity of deprivation, and associated poor health and educational outcomes.

Engagement and insight work with Knowsley children tells us that children are ambitious for their lives, that they are passionate about the environments that they live in and that they want to be afforded the opportunity to have activities and achieve their aspirations. Children in Knowsley also care a great deal about their families, in particular showing concern for older members of their families.

The intensity of deprivation levels that exist within Knowsley, indicates that to be in line with areas that are statistically similar, Knowsley should have more children who are in need of help and protection and more children

who are looked after in care. However, there are significant strengths in families in Knowsley, and throughout the life course there are strong and consistent examples of families who seek to provide significant care for each other, despite the often overwhelming challenges families face.

However, recent trends show that there has been an increase of children presenting with progressively more complex challenges. This is shown through increases of children with special educational needs having Education, Health and Care Plans, trends that show increasing numbers of children looked after numbers, the increase in child criminal exploitation and demand for contextual safeguarding. There are challenges in addressing these demands for families and services across Knowsley, and while children remain centre of all practice, the context of the family and parents should be considered also.

The challenge for services is to provide a foundation of support, through high quality universal services and early help, that empowers children and their families to be independent and resilient, whilst protecting and championing the most vulnerable children.



### Key messages from evidence base about Starting Well in Knowsley are:

- Knowsley's population of children and young people are less ethnically diverse than their English peers.
- Knowsley has the highest rate of secondary school age children who are eligible for free school meals.
- 25% of children in Knowsley live in poverty.
- Teenage pregnancy rates are higher than national and regional averages.
- 17% of Knowsley women smoke during their pregnancy.
- 2 in 10 mothers' breastfeed at 6-8 weeks after birth.
- Primary school results show year on year improvement, but remain below national average.
- The rate of primary school children eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national rate.
- Knowsley's results at secondary level are an outlier, with the worst results in England.
- Results for Knowsley residents are better than those attending Knowsley schools.
- Knowsley schools have the highest rate of persistent absence in England.
- Knowsley has the third highest rate of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in England.
- Too many children in Knowsley are identified as having "moderate learning needs".
- Knowsley's current prevalence of childhood obesity is the highest in 20 years.
- Unintentional injuries are one of the leading causes of hospitalisation in children.
- Estimated prevalence of mental health disorders in Knowsley are higher than national and regional rates.
- Knowsley has one of the highest rates of self-harm admissions in England.
- Mental health in children looked after has gotten worse.
- Knowsley has the lowest rate of Children in Need in comparison with all statistical neighbours.
- The numbers of children looked after are increasing, albeit at a lower rate than national and regional levels.
- Knowsley's Youth Offending rate has significantly declined over the last 10-years.
- 87% of young offenders in Knowsley are male.
- The demand for criminal exploitation services now far outstrips the demand for sexual exploitation services in Knowsley.
- The primary risk factors for NEET are low educational attainment at GCSE, Special Educational Needs, poor health, and difficult labour market conditions.
- Knowsley has the lowest rate of 19-year olds with Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in England.
- A higher rate of Care Leavers 'stay put' in Knowsley than nationally.

## What Children and Young People Tell Us

Children and young people in Knowsley are interested in their local communities, and throughout the 2030 engagement they were able to articulate the positive and negative aspects of the area they live. In many cases, children express the impact these points have on day-to-day life in the Borough. Between requests for sweet shops and puppies, young people made some poignant and considered aspirations for Knowsley in 2030. Predominantly, young people of different ages reported similar priorities for the future, largely around being safe, happy and healthy.

The engagement work undertaken with children and young people has taken an inclusive approach, collaborating with partner organisations and schools. The methods have included surveys, focus groups, lesson plans, and postcards from the future, peer research and social media platforms. There has been an especially good response from youth groups facilitated by the Knowsley Youth Mutual, and from primary school pupils about what they want from their futures.

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

During engagement sessions, children and young people consistently return to the theme of the environment, both in terms of the areas where they live, and in addressing issues like recycling and wildlife.

Children in Knowsley discuss the importance of environmental protection and quality, such as parks, woodlands and ponds, and their positive impact on where they live. Children and young people told us that parks are

important to them as places to have fun, spend family time and ways in which to be healthy and to feel good. The upkeep of parks is a significant concern, as many reported vandalism and litter in parks as having a negative impact on their experience.

### ***“Grass is important so that bugs can keep safe”***

Year 1 pupils used maps to explore and express their ideas of what is important in their communities, in the future.



*Andrew (age 5) and Aston (age 6):*

- We need more trains
- We need lighthouses to stay safe
- We need more buses to go to town and Huyton
- We need more bridges to stay safe
- Doors on houses help us stay safe
- If shops are far away it's not very good
- More bins so we can put rubbish in
- We need more houses so we can stop people living in bins and tents

*Robyn (age 6) and Penelope (age 6):*

- Football pitch so people can play and have fun and have more energy
- School is good because people learn and do work.
- It's important to have places to walk the dog where there's flowers
- Grass is important so that bugs can keep safe
- Trees are important to keep birds safe



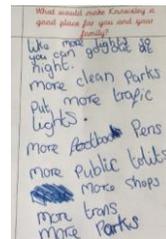
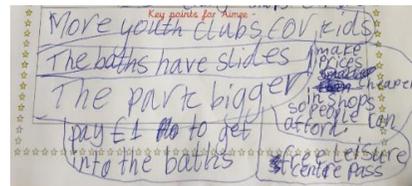
### ***“Young people need somewhere to go and things to do”***

When asked ‘what would you like to see change or be different in Knowsley in the future’, responses focused on activities, with a focus on increasing the activities available for children and young people. In particular young people from the LGBT community identified a lack of dedicated space to socialise with their peers:

*“Some people don’t have stuff to do and they just go to the shops and then go home”*

*“Some people need money”*

*“There’s a lack of community in the area ... would like to see things like LGBT cafes and places to go before the age of 18 when you can go to bars/clubs”*



Parks and their upkeep feature once more as an important part of young people’s future. Young people were aware of the complexity of providing services and activities and discussed at length the affordability of leisure facilities and youth clubs. There was also a strong awareness of the relationships between the provision of activities and community safety (both in terms of finding a safe place and opportunities to reduce anti-social behaviour), access, transport links through the Borough and disability access. They also talked about homelessness and older people showing an awareness of some of the wider social issues prevalent in the UK at the moment. These debates represented the breadth of young people’s concerns for the future as well as their engagement with their local and

wider communities, and showed how young people recognised complexity and showed consistent awareness of and concern for people within their communities.

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

Young people also discuss the ways in which they could be more involved in the wider community: “People in school tell us what they decided to do rather than ask”

School councils were discussed as a way in which young people can be involved in decision-making. Importantly, young people said that this involvement must be genuine, non-tokenistic and not used to make false promises; concerns discussed by young people when sharing their experience of their involvement (or not) in their community. A suggested future improvement from a young person was “to write youth engagement into policy”.

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

Education and personal aspirations was an important theme for all children and young people who were part of 2030 engagement. Education was discussed as vehicle for young people to achieve personal ambitions, as well as aspirations for the Borough as a whole.

*“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”*

When asked, children reported the types of jobs they'd like to pursue when older, as well as explaining the reasons these jobs would be important to them and others:

“I want to be a researcher when I grow up”

“I want to be a footballer when I grow up because I likes playing on a team”

“I want to be a vet because I like animals”

“I want to be a teacher so you can learn things and help people”

***“Should have advice on guidance for different types of jobs - there isn't much variety”***

For teenagers, they discussed their job aspirations, and the possible routes they could take to achieve through qualifications and training. Young people reported their hopes for employment and careers guidance to be delivered in schools, alongside life skills:

“Life skills should be a compulsory subject in schools and given equal importance as maths and English”

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

These young people also discussed how useful the achievements of others could be in terms of their own aspirations. They suggested that role-models should be used in schools: “there should be people who have done well going back into schools to talk to them”.

The next section of this document focuses on what the data tells us about the experience of children in Knowsley. Data cannot consistently capture the positive experiences in Knowsley, instead it often exposes the areas where Knowsley is behind the rest of the country in terms of health and education for Knowsley. However, the reality of Knowsley is that there are incredible strengths and assets among our young people, the insight work shows that children and young people have aspirations for Knowsley, especially in terms of the protecting the physical environment, about caring for their communities and they have considerable personal ambitions.

The challenge for services in Knowsley is to make sure that the opportunities that these children and young people talk about is offered to all young people in Knowsley, regardless of their background and the challenges that they face.

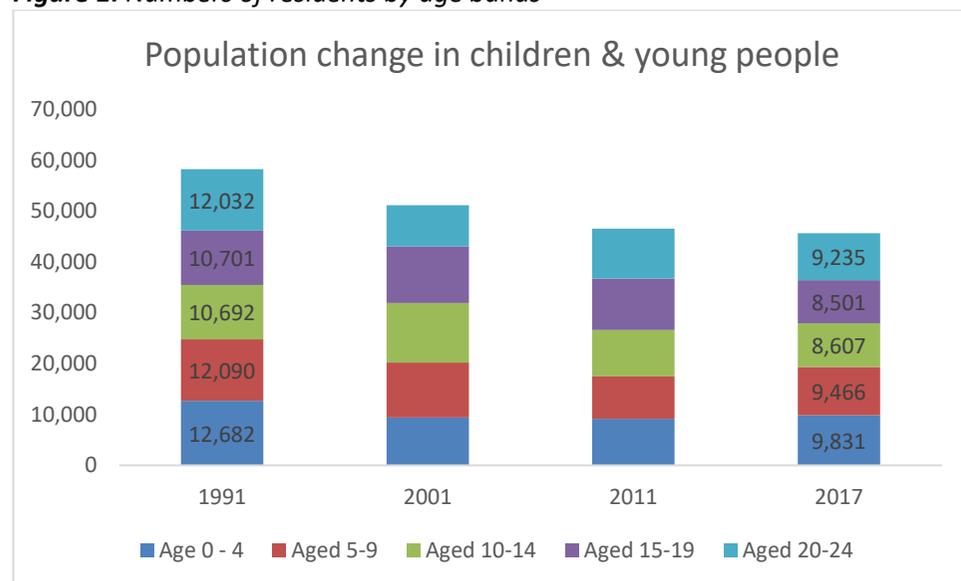
*For more information on parks and green issues, see Neighbourhoods chapter.*

## Children and Young People Population

### **36,405 people aged 0-19 live in Knowsley**

The number of children and young people accounts for a quarter of Knowsley's total population. This is slightly higher than the national proportion of 23% of the population being aged 0-19.

**Figure 1:** Numbers of residents by age bands



Source: ONS Mid-Year estimates

The number of children and young people in Knowsley has fallen by 22% since 1991, with consistent reductions in all age groups. Since 2011 the rate of population decline has slowed primarily due to an increase in birth rate and more children in the 0-9 age ranges. However, the numbers of children aged between 10 and 19 has continued to decline.

### **National projections are stable for numbers of children in the Borough.**

ONS Projections show that in the next decade the birth rate of children in Knowsley will remain stable, and the pattern of older children leaving the Borough is likely to continue.

## Characteristics of Children and Young People

### **Knowsley's population of children and young people are less ethnically diverse than their English peers.**

2011 census data showed that 95% of Knowsley's children were from a white ethnic background.

School census 2018 shows that 94% of children who go to Knowsley schools are from a white ethnic background, compared to 80% in the North West, and 74% in England. In Knowsley, 7% of pupils are from a minority ethnic background, compared to 32% in England and 23% in the North West. The ethnic composition of schools has been subject to analysis, with a parliamentary select committee finding evidence to support the assertion that "Poor white British children now come out of our schools with worse qualifications than equally poor children in any other major ethnic group". In Knowsley schools, there is a high rate of economically disadvantaged pupils, and the lack of ethnic diversity in the pupil characteristics is potentially a contributory factor to below national average educational attainment.



There is limited information available about children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. Social care data shows increased recognition of gender variance amongst our most vulnerable communities, and a local group (Queer Youth) has engaged with 149 young people from Knowsley who identify as LGBTQIA.

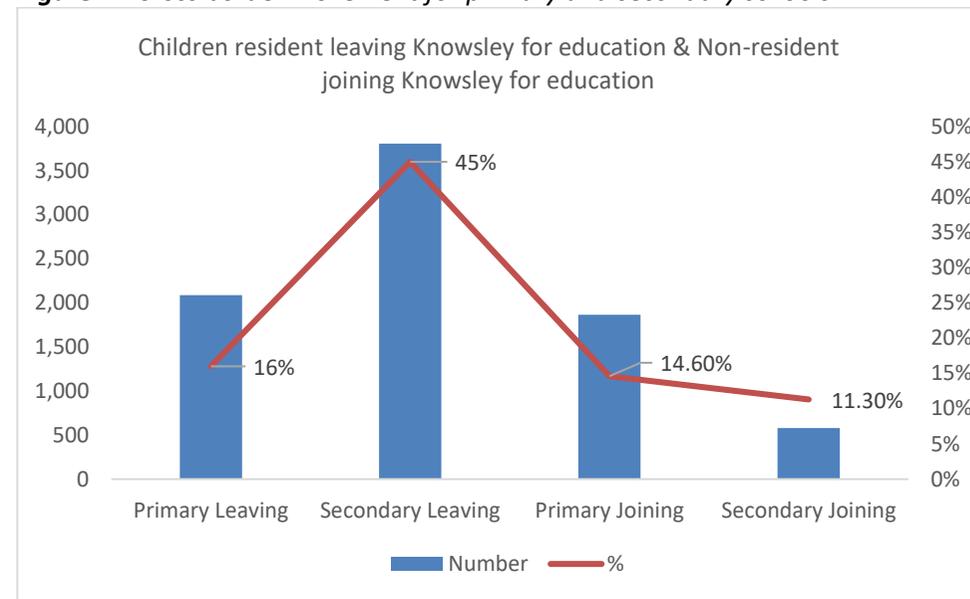
Knowsley has a high rate of children educated in the Borough who are identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, with 19.2% of the school population with an Education, Health and Care Plan or receiving SEN Support. There are more than 1,200 children who live in Knowsley with an EHC Plan, and 1,530 children and young people are eligible for disability living allowance, at a higher rate than national eligibility.

