

Knowsley Care Experienced People Strategy

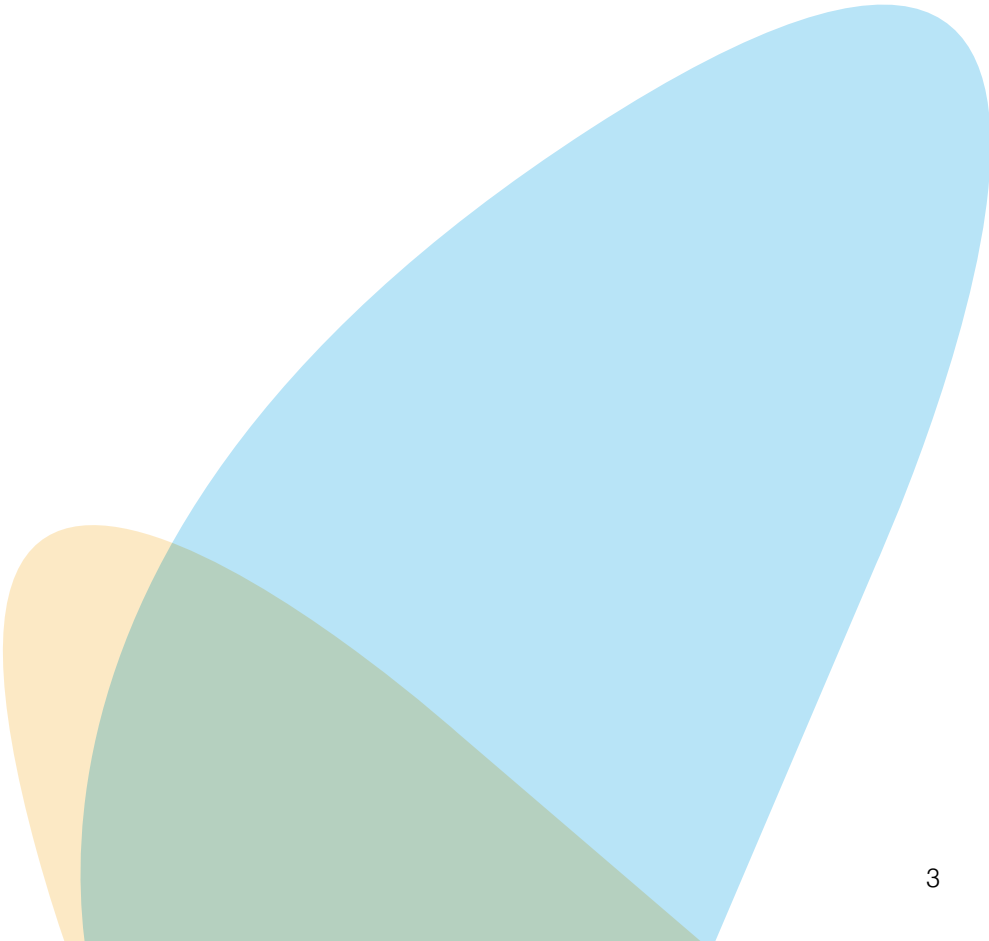
2023 – 2026





Contents

Foreword	5
Introduction	6
Policy and Legislation Landscape	8
Headline Data and Local Picture	13
Where are we now?	18
Consultation & Engagement	20
Vision and Priorities	22
Governance and Next Steps	32





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 Care Experienced People 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 in the Borough are able to 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, looked after 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 journeys and the need for strategies which are specific to their individual circumstances.

We do not want our Care Experienced People to encounter disadvantaged lives upon leaving our care. When they become young adults, we want to be sure they can excel at work or in education, have and know how to form positive relationships and live stable lives in suitable housing. 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 young people leave our care, they can go on to lead the best possible independent and fulfilled lives.

Cllr Margaret Harvey

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

Introduction

Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs we do. As Corporate Parents we have not only a legal responsibility, but a moral duty to intervene if a child's needs cannot be met by their families alone, or if they are at risk of suffering harm in the family home. In some cases, when it is believed that children cannot be looked after at home, they will be placed in the care of the Council and the Council becomes their Corporate Parent to look after them, to keep them safe and to promote their well-being.

Every child who is brought up in care is unique with individual strengths and needs. The responsibility for meeting the needs of Care Experienced People therefore requires a multi-agency approach by a range of services including housing, health, employers and further education during their time in care and beyond. Improving how we and our partner agencies support young people leaving care is therefore crucial to improving the lives of these young people. During these times, we also work very closely with children, young people and their families and carers when making decisions for their futures.

In keeping with Knowsley Better Together, this strategy has been developed with our partners and a range of different stakeholders, including most importantly – our Cared for Children and Care Experienced People themselves to ensure their voice is at the heart of what we do. Knowsley 'Better Together' brings people and organisations together for the benefit of Knowsley and its residents, making sure we achieve the best possible outcomes for children, young people and their families in Knowsley as we know we work better when we work together.

Prior to 2008, a statutory framework for care leavers did not exist. Instead, Local Authorities were responsible for decisions regarding the level of support and care offered for young people moving on. Since then and with the introduction of new legislation and amendments to existing Acts, Local Authorities have introduced a number of mechanisms to further support Cared for Children and Care Experienced People, including the introduction of Personal Advisors, the creation of pathway plans and new assistance up to the age of 25. The 'Staying Put' duty introduced in 2014 also enabled young people to remain with their Foster Carers up to the age of 21 allowing for a more gradual and assisted transition to adulthood.

Transition to adulthood is often a turbulent time and transitions are not always sequential. Young people can be regarded as an adult in some areas but not in others. For many young people, their transition to adulthood can be extended and delayed until they are emotionally and financially ready and they have the qualifications they need and aspire to, so that they have the opportunity to achieve their economic potential. Young people from care may not have this option. Whilst most young people know they can call on the support of their families to help them through unforeseen difficulties, Care Experienced People may not be able to rely on family support as they navigate their journey into adulthood.

With all of this in mind, our duty is to act as a 'good' Corporate Parent to offer support to our young people who have left care so they feel that they can turn to us for support. We want our Care Experienced People to thrive, to develop into young adults who have a good education, to develop the right skills needed to be

independent, to feel confident about themselves and able to reach their full potential. We want all our Care Experienced 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 Care Experienced People 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 personal advisors through meaningful relationships. We want to enable our young people to have stable, secure lives and hopeful futures.

