

Knowsley Cared for Children Strategy

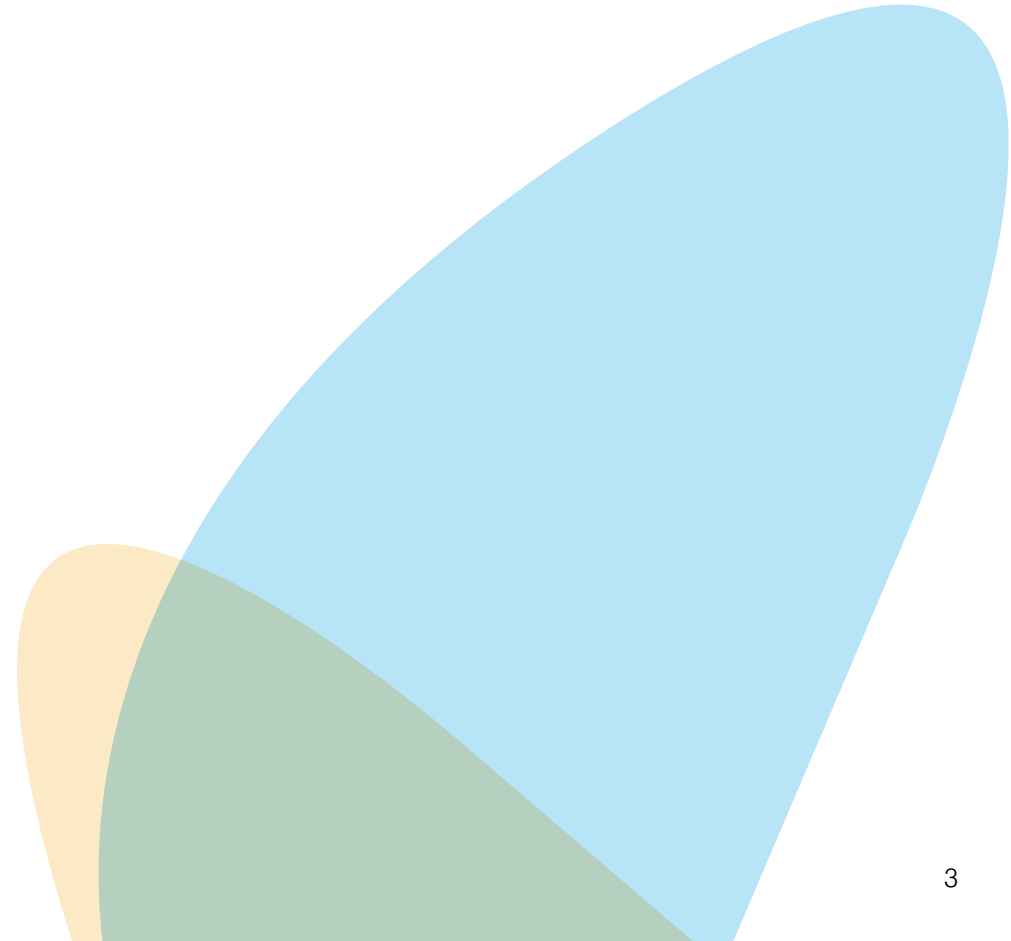
2023 – 2026





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Foreword

As Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Chair of Knowsley's Corporate Parenting Board – I am pleased to present to you Knowsley's new Cared for Children Strategy 2023-2026.

We want Knowsley to be a place where all our children have the best start in life, where every family thrives and where all our young people aim high and achieve their potential.

Whilst most children and young people can live happily and safely with their own families and achieve the best possible outcomes, some families need extra support to overcome challenges and difficulties in their lives. We know that those children and young people who are not able to live with their families, whether for long or short periods or sometimes permanently, face more challenges than most. But, when they feel safe, secure, cared for, understood and happy, cared for children can thrive and succeed.

As any good parent would, we undertake our responsibilities to support our Cared for Children and Care Experienced People to the best of our ability and have continued to improve our care offer since the publication of our Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy in 2020.

We have also taken the decision locally to separate our strategies for Cared for Children and Care Experienced People into two individual strategies with their own sets of priorities – whilst still acknowledging and recognising the need for seamless service provision throughout their individual care journeys, and that they need strategies which are specific to their individual circumstances.

We want our Cared for Children to excel in education, have and know how to form positive relationships and live stable lives in suitable housing and accommodation that is the best fit for them. This strategy is therefore a statement of our intent to continue to collaborate with families, carers, schools, professionals and young people themselves so that when children are in our care, they can live the best possible, fulfilled lives.

Cllr Margaret Harvey

Cabinet Member for Children's Services
and Chair of Knowsley Corporate Parenting Board

Introduction

Looking after and protecting children is one of the most important jobs we do. In Knowsley, we want our Cared for Children to achieve the same good outcomes and have similar opportunities and chances in life to those of children growing up in their own families. We will therefore seek to provide our Cared for Children with all of the support and help they need to reach their potential during childhood and into adult life. This includes the provision of good quality placements and access to good education and high-quality health care.

Every child in care is a unique child with individual strengths and needs. Our responsibility for meeting the needs of these children and young people therefore requires a multi-agency approach as they will encounter a range of services during their time in care and beyond. This strategy has therefore been developed with our partners and a range of different stakeholders, including most importantly – our Cared for Children and Care Experienced Children and young people to ensure their voice is at the heart of what we do. This is in keeping with our Knowsley 'Better Together' approach which brings people and organisations together for the benefit of Knowsley and its residents, making sure we achieve the best possible outcomes for children and their families we know we work better when we work together.

Like all children and young people, the children we care for have hopes, dreams and aspirations. Unlike most children and young people, however, many will have experienced hardships and trauma during their young lives. We want to ensure our children are settled and have a sense of belonging within their homes. In developing this strategy, we acknowledge that a child or young

person in care is much more likely to be vulnerable and face increased challenges when compared to their peers in achieving positive outcomes, and transition throughout a child's journey in care can often be a turbulent time.

With all of this in mind, our duty is to act as a 'good' Corporate Parent to offer support to our Cared for Children – so they feel that they can turn to us for support. We want our Cared for Children to thrive, to develop into young adults who feel safe, loved and respected and have had a good education, to develop the right skills needed to be independent, to feel confident about themselves and reach their full potential and aspirations. We want our children and young people to have everything that good parents want for their children, and to get the same level of care and support that other young people receive from their parents. We will treat our children in care with respect and dignity by understanding their experiences and listening to their voice and when young people leave our care, they should be able to live autonomously with support from Social Workers and Personal Advisors through meaningful relationships. We want to enable our young people to have stable, secure lives and hopeful futures. We want to ensure that there are no delays in our decision making, ensuring our reviews are timely to make certain what is needed is being delivered and is safe and right for each child.

This strategy therefore sets out how we will deliver our commitment for our Cared for Children over the next three years, which will require a sustained effort across Children's Services, other Council departments and our partner agencies.



Policy and Legislation Landscape

National Legislation

A number of Government Acts and Bills are in place relating to Cared for Children and Care Experienced People, all of which set out how the child protection system works and what agencies' responsibilities are to children and families who need support.

The national statutory framework for Cared for Children and Care Experienced People was set out in the Children Act 1989 before the introduction of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Young Persons Act 2008. The Children and Young Persons Act in 2008 introduced a number of reforms to the laws about children. It introduced a number of changes to a number of areas including caring for disabled children, private foster care and residence and special guardianship orders. There were specific amendments to Part 2 of the Act which specifies duties to in relation to accommodation, education, and the general provisions of care. The Wellbeing of Children and Young people being the first of those duties within the amended part of the Act.

Most recently, the Government commissioned a review of the children's social care system in England. This began in March 2021, gathering evidence from public engagement, research and visits to local areas with the aim of putting forward recommendations for a system that:

- Provides intensive help to families in crisis
- Acts decisively in response to abuse

- Unlocks the potential of wider family networks to raise children
- Puts lifelong loving relationships at the heart of the care system
- Lays the foundations for a good life for those who have been in care

The final report and supporting evidence were published in May 2022, suggesting that the issues facing the social care system can only be addressed through a "radical reset". Approximately 80 recommendations have been made following the review and cover a range of issues – from transforming help for families, to a just and decisive care protection system, to realising the potential of the many thousands of dedicated professionals who work in children's social care . Whilst it is acknowledged that change cannot happen easily or overnight, the review marks the start of a fundamental shift in how the Government thinks about children's social care. In February 2023, the Government published its long-awaited children's social care implementation strategy in response to the review to transform children's social care. At the time of writing, the strategy was subject to consultation, the outcome of which we will proactively utilise to further improve local systems and practice in Knowsley.

The infographic at figure 1 outlines some of the main legislation that is in place to ensure all aspects of our Children's and Young People's lives are protected and supported. This strategy sets out the commitments of Knowsley Council, working with our partners, to continue to improve the outcomes for our Cared for Children in line with the requirements of this different legislation.



Figure 1 – Legislation that is in place to ensure all aspects of our Children's and Young People's lives are protected and supported

Local Strategic Landscape

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

- A place where people are active and healthy, and have access to the support they need and
- A place where people feel safe and secure and have a sense of pride and belonging



Underpinning the way that we work is Knowsley Better Together, a shift in culture that is focused on the Council working in equal partnership with children and young people – including those in care and care leavers, partners, and the voluntary sector – more than ever before. This is further supported by the Knowsley Council Plan 2022-25 which has the strategic vision of 'Supporting Knowsley's people and communities to thrive' and is focused around three key priorities – the first of which is 'Effective support for those in need' – part of which is about ensuring we continue to protect the most vulnerable children and families through effective early help and high-quality practice, particularly in Children's Social Care. The Knowsley Children and Families Plan 2021-24 also sets the direction for Children's Services in Knowsley and outlines the Knowsley Children and Families Board's vision for positive outcomes for children and young people in Knowsley, with a focus on the priorities of Prevention, Education and Family. There are also links with a number of other departmental and service strategies and plans across the Council, for example the Knowsley SEND and Inclusion Strategy and the Knowsley Early Help and Prevention Strategy – all of which complement in each other in playing a key role in supporting the delivery of the Council and Knowsley Partnership's wider strategic aims.



Headline data and local picture

Knowsley Population

Knowsley is the second most deprived Borough in England. Data from the 2021 Census recorded Knowsley as having a population of 154,500, of which 35,368 are children aged between 0 and 18 years. Of those children, 31.5% live in low-income households. Knowsley's population is growing, and there remains a higher proportion of children and young people who face greater challenges and inequalities due to the higher than national proportion of children who live in poverty and who have experienced adverse childhood experiences – both of which further increase inequalities and disparities.

Our Cared for Children

The numbers of Cared for Children in Knowsley are lower than statistical neighbours, but above that of national averages. We recognise the effectiveness of our preventative approach, early help, and edge of care offers as key factors in ensuring children & families receive the right help at the right time. Our preventative approach reduces the number of families requiring statutory intervention, contributing to the maintenance of social care thresholds.

In Knowsley we currently have just over 340 children in our care. We have a responsibility to ensure they that are safe, happy and healthy and effectively supported to reach their potential through the provision of excellent parenting, high quality education, opportunities to develop their talents and skills, and effective support for their transition to adulthood.

Our 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.

Education

Overall in Knowsley we have seen improved inspection outcomes in education, with 100% of Local Authority maintained schools now 'good'. Of all Knowsley schools, 90% are now good or better against national average of 88% and we have no inadequate schools when compared to 3% nationally. With regards to primary education, the percentage of children reaching the expected standards for Key Stage 2 for Reading, Writing and Maths are above the Liverpool City Region and North West averages, and the majority of secondary schools recorded better results in 2022 than in 2019. Grade 4 and above in both English and Maths has also increased at all schools and all schools have improved the percentage of students achieving a strong pass in both English and Maths (Grade 5 and above).

With regards to Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in Knowsley 19% of school aged children are recorded as having SEND. Of our Cared for Children 29% have an Education Health Care plan (EHCP) which increases when considering those who are being provided with SEN support which is currently 50%. Knowsley's new SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2026 sets out a number of priorities which have been identified as key in helping to tackle some of the longstanding challenges facing children and young people with special educational needs and their families in Knowsley. The strategy also links to the Written Statement of Action

which sets out how we will meet our statutory duties, as well as improve outcomes for children and young people.

The Knowsley Virtual School work with Cared for Children, their schools, carers and social workers to ensure that they are able to access good educational provision and positive experiences in their learning to enable them to achieve. Whilst children and young people will attend their own actual physical school, the Virtual School is a small team of professionals dedicated to supporting children's educational needs. The Virtual School have oversight over all key educational areas including additional learning needs and review this via the termly Personal Education Plan and also by attendance at EHCP annual reviews. The Virtual School ensure that recommendations from assessments such as Educational Psychologists reports are acted upon and reviewed. The Virtual School work in partnership with the SEND service to review the offer and educational needs of our children.

All Cared for Children in Knowsley have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) as a part of their care planning and education process. The PEP captures transition planning, careers advice and guidance from at least year 9, with SMART short-term targets to improve the educational outcomes. Preparation for adulthood is embedded within our practice, exploring reflecting always upon next steps to positive engagement and independent living. Reviews of PEP's are carried out termly and unlike many Local Authorities, Social Workers in Knowsley take the lead on this process. The PEP provides the opportunity to offer a multi-agency approach working with to those children and young people who may need more intensive levels of care as social workers are able to link educational needs with other presenting needs to provide a more comprehensive package of support.

In terms of the educational offer, all Cared for Children and are monitored and tracked by Knowsley's Virtual School. The school

provides the opportunity for the children, their educational carers, and social workers to work together to ensure that there is help and support with access to good educational provision and positive experiences to learning. The Virtual School monitors standard educational provision offered, progress made along with attendance and the results of this monitoring are used as a way of directing early interventions to prevent potential disengagement or suspension from provision and helps aid a smoother transition to school. Further to this, both attendance and progress are monitored to enable early targeted support to be put in place. Access to the Virtual School is available up to the age of 25 years for those with additional learning needs.

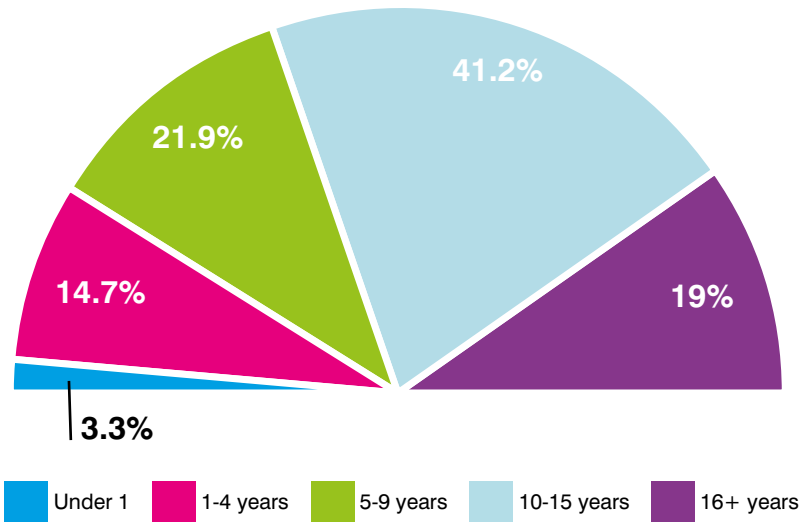
Placements

At the end of 2021/22, 67% of our Cared for Children were living in Foster Care placements compared to the England average of 70%. In 2021/22, 6% of those Cared for Children ceasing to be looked after were adopted, which is a decrease when compared to 2020/21 (10%). With regards to placement stability, Knowsley outperforms national and regional comparators both in relation to short-term stability (3 placements) which has been below target since 2018/19 and is lower than all comparators and long-term stability (children remaining in their placement for 2 or more years) which continues to exceed historic trends.

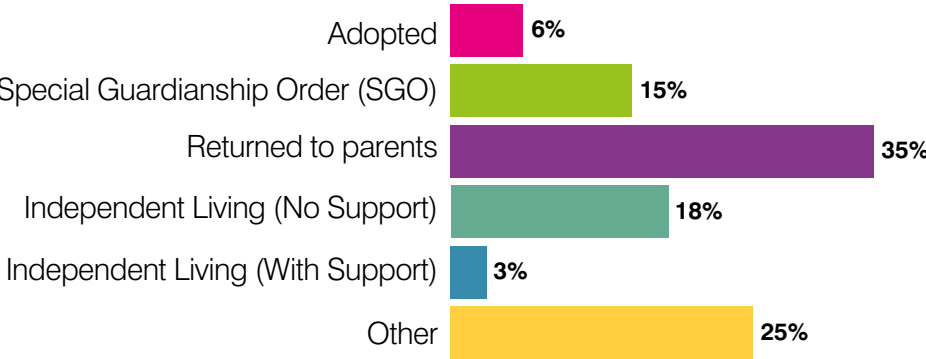
Whilst Knowsley has overall seen a decrease in the number of Foster Carers within the Borough, which is consistent with the regional and national picture, there has however been a slight increase in friends and families Foster Carers between 2021 and 2022. Work is ongoing locally to support a drive in the recruitment for Foster Carers through a targeted marketing campaign to attract both new and other approved Foster Carers from Independent Fostering Agencies and Local Authorities who bring with them a

Cared for Children in Knowsley

Cared for Children by age



Destinations of those who ceased being cared for in 2021



100%

For the period 2020-22 Knowsley as a Corporate parent kept in touch with all of our Cared for Children.



6.9%

In 2022/23 only 6.9% of our Cared for Children have had 3 or more placements. This is a reduction on the previous year.



100%

In April 2022, all Knowsley Cared for Children were in suitable accommodation and placements.



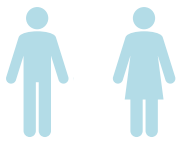
51%

In April 2022, 51% of our Cared for Children were logged as having Special Educational Needs.



10%

In 2021, 10% of those ceasing to be Cared for Children were adopted.

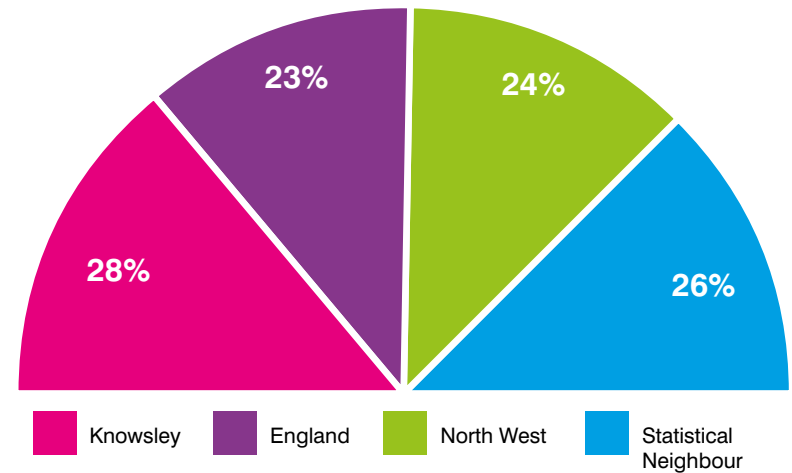


56% 44%

In April 2022, 56% of those being cared for identified as being male and 44% identified as being female.

Education, Employment and Training for 2022

Key Stage 4 Average 8 progress scores 2021/22



The number of Cared for Children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) by %



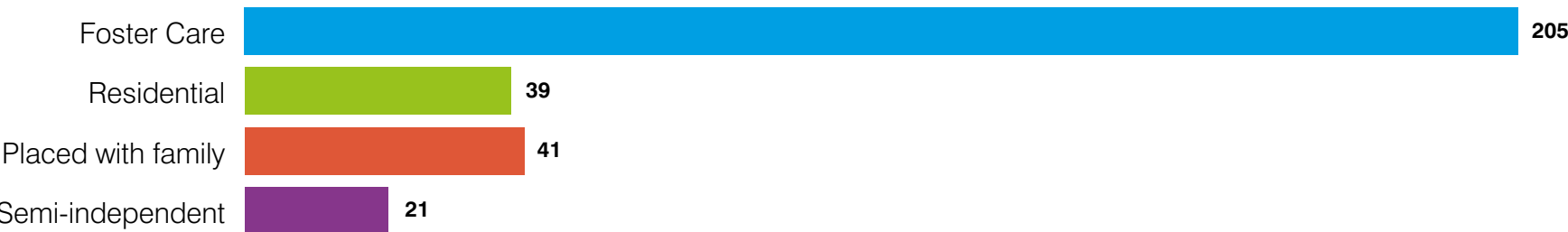
Key Stage 2

Due to disruption caused by Covid-19 National and Local attainment figures at this level are not available for 2019/20 or 2020/21.



Placements

Placement type for 2022



76.4% of Cared for Children in 2022 have Long Term placement stability this is a 3.1% improvement compared to the previous year.



29 of our Cared for Children were placed more than 20 miles away from home in 2021/22 this is a decrease when compared to 32 in 2019/20.

wealth of experience and knowledge of the role. Activity is also continuing to focus on a multi-marketing approach with in person information sessions being held in local coffee shops, libraries and town centres combined with a range of digital marketing and is so far proving to be successful.

For children and young people who have been identified as needing residential accommodation following a social workers assessment, Knowsley currently has four residential care properties. This includes two residential care homes, both of which are three bedroomed. One of these is currently closed but due for re-opening in 2023. Knowsley has an Edge of Care Short Breaks Support Service which offers weekend stays and weekday bridging support for families and has the capacity for around 12 young people at a time. Knowsley also has a short breaks service for children with disabilities which was re-opened in 2022. In Knowsley at the end of 2021/22, 14% of our Cared for Children were in residential care (including welfare secure and Supported & Independent Living) which outperforms the national average and is in line with the North West average.

Health

Local Authorities are responsible for making sure a health assessment of physical, emotional and mental health needs is carried out for every child they look after, regardless of where that child lives. In Knowsley, Cared for Children routinely attend their annual health assessments (97%). Dental assessments are currently at 78%, however this is an area which has been impacted upon by the COVID-19 pandemic and improvements are expected in 2022-23.

It is also important to have some means of measuring on a regular basis the emotional and behavioural difficulties experienced by

Cared for Children. The way in which this is currently done is through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which provides information to help social workers form a view about the emotional well-being of individual Cared for Children. These are undertaken with school aged children, and in Knowsley the average score is currently 12.5 (above the target of 12).

Youth Offending

It is recognised that Knowsley has a high proportion of Cared for Children in the Youth Justice System (14% of total Youth Offending Service cohort for 2021/22). Knowsley is committed to reducing this number and works within the Pan Merseyside Protocol for Preventing the Unnecessary Criminalisation of Looked After Children (2018). Knowsley Children's Services works in partnership with the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and the Police to identify and support children on the edge of criminality, signposting to services such as the newly established Prevention Service and Merseyside Youth Association. These services deliver bespoke interventions to children, taking a relationship-based approach to delivery. It is hoped that strengthening the offer to children at risk of criminality at the earliest opportunity will reduce the number going on to commit offences.

Knowsley YOS advocates for Cared for Children who commit offences which result in an arrest or Court appearance. We do this through partnership working, producing reports for Court, liaison with the Crown Prosecution Service regarding the possibility of diversion, enabling the voice of the child in Court hearings and raising any barriers or challenges with the Youth Justice Management Board. We are seeking to strengthen the strategic oversight of the YOS Cared for Children cohort as part of the improvement plan to address the high numbers.