***Knowsley has the highest rate of secondary school age children who are eligible for free school meals.***

Knowsley has the highest rate of secondary school age children who are eligible for free school meals (34.1% of children educated in secondary schools), and one of the highest rates of primary school children eligible for free school meals (26.2%). Both secondary and primary rates of free school meals in Knowsley are more than double the average for England.

There are 20,277 children educated in schools in Knowsley, as a high proportion of secondary aged children are educated outside of the Borough:

**Figure 2: Cross border movement for primary and secondary schools.**



Source: DfE Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, 2018

With the rate of secondary school children eligible for free school meals being so much higher than the primary school rate, this shows that the cohort of children who remain in Knowsley for their secondary education tend to be those from more deprived families.

### ***25% of children in Knowsley live in poverty***

Child poverty is measured through the proportion of children living in families whether in receipt of out of work benefits or in receipt of tax credits with a reported income less than 60% of national median income. The rate of child poverty in Knowsley has declined since 2009, influenced by a fall in

national median income, however, Knowsley is among the top ten local authorities with the highest rates of child poverty in England.

In between 2015 and 2016, the rate of child poverty decreased by 2.20% points in Knowsley, while the national rate increased from 16.8% to 17.00%. Within a year, Knowsley has gone from the 10<sup>th</sup> highest to the 19<sup>th</sup> highest rate of child poverty in England. Child poverty has increased for local authorities from the North East and West Midlands, with other North West local authorities such as Liverpool and Manchester experiencing a similar reduction as Knowsley.

However, the reliability of HMRC's local measure has reduced in recent years due to the nature in which it is calculated (reliance on benefits and tax credits data and the measure also does not include claimants of Universal Credit). With the increasing rollout of Universal Credit replacing working age benefits and tax credits, the fall in local child poverty in the most recent set of data, shows that this measure is no longer a reliable indicator of local child poverty.

Therefore the End Child Poverty group has for several years published a set of measures to show local levels of child poverty using a wide range of indicators such as the unemployment rate and the number of families on tax credits. The figures also reflect levels of child poverty both before and after housing costs are taken into account, evidencing the balance of in work and out of work poverty.

In terms of local data, the latest figures published in May 2019 show that in Knowsley in 2017/18, 27.1% of children were living in a family in poverty before housing costs were taken into account. When housing costs are included this rises to 32.3%, underlining the impact that housing costs can

have on a family. Consideration of housing costs is important in this respect as costs related to housing, such as rent, Council Tax, and utilities can absorb a far greater proportion of a low income family's income.

	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
	Before housing costs (%)	After housing costs (%)	Before housing costs (%)	After housing costs (%)	Before housing cost	After housing costs
Halton	17.4	28.2	18.1	28.5	24.8	30.6
<b>Knowsley</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>32.2</b>
Liverpool	21.0	33.9	22.0	34.2	31.8	36.0
Sefton	15.5	25.0	15.7	24.8	21.5	27.1
St Helens	16.3	26.6	17.2	27.2	24.8	29.8
Wirral	16.1	26.2	16.9	26.7	24.4	28.9
Liverpool City Region	17.9	29.0	18.7	29.3	26.0	31.0

The figures also highlight specifically how poverty is rising fastest in the most deprived areas, pointing to the severe real-terms cuts in benefits, the roll-out of Universal Credit and rising housing costs as being behind the rise. This means that nationally, two thirds of child poverty occurs in working families<sup>ii</sup>. This is further supported by recent research from the Institute of Fiscal Studies<sup>iii</sup> which has found that almost a fifth of working households are affected by relative poverty leading to the biggest increase in Britain's working poor since the 1990s.

Whilst work has traditionally been viewed as the best route out of poverty, working families are increasingly dependent on a receiving some level of welfare support to top up family earnings to an adequate income level in

the form of in work benefits such as tax credits or universal credit and so employment alone is not always enough to pull families out of poverty<sup>iv</sup>.

### ***Forecasts show that relative child poverty could increase nationally***

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) projects that the share of children in relative poverty will increase sharply between 2015/16 and 2021/22. The IFS projects that relative poverty is expected to increase to 37% nationally in 2021/22, and that absolute poverty will increase to 31%. The IFS identified two main drivers of the expected increase in children in relative low income: (1) forecast earnings growth will have less of a benefit for poorer households with children than middle-income households, and (2) planned cuts to benefits, especially the two-child limit in tax credits and Universal Credit.

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. They are more likely to suffer from poor physical and mental health, live in poor quality housing and experience stress.

### ***The prevalence of poverty and deprivation has significant impact on parenting and the experience of children.***

Research into Safeguarding Pressures in 2018<sup>v</sup>, found that the unmet needs of parents are adversely impact upon the safeguarding and wellbeing of children. Adults experiencing domestic violence, mental health difficulties or substance misuse remain prevalent risk facts in children's lives, alongside the impact of poverty. People who experience poverty and lower incomes

are at more risk of social isolation and of strained relationships within families than those on higher incomes, putting more pressure on families.

The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) have stated that, "poverty can and does impact upon parenting capacity. What our research...has found quite clearly is that poverty as a result of the cumulative impacts of 10 years of austerity, and welfare reform is a primary cause of increased demand for early help and children's social care." The ADCS argues that as the often unmet needs of parents adversely impact upon the wellbeing of their children, that it makes sense to address the cycle of adult disadvantage to help improve outcomes for children.

The 2030 Live Well chapter addresses welfare reform in Knowsley in more detail, but the socioeconomic impacts are felt by children, especially the most vulnerable children in Knowsley.

## **Starting a Family**

Giving every child the best start in life starts with the family and the circumstances they are born into, including the physical and mental health of their parents. Reducing inequalities begins before conception and throughout pregnancy.

### ***2,018 babies were born to women Knowsley in 2017***

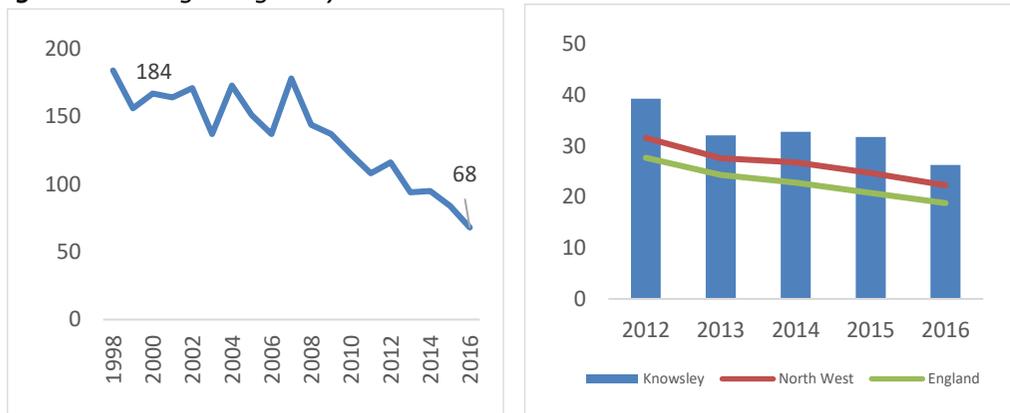
Knowsley's birth rate per 1,000 females aged 15 to 44 years, is 67.8 – which is higher than the national fertility rate of 62.5, and the North West rate of 63.4. Other local authorities in the North West with high fertility rates tend to be those places that have greater ethnic diversity than Knowsley.



**Teenage pregnancy rates are higher than national and regional averages**

Teenage pregnancy refers to under-18 conceptions, including those leading to live births and terminations. Teenage mothers are less likely to finish their education, are more likely to bring up their child alone and in poverty and have a higher risk of poor mental health than older mothers.

**Figure 3: Teenage Pregnancy statistics**



Teenage Conception by (a) Long-Term Count and (b) Rate Comparisons

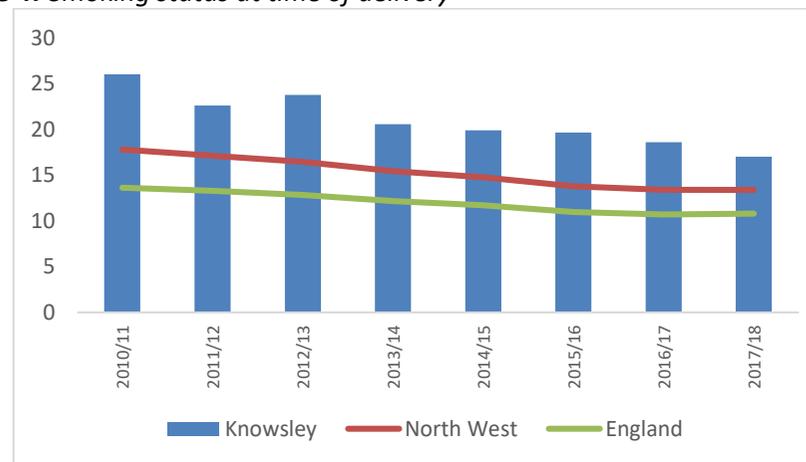
Source: NHS Fingertips

Knowsley has a high rate of terminated pregnancies, particularly for women in their twenties which is the highest rate in England amongst that age group. Knowsley’s sexual health service reported a drop in condom use amongst young people and other factors such as young people reporting poor quality sex education and long-term correlations between deprivation levels and high teenage pregnancy rates.

**17% of Knowsley women smoke during their pregnancy**

Smoking whilst pregnant can result in serious health risks for mother and baby during and after pregnancy.

**Figure 4: Smoking status at time of delivery**



Source: NHS Fingertips

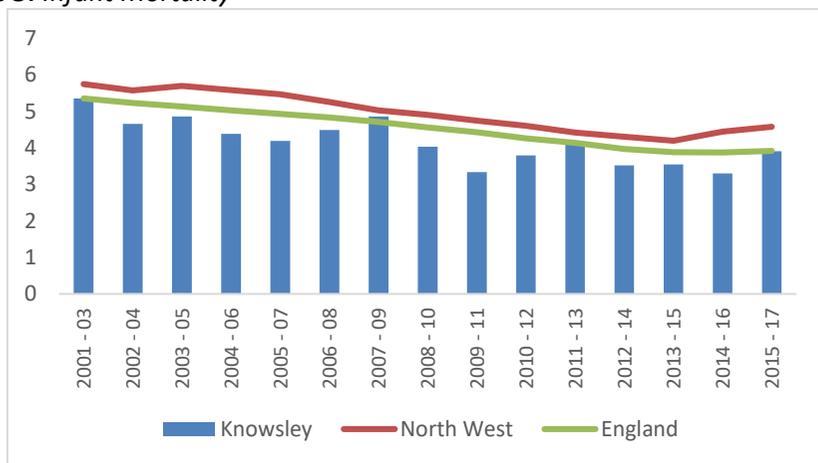
Since 2011, there has been steady improvement in the prevalence of expectant mothers who smoke during pregnancy in Knowsley. From 2010/11 there has been a reduction from 26% to 17% in 2017/18, equating to 31% fewer mothers smoking now than eight years ago. During 2017/18 Knowsley remains higher for smoking status at time of delivery (17%) in comparison to the England and North West average which is 10.8% and 13.4% respectively.

**Knowsley’s infant mortality rate is the same as the national rate, but child mortality is much higher.**



Infant mortality is an indicator of the health of the general population as a whole, there is often a strong correlation between deprivation and infant mortality. However, Knowsley’s rate of infant mortality is often lower than the national rate, and consistently below the rate in the North West.

**Figure 5: Infant Mortality**



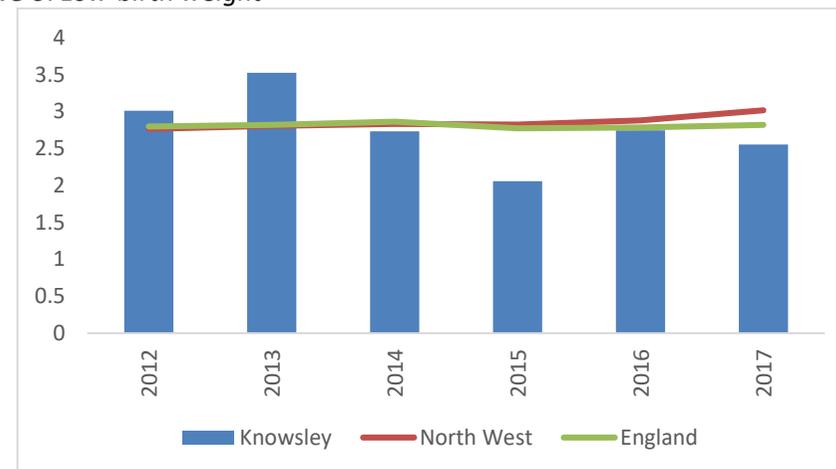
Source: NHS Fingertips

Although the infant mortality rate is the same as the national rate, the child mortality rate in Knowsley is much higher than national rates. The child mortality rate in Knowsley is 21.8 children per 100,000, compared to national rate of 11.6 children. This rate has increased from 2010-12 when the rate was 12.0 per 100,000, whereas the national rate has decreased during this period.

**Low-birth weights in Knowsley are stable**

Low birth weight increases risk of infant mortality, and the likeliness of the child having poorer health outcomes later in life. Prevalence of low birth weight is associated with deprivation and maternal lifestyle choices such as smoking during pregnancy. Poor maternal health or certain health conditions can also increase risk of low birth weight such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension.

**Figure 6: Low-birth weight**



Source: NHS Fingertips

Low birth weights in Knowsley have stayed fairly stable with small fluctuations since 2006 remaining at between 2%-3.5% of live births with a low birth weight.

Maternal and birth information shows a mixed picture, with many positives, where data shows an improving picture from historic poor performance. However, there are many areas Knowsley remains outside of the national average. In addition to health, there are other factors to consider, when



asking whether children are born into positive environment, including the social support surrounding a family.

The number of births which were registered by just one parent potentially gives an indication of the number of women in a local area that are likely to lack the support of the father during pregnancy and as a new mother. In Knowsley, 10.2% of births were registered by just one parent which is higher than the average of 5.4%, and in the 2011 Census 19.9% of Knowsley's population lived in lone parent families, which was the highest rate nationally.

