

Specialist Housing Needs Assessment: Omega Care Group – 9 North Park Road, Kirkby, L32 2AR

This assessment outlines the strategic benefits of establishing a high-quality children's residential care home in Kirkby, Knowsley for Omega Care Group. It is informed by recent national care review findings and aligns with local authority strategies and statistics.

The aim of the assessment when adjoined to Omega Care Group services is to ensure that Knowsley children's services are provided with high quality, reputable care services delivered by a local provider operating in borough.

1. Alignment with Knowsley 's Children's Services Sufficiency Strategy

Knowsley Council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient local accommodation and support for children in care. The proposed home in Kirkby directly supports the core ambitions of the [Knowsley Cared for Children Strategy 2023-2026](#) and the Knowsley sufficiency needs assessment

<https://knowsleychildcare.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/sufficiency-needs-assessment-for-children> which include:

- ***Keeping children local:*** A primary goal is to support children to remain within their home borough, near their families, communities, and schools, which is a key factor in achieving stability and a sense of belonging. Where safe to do so authorities should place in borough to help sustain a child's wider positive network from siblings, through to grandparents, peers and health professionals.
- ***Meeting diverse needs:*** The strategy emphasizes the need for a range of targeted, universal, and specialist services to ensure all children are matched with good quality placements that meet their specific needs. Omega Care Group operate consistently through the use of recognised frameworks, training methods, intervention and educational techniques and have a wider Omega Life network such as "Foundations for Life school" and "Omega Clinical" to draw upon further professional services to meet a broad spectrum of needs within childcare sector. These diverse deliverables are also designed to meet the needs of sibling groups.
- ***Reducing reliance on costly external placements:*** The Council actively seeks to safely reduce its reliance on high-cost external and out-of-area placements, an approach that is both financially prudent and better for the child's well-being. Omega Care Group contribute consistently to supporting authorities in reducing expenditure by keeping costs under review, realistic and offering value for money.
- ***Strengthening in-borough provision:*** The development of local, high-quality residential care options in areas like Kirkby helps build the required capacity within the Knowsley's own service landscape and Omega Care Group prioritise hosting

authority needs first and work collaboratively with commissioning teams to minimise any contribution to other council resource demands through the provision of consistently high standard services which result in stable placements for children and reduced costs to local authorities.

2. Children in Care Statistics and the Need for Local Provision

National and local statistics highlight the critical need for more in-borough residential placements:

- ***Knowsley Statistics:*** As of January 2026, available statistics, Knowsley had over 300 children in care on S31 (CLA).

Key details regarding looked after children in Knowsley:

- **Total Numbers:** Roughly 300-336 children are in care, with numbers noted to be rising: **Context:** The rate of 97 per 10,000 is higher than some other areas, and the borough has a high rate of children in need compared to national averages.
- ***Reducing Placement Costs and Financial Pressures:*** Local authorities often face "spiralling" costs for external, often out-of-area, placements, sometimes paying exorbitant fees (e.g., up to £42,000 per week for a single child in some cases mentioned in council discussions within the Merseyside area). A local provision reduces these high costs and the financial volatility of relying upon out of area providers to meet demand. The home directly addresses the shortage of local placements linking onto Knowsley sufficiency plans and helps to challenge the presence of unregulated placements through the provision of high-quality regulated services, allowing Knowsley to meet more of its needs internally and reducing the need to place children far from home. This aligns with the Council's care goals of safely reducing reliance on residential care placements outside the borough.

National Context & Out-of-Area Placements: Nationally, 44% of children in care were placed outside their local authority boundary in 2025. The recent children's social care review and government responses have consistently raised concerns about the "traumatic and lasting impact" of placing children many miles from home. The new home would directly address this by providing a local, accessible option. Knowsley have seen a rise in complex cases across 2024/2025 and this home aims to offer in borough complex case management options by an established organisation with an exemplary record.

- ***Rising Need for Residential Care:*** Despite a slight fall in the overall number of looked-after children nationally, the number of children placed in children's homes increased by 9% in the year to March 2025, indicating a growing demand for this specific type of provision.

3. Benefits to Children: Aligned with the Most Recent Care Review

The recent independent review of children's social care in the UK has heavily influenced current and future policy, focusing on stability, relationships, and a sense of belonging. The Kirkby home would provide the following benefits in line with these recommendations:

- ***Stability and Belonging:*** A local home will allow children to maintain connections with friends, attend their existing schools, and participate in local activities, fostering a more stable environment and reducing placement instability.
- ***Access to Local Services:*** Staying in the borough ensures seamless access to local health services, mental health support, and education providers who understand their needs.
- ***Better Outcomes:*** Proximity facilitates easier supervised family time and engagement with parents/relatives, which can improve the potential for children to return home or achieve permanency arrangements.
- ***Trauma-Informed Care:*** The 2025 outlook for social care focuses on integrated, trauma-informed approaches. A local home can better coordinate with existing local professionals to provide holistic support.