Knowsley Community Safety Partnership works with our children and young people in the Borough to implement low level interventions as a part of its ongoing anti-social behaviour work within the community. The Borough also now has more specialised CCTV in town centres with dedicated CCTV officers. There has been a rise in the number of people reporting Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) through increased communications via social media and as part of the 'Talk About Tuesdays' initiative which involves community walkabouts. Positively, this allows for the children causing ASB to be identified more easily, then ensuring the right support is in place at the earliest opportunity.

Exploitation

The Shield Team is an established, specialist multi-agency child exploitation & missing service in Knowsley. The aim of the service is to safeguard and protect children and provide a coordinated response to keep Knowsley children safe and free from exploitation. This includes our cohort of Cared for Children who also receive the same intensive level of support even when placed out of Borough to maintain and build relationships. Shield will also continue to provide intensive intervention to children who turn 18, including Care Experienced young people, if further support is identified as needed to assist transition to adult services or there is an ongoing police investigation or court proceedings. The Shield Team has proven success in reducing missing episodes and exploitation and is at the forefront of practice development to tackle exploitation. Shield's social care practice is underpinned by therapeutic interventions using a trusted working relationship approach, which is enhanced by Shield Police practice which tackles the contextual safeguarding risks. In addition, our commissioned voluntary missing service helps to gather the voice of the child which supports engagement and targeting interventions.



Where are we now?

Following on from our previous Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2023, we have continued to transform the way we do business, ensuring that the themes of early intervention and prevention are central to our planning to ensure our focus is on improving the lives of our young people and their families in all areas. We are committed to providing the best possible care and positive experiences to our young people and have made progress and can demonstrate the improvements we continue to make.

Since our previous Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy, we have:



Commissioned a joint service in partnership with a neighbouring Local Authority which targets mental health issues at the earliest possible point, preventing further mental health issues escalating where possible.



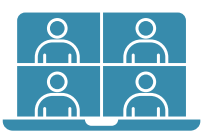
Strengthened our offer to our parents and carers providing them with access to tools to better support our children and young people with their emotional health and wellbeing.



Provided additional support to Cared for Children by joining up Knowsley Early Help services such as the Early Help Team and Family Support services in line with Knowsley's Better Together approach.



Increased the capacity of our virtual school to support to more of our Cared for Children help them reach their academic goals and aspirations.



Enhanced the communication and information we provide regarding our Fostering Service for those who currently foster and for those considering fostering through the development of a comprehensive website and delivery of face to face and virtual workshops.



Continued to ensure the voice of our children and young people is at the centre of what we do by working even more closely with our Cared for Children in formal consultation groups such as Making a Difference Everywhere (MADE).

Whilst improvements have been made in some areas, the Borough still faces a number of challenges, some of which have been further exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Knowsley consistently had one of the highest rates of COVID-19 throughout the pandemic, exacerbating pre-existing high levels of deprivation and inequality.

Whilst we know that children and young people have been less affected by the virus than adults in terms of infection and mortality rates, local insight suggests that the pandemic had a number of other impacts including lost learning and greater safeguarding risks to this vulnerable group during lockdown.

COVID-19 has also disrupted practitioners' relationships with children and families, and there has been an undeniable effect on emotional and mental wellbeing. Implementing some of these new ways of working, reconfiguring services to meet evolving social distancing requirements and offering emergency support has also resulted in increased cost pressures on local authorities, the healthcare sector and other organisations and agencies involved in the care of looked-after children and young people.





Figure 3 – Combined Illustrations from Knowsley's MADE group representing what is important to them

Consultation & Engagement

What our Cared for Children have told us

The voices and experiences of young people are at the heart of what we do. In Knowsley, we encourage all children to express their views and to hold us to account on the decisions we make about their lives. We want our Cared for Children to feel confident that they are able to influence what we do and how we do it. In developing this strategy, we therefore consulted with children and young people on their views outlining what the important things are in terms of improving the services we provide and their experiences. This has taken the form of face-to-face meetings and conversations, online meetings and workshops.

We also, as a part of our ongoing consultation with our Cared for Children, carry out an annual survey which gives our children and young people the opportunity to tell us about their experiences anonymously. Questions relate to those who work directly with our children and young people along with questions to gauge opinions and views about our Children's Charter, local offer, and the services available which provide support. The information gathered from this is used to help shape service delivery but has also been used in the development of this strategy to help develop its priorities and key areas of focus.

Throughout the strategy development process, we have worked closely with our Cared for Children through their formal consultation groups include MADE (Making a Difference Everywhere) to help inform the strategy. This engagement will also continue throughout the lifetime of the strategy, particularly as part of our action planning process and performance monitoring.



Figure 4 – Comments and feedback from our Cared for Children and Annual Survey



What other stakeholders have told us

Along with our children and young people, consultation with those who directly support our Cared for Children such as Social Workers, Personal Advisor's, Independent Review Officers, Residential Staff and Foster Carers has also taken place to ensure that the priorities in this strategy reflect what they feel is important to them and where they feel improvements can be made.

This took place in the form of facilitated group sessions and meetings, one to one's and surveys to gather a comprehensive and well-rounded representation of what Knowsley's current system looks like – depicting the things which we do well and identifying areas where we need improvement in order to reach a consensus on where the areas of focus for the priorities of the strategy should be.

In line with our Knowsley Better Together approach, consultation has also been undertaken with our partners through dedicated workshops and through the Corporate Parenting Board to help shape the strategies development.

Those consulted with acknowledged that an early intervention approach is important and a key element of this relates to the amount of time our children spend in school, with a focus on the importance of this environment as often it is the constant for a cared for child. It was agreed that strong relationships and information sharing between the Council and education providers also needs to continually be built upon and nurtured to ensure our children are fully supported and able to thrive and that strengthened communication between agencies and partners can support this.