## First Days

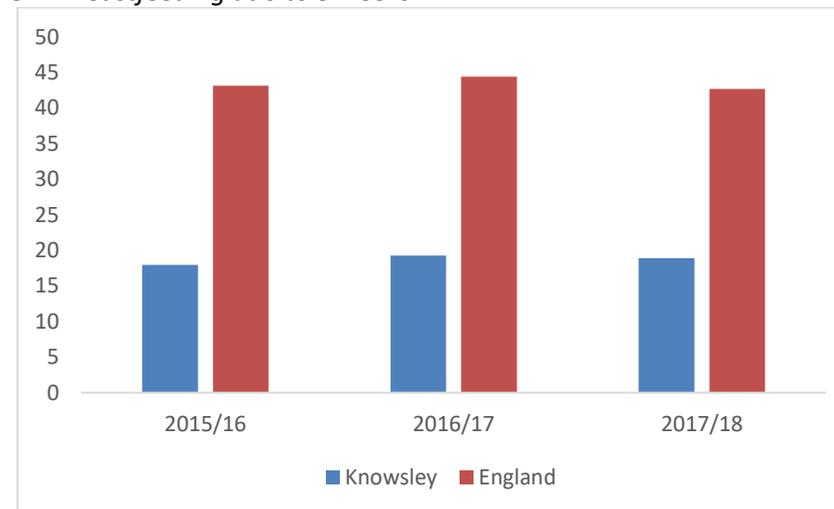
A child's experience during their early years of life is critical to their physical, cognitive and social development. During this development phase the groundwork is laid for the rest of the child's life.

Many of the issues facing young children in their early years can be influenced by deprivation. Nutrition, access to good quality early education, immunisation, and access to health services all have a long-term impact on children as they progress into adulthood.

### ***2 in 10 mothers' breastfed at 6-8 weeks after birth***

There is extensive evidence of the health benefits to breastfeeding such as reducing infant risk of infections, asthma, diabetes, heart disease, obesity and cot death. It also helps protect the mother from ovarian and breast cancers as well as heart disease and hip fractures.

**Figure 7: Breastfeeding at 6 to 8 weeks**



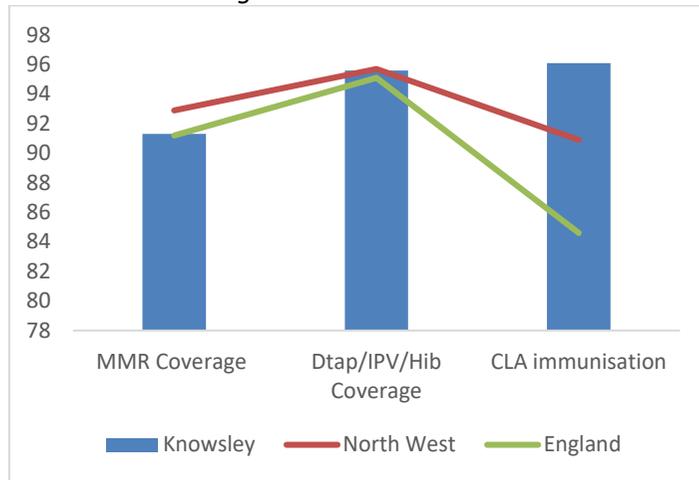
Source: NHS Fingertips

Knowsley is significantly lower than the national average for breastfeeding prevalence at 6-8 weeks after birth. In 2017/18, 19% of mothers in Knowsley reported to be breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks after birth, significantly lower than the national average which was over double this at 43%. Breastfeeding rates have stayed relatively stable in Knowsley over the last few years. Overall fewer than 2 in 10 mothers are or have breastfed in Knowsley at 6-8 weeks after birth compared to the national average which has been 4 in 10 since 2015/16.

### ***Immunisation coverage has been better than or in line with national levels.***

The coverage of early years immunisations completed in Knowsley is high, even for children in care who have a 96.1% rate of completed immunisations compared to England's 84.6%.

**Figure 8: Immunisation Coverage**



Source: NHS Fingertips

This indicates efficacy of health services in ensuring that children receive their immunisations.

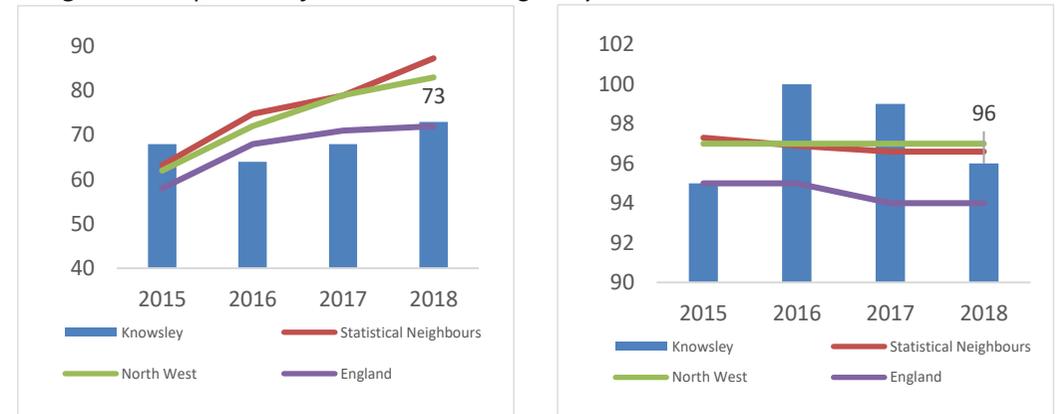
**The take-up of the two-year old offer has fluctuated**

The two-year old offer is for the children of parents who are in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance and provides 15 hours free childcare. Access to high quality early learning experiences, together with a positive learning environment at home, is a vital combination to ensure that children reach a good level of development at the start of compulsory school age.

**A greater proportion of children in Knowsley access the three and four year old early education offer than the national average.**

73% of eligible two year old children in Knowsley are benefitting from funded early education (LAIT). The improvement seen in Knowsley is significantly lower than that of England, North West and Stat Neighbours.

**Figure 9: Proportion of children accessing Early Years education**



(a) % of two-year olds accessing funded early education, (b) % of three & four year olds accessing early education.

Source: DfE LAIT

Free entitlement to early years support has been crucial for children living in poverty and most disadvantaged areas. Particularly through attaching those two year olds eligible to good high quality early education and childcare, it has strengthened baseline assessments as they move through their Foundation years.

**Education**

Children's education and development of skills are important for their wellbeing and for that of Knowsley as a whole. Learning ensures that



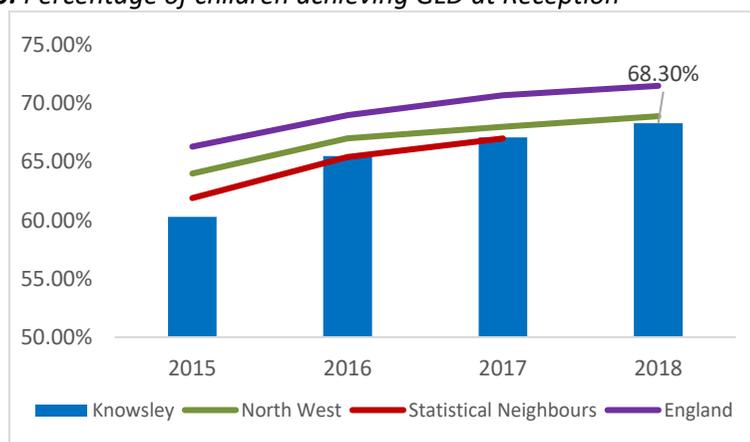
children develop the knowledge and understanding, skills, capabilities and attributes that they need for mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing now and in the future.

Educational attainment is measured at numerous points through childhood as children progress through the education system. Attainment data allows for effective benchmarking across local authority areas, and enables comparison between attainment in Knowsley, and national and statistical neighbours.

***Primary school results show year on year improvement, but remain below national average.***

At Reception level, children are assessed on whether they have reached a good level of development (GLD) in key domains. Since 2015, there has been an increase of more than 8% points in the proportion of children having a good level of development at Reception age:

**Figure 10:** Percentage of children achieving GLD at Reception



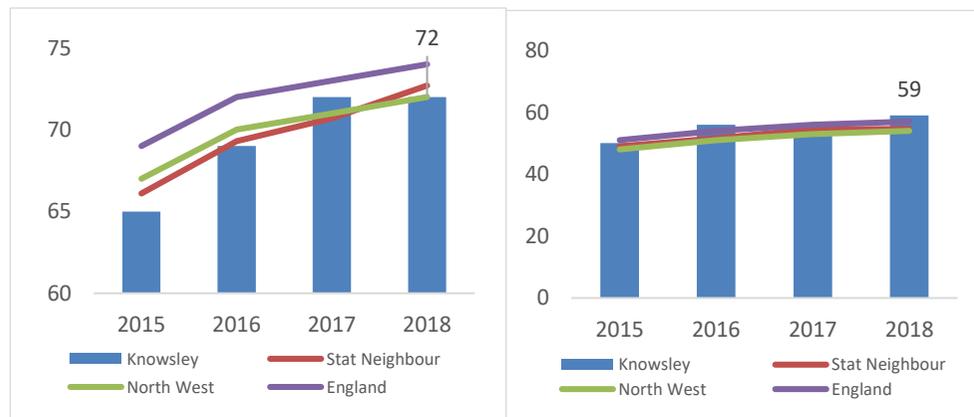
Source: DfE LAIT

Attainment data shows how children who are entitled to free school meals attain in comparison with those who are not eligible, and this shows the impact of deprivation on the education attainment of children.

At Early Years Foundation Stage, the difference between attainment levels of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and those who are not is significantly lower than statistical neighbours, North West and national gaps.

- There are 13% points between children eligible for FSM and those who are not in Knowsley compared to 18% points for statistical neighbours and the North West, and 17% points nationally;
- This means that at Early Years the impact of deprivation has been reduced for children at 5-years old in Knowsley compared to other areas, and is positively influenced by the numbers of children accessing early education before they begin school;
- Children eligible for FSM in Knowsley attain in line or better than their peers elsewhere in the country, whereas those not eligible attain overall below national averages. The margins of difference at Early Years is small – 2% points between Knowsley and national average for non-FSM children, but this gets wider as children become older.

**Figure 11: EYFS results by free school meal eligibility**

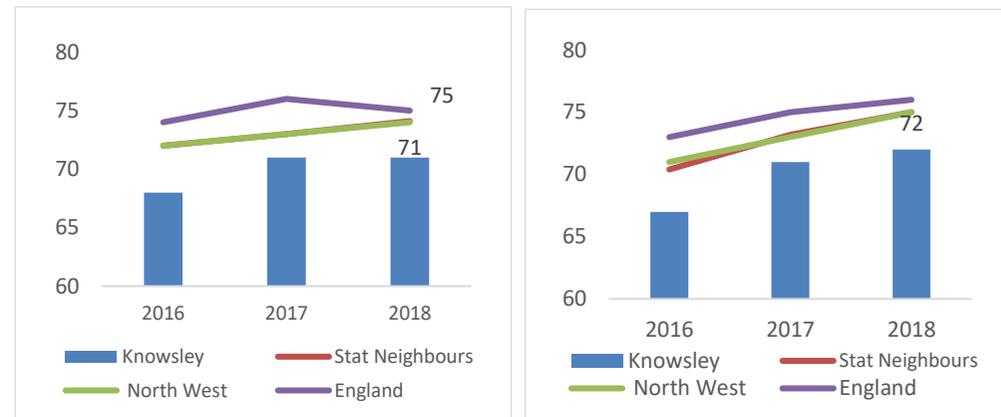


(a) % of children not eligible for FSM achieving GLD, (b) % of children eligible for FSM achieving GLD  
 Source: DJE LAIT

**At Key Stage One, Knowsley results are improving in every measure**

Key Stage One assessments take place at the end of Year 2 of primary school, and review whether a child is making expected progress in reading, writing and maths. While Knowsley results show a year on year improvement since 2016, there remains significant gaps when compared to regional, statistical and national neighbours.

**Figure 12: Key Stage One Results**



Key Stage One results (a) Reading and (b) Maths  
 Source: DfE LAIT

2018 results showed that at Key Stage One Knowsley is improving in every measure, at a greater or close rate to national changes. On average there is a 4% difference between Knowsley and national in the ‘expected standard’ measures and a 6% gap between Knowsley and national in the ‘greater depth’ measures. In Reading, the emerging figures indicate that the gap between Knowsley and the national average is greater than in other subjects.

**Table 1: Key Stage One Results**

Key Stage One	Knowsley 2018	% point change from 2017*	National 2018	% point change from 2017*
Reading, Writing, Maths	61.4%	n/a	65.3%	n/a
Reading (Expected Standard)	71.4%	+0.4	75.5%	-0.5



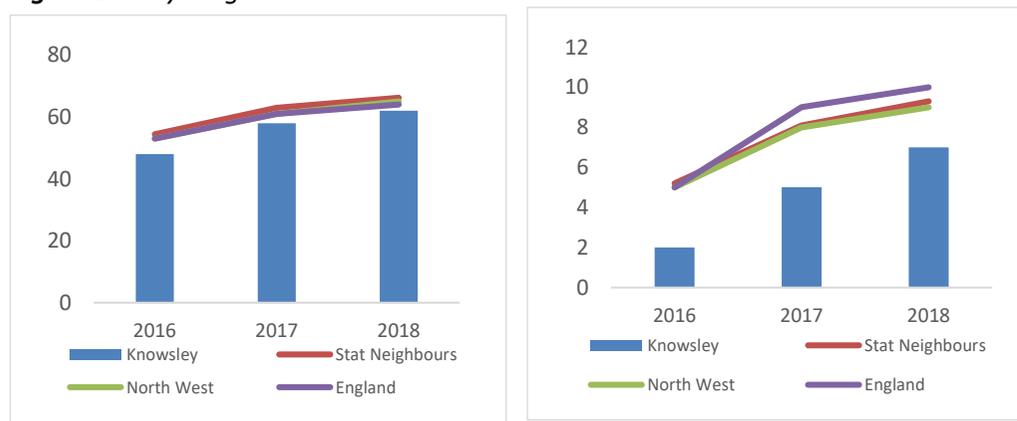
Reading (Greater Depth)	18.9%	+1.9	25.6%	+0.6
Maths (Expected Standard)	71.9%	+0.9	76.1%	+1.1
Maths (Greater Depth)	15.7%	+2.7	21.8%	+0.8
Writing (Expected Standard)	65.4%	+2.4	69.9%	+1.9
Writing (Greater Depth)	10.1%	+1.1	15.9%	-0.1

Source: DfE LAIT

**Key Stage Two Results in Knowsley have improved year on year.**

Key Stage Two results show similar patterns in that while Knowsley has year-on-year improvement in the results, there remains significant gaps to comparators.