4. Omega Care Group: A Provider of Outstanding Care and Sustained Partnership

Omega Care Group operates several Ofsted-registered children's homes, many of which have achieved "Outstanding" ratings, consistently exceeded the standards of good care and reliably delivered on consistent positive outcomes for children across their services. We currently operate 4 homes in the Knowsley authority with 2 rated 'Outstanding' and the remainder on 'Good'

- ***Proven Track Record:*** For example, one Omega Care home was rated "Outstanding" in April 2024, with inspectors noting that "highly effective services... contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children". Another home with positive feedback from health and social care agencies who said children were "happy and settled". Omega Care Group have no less than 8 homes across the LCR currently rated "Outstanding"
- ***Sustained Professional Relationship:*** Omega Care Group's philosophy goes beyond basic provision, aiming to provide safety, security, and life skills. This quality of service is a cornerstone of a longstanding professional relationship with the local authority. The provision of quality, in-borough care creates cohesive partnership scaffolding around children, ensuring that the local authority can confidently meet its sufficiency duty with a trusted, high-performing partner. This collaborative approach ensures that services are coordinated and effective, benefiting from positive inter-agency feedback.

- **Partnership and reunification:** Omega Care group work continuously to form part of the scaffolding around the child and contribute to the multi-agency approach in ensuring that children and families, where possible and safe, are provided with the tools, support and resources to be reunified. This is done in the best interest of the child and family and has been achieved safely on many occasions resulting in a more positive experience for the child and an indirect reduction in expenditure to the local authority.
- **Educational needs and transition:** The Omega life model encapsulates what consistency and commitment to and for children is about. From implementing modern technological support initiatives benefiting staff, children and the environment, through to the provision of transport services, SEND educational opportunities, clinical service and supported accommodation we ensure that the wraparound support for children exists at all times contributing to a reduction in local authority administrative costs by simplifying transitions and access and ensuring that phases of life which can be difficult or disruptive for children are handled sensitively, by people they trust and in a manner which puts their needs first.

5. The Right to Thrive: Locality, Low Crime, and Life Chances

Research consistently demonstrates a "strong social gradient" in rates of children entering care, with children in the most deprived neighbourhoods being up to 10 times more likely to be in care than those in the least deprived areas. Locating the home in Kirkby addresses the right of every child in care to live in an area that supports, rather than hinders, their potential for growth and integration into society.

- **Avoiding Poverty-Stricken Areas:** Children have a right to live in areas that are not poverty-ridden. Parenting is significantly harder when parents cannot afford essentials, and living in disadvantaged areas can compound adversity, driving poor health and social outcomes later in life. By choosing a stable residential area, Omega Care Group is actively improving the living conditions for children who have already faced significant disadvantage. This area has good social cohesion, good healthcare facilities and good educational facilities.
- **Increased Life Chances and Integration:** Low crime rates and better socioeconomic environments significantly increase the life chances of children who have a cared for experience. Whilst Kirkby does have its own antisocial behaviour issues Omega challenges this by delivering consistent role modelling, a safe home environment and protective measures which ensure children are guided in positive directions.
- **Safety and Stability:** A safe environment, free from the daily risks associated with high-crime or deprived areas, offers essential stability, allowing children to build trust, focus on education, and engage in positive community activities. Primarily the

Longview Road area has a high home ownership percentage and is termed as a family friendly area by most statistical analysis platforms.

- **Educational Attainment:** Schools in less deprived areas are more likely to be rated "outstanding" by Ofsted. Providing access to better local education increases their future employment prospects and integration into society as they get older. The Kirkby and wider Knowsley areas boasts no less than 4 schools rated 'Outstanding' and a further 7 rated 'Good'. This is an indication of the potential for educational attainment within the borough.
- **Positive Socialisation:** Proximity to positive community resources, strong community networks, and reduced exposure to negative influences within a low-crime area fosters better social development and integration.

In conclusion, a children's residential home in Kirkby is strategically valuable, aligning with the Knowsley specific sufficiency needs and national reform agendas focused on improving outcomes for children in care by keeping them close to home and community. Omega Care Group's track record of "Outstanding" care, combined with the proven benefits of a safe, stable location, offers an exceptional opportunity to improve the life chances of vulnerable children in the Knowsley area.

As a registered provider we aim to not only ensure high quality service deliverables but to ensure that we recruit locally, contribute positively, pay fairly above real living wage and to support local authorities in reducing reliance on costly often unregulated placements.