The need for early life skills was also highlighted as being particularly important with regards to the development and importance of learning basic life skills before the age of 16 to allow for natural growth, progression, and feelings of independence to develop as young people move into adulthood. What was evident from the consultation exercise was the level of dedication and care the workforce demonstrate and their willingness to improve services and build upon good practices to support our Cared for Children.



Figure 5 – Comments and feedback from stakeholders

Our Vision and Priorities

“Working to make sure
Children Looked After and
Care Leavers are happy,
healthy and can reach their
full potential”

The Corporate Parenting Board has set out its own vision for Cared for Children and Care Experienced People. The vision set out in 2020 supports the wider strategic framework and the overarching priorities for all children who live in Knowsley, in line with Knowsley’s Children and Families Plan.

To continue to support this vision, four priority areas have been identified for this strategy. These priorities incorporate what our Cared for Children, workforce, and partners and have highlighted as being the most important things to ensure our Cared for Children can live happy, healthy, and fulfilled lives.

Throughout the development of this strategy, there has been great emphasis placed on the recognition of the transitions that occur as children and young people grow and move through the different stages of their journeys in care. These have therefore been reflected within both sets of priorities – for both Cared for Children, and Care Experienced People – but within each strategy, the priorities are specific to their individual circumstances.

These can be seen in the diagram at figure 6 which represents the cross-cutting nature of the themes identified and how these have been translated into the priorities for each of the strategies.



Cared for Children Priorities

Children are healthy and happy throughout
childhood and into early adulthood

Children are provided with opportunities
and support to achieve their aspirations

Children are in settled homes with the right
support and care



Cross Over Themes

Careers advice and support

Accessible Local Offer

Health and wellbeing support

Identity forming

Maintaining relationships

Skills for life support

Consistency of support staff



Care Experienced People Priorities

Young people are healthy, happy and
equipped with the skills and knowledge to
live independently

Young people have access to the right
education and training to fulfil their
aspirations

Young people are empowered and able
to make positive connections and forge
positive relationships

Young people are central to the decision
making for their lives

Figure 6 – Cared for Children and Care Experienced People Strategic Priorities

Priority One

Children are healthy and happy throughout childhood and into early adulthood



Why is this important?

As Corporate Parents we want our children and young people to have the best start in life and to be healthy. We want them to receive the support and care that they need to thrive as they move through childhood, into adulthood.

We have a responsibility to ensure that children and young people in our care have their health needs identified and are being helped to maintain and improve good health. To do this, we need to consider a child or young person's health needs holistically that address both physical and mental wellbeing.

An element of this is also about ensuring that children and young people in our care have appropriate, supported contact with family and friends and that they are supported to build positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

How will we deliver this?

- By ensuring all Cared for Children are registered with a GP and Dental practice and they have access to regular check-ups and treatment when needed
- By ensuring all our Cared for Children have accurate and up to date immunisations and health records
- By ensuring all Cared for Children have the opportunity to have an annual health check
- By regularly undertaking thorough strengths and difficulties questionnaires to allow for timely, targeted referrals to the right services for our children and young people
- Through provision of emotional mental health and wellbeing support services to provide our children and young people with the support they need to thrive
- Through the continued commissioning of services to carers and families to ensure they have the right skills to work alongside our children and young people and support their emotional wellbeing
- Through the early identification of substance misuse and through timely targeted referrals and the right individual support

How will we know if we have been successful?

- Improved numbers of Cared for Children who are registered with a GP and Dentist, so that all our Cared for Children have access to treatment when they need it and are receiving 6 monthly and annual health assessments
- Health outcomes for our Cared for Children are positive
- Improvements in the numbers of Cared for Children receiving immunisations
- Reduced numbers of Cared for Children entering the criminal justice system
- Timely support for those who need access to services related to mental health and wellbeing and substance misuse
- Through positive improvements in the views provided by children and young people as part of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires undertaken around their emotional wellbeing which evidences that the right support is being provided by the right services
- Continued consultation with our MADE (Making a Difference Everywhere) groups which provides positive feedback and demonstrates that ongoing communication and engagement is taking place with our children and young people

Priority Two

Children are provided with opportunities and support to achieve their aspirations

Why is this important?

As Corporate Parents we have a responsibility to ensure that children and young people in our care attend school or other educational provision to learn, and so that they can work towards achieving their aspirations. We also need to provide accurate and timely reviews of their needs through Personal Education Plans, as well as specialist support where it is needed to help them to make good progress in their learning, development, and achievements wherever they live.

Cared for Children should receive the same support from their carer's as they would from a good parent in relation to their schooling and education. It is also important that we support Cared for Children to explore their talents, hobbies and things they enjoy and provide opportunities to take part in extra activities outside of school which help support and facilitate this.



How will we deliver this?

- By working towards ensuring all Cared for Children attend a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' rated school
- Monitoring our Cared for Children to ensure good progress is being made in their learning through the regular review of Personal Education Plans (PEPs)
- Utilising PEP's and reviewing them with the virtual School to ensure our Cared for Children are receiving the right standard of planning and support to achieve their aspirations
- By bringing together PEP's, Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires and other key assessments to ensure we provide a well-rounded comprehensive package of support for our Cared for Children
- For those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) we will continue to support the use of Pupil Premium Plus to ensure access the right services
- By strengthening the additional support we provide to those who are in the process of undergoing SEND assessments
- Through monitoring the educational attendance of our Cared for Children to allow us to put in place early interventions to ensure the right additional support is there when required
- By encouraging our Cared for Children to have high aspirations, working with them in school and at home to provide information and advice relating to careers and training pathways
- By working closely with further and higher education providers to offer Cared for Children 'tasters' of further education and training
- By strengthening the support we offer to our Cared for Children through times of educational transition. Most importantly from Primary to Secondary, through the latter stages of Secondary and then onto Further and Higher Education for Care Experienced People

How will we know if we have been successful?