This strategy therefore sets out how we will deliver our commitment to Care Experienced People over the next three years, as part of a sustained effort across Children's Services, other Council departments and partner agencies.



Policy and Legislation Landscape

National Legislation

A range of Government legislation, policy and guidance is in place relating to Cared for Children and Care Experienced People which sets 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 is 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 (Leaving Care) Act 2000 was introduced to clarify Local Authority duties regarding children leaving care and care leavers and tackle disparities in the range and quality of services available to them. Volume 2 of the act relates specifically to care planning, placement and case reviews, all of which make up the most important elements of ensuring our children and young people are safe and supported.

In 2013 the Government published a Care Leaver Strategy setting out the importance of providing care leavers with access to the same level of care and support that other young people get from their parent with regards to Education, Employment, Financial Support, Health, Housing, Justice System and on-going support.

In July 2016 the Department for Education also published the 'Keep on Caring Strategy' to guide Local Authorities supporting young people from care into independence. This strategy recognised that care leavers typically make the transition into independence sooner than other young people of their age, with much less support.

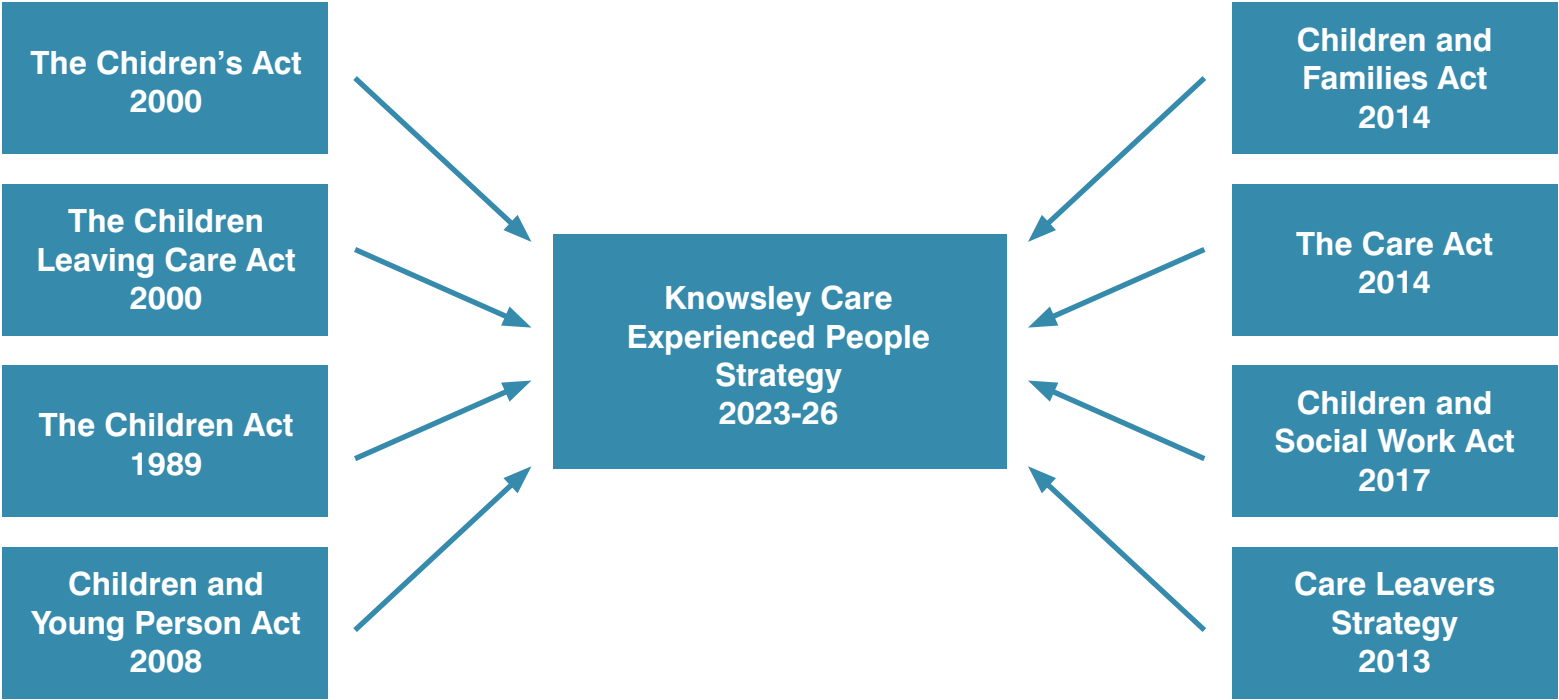
The Children and Social Work Act 2017 also made it a statutory requirement for all Local Authorities to publish a local offer for our Care Experienced People to ensure support is accessible at all times.

All Care Experienced People are entitled to support from a Personal Advisor, who is not always a qualified social worker but is experienced in relationship work with children and young people. In February 2018 the Department for Education published statutory guidance for Local Authorities in relation to extending Personal Advisor support to all Care Experienced People up until the age of 25. The previous duty was up until the age of 21 unless the Care Experienced Person was in further education. This amended duty came into effect on 01 April 2018.

In January 2023, Ofsted introduced changes to its Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) inspection framework with the introduction of a separate judgement for care leavers on their experiences and progress. In summary this means that Ofsted will now:

- Start to make a graded judgement on 'the experiences and progress of care leavers' on ILACS standard and short inspections as of January 2023;
- Use the evaluation criteria for this judgement to inform focused visits looking at the experiences and progress of care leavers carried out from January 2023; and
- Review the implementation of the changes by the end of 2023 and amend the framework if necessary.

Our Care Experienced People Strategy sets out the commitments of Knowsley Council and the Corporate Parenting Board, to continue to improve the outcomes for those who are care experienced, in line with the requirements of this legislation, for Care Experienced People in Knowsley.



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 17,057 are young people aged between 16 and 25 years. Knowsley's population is generally growing, but the 10-24 year old population has fallen in the last 10 years.

In Knowsley, 25% of our children live in poverty compared to 17% nationally. There therefore remains a higher proportion of 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.

Education and Attainment

In Knowsley 2021, 50% of our Care Experienced People are in Education, Employment or Training (EET) and the rate of Knowsley Care Experienced People accessing Education, Employment or Training is comparable with that of national (51%), Northwest (50%) and statistical neighbours (52%).

Whilst the rate of children leaving care with GCSEs has recently improved, it remains below target. We know that education has been affected quite significantly as a result of COVID-19 and for Care Experienced People this will have been magnified. However, the full impact of the COVID-19 is still not fully known in terms of attainment levels which is therefore something that is continuing to be monitored and understood.