**Figure 13: Key Stage Two results**



Key Stage Two results (a) % at expected standard in reading, writing and maths and (b) higher standard in reading, writing and maths

**Knowsley's rate of improvement is better than national improvement across all measures.**

Although Key Stage Two results remain below the national average, Knowsley results have improved on last year in every measurement, and results show that the gaps between Knowsley and national averages have narrowed. Key Stage Two results have improved year on year since 2016 (which marked changes in the curriculum). In 2016, 47.7% of children attained expected standard in Reading, Writing, and Maths, which has improved by 13% points in two years.

**Table 2: Key Stage Two Results**

	Knowsley 2018	% point change from 2017*	National 2018	% point change from 2017*
Reading, Writing, Maths	60.7%	+4	64.0%	+3
Reading (Expected Standard)	72.5%	+4.3	75.0%	+3.5
Reading (Greater Depth)	25.1%	+6.3	27.7%	+3.2
Maths (Expected Standard)	74.4%	+0.9	75.3%	+0.4
Maths (Greater Depth)	20.2%	+2.4	23.2%	+0.6
Writing (Expected Standard)	73.3%	+2.9	78.1%	+1.8
Writing (Greater Depth)	16.2%	+3.2	19.6%	+1.9

Source: DfE LAIT



**The rate of primary school children eligible for free school meals is almost twice the national rate.**

In Knowsley, 26.2% of children in Knowsley primary schools are eligible for free school meals, against a national rate of 13.7% of primary aged children.

In 2018, Knowsley's Key Stage Two results (reaching expected standard in RWM) for children not eligible for FSM was the same as national, with the results for children eligible for FSM being 1% point below national average for children eligible for FSM.

In Knowsley, while all Key Stage 2 results are improving, the attainment for children eligible for FSM is increasing at a slightly slower rate than non-FSM eligible children:

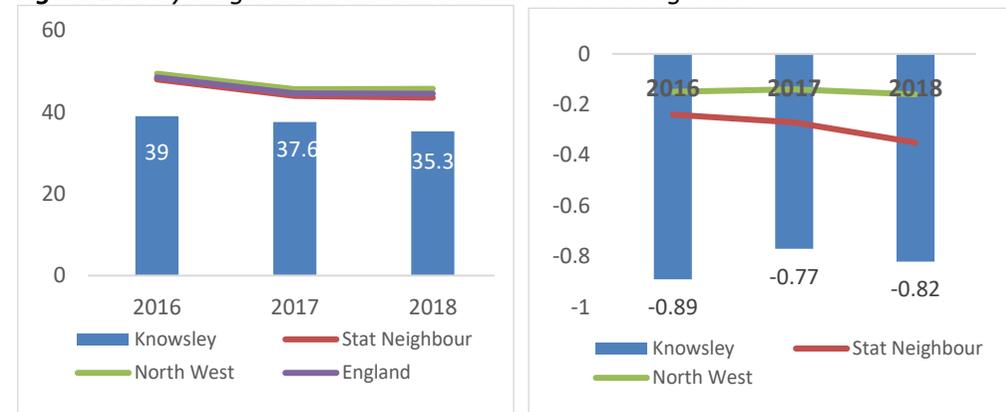
- Since the curriculum changed in 2018, FSM eligible children's attainment has increased by 8% points, but for non-FSM it has increased by 23% points;
- The gap in Knowsley between FSM and non-FSM eligible children has increased from 16% points to 23% points over a 3-year period;
- This is largely in alignment to national and local comparators who have similar growth in the gaps between children;
- This is in contrast to the Early Years Foundation Stage results, where the gap has narrowed between FSM and non-FSM children in Knowsley.

**Knowsley's results at secondary level are an outlier, with the worst results in England.**

Attainment is poor in all measures at Key Stage 4, with a smaller proportion of children educated in Knowsley schools gaining good grades in core subjects, including English and maths. With changes to how results are

expressed, Attainment 8 and Progress 8 shows that not only is attainment poor, but that children do not make expected progress throughout their education.

**Figure 14: Key Stage Four Results – Attainment 8 & Progress 8**



Key Stage Four results (a) Average Attainment 8 score (b) Average Progress 8 score

Source: DfE LAIT

**Figure 15: Attainment 8 by FSM eligibility**

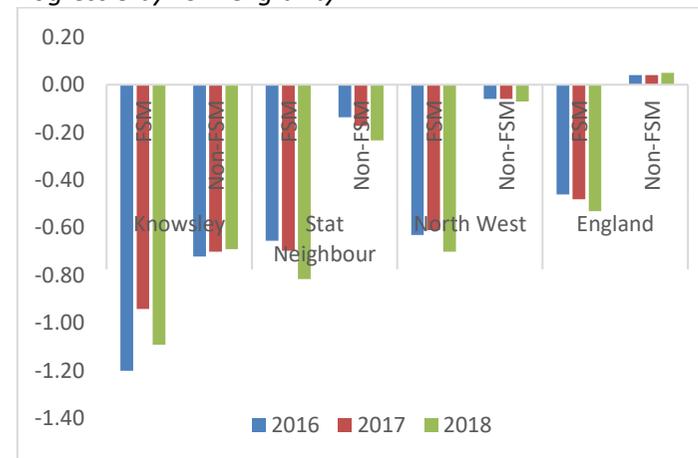


Source: DfE LAIT

Knowsley’s rate of children eligible for FSM increases in the secondary phase of education. While results for children eligible for FSM are poor, they are not an outlier.

Attainment 8 results have gotten worse after 2016 across the statistical neighbours, North West and national comparators, predominately due to further curriculum changes nationally. In Knowsley, the gap between the FSM and non-FSM eligible children is 10 points on their average Attainment 8 score, which is lower than comparators at 14 points.

**Figure 16: Progress 8 by FSM eligibility**



Source: DfE LAIT

Knowsley non-FSM results are more in line with FSM results nationally in Progress 8. This means that children educated in Knowsley at secondary level make less progress than disadvantaged pupils nationally. As curriculum changes have come in, results for children eligible for FSM have gotten worse across the country, widening inequality gaps.

In terms of the gap between FSM and non-FSM eligible children, Knowsley’s gap is narrower. However, this is not built on supporting children who are FSM eligible to do better, but rather that both attainment and progress in Knowsley for all children is poor.

**Results for Knowsley residents are better than those attending Knowsley schools.**

In recent years, between 40% and 45% of resident children in Knowsley have attended schools outside of Knowsley at secondary level. Statistics released



show that Knowsley resident results sit in between that of national averages and Knowsley. Results for Knowsley residents show that while residents tend to attain more than children educated in Knowsley schools, but resident results are the second worst in England.

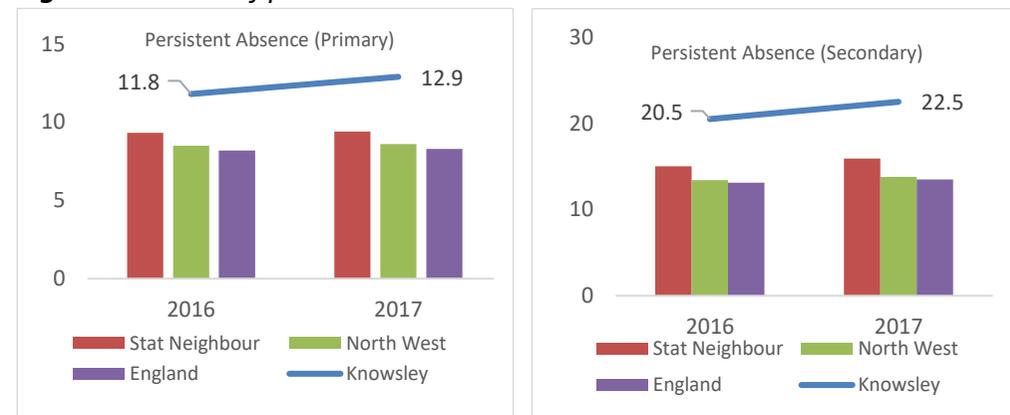
**Table 3: Key Stage Four results**

2017/18	Attainment 8	Progress 8	9-5 English and Maths
<b>Knowsley Residents</b>	40.6	-0.55	31.30%
<b>Attending Knowsley School</b>	35.3	-0.82	21.00%
<b>England</b>	44.5	-0.02	40.2

### ***Knowsley schools have the highest rate of persistent absence in England***

Attendance for children in Knowsley schools is poor at both primary and secondary level, with persistent absence being particularly high in the secondary sector. While persistent absence has increased nationally, from 2016 to 2017 Knowsley's rate increased at a greater rate than national levels, widening the gap further.

**Figure 17: Rates of persistent absence**



Source: DfE LAIT

### ***80% of Knowsley primary schools are Ofsted rated as 'good' or better***

In Knowsley, 9.3% of primary schools are rated as outstanding, compared to 18% nationally, and 77% are judged to be 'good', compared to 68% nationally. Only 2% of primary schools in Knowsley are judged to be inadequate (one provider), compared to 3% nationally.<sup>vi</sup>

However, there are no Knowsley secondary schools judged to be outstanding compared to 21% nationally, and 17% (one provider) of Knowsley secondary schools is judged to be good compared to 54% nationally. 50% of Knowsley secondary schools require improvement (17% nationally), and 33% are inadequate (8% nationally).

## Children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities

Educational attainment is influenced by both the quality of education children receive and their families' socio-economic circumstances. Children with poorer mental health are more likely to have lower educational attainment and there is some evidence to suggest that the highest level of educational qualifications is a significant predictor of wellbeing in adult life.

***Knowsley has the third highest rate of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.***

The strong links between deprivation, poverty and SEND are evident in Knowsley, and the relationship between SEND and poverty in terms of both identification of SEND (the risk of misidentifying SEND and conflating this with poverty) and the impact of SEND (lower levels of attainment, fewer job prospects and progression, and overall worse outcomes throughout childhood and into adulthood).

19.2% of all children educated in Knowsley have a recognised Special Educational Need or Disability. 3.9% of children receive support through an Education, Health and Care Plan, and 15.3% receive SEN Support. There are more than 1,200 children living in Knowsley who have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

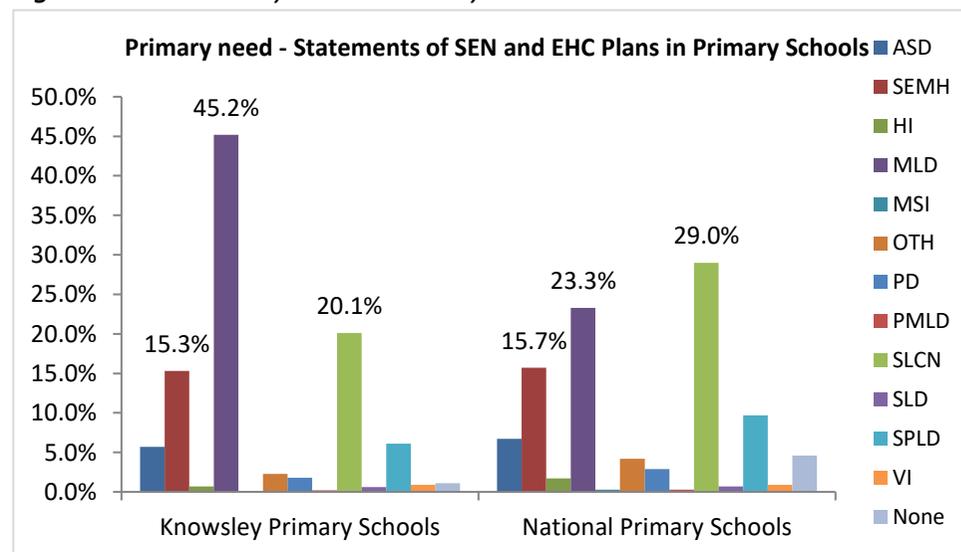
***Too many children in Knowsley are identified as having “moderate learning needs”***

Amongst Knowsley’s primary school special educational needs children cohort, the most common SEN identification is for Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) accounting for 45.2% of children with SEN. This is in

contrast to the national picture, where Speech, Language and Communication Needs are the most commonly diagnosed special educational needs. This difference in identification is significant, especially considering that Knowsley does have a higher rate of SEN than national rates.

The disparity between rates of moderate learning difficulties and speech, language and communication needs in Knowsley when compared to the national picture is significant, and suggests that there is potentially a misidentification of needs, or that extensive work is not undertaken by schools to understand the needs of individual children.

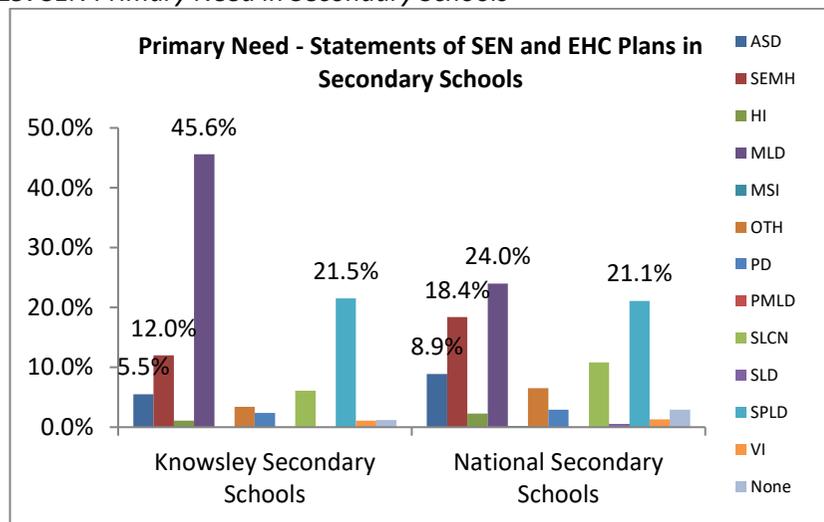
**Figure 18: SEN Primary Need in Primary Schools**



For Secondary School pupils with SEN, the most common identification is also Moderate Learning Difficulty. However, the rate in Knowsley (45.6%) is significantly higher than the national rate (24%). In both the local and

national pictures Specific Learning Difficulties has the second highest rate of diagnosis, with Social, Emotional and Mental Health having the third highest rate.