- All Cared for Children are attending school or educational provision
- All Cared for Children are attending 'Good' and 'Outstanding' schools
- All Cared for Children have aspirational Personal Education Plans which set goals for the future
- Through an increase in the academic achievements of our Cared for Children and an improvement in the number of positive outcomes when benchmarking nationally, locally and with our statistical neighbours where possible
- An increase in the number of cared for children and young people who access Education, Employment and Training
- An increase in the number of Cared for Children accessing further education pathways
- An increase in the uptake of places to extracurricular clubs, social activities and access to community groups by Cared for Children
- An increase in the number of successful EET and NEET panels with a positive outcome

Priority Three

Children are in settled homes with the right support and care



Why is this important?

As Corporate Parents we have a responsibility to ensure that the children and young people in our care live in safe, stable and appropriate homes or families, where they are settled and can thrive. This means early decision making and multi-agency planning so that the best quality of care is provided at the earliest opportunity, providing security and a sense of belonging.

Ensuring that we listen to the wishes and feelings of our Cared for Children and take them into account when making decisions is therefore a key part of the care planning decision making process, helping them to understand their rights and responsibilities.

This also means taking every opportunity to support and maintain family relationships and community ties where it is safe and possible to do so. We know that Cared for Children have the best chance in life when they feel settled, safe and cared for.

How will we deliver this?

- Through the promotion of legal permanence where it is safe and right to do so for the child or young person, and every child and young person has a permanence plan
- By ensuring where possible that siblings are placed together due to the importance of family relationships
- By working towards increasing the number of permanent foster carers within Knowsley through the continuation of the 'Knowsley Fostering Deal'
- To prevent placement breakdowns for our Cared for Children by ensuring we continue to offer support to the people who look after our children and young people
- By seeking legal permanence for Cared for Children at the earliest opportunity if they are living with their family members through a Special Guardianship Order if appropriate to do so
- If the plan for a Cared for Child is one of Adoption, we ensure that we start to make arrangements for this at the earliest opportunity
- By actively working with children, young people and families who are on the Edge of Care to promote stability, bring in the right services at the earliest possibility and provide support to allow children and young people to remain in the family home when it is safe to do so
- By promoting an improved offer to our Cared for Children and those who care for by promoting opportunities to access social and community groups and activities
- By facilitating ongoing and regular engagement with our Cared for Children (including through the formal consultation groups and forums in place such as MADE – Making a Difference Everywhere) to provide the opportunity for ongoing information sharing, coproduction and feedback on service delivery and provision, and to continue conversations with Cared for Children about what is important to them

