



Knowsley Council



Knowsley Children's Social Care

Sufficiency Position Statement **2018 - 2021**

Sufficiency Position Statement & Action Plan 2018-2021

Executive Summary

Under the Children Act 1989, Local Authorities are required to take steps to secure sufficient accommodation within the authority's area which meets the needs of Children Looked After (CLA). In Knowsley, the Sufficiency Strategy 2015-17 successfully reduced demand for placements for Children Looked After. Evidence shows that over the last three years (2015/16-2017/18), while overall numbers of Children Looked After have remained stable, that fewer children are coming into and out of care.

However, changes to the external market (primarily in the independent fostering and residential sectors) and increasing numbers of children who present with complex emotional and mental health needs, along with challenging behaviours, continues to place pressure on sufficiency in Knowsley. The current position is that while the turnover of Children Looked After has reduced, there are increased numbers of younger children looked after on full care orders. In terms of future demand, the current age profile of children looked after means that there is likely to be sustained demand coming from these children for placements over the next 10 years, and this could potentially create greater pressure on foster care and residential placements as these children grow older.

Through analysis of changes in placement trends and current data in relation to Children Looked After, emerges 'key lines of enquiry' that the refreshed Sufficiency Action Plan sets out to address. The Action Plan will be refreshed annually throughout the lifetime of the Sufficiency Position Statement.

Key Lines of Enquiry

(1) Market Development – External Residential

- **Cost and availability of residential placements** – in the North West the culmination of trends over recent years creates a perfect storm for rising residential costs; increased demand and plateauing fostering use has led to a 46% increase in residential placements made by North West local authorities, alongside a 23% rise in average cost in the last two-year period (2015-2017). While Knowsley's demand for residential placements has declined over the last three years, the increase in the cost of placements and availability continues to create budget pressures. There is a particular demand related to those children with complex mental health or emotional difficulties, along with challenging behaviours, who require a setting where there is an opportunity to receive individual care in a small provision.
- **Distance and availability in the local area** – increasing numbers of Children Looked After are accommodated further away from Knowsley, and there has been a particular increase in the number of children accommodated more than 30 miles away. While this is often the result of Police or Court advice, it is also indicative of changes in the market, and the demand on external residential placements in the North West. The

impