



HOW **STIGMA** AFFECTS THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OUR COMMUNITIES

KNOWSLEY PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT
2024 - 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY




Knowsley Council


Healthy
KNOWSLEY

OVERVIEW

Every year, the Director of Public Health for Knowsley, Dr Sarah McNulty, produces an Annual Report which focuses on a key public health issue in the borough. The focus of this year's report explores the complex impact of stigma and how this affects people from across society.

The Annual Report draws on local insight, expertise, data, case studies and lived experience to discuss the different types of stigma people can face and the associated negative consequences. This is explored through the lens of a key public health priority area as outlined in the infographic on the next page.

Professor Harry Sumnall from Liverpool John Moores University, has kindly authored a section in the report which explores the impact of public stigma and stigma by association on people who struggle with addiction. Phil Noon, Co-Founder and Director of Evolving Mindset has also kindly given a personal perspective in relation to self-stigma and mental health.



WHY DOES ADDRESSING STIGMA MATTER?

The Annual Report reveals how stigma is deeply rooted in society and often has a hidden impact on people's daily lives. Stigma manifests in ways such as through the labels put upon people, prejudice and discrimination. Research suggests the more differences an individual experiences, the more likely they are to face stigma.

The different types of stigma (described in the infographic) are interconnected and interact across all aspects of people's lives. This creates barriers to people accessing health, social care or mental health support, it worsens health inequalities and contributes to disadvantage and social exclusion.

The actions, interventions and services discussed within the full Annual Report are in place to ensure that people do not experience further stigma through policies, practices or through the use of stigmatising language.

I encourage you to take time out to read the full Annual Report which you can access [here](https://www.knowsley.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/public-health-annual-reports).

Dr Sarah McNulty
Director of Public Health

For comments and queries please email publichealth@knowsley.gov.uk

The front cover of this report represents people from our diverse communities. Any one of them could experience stigma due to visible or hidden characteristics.



The Annual Report covers the different types of stigma listed below, each type of stigma is explored through a different public health priority area.

	Type of stigma	Definition	Public health priority area
	Structural stigma	Stigma is embedded in society through social structures, cultural norms and beliefs, laws, policies, and institutional practices, creating barriers to opportunities and access to resources.	Understanding how structural stigma contributes towards poverty
	Public stigma and stigma by association	Negative attitudes and beliefs towards others who have certain health conditions or characteristics. Family and friends of those stigmatised may also experience criticism, judgement or discrimination.	Challenging general misconceptions and ending the stigma surrounding addiction
	Self stigma	People internalise the negative attitudes and public beliefs about themselves, even if not true, leading to self-blame, low-esteem and shame.	Understanding self-stigma in relation to mental health and suicide prevention
	Perceived stigma	People believe/anticipate that others hold negative views about them, their age or their condition, even if those views are not accurate.	The impact perceived stigma has on older people, especially those with long-term conditions or disabilities
	Label avoidance	People deliberately distance themselves from an identity label that carries social stigma, thereby hoping to escape the associated bias or unequal treatment.	Silenced by stigma - domestic abuse
	Health care professional stigma	Negative attitudes and behaviours which may be exhibited by healthcare providers towards individuals with certain health conditions or characteristics.	Weight stigma in healthcare settings



A CALL TO ACTION

The Annual Report is a call to action, for a whole system approach to recognise stigma in all its different types and encourage understanding, acceptance, inclusion and equality for all. This can be progressed through the 10 actionable recommendations summarised below. Detailed recommendations can be found within the full report.

1. Collect and apply partner insights on socioeconomic impacts in service design and evaluation.
2. Explore what more could be done to strengthen considerations under the Socioeconomic Duty ahead of legal enactment in England.
3. Deliver anti-stigma training across Knowsley partners and measure its impact.
4. Create an Anti-Stigma Charter and commit organisations to challenge stigma, use inclusive language, and train staff annually.
5. Continue to develop and implement the local suicide prevention action plan for 2025/26 which includes reducing stigma.
6. Use inclusive language and ensure all public health messaging avoids stigma and encourages support-seeking.
7. Promote healthy workplaces practice through the Working Well Programme and local employers.
8. Foster open dialogue to enable safe sharing of stigma experiences through Healthwatch-led Partnership Boards.
9. Support the development and implementation of the Council's Domestic Abuse Strategy and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
10. Continue to deliver the Council's Healthier Weight Strategy action plan for 2025-2030 which includes working with partners to understand the issue of weight stigma.

[You can view the full Annual Report here](#)
[Knowsley Public Health Annual Report 2024-25](#)

Along with an update on recommendations from the 2023/24 annual report - Improving lung health in Knowsley.

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