**Figure 19: SEN Primary Need in Secondary Schools**



Source: Schools Census 2018

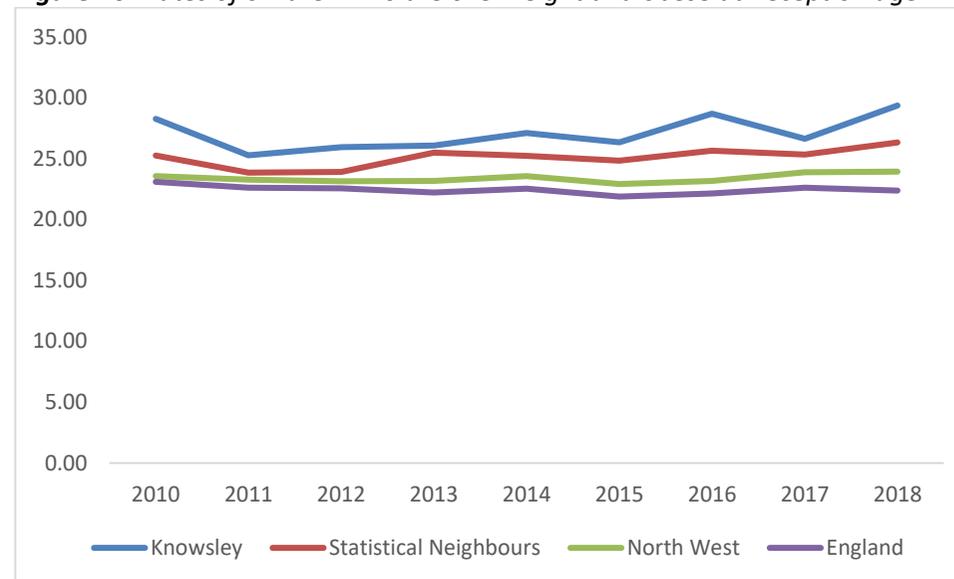
In Knowsley, there is also a lower rate of children on the ASD pathway in mainstream secondary schools, a difference of 3% points with the national distribution.

## Health

**Knowsley's current prevalence of obesity is the highest in 20 years.**

At Reception age, obesity levels have increased intermittently however not as significantly as Year 6.

**Figure 20: Rates of children who are overweight and obese at Reception age**

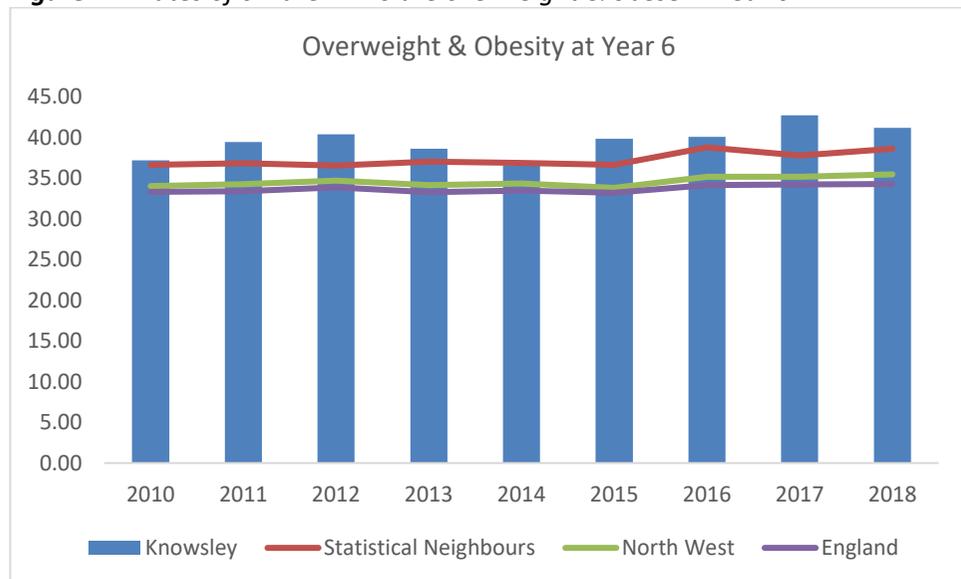


Source: NHS Fingertips

Obesity levels in year 6 is significantly higher in Knowsley compared to levels in the North West and England. Over the last decade childhood obesity has not only increased in Knowsley but also regionally and nationally - however at a slower and less erratic rate. Throughout this time obesity levels have always remained higher in this group in comparison to the regional and national rates. Obesity levels in year 6 is significantly higher in Knowsley compared to levels in the North West and England.



**Figure 21: Rates of children who are overweight & obese in Year 6**



Source: NHS Fingertips

Obese children are more likely to go on to become obese adults with a higher risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, cancer and liver disease. Aside from the physical affects, obese children are also more likely to experience bullying, feel stigmatised and develop low self-esteem which they can carry on into adulthood. All of these issues can prevent a child growing into a happy and healthy adult.

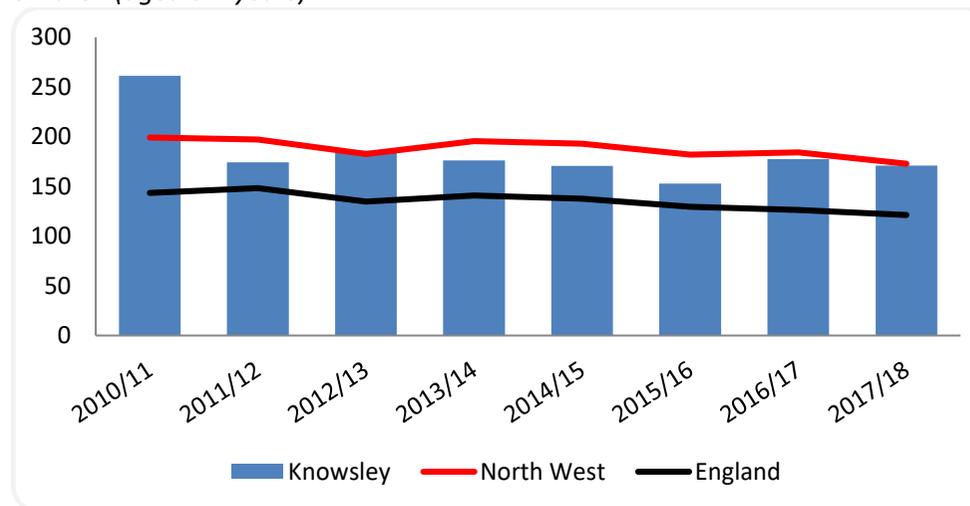
**Unintentional injuries are one of the leading causes of hospitalisation in children.**

They are the most common causes of death in children under one year and over 40% of accidents occur to children under five. In some cases

unintentional injury leads to long term mental and physical health issues, due to injury leading to permanent disability or disfigurement.

Hospital admissions in 0-4 year olds in Knowsley has fluctuated since 2010/11 in which there was a rate of 261.2 occurrences per 10,000 population compared to 2017/18 in which 170.9 admissions were reported, a 35% reduction. In comparison to the NW rates of admission these are higher than that of Knowsley in 2017/18) (NW – 172.8 admissions per 10,000). However rates in Knowsley are significantly higher (41%) than the national average in 2017/18 (121.2 admissions per 10,000).

**Figure 21: Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in children (aged 0-4 years)**



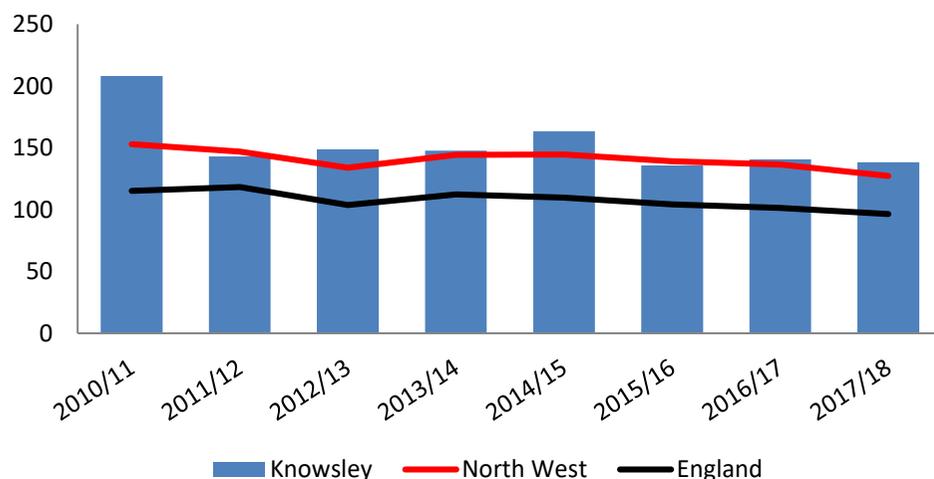
Source: NHS Fingertips

The rate of hospital admissions of children 0-14 due to unintentional and deliberate injuries in Knowsley fell significantly between 2010/11 and 2011/12. Since this period rates have remained steadier with the most



recent rates of 138.3 admissions per 10,000 reported in 2017/18. Knowsley has remained similar to the NW average over the last few years with the most recent rates for NW reported as 127.2 admissions per 10,000 in 2017/18. Admissions in England has remained consistently lower in comparison to Knowsley, most recent figures report that admissions in this age group are 43% higher in Knowsley compared to the national average.

**Figure 22:** Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in children (aged 0-14 years)



Source: NHS Fingertips

## Children's Mental Health

Practitioners, teachers and social workers have consistently told us that the mental health of children and young people is an ongoing and worsening situation.

Funding for mental health services is the subject of significant national debate. In 2017, national data on children's mental health showed that:

- 37% of the more than 338,000 under-18s referred to NHS child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) in England were denied any help at all because they were not accepted into treatment or were discharged after being assessed;
- 31% did begin treatment within a year;
- 32% were still waiting at the end of the year.<sup>vii</sup>

In addition to CAMHS lower levels of mental health support are available. However, a parliamentary select committee in 2019 found that "in 2017–18 only three in ten children and young people with a mental health condition received NHS-funded treatment, and many more faced unacceptably long waits for treatment." Prevalence of mental health needs nationally has increased over the last 15-years, with 5.8% of five to 15-year olds suffering from an emotional disorder (an increase from 3.9% in 2004) and 12.8% of five to 19-year olds have a mental health disorder.

Current plans by the NHS to increase the proportion of children and young people with a diagnosable mental health condition from 25% in 2016/17 to 35% in 2020/21, shows that nationally funding for children will continue to be a challenge in the coming years.<sup>viii</sup>

***Good emotional wellbeing is fundamental to children and young people's future health and the opportunities each individual has to improve their quality of life.***

Children with emotional health and wellbeing problems have an increased risk of physical health problems, an increased risk of disruption to education and increased school absences, leading to poor educational attainment, poor employment prospects, poor social relationships and a decrease in life

chances. Mental illness, including suicide, accounts for 20.0% of disability adjusted life years lost (more than cancer or cardiovascular disease).

**Estimated prevalence of mental health disorders in Knowsley are higher than national and regional rates.**

Estimated prevalence in Knowsley for mental health disorders, conduct disorders and emotional disorders are among the highest in the North West:

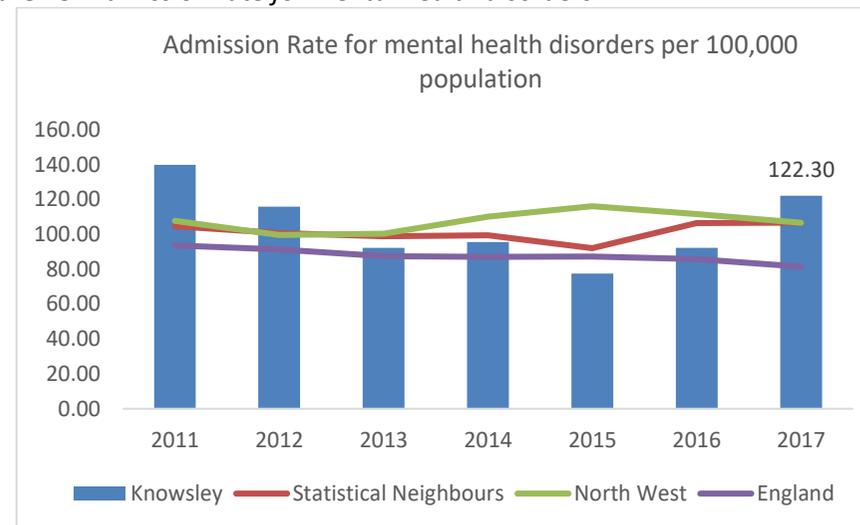
**Table 4:** Estimated prevalence of mental health disorders

% of population aged 5-16	Knowsley	North West	England
Estimated prevalence of mental health disorders	10.5%	9.6%	9.2%
Estimated prevalence of emotional disorders	4.1%	3.7%	3.6%
Estimated prevalence of conduct disorders	6.5%	5.8%	5.6%

Source: NHS Fingertips

**Mental health admissions are high for children in Knowsley**

**Figure 23:** Admission rate for mental health disorders



Source: NHS Fingertips

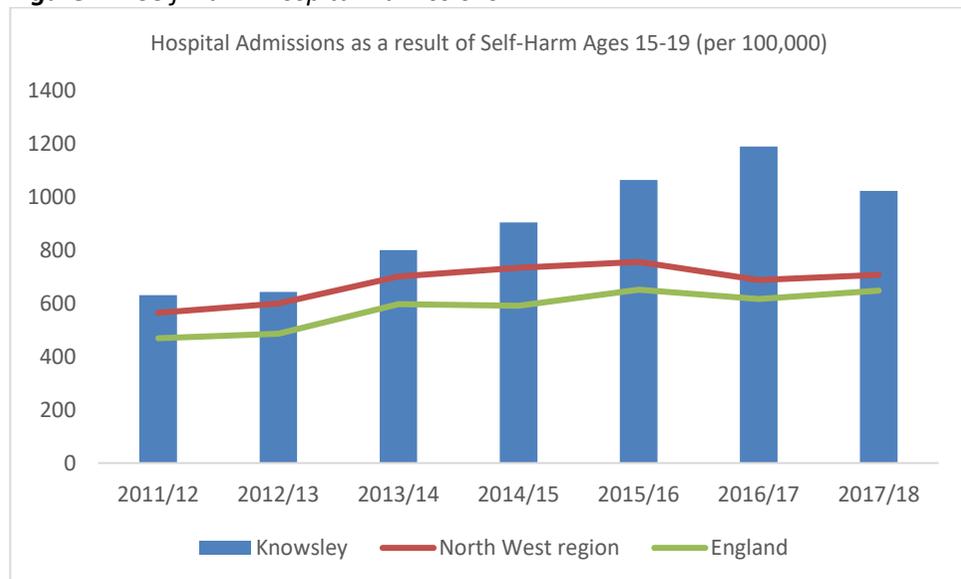
Since 2011, Knowsley’s rate of admissions have been consistently higher than national rates. However, these are relatively small numbers of children, with 40 children being admitted to hospital in 2016/17 equating to a rate of 122.3 children per 100,000.