From April 2022 the Department for Education set requirements for all local authorities to report on all Care Experienced People in education up to the age of 25. This will be an important way by which we can monitor young people's progression into adulthood.

Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

With regards to Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities (SEND) in Knowsley 19% of school aged children are recorded as having (SEND). Of those, 14.9% of those with SEND have an Education, Care and Health Plan (ECHP). Of our Care Experienced People, 8% have an EHCP. Previously, monitoring and reporting was only up to the age of 21 and so this figure reflects this age range only, however, support would still be offered to those with an EHCP up to the age of 25. The figure is anticipated to change once 2022 data is released as going forward, Local Authorities will report on this up to the age of 25.

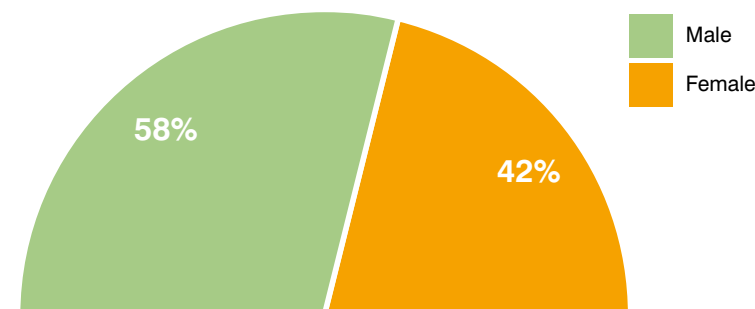
Accommodation and Placements

In 2021/22, 59% of Care Experienced People who ceased to be looked after on their 18th birthday stayed with their foster carers at age 19 or 20. This is above the national average of 31% and regional average of 35%. The matching process is extremely important in making sure our Cared for Children are in stable, safe and supported homes and the 'Staying Put' programme is evidence that in Knowsley we do well at this and plan to continue to develop this work.

Care Experienced People in Knowsley

In April 2022, there were **154** Care Experienced People in Knowsley, this is a 20% increase when compared to figures from the same month in 2020.

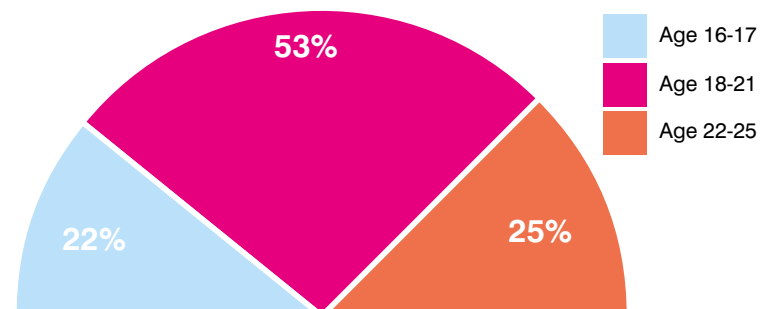
Care Experienced People by Gender



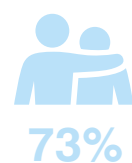
Those Care Experienced People reporting as transgender have been included into the groups they identify as.

93% of Knowsley Care Experienced People have pathway plans in place to support them on their journey to adult life.

Care Experienced People by Age



For the period 2020-22 Knowsley as a Corporate parent kept in touch with all Care Experienced People.



Of Care Experienced People who ceased to be looked after at 18 years old remained with their former foster carers.



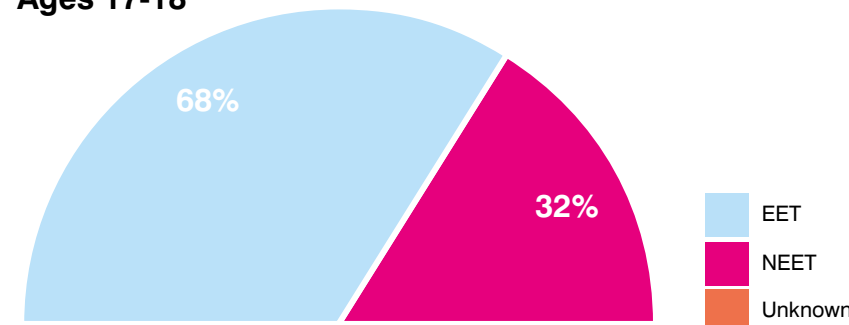
In April 2022, 89% of 17-21 year old Care Experienced People were in suitable accommodation.



From April 2022 all of our Cared for Children and Care Experienced People aged 16-25 have a dedicated Personal Advisor for support.

Education, Employment and Training for 2022

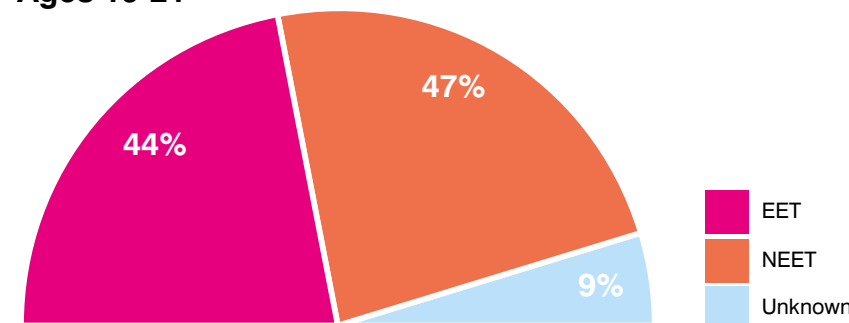
Ages 17-18



EHCP's

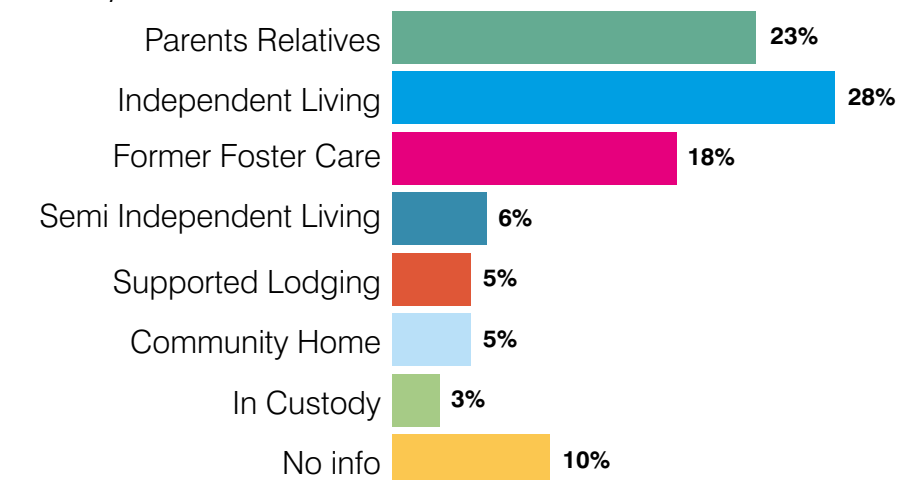
The number of Care Experienced People requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan has dropped from **14%** in 2020 to just **8%** in 2022.