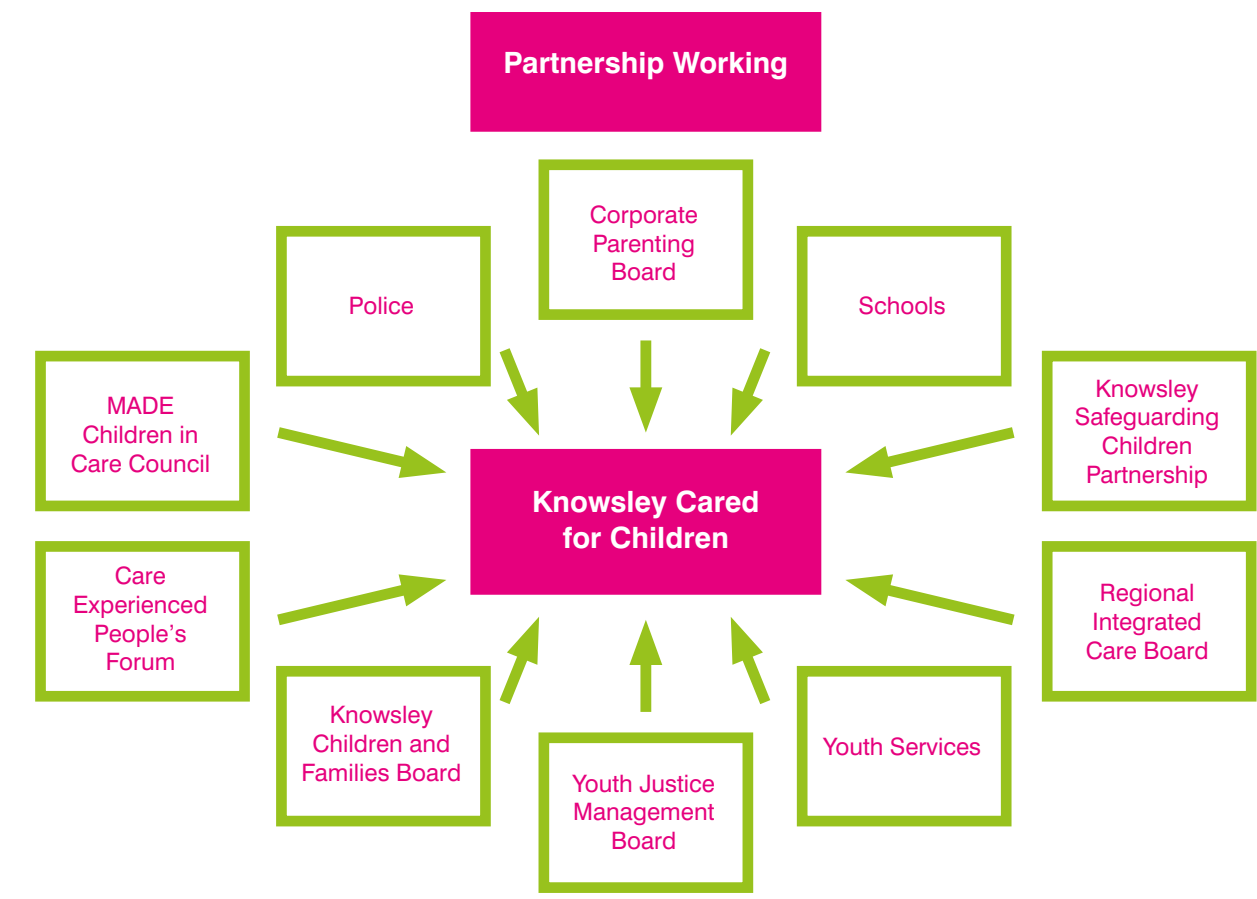
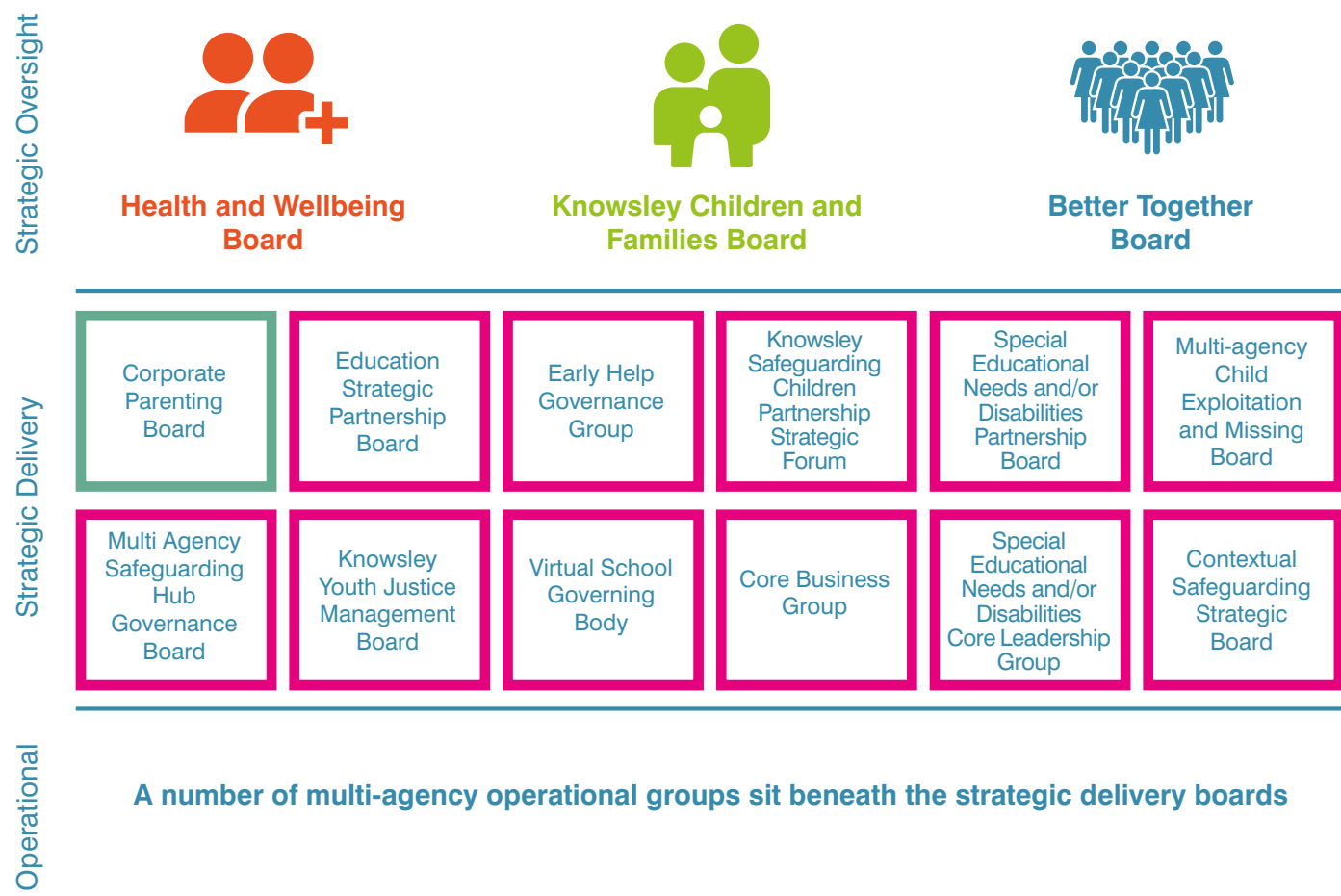
How will we know if we have been successful?

- All children will have a plan of permanence that is reviewed and agreed at their care review by four months
- An increase in children being adopted if this is their plan
- An increase in Special Guardianship Orders being made for cared for children
- An increase in Cared for Children remaining in stable placements for two years or more
- An increase in the number of permanent Foster Carer placements available
- All Cared for Children feel they are involved and part of the review of their plan
- All Cared for Children will have the opportunity to see their social worker on their own to enable them to tell them what they are feeling
- An increase in the uptake of places to extracurricular clubs, social activities and access to community groups by Cared for Children
- Continued consultation with our MADE (Making a Difference Everywhere) groups which provides positive feedback from our Cared for Children and young people and demonstrates that ongoing communication and engagement is taking place

Governance and Next Steps

Working with our partners under the Children’s Act 2004, it is our duty as a Council and Corporate Parents to lead and promote cooperation between our ‘relevant partners’, including the police, the NHS and education providers. Partners also have a duty to cooperate with us the Local Authority in line with the guidance on the Act which specifies that corporate parenting is a ‘task [that] must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies.’

The Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and the Board is responsible for owning and driving the delivery of this strategy. The Board comprises of senior managers and officers from across the Council and partners representing education, health, housing, social care, as well as Elected Members and children and young people themselves.



In terms of delivery, decision making and governance, a range of strategic groups and boards support the work of the Council and Corporate Parenting Board in playing their part to ensure we meet the needs of our Cared for Children. The local governance arrangements in place in Knowsley provides strong strategic leadership, providing challenge and support drive improvement and effect change where necessary.

An action plan to deliver this strategy will be developed and delivered through successful partnerships between the Council, Corporate Parenting Board and the agencies and partners involved with supporting our Cared for Children in Knowsley. Progress against this strategy and action plan will be monitored, reviewed and reported on a regular basis to the Corporate Parenting Board as a way of ensuring we measure the difference we have made to the lives of our Cared for Children.