**Knowsley has one of the highest rates of self-harm admissions in England.**

Analysis of self-harm hospital admission data since 2013, shows that self-harm is more common for females than males throughout the life-course, and that it peaks in the mid-teens for females. The most common type of self-harm is self-poisoning, through over the counter, prescribed and illegal drugs, with self-harm by sharp object also being a common reason for admission to hospital.



**Figure 24: Self-Harm Hospital Admissions**



Source: NHS Fingertips

Knowsley has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest level of self-harm rates (out of 152 Local Authorities) in children aged 15-19 in England at 1190.6 admissions per 100,000 people. When compared to the North West region and England, Knowsley has significantly higher rates. The gap has widened since 2011/12, and Knowsley is not almost double the England rate of 617.1 and significantly above North West (688.6)

The Knowsley rate has increased by 89% between 2011/12 to 2017/18. During the same period North West and England increased by 22% and 32% respectively.

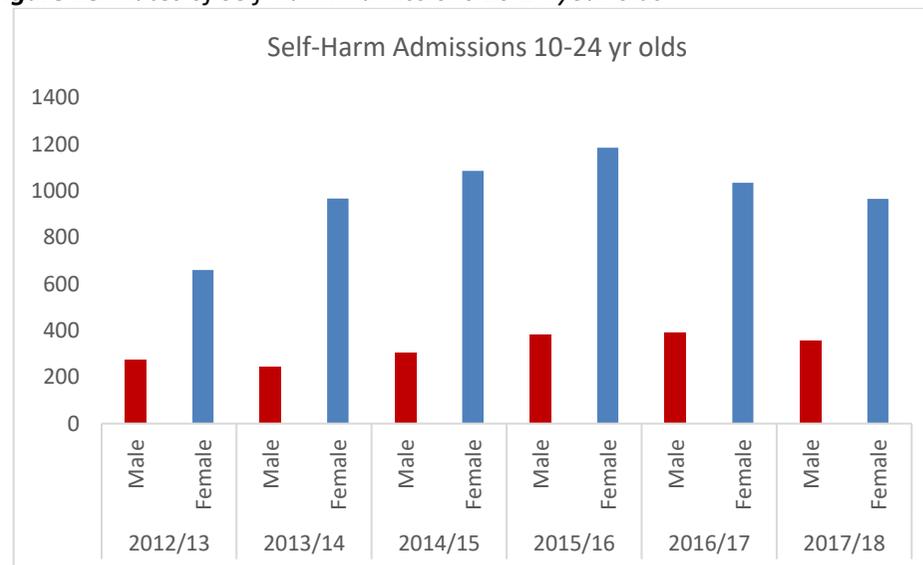
Self-harm can take different physical forms such as cutting, hair pulling or overdosing. For many young people self-harm is a method of coping and to

release overwhelming emotions. Warning signs include physical such as bruises, cuts and bald patches and emotional such as depression and self-blame.

**Self-Harm admissions across all ages are higher in females than males**

72% of children and young people aged from 10-24 in Knowsley admitted to hospital for self-harm were female.

**Figure 25: Rates of Self Harm Admissions 10-24 year olds**



Source: NHS Fingertips

A national study of self-harm found that:<sup>ix</sup>

- There has been an increase in girls self-harming (however, in Knowsley the proportion of girls to boys is fairly consistent ranging between 72% and 77% girls);
- Rates are higher in more deprived areas;

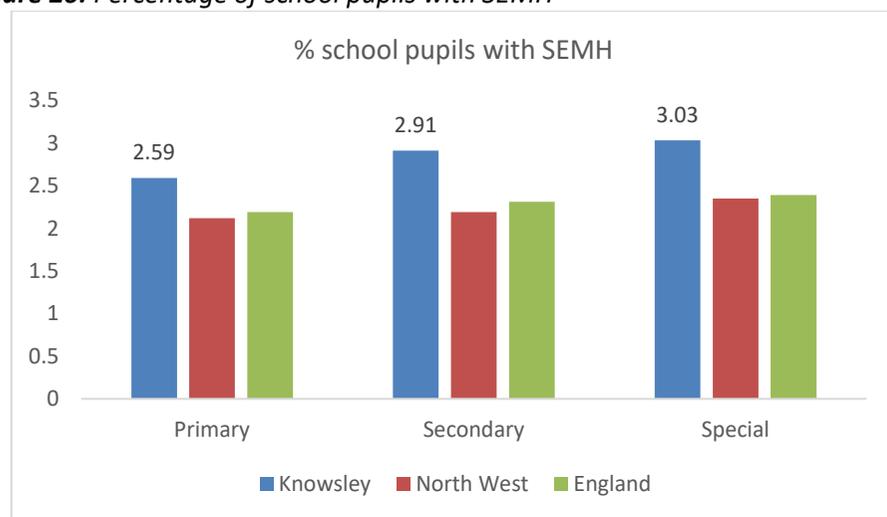


- Girls with a diagnosis of depression have higher rates of self-harm, and boys with diagnosis of ADHD or Autistic Spectrum Disorder have higher rates of self-harm.

**Knowsley has a higher rate of children with recognised Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs in schools**

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) is recognised as a special educational need in schools. Knowsley has a high overall rate of children with special educational needs and disabilities within Knowsley schools, and the rate of children with SEMH is higher in Knowsley than in the North West of England.

**Figure 26: Percentage of school pupils with SEMH**



Source: NHS Fingertips

Knowsley also has a greater increase of SEMH identification between primary and secondary stages than North West and national comparators.

While Knowsley’s overall prevalence of SEMH is higher than national, when considering children who have special educational needs, Knowsley’s proportion of SEMH is lower than national (with a far greater proportion of children with MLD), especially at secondary level. This could be as a result of under-identification amongst the SEND cohort, or if there is an overall over-identification of SEND (not SEMH).

There have been recent increases in the numbers of children attending Special Schools in Knowsley due to SEMH as their primary need, which could potentially mean that mainstream schools are struggling to meet the mental health needs of children.

**In Knowsley, 18% of children with a diagnosed mental health condition have been able to access CAMHS services**

The national target of 35% by 2020/21 has also been applied to Knowsley, and data shows that at the end of 2017/18 that 18% of children with a diagnosable mental health condition receive treatment from an NHS-funded community mental health service. Recent information shows that by the end of October 2018, 17.5% of children with a mental health need had received NHS funded treatment:

**Table 5: CAMHS access for children with diagnosed mental health condition**

Standard	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
National Target	30%	32%	34%	35%
Knowsley CYP	1,019	1,090	1,154	1,188
Current Position	620 (18%)	415 (17.5%) at Month 7		

Source: Knowsley CCG

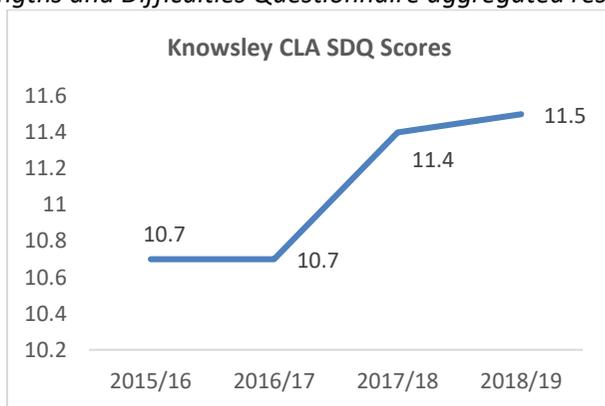


**Mental health in children looked after has gotten worse**

All children who have been looked after for 12-months, complete a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. This is a short behavioural questionnaire that examines a child’s mental well-being, and a high score indicates that a child needs more emotional and mental wellbeing support.

Knowsley’s strengths and difficulties score has increased over recent years, and while the overall average is below 12 (which is the Knowsley target), increasing numbers of children are scoring above 20, which is a trigger for a CAMHS referral:

**Figure 26:** Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire aggregated results



Source: Children’s Social Care performance report

Of those children looked after with an SDQ score of more than 20, more are boys than girls and it tends to be older children looked after with worse SDQ scores.

Data shows that in Knowsley, that there is a higher incidence of mental health needs in our child population than nationally. Poor mental health can

affect any child, regardless of their background, but the increased prevalence in areas of deprivation means that the challenge could potentially be more widespread than figures currently indicate.

**Adverse Childhood Experiences**

Exposure to stresses or adversity during childhood can result in a child’s development falling behind their peers. Left unaddressed, experiences (such as abuse or conflict between parents), can stay with children throughout their lives, can cause harm to them and to others, and might be passed on to the next generation. Individuals with four or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are at a much greater risk of poor health outcomes compared to individuals with no ACEs. They are also thirty times more likely to attempt suicide.

Recent research has led to a greater understanding of how this early adversity affects brain development. Our brains are shaped by the relationships we have had from birth and therefore impact on our future emotional health and wellbeing. Children and young people who have experienced ACEs and who may not have received the emotional comfort for a healthy start in life will develop ways to respond and cope.

Adverse childhood experiences include:

Abuse	Neglect	Household Dysfunction
Physical Emotional Sexual	Physical Emotional	Mental Illness Domestic Abuse Incarcerated Relative Substance Abuse



		Divorce
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This section examines what we know about children who experience adverse childhood experiences in Knowsley, primarily through considering what children’s social care data tells us about the most vulnerable children in the Borough. Children who are subject to a targeted intervention

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

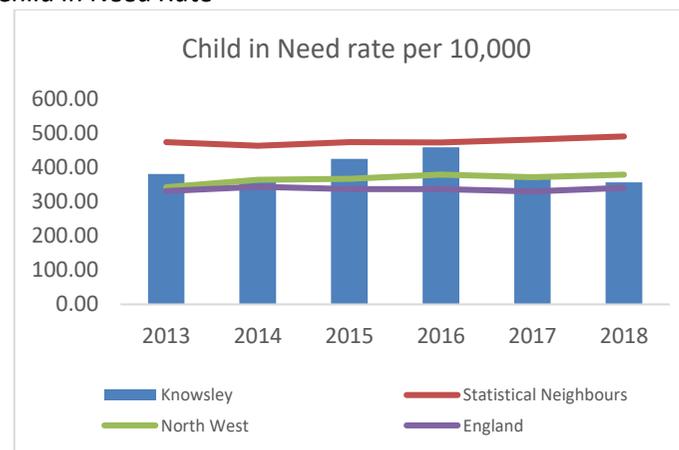
Knowsley’s rate of Children in Need (all children in receipt of a social care service, including care leavers and adoption support) is significantly below that of all statistical neighbours, and areas with similar levels of deprivation. The effectiveness of early help will be a contributory factor, as will the maintenance of social care thresholds, but as the rate of CIN has been consistently below that of statistical neighbours when there has been significant variations in availability of the early help offer in Knowsley and effectiveness of thresholds, this potentially says more about families in Knowsley, compared to other areas of high deprivation.

**Figure 27: Rates per 10,000 of child protection plans and children looked after**



Source: DfE LAIT

**Figure 28: Child in Need Rate**



Source: DfE LAIT

As a subset of the child in need rate, the rates of children who are subject to child protection plans and those who are looked after is also significantly lower than statistical neighbours, but above that of national averages. However, the rates of both child protection plans and children looked after in Knowsley are significantly higher than national levels, and there is a greater difference between Knowsley and national levels than there is in the overall child in need.

Abuse or neglect is the primary need for 46% (541) children in need in Knowsley. This is lower than North West (63%) and England (53%) rates of abuse and neglect in children in need. Knowsley’s child in need population has greater rates of families in acute distress and family dysfunction than England and the North West.

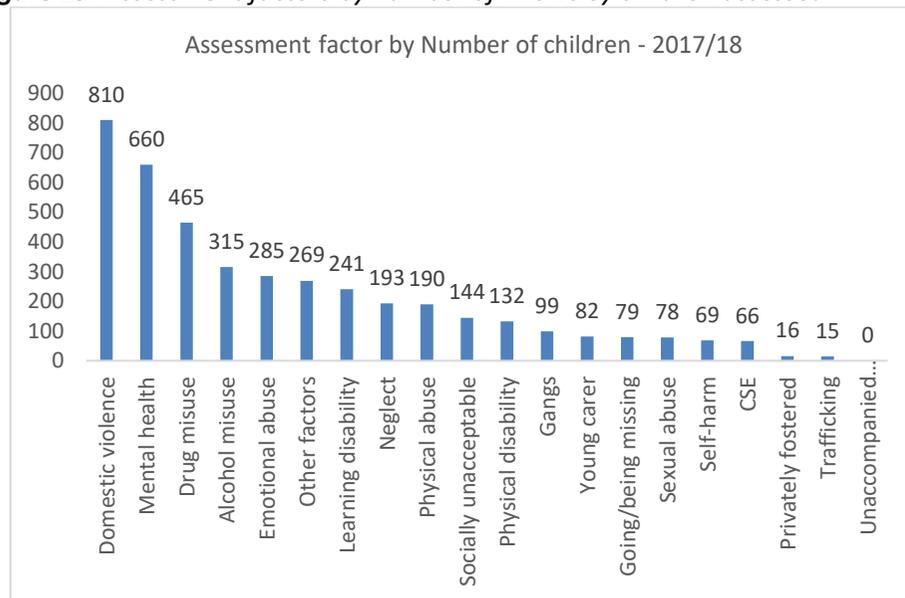
**The toxic triggers are prevalent in social care cases in Knowsley**



The assessment factors by child show that domestic abuse, mental health and substance abuse are the most common assessment factors across children’s social care. This means that families most commonly present with these issues, but that there might be underlying neglect and abuse towards children.