Ages 19-21



Accommodation

Where our Care Experienced People were during 2021/2022



Foster Carers

Knowsley currently has **66** Foster Carers supporting looked after children and care leavers, this is a **15%** reduction compared to 2020.

73% of Care Experienced People aged 18 in 2021/2022 remained with their former foster carers along with **50%** of those aged 19-21.

This is a good indication of Knowsley getting the matching process right.



The proportion of Care Experienced People in suitable accommodation has increased year on year since 2018. In 2021/22 89% of Care Experienced People in Knowsley were recorded as living in suitable accommodation which is slightly below the reported figures for the North West which remained at 91% for the same time period. Work is therefore continuing with our partners including housing to ensure that the accommodation provided is suitable to the needs of our Care Experienced People.

Youth Offending

In Knowsley in October 2022, 7% of Care Experienced People were reported as being in custody. For those in custody, we continue to provide support through maintaining visits and joint support with the Probation Service and ensuring that pathway plans are still written and followed. Knowsley is committed to reducing this number through working in partnership with the Youth Offending Service (YOS), Probation Service and the Police to identify and support children and young people on the edge of criminality, signposting to services such as the newly established Prevention Service and Merseyside Youth Association. These services deliver bespoke interventions taking a relationship-based approach to delivery. It is hoped that strengthening the offer to children and young people at risk of criminality at the earliest opportunity will reduce the number going on to commit offences, and ultimately ending up in custody.

Knowsley YOS support and advocates for Care Experienced people who are open to the service and who are turning 18. This is done through close multi agency working with the Probation Service, to ensure a smooth transition of services. Transitions of this kind, and for those who are care experienced, are monitored and reviewed at the Youth Justice Management Board on a quarterly basis.

Knowsley Community Safety Partnership works with children and young people within 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 the 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 Care Experienced Young People 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?

Reflections since our previous strategy

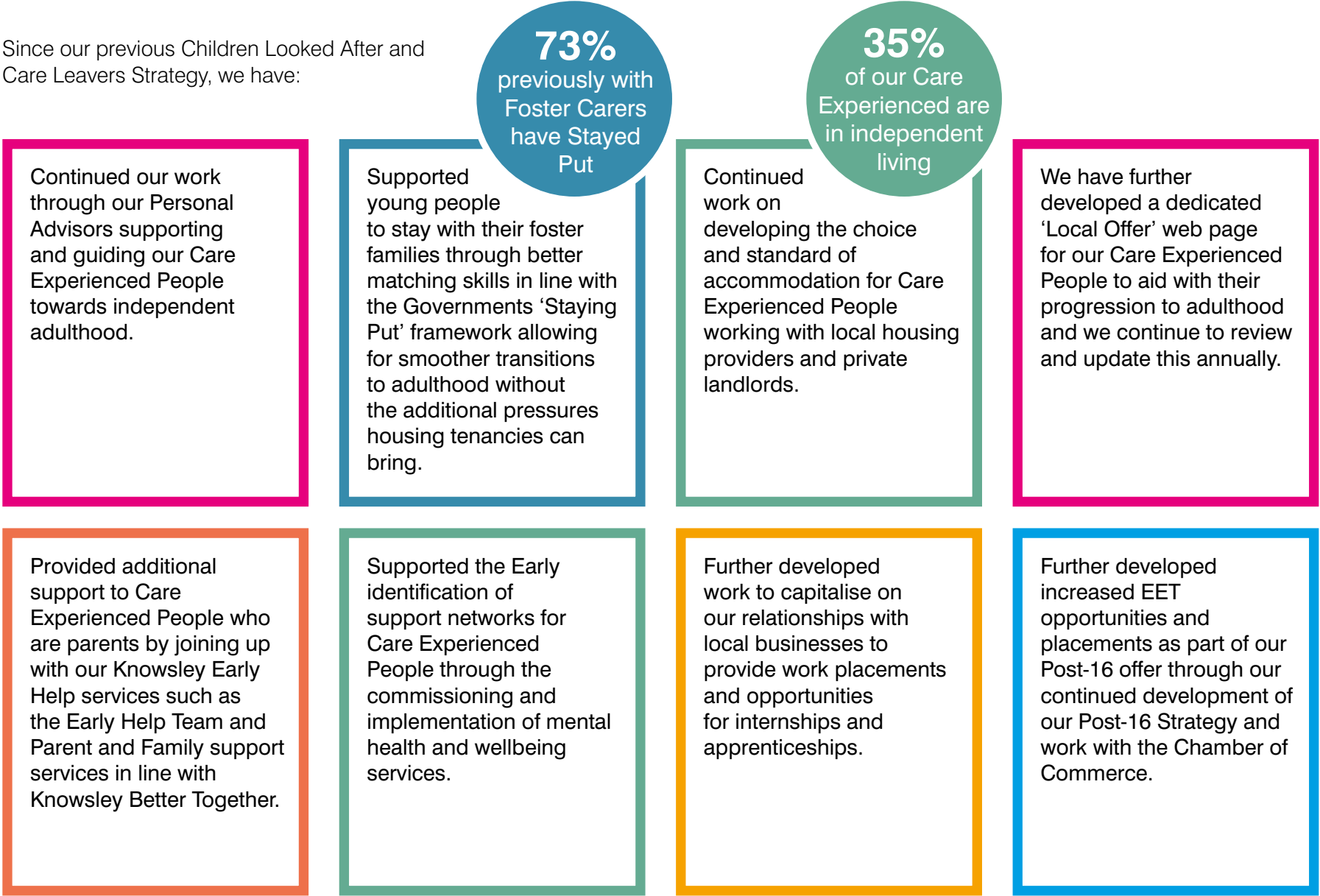
Following our previous Children Looked After and Care Leavers Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2023, we are continuing to transform the way we do business, ensuring that early intervention and prevention are central to our planning to ensure our focus is on improving the lives of our young people and their families. This is despite the challenging backdrop of ever-increasing pressure on children's services – particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. The reconfiguring of services to meet social distancing requirements and offering emergency support throughout the pandemic resulted in further increased pressures on local authorities, the healthcare sector and other organisations and agencies involved in supporting Cared for Children and Care Experienced People. The impact of the pandemic on vulnerable

groups outside of the care system, such as those experiencing domestic abuse and neglect, and families suffering financially, has also led to more children being referred to children's services who had not previously been known to local authorities and children's social care, leading to a greater impact on the system, creating even more demand for children's services. This has been exacerbated even furthermore recently during the cost-of living crisis, meaning an even further concerted effort is required to strengthen our response to the needs of our Care Experienced People.