Domestic abuse, poor mental health and substance abuse are often referred to as either the “toxic triggers” or the “toxic trio”. The toxic trio issues, and associated responses of frontline practitioners, have been cited as a major driver of the increases on children’s services caseloads and the numbers of children being taken into care.

**Figure 29:** Assessment factors by number of Knowsley children assessed



Source: DfE CIN Census 2018

***In the adult population, Knowsley has high rates of mental health problems and substance use disorder***

Adult health is explored in more detail in Live Well. However, there are indications that the challenges of mental ill health, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic abuse are prevalent in Knowsley. There are risks to the wellbeing of children connected with the problems of their parents, and with these issues being prevalent in Knowsley, it is likely that some children at risk remain unknown to intervention services, but their overall wellbeing, health and education will suffer.

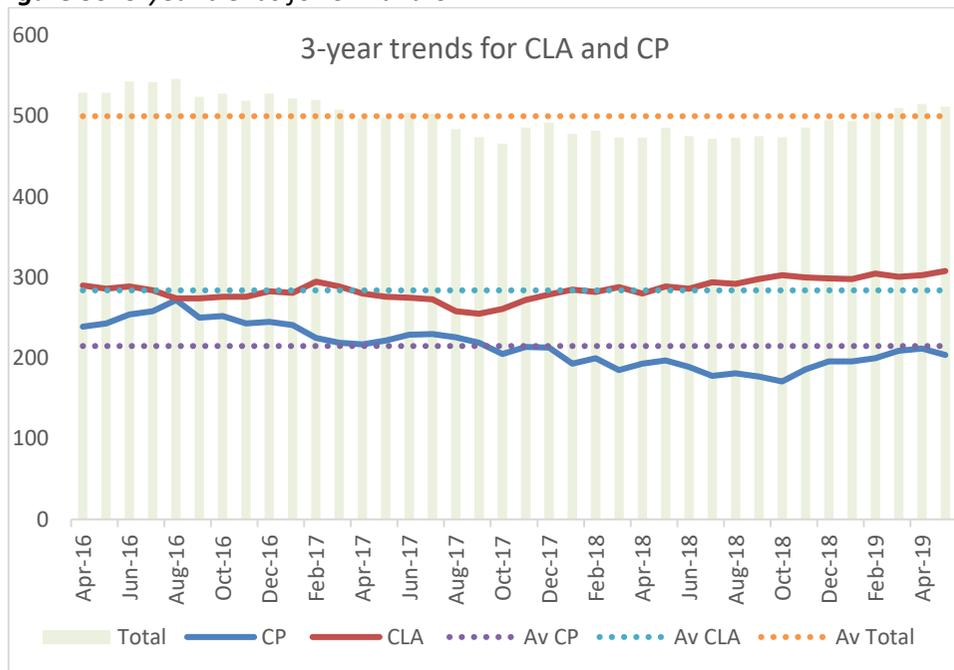
The prevalence of domestic abuse in Knowsley is significant. Domestic abuse is consistently the primary reason for a contact or referral to Children’s Social Care or Early Help in Knowsley, and the majority of these contacts are made by Merseyside Police. 17% of all crimes in Knowsley are domestic incident related. This percentage has increased year on year since 2011 and has more than doubled since 2011/12. This is primarily due to the recording of harassment offences as crimes. More detail is available in the Local Environment and Place 2030 chapter on domestic abuse.

***The numbers of children looked after are increasing, albeit at a lower rate than national levels***

Although a contact for a child and their family is often driven by incidents (in particular, domestic abuse), neglect is often the determining factor in a child becoming looked after. Throughout 2018, and into 2019, the numbers of children looked after (CLA) have increased in Knowsley.



Figure 30: 3-year trends for CLA and CP



Source: Children’s Social Care Monthly Activity Report

Over the past three-years, the rates of referrals into children’s social care have declined from 758 per 10,000 to 433 per 10,000, so while there are fewer children coming into social care for a service the overall numbers of children looked after has increased. Without any significant change to thresholds, this suggests that the cases that are coming into social care are presenting with more serious problems that cannot be resolved through child in need or child protection support, and that these children cannot stay within their families.

**Children who are in need of help and protection receive services and enquiries that are timely, thorough and reflect a clear analysis of risk with reference to significant harm\***

When children who are identified as needing help and protection come into contact with services, they are offered interventions by early help services (including Family First) or from Children’s Social Care. Services for children have improved significantly over the last five-years, with investments made in a broad early help offer and into improving the quality of frontline practice in both early help and children’s social care.

In a focused Ofsted visit in October 2018, Ofsted stated that “the local authority has enhanced its early help services...assessments completed by case managers in this highly effective service are comprehensive...This results in outcome-focused and regularly reviewed support plans that improve children’s lives and, in some cases, prevent the need for the involvement of statutory services.”<sup>xi</sup>

Performance information that is benchmarked across comparators shows that Knowsley’s children’s social care often exceeds national averages in the standards of services offered to children and young people:

Percentage of re-referrals to children’s social care within 12-months of previous referral indicates the effectiveness of the social care system to identify the scale of problems with the family and provide interventions that are sustainable. In Knowsley, the re-referral rate has declined:

Table 6: Rates of re-referrals to Children’s Social Care

	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Knowsley</b>	26.6%	30.3%	20.9%	15%
<b>North West</b>	17.11%	17.54%	18.56%	



<b>Stat Neighbour</b>	22.2%	21.8%	22.3%	
<b>England</b>	22.5%	21.9%	21.9%	

Source: DfE LAIT and Children's Social Care monthly activity report

***Children who have needed a social worker do significantly worse than others at every stage of education***

A recent longitudinal study by Department for Education has established evidence that children in need on average have poorer outcomes at every stage of education than their peers. They start behind other children in the early years and have a widening attainment gap throughout school. They are also more likely than other children not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) after age 18.<sup>xii</sup>

After controlling for other factors associated with attainment, children who were in need of social care services were 50% less likely to achieve a strong pass in English and maths GCSEs, with the likelihood for those on a child in need plan or a child protection plan almost as low as looked after children. Pupils who were in need at some point in the 4 years leading up to exams, but not in need in the year of exams, were between 25%-50% less likely to achieve a strong pass.

In Knowsley, the educational profile of children in need and children looked after shows the following:

- Knowsley has a similar level of children in need with identified Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to the national level. In Knowsley 54.9% of children in need have SEND status, and 16.4% have an EHCP; whereas in England 54.3% have SEND status and 21% have an EHCP;

- Knowsley has a slightly lower rate of children looked after identified with SEND than the national picture. In Knowsley, 25.9% of children looked after have an EHCP, and a further 25.9% have SEN without an EHCP; nationally 26.5% of children looked after have an EHCP and 29% have SEN without an EHCP;
- 69.9% of children in need in Knowsley are eligible for free school meals, compared to 49.4% of children nationally, suggesting a higher correlation between poverty and need in Knowsley;
- Education results for children in need in Knowsley are below that of comparators. 30% of children in need reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2, compared to 34% nationally. At Key Stage 4, the average Attainment 8 score is 16.1 for children looked after compared to 19 nationally, and the average Progress 8 is -1.81 compared to -1.45 nationally;
- Children looked after education results improved in 2018, in particular at Key Stage 4 with better Attainment 8 average score (20), than the national average score (18.9). However, the Knowsley average Progress 8 (-1.32) was below that of national level (-1.2).

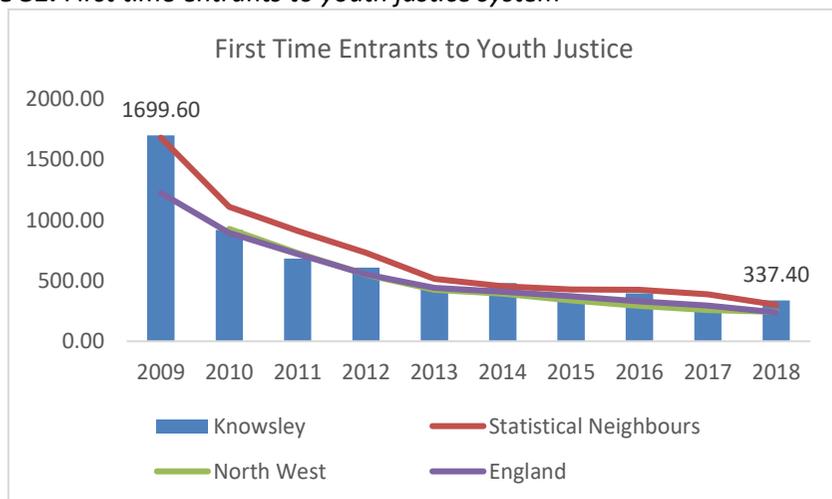
The education results for children in need and children looked after indicate strong relationships with poverty, SEND status and lower educational attainment. In addition to trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences, there is evidence of lasting negative impact beyond the point of being in need for these, the most vulnerable children in Knowsley.

***Knowsley's Youth Offending rate has significantly declined over the last 10-years.***



Along with national, regional and statistical comparators, the number of first time entrants to youth justice system has declined from 2009 when there were 1699.6 first time offenders per 100,000 population, compared to 337.4 in 2018. Although Knowsley’s remains above the national level of first time offenders, the national rate has fallen by more than 75% in the same time frame.

**Figure 31: First time entrants to youth justice system**



Source: DfE LAIT

Nationally, the overall crime has been falling in England and Wales since the mid-1990s and there is some evidence that youth crime may have also fallen. During this time period changes such as Troubled Families have been implemented, with Youth Offending Teams undertaking more prevention work, and a number of policing and criminal justice policies and practice were introduced to increase the discretion of the police to divert young people who had committed a low-level crime away from the youth justice system.

The proportion of young people who re-offend has also declined in the last 10-years, with levels of re-offending slightly higher in the younger age group:

**Table 7: Re-offending rates**

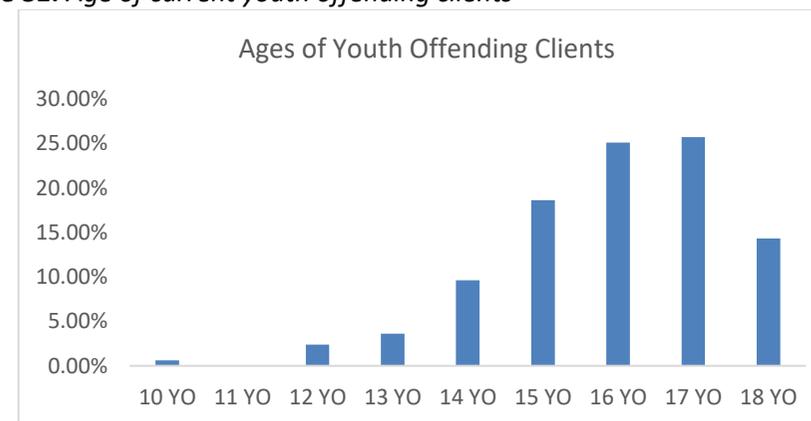
Re-offending	10-14 year olds	15-17 year olds
Knowsley	58.06%	40.96%
Statistical Neighbours	46.27%	45.15%
North West	45.54%	41.54%

Source: DfE LAIT

**87% of young offenders in Knowsley are male.**

In the past 12-months, 167 young people have commenced services with Youth Offending Services, of these 13% are female and 87% are male. The majority of young people receiving services are older teenagers:

**Figure 31: Age of current youth offending clients**



Source: Knowsley’s Youth Offending Service



***The most common offences for young people receiving services are violence against the person and drugs related offences.***

Many of these offences are related to the criminal exploitation of children, also known as 'Contextual Safeguarding'. Contextual Safeguarding of children has emerged as a significant threat to the wellbeing of vulnerable children in the Borough. Contextual Safeguarding refers to criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, trafficking and radicalisation of children – often the threats to the safety of a child that sit outside the family.

Through analysis of referrals into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), we can evidence that children in Knowsley experience contextual risks. These include Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) (both on line and direct contact), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) both county lines and in borough, and peer on peer abuse. By far the most challenging risk at present in terms of demand and complexity is that of CCE.

There is substantiated evidence that children in Knowsley are at risk of being exploited by both the Merseyside and Knowsley based OCG's. Children within our local communities including those at home, and those looked after are at risk of being groomed and subjected to debt bondage, threats and violence and used for both in borough drug dealing, commissioning of serious violence and for county lines purposes. They are trafficked across the country to courier (often internally) and distribute drugs, cash and firearms.

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

Since 2015, the numbers of children subject to criminal exploitation has risen each year, with significant numbers of children remaining undetected

and unreported. The majority of children who are subject to sexual exploitation tend to be provided interventions through early help services, whereas far more of the criminally exploited children are receiving statutory safeguarding services from children's social care, which demonstrates the complexity and seriousness of exploitation in Knowsley.

Those children most at risk from exploitation include those who:

- Are predominantly white male aged between 14-17 years (for criminal exploitation – those who are sexually exploited are female and tend to be younger);
- Those with special educational needs and either poor or non-school attendance. PRU's and alternative education provision often feature in the profile;
- Children who have been exploited have often had Adverse Childhood Experiences, making them less resilient and more likely to be at risk of exploitation;
- Users of cannabis, which leads to accrual of debts to drug dealers and gangs. Rapid escalation from being based locally and selling cannabis into distribution of Class A / cross border / internal concealment;
- Those who are repeatedly 'missing' from home, care or school, especially those who are not reported by parents in the Borough.