Yet despite these challenging circumstances we have still made progress and demonstrated notable improvements over the last three years.



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



Consultation & Engagement

What our Care Experienced People have told us

The voices and experiences of our Care Experienced People are at the heart of what we do. In Knowsley, we encourage young people to express their views and to hold us to account on the decisions we make about their lives because we want our Care Experienced People to feel confident that they can influence what we do and how we do it.

In developing this strategy, we have therefore consulted and engaged with the young people we support to make sure that our priorities reflect what they feel is important to them and where they feel improvements can be made. This consultation and engagement has taken place in a range of different ways – including surveys, workshops and activities. Extensive engagement was also undertaken in developing Knowsley’s Children’s Charter, and Our Care Experienced People also took part in a range of consultation activities as a part of ‘Care Leavers Voice’. All of the insight, feedback and views gathered as part of these exercises has therefore been collated and played a key part in the development of this strategy, and the voice of Care Experienced People will continue to be vital as we look to develop our action plans and implement this strategy over the next three years – particularly through Knowsley’s Care Experienced People forum. This forum provides the space and opportunity for our Care Experienced Young People to feed shape the work we do, and to provide a mechanism for ongoing communication, consultation, and engagement.

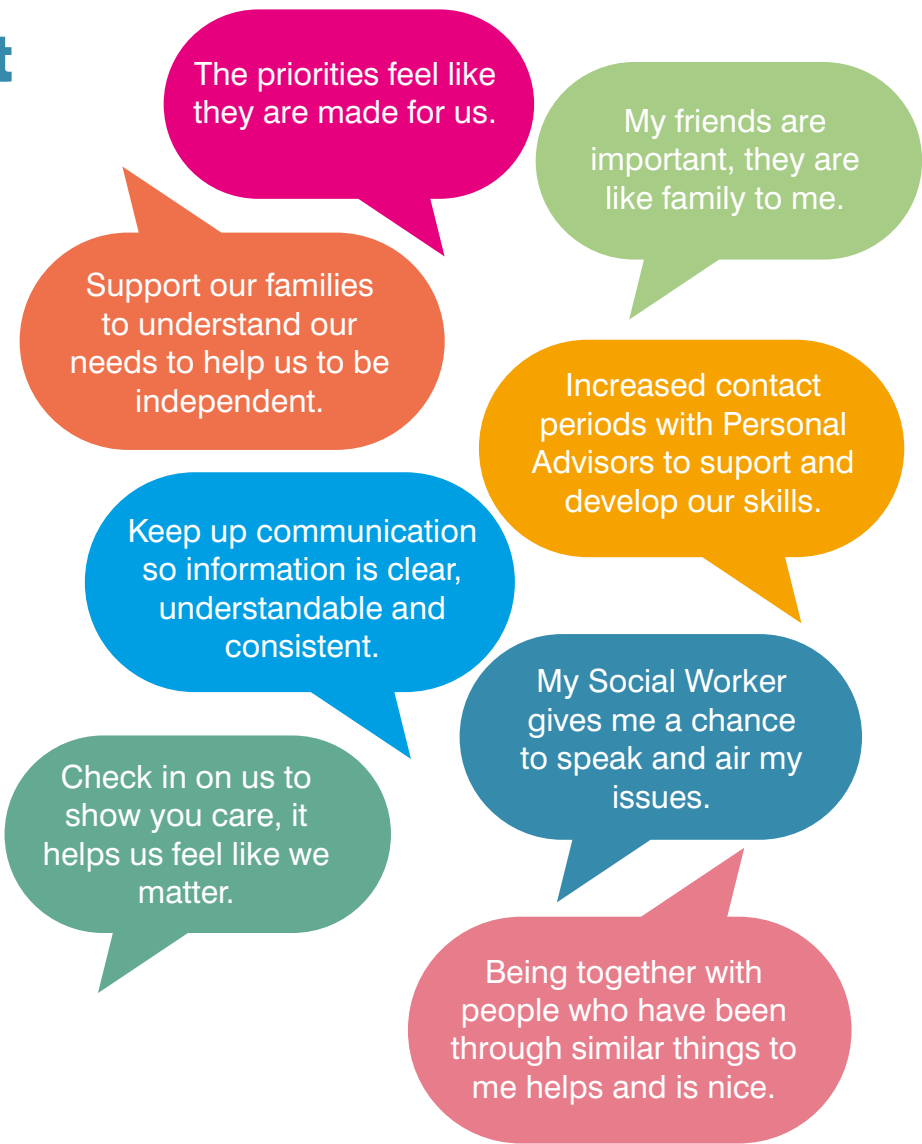


Figure 1 – What our Care Experienced People have told us

What other stakeholders have told us

Those who directly support our Care Experienced people such as Social Workers, Personal Advisor’s, Independent Review Officers, Foster Carers and Residential Care Homes, housing providers and health services have also been consulted with as part of the development of this strategy.

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 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 acknowledged the need for an increased level of support but agreed that the support had to be delivered in a timely, respectful, and consistent way. The consistency of those in supportive roles was a theme also raised by young people in relation to the importance of forming positive relationships with those who support them. Ensuring that our workforce is supported, the right processes are in place and access to the right tools for those relationships to be formed and built upon is therefore key to this.

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 Care Experienced People.



Figure 2 – What our stakeholders have told us

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 Care Experienced People, workforce, and partners and have highlighted as being the most important things to ensure our Care Experienced People 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 3 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 3 – Cared for Children and Care Experienced People Strategic Priorities

Priority One

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



Why is this important?

All children and young people have every right to lead a healthy, happy, and fulfilling life. But for many children and young people leaving care, approaching adulthood and leaving the care system is a time of extra challenges, anxiety, and fear.