Children and young people who are criminally exploited

## Transition to adulthood

Adolescent transitions to adulthood are an important phase of life for long-term health, happiness and wellbeing. Evidence indicates that health promoting behaviours in adolescence have a long-term impact into



adulthood. In addition to behaviours, during adolescence the decisions made about education and training can have a significant impact on their future life. Prevention approaches during adolescence, might lead to lasting improvements in adult health, happiness and wellbeing. Social inequalities are evident in relation to a range of areas of adolescent health including substance use, violence and abuse, and mental health.

One of the risks as young people transitioning into adulthood is that vulnerable people do not get the same degree of support when they become adults, as they did as children. Those young people who are preparing to leave care, those with SEND, and those with any care responsibilities or those who are at risk of exploitation or criminality are particularly vulnerable.

**The primary risk factors for NEET are low educational attainment at GCSE, Special Educational Needs, poor health, and difficult labour market conditions**

National research shows us that young people who experience a period of being NEET will, on average, lose up to £50,000 in earnings over their working life when compared to a peer. Young people who do not participate are more likely to have low skills, to go on to be unemployed in adult life, to earn less and to suffer from poor health or depression, which can continue to have a negative impact on their adult life. This can block social mobility for individuals and families, and research also suggests that a lack of skills impacts on the productivity gap between this country and some other countries.

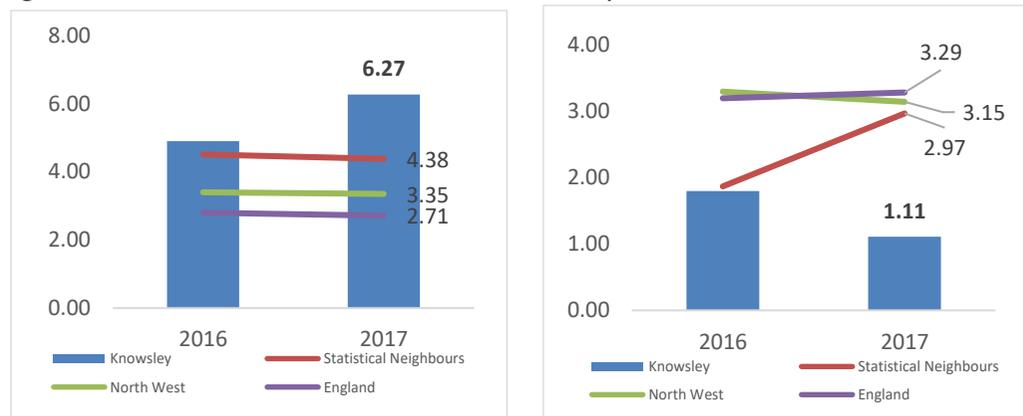
The Department for Education changed the way that NEET statistics are published, which means that trends pre-dating 2016 are not robust. However, recent trends show that in Knowsley, there are higher levels of

young people who are NEET, and lower levels of not known when compared to national and statistical neighbour

National data shows that in 2017, Knowsley had the highest NEET rate in England with 6.27% of 16 and 17 year olds not in education, employment or training. This is balanced by the much lower rate of 16 and 17 year olds who are unknown, which remains significantly below all comparators.

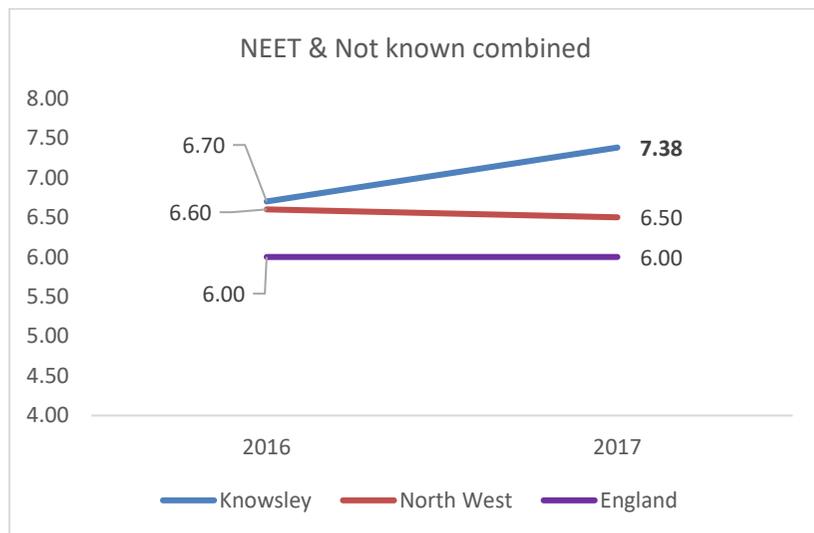
However, the combined NEET and not known figures show that although Knowsley is not an outlier that we remain above regional and national comparators.

**Figure 32: NEET and Not known rates at 16 and 17 years old**



(a) % of 16 and 17 year olds NEET and, (b) % of 16 and 17 year olds unknown



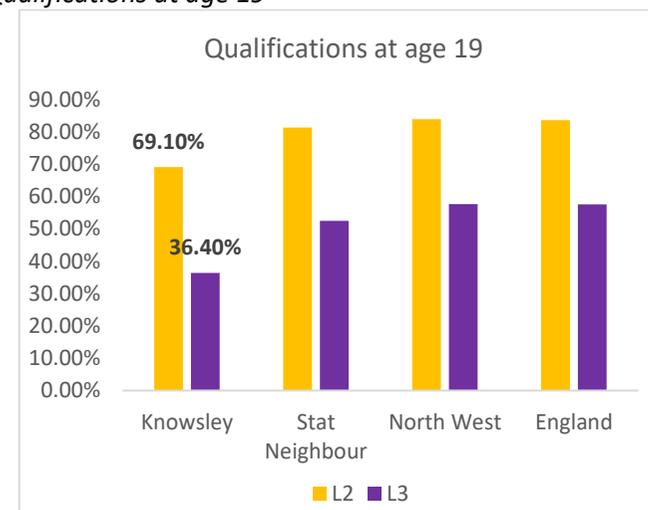


Source: DfE LAIT

National and regional figures have remained stable, Knowsley’s increase has been driven by an increase in NEET, with NEET figures increasing by a greater amount than not known has decreased by. Other local authorities with higher NEET rates tend to be driven by high not known figures, with their NEET rates lower. This is indicative of the effectiveness of tracking in Knowsley.

**Knowsley has the lowest rate of 19-year olds with Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in England**

Figure 33: Qualifications at age 19



Source: DfE LAIT

Knowsley has both the lowest Key Stage 4 results in England, and the lowest coverage of skills qualifications at age 19. Published data shows the percentage of young people attaining GCSE or other level 2 qualifications at age 19 for those who had not achieved this level by age 16. This data shows that 21.8% of young people who did not achieve at Key Stage 4, did achieve by age 19. From 16 to 19 years old for young people educated in the Borough, not enough progress is made to balance out the gap at age 19. Statistical neighbours, and places with near Key Stage 4 results (like Blackpool), all make more progress between 16 and 19 than Knowsley does, and are moving from a higher baseline.

Although the NEET rate is high, Knowsley’s rate of 16 and 17 year olds who are unknown is low. However, Knowsley has both the lowest Key Stage 4 results in England, and the lowest coverage of skills qualifications at age 19,



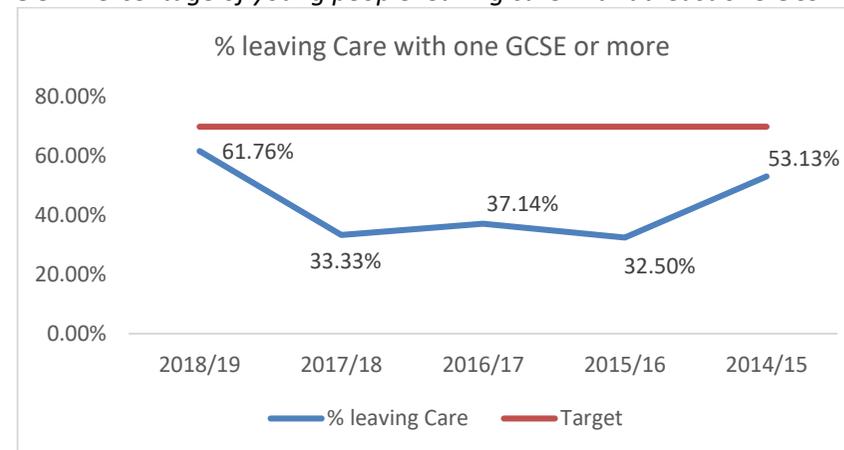
with fewer young people gaining Level 2 or Level 3 skills level by the time they are 19. This means that the gap established at age 16 widens by the time young people reach the age of 19. Coupled with lower take up of A Levels and Level 3 qualifications, just 36% of young people studying at a school in Knowsley at the age 15 achieve a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19.

From 16 to 19 years old not enough progress is made to balance out the gap at age 19. Statistical neighbours, and places with near Key Stage 4 results (like Blackpool), all make more progress between 16 and 19 than Knowsley. This consequently means that a far lower proportion of young people completing Key Stage 5 in Knowsley remain in sustained further education, higher education or employment: 82% in 2017 compared with 89% across England.

#### **40% of care leavers are in Education, Employment or Training**

The rate of Knowsley care leavers accessing education, employment or training is below that of national (51%), North West (50%) and statistical neighbours (52%). The rate of children leaving care with GCSEs has recently improved, but remains below target.

**Figure 34: Percentage of young people leaving care with at least one GCSE**



Source: Children's Social Care monthly activity report

#### **Young carers are more likely than the national average to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) between the ages of 16 and 19.**

One in 12 young carers is caring for more than 15 hours per week. Around one in 20 misses school because of their caring responsibilities. At the 2011 census, there were 371 children and young people recorded as performing weekly caring activities. In 2018, a total of 101 Young Carer Assessments had been completed by the Family First team.

#### **A higher rate of Care Leavers 'stay put' in Knowsley than nationally.**

46% of care leavers stay with their foster carers to age 19 or 20, above the national average of 26% of care leavers. However, the proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation declined significantly in 2018, with 70% of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation (a decline of 15% points from the previous year). This has been due to an increase of care leavers

**Thresholds for adult social care support are higher than children’s support.**

Transition arrangements for vulnerable children often focus on preparing for independence and adulthood, as there is a significant change in the availability of services. Children and young people with SEND, those with mental health difficulties and young carers will not necessarily be able to access the same level of support as adults.

This is significant for children with SEND in particular. Children and young people with Education, Health, and Care Plans can access support up to age 25, but those who receive SEN Support at school will only receive support

Children’s mental health is an area of concern in Knowsley, and adult mental health is also high. Thresholds for support are higher for adults than children, however, the growing numbers of children who self-harm, admissions for mental health and increased numbers of children in special school provision for social, emotional and mental health needs means that more younger adults could potentially need services for mental health in the future.

Depression is prominent issue in Knowsley. In 2017/18, there were approximately 18,619 people aged 18 plus in Knowsley who were registered with depression (14.3% of the population); In Knowsley, 25.4% of people in aged 16+ reported having high levels of anxiety, the highest in the North West and higher than the North West and England average of 20%.

## Starting Well in 2030

In 2030, Knowsley is forecasted to have a population of 35,128 people aged 0 to 17. These projections indicate that the current patterns of children and young people leaving the Borough at age 10 and above will continue into

the next decade, but that there will be overall growth in the numbers of children living in the Borough.

However, the numbers of children in the Borough will potentially grow beyond the current projections, due to increased house building across Knowsley. In addition to the impact on schools, and health services, increases in population can also result in a proportionate demand placed on targeted services including SEND, Early Help and Children’s Social Care.

When considering the impact of population growth on demand in children’s services, there are considerable complex and interdependent systems which influence the numbers of children requiring interventions and support:

- Increased population – means greater demand for age-appropriate universal health and education services. Also, this could translate into likely proportionate increase in demand on targeted services;
- Poverty – if families living in poverty increases (as forecast by Institute for Fiscal Studies who state that the share of children in relative poverty will increase sharply) then this is a likely driver for more children being in need, and being subject to influence of deprivation and poverty and the impact that this has on wellbeing and education;
- Housing – if the availability of affordable and suitable housing does not increase then there are likely to be more children at risk of homelessness and potentially in the social care system;
- Health – without universal child health services available to promote, prevent or treat health issues, there are potentially more children and families who will develop more serious health problems;



- Mental health – if there is limited improvement in accessing services that prevent and treat mental health, there is likely to be more young people suffering acute distress, requiring access to higher cost in-patient services and subsequent negative impact on children’s future life chances.<sup>xiii</sup>

Specifically for children’s social care, national projections are forecasting that:

- There will be an increase in referrals to children’s social care;
- There will be more children in need, more children subject to child protection plans, and more children looked after.

The impact of deprivation in driving demand and interventions in children’s services cannot be underestimated. The immediate drivers of demand are

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/news/white-working-class-report/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/child-poverty-indicators-2019-report-to-ecp-1.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/R157-Living-Standards-Poverty-and-Inequality-2019.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Child Poverty Action Group (2018), <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/stop-work-poverty>

<sup>v</sup> [Safeguarding Pressures Phase 6 – November 2018, The Association of Directors of Children’s Services](#)

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.watchsted.com/tables> accessed 05/07/2019

domestic abuse, mental illness and drug misuse, and are also influenced or determined by deprivation. To be able to effectively close the wellbeing and educational gap for children in Knowsley, there needs to be a holistic and systemic approach to dealing with these problems in terms of policy, funding, collaboration, commissioning and practice.

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/22/what-is-happening-with-childrens-mental-health>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmpubacc/1593/1593.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> <https://www.nhs.uk/news/mental-health/worrying-rise-reports-self-harm-among-teenage-girls-uk/>

<sup>x</sup> Ofsted focused visit – October 2018 <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50039766>

<sup>xi</sup> Ofsted focused visit – October 2018 <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50039766>

<sup>xii</sup> [Children in need of help and protection , June 2019CIN review: final data and analysis](#)

<sup>xiii</sup> [ADCS Safeguarding Pressures, Phase 6](#)