Timely access to mainstream and specialist health services, which meet the physical, mental, and emotional health needs of Care Experienced People is therefore essential.

We will also work to ensure that we equip our Care Experienced People with the skills and knowledge to live independent, happy, and healthy lives through access to a wide ranging comprehensive local offer which supports them with financial skills, budgeting advice and training – as well as support in building essential life skills, such as how to shop and cook.

How will we deliver this?

- By ensuring that Care Experienced People are allocated a dedicated Personal Advisor who will be on hand to offer guidance and support. Where possible, Personal Adviser's will be allocated by the age of 16
- Through working closely with our Care Experienced People to ensure they are assigned a timely pathway plan that is purposeful and bespoke to their needs
- By ensuring that all Care Experienced people are registered with a GP and a dentist
- By ensuring all Care Experienced People have a health passport allowing for all health information about them to be held in one place, which they can also access where appropriate
- Through the delivery of appropriate and timely interventions which support the emotional and mental health needs of our Care Experienced People, working in partnership with our commissioned including services and CAMHS
- By ensuring our Local Offer is fit for purpose and includes access to the right services for our Care Experienced People
- Working more closely with our foster carers to help them support our Care Experienced People with skills for independence, to ensure they are fully prepared for the transition to adult living
- By ensuring our Care Experienced People have access to a housing resettlement pack at the time of transitioning into independent living, which is inclusive of the independence tool kit
- By working within the joint housing protocol to ensure support and provision is provided to prevent homelessness
- Through the establishment and promotion of our Care Experienced Forum which provides the space and opportunity for our Care Experienced Young People to feed shape the work we do, and to provide a mechanism for ongoing communication, consultation, and engagement
- The creation of and access to trainer flats to support Care Experienced People in developing and enhancing their skills for independent living

How will we know if we have been successful?

- Achieving regular attendance at our Care Experienced People forum, which will provide the opportunity for ongoing consultation and engagement on the work we are doing and taking into account the views of our Care Experienced People to ensure that we are getting things right
- By ensuring all our Care Experienced People are supported by their Personal Advisors, to engage with DWP, Knowsley Works and within direct work sessions and with relevant organisations such as Centre 63
- All Care Experienced People will have access to health services they require and are able to request timely health and dental appointments
- There will be an increase in the number of Care Experienced People who are accessing mental health and wellbeing services
- Each of our Care Experienced People will have a tailored Pathway plan that is bespoke to their needs and aspirations
- All our Care Experienced People will have access to an independence toolkit in preparation to reaching adulthood
- All our Care Experienced People will have access to suitable accommodation that meets their needs
- All our eligible Cared for Children will have access to trainer flats to support their independence skills as they transition to adulthood

Priority Two

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

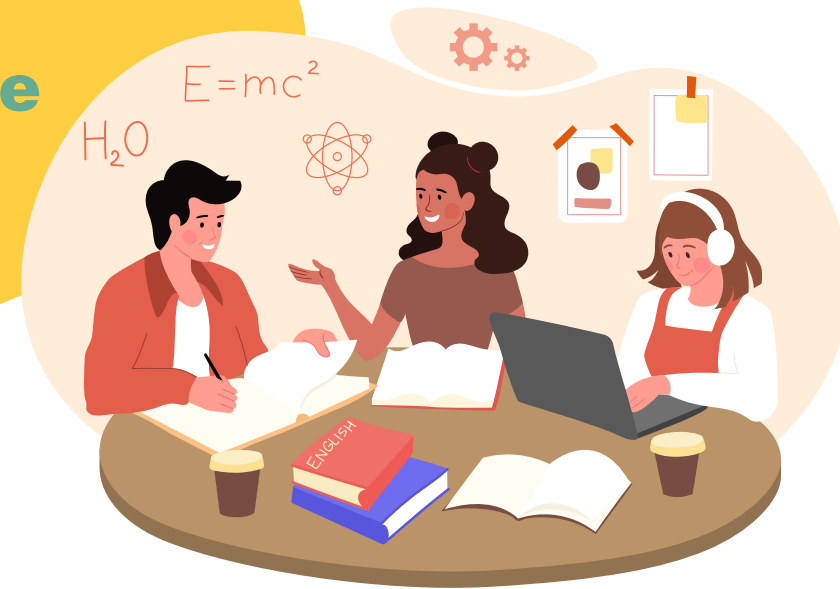
Why is this important?

Care Experienced People often have significantly poorer educational outcomes than the general population on average and Care Experienced People are the most under-represented group in Higher Education.

Working more closely with our Care Experienced People in the facilitation of meaningful careers advice and guidance and assistance in accessing quality education and training is therefore crucial to help them fulfil their education, training and potential future employment aspirations and achieve personal progression.

Key to this is therefore providing Care Experienced People with opportunities to enter the world of work, offering work experience placements, shadowing placements, internships, traineeships, and apprenticeships to improve employment outcomes.

Being successful at delivering positive pathways into adulthood is also a preventative action to help deter our young people away from the possibility of being drawn into crime.



How will we deliver this?

- By ensuring Education, Employment and Training (EET) pathways feature within our Care Experienced People's Pathway plans and that they are robust
- By ensuring that those who have special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) have long term pathway plans in place
- Building and strengthening the close work we do with the Virtual School to allow our Care Experienced People to follow and achieve their aspirations
- Maximising the apprenticeships and traineeships available for our Care Experienced People, ensuring they have the support to access these
- Working in partnership to developing and strengthening our Local Offer, building on relationships with local industry and the Chamber of Commerce to increase the opportunities available to our Care Experienced People
- Working towards increasing the number of opportunities for work experience to allow our Care Experienced Young people to help determine the types of careers they may want to progress into
- Working with those who want to continue onto Higher or Further Education, we will ensure that the right support is offered along with signposting to additional help
- Developing and improving the support to these in custody in partnership with Youth Offending Services and Probation. Maintain regular visits to those in custody, delivering effective pathway plans to allow for opportunities to access education both whilst in custody and upon release

How will we know if we have been successful?

- The number of Care Experienced People who access Education Employment and Training will increase
- Improved post 16 attainment for our Care Experienced People
- A reduction in the number of Care Experienced People in custody
- All our Care Experienced People will have an opportunity to access to our Local Offer
- The number of Care Experienced People who access Higher Education will increase
- An increased range of opportunities will be available in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce
- All our Care Experienced People will have access to support, advice, and guidance with access local business opportunities
- There will be an increased range of opportunities being delivered to support those Care Experienced People who are being released from custody allowing them access Education, Employment and Training

Priority Three

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



Why is this important?

Early connections and relationships have a profound influence on many aspects of our later life experiences. Formative relationships affect our sense of self, ability to regulate emotions, feeling of personal value, sense of security, trust in the world and others, future relationships with services and other people and importantly – our sense of autonomy.

We will therefore work more closely with our Cared for Children who become Care Experienced People to help them understand the importance of forging positive relationships, through the supported maintenance of family bonds where possible, and help empower them with the tools and skills to establish and develop new relationships with those who may be a positive influence in their lives now, or in the future.

There is also a need to ensure our Care Experienced people are and feel safe and this is a part of making those positive connections along with having the knowledge and skills to avoid them becoming victims of exploitation. This also includes those Care Experienced People who are already a part of the justice system, providing them with opportunities wherever possible to move away from criminality and the relationships linking them to it.

How will we deliver this?

- By ensuring that our Personal Advisors are providing the tailored support to those who are Care Experienced from ages 16 to 25
- By ensuring that we promote positive relationships for Care Experienced People when they identify people who are important to them. We will continue to assist with maintenance of those relationships in our Care Experienced People's lives
- Strengthening the delivery of the appropriate support, advice and guidance services to reduce the risk of exploitation of all Care Experienced People
- Developing the pathway plan so that it is inclusive of our practice model and Signs of Safety for our most vulnerable young people and ensure ongoing access to identified support services to promote their emotional wellbeing
- Reducing the risk of social isolation through the promotion of our Local Offer and signposting our Care Experienced People to positive community groups and social activities who can help promote and develop a sense of belonging and staying connected
- Working with our Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers to improve access to information, advice and guidance and additional support to facilitate a supported transition and integration into local communities
- By ensuring our Independent Reviewing Officers when undertaking final reviews identify and signpost our Care Experienced Young People to key agencies and organisations for ongoing support

How will we know if we have been successful?

- We will have maintained contact with all our Care Experienced Persons up to the age of 25 to offer support, advice, and guidance
- Reduced numbers of Care Experienced People entering the criminal justice system
- All our Care Experienced People will have access to better information, advice and guidance to enable them to access local support / community-based groups that promote positive relationships
- Further develop our approaches to consultation through our Care Experienced Forum which provides positive feedback that demonstrates our services are getting it right
- Further develop our approaches to consultation and engagement with our harder to reach groups for example those with special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND), in custody, or are out of area which provides positive feedback that demonstrates our services are getting it right
- Through the independent reviewing of Pathway Plans evidencing that they are bespoke, comprehensive, and supportive of each individual young person
- All our Care Experienced People have access to independent advocacy through commissioned service where appropriate
- All pathway plans will identify key people in their lives to strengthen and maintain lifelong links with family and friends

Priority Four

Young people are central to the decision making for their lives



Why is this important?

Providing access to the right placements and safe accommodation is a way of reducing additional anxieties for our Care Experienced People at what is often already a very difficult and uncertain time in their lives.

We will therefore work more closely with our Care Experienced People to ensure that they are a part of the planning process and discussions about their futures, making sure they feel connected, involved, and heard to ensure that future plans meet their aspirations and wishes wherever possible. This will include efforts to ensure that where possible, placements and services are accessible and within reasonable proximity for the relevant support and connections – be this to family, friends, or community ties.

How will we deliver this?

- By ensuring the right information advice and guidance is provided when working with Personal Advisors on the development of individual Pathway Plans – with a clear focus on life story
- By ensuring the voice of the young person is evidenced in all Pathway Plans and that Care Experienced People have signed their Pathway Plan and are offered a copy of the plan
- By ensuring our Care Experienced People are heard through the building of positive connections with Personal Advisors, allowing for constructive and caring conversations to take place
- Supporting our Care Experienced People to ‘Stay Put’ and facilitating this at the earliest possible stage of children coming into our care by ensuring we get the matching process right, giving our young people stable homes and an increased sense of belonging
- By ensuring our Care Experienced People have access to the right documents and information to allow for the transition into adulthood to occur smoothly and without issue when beginning to live independently
- By providing access for Care Experienced People to their personal records and files along with appropriate support to them if they want to view these files
- Keeping in touch with our Care Experienced People up to the age of 25, granting them the opportunities to live independently with the knowledge that support is available when they need it
- By ensuring there is access to suitable housing at the time of transition either through independent living or through access to sufficient supported living
- Working in partnership with the Probation Service and Housing to ensure safe accommodation and a robust pathway plan following being in custody

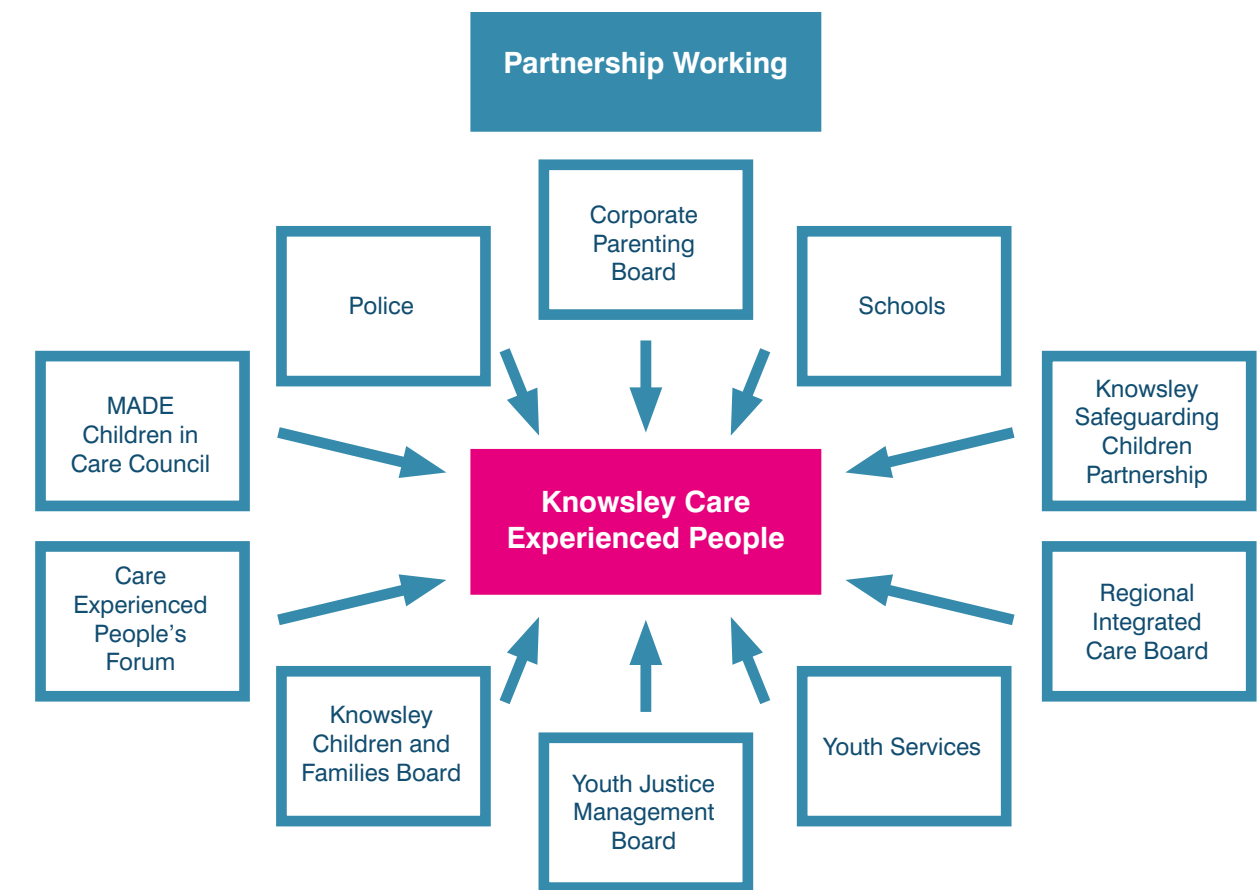
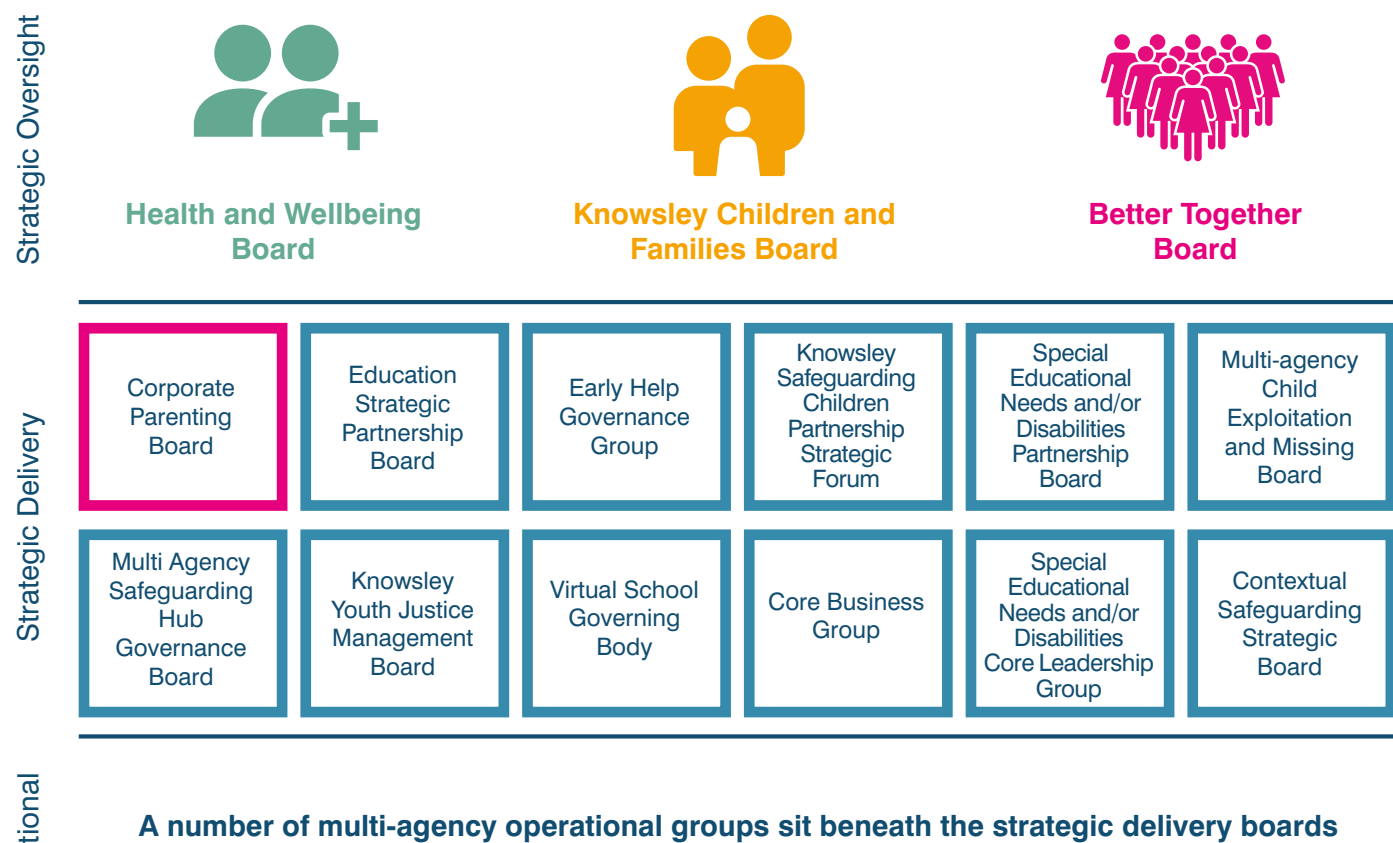
How will we know if we have been successful?

- Continued and maintained regular contact with our Care Experienced People
- Higher numbers of our Cared for Children are ‘Staying Put’
- More Care Experienced People are maintaining tenancies following a successful transition to independent living
- Independent Reviewing Officers will maintain the regular review of pathways plans for all Care Experienced People up to the age of 19
- All Care Experienced People will have an up-to-date aspirational pathway plan where their wishes and feelings are clearly identified
- All pathway plans are sheared with Care Experienced People in a timely manner and are written in a way that is understandable to them
- All pathway plans evidence multi agency views from partner agencies where appropriate
- All Care Experienced People will have access to their records if requested and are supported through this process
- All Care Experienced People will have a voice in where they want to live to ensure they achieve a stable home which promotes their sense of belonging

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 Care Experienced People. 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 Care Experienced People 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 Care Experienced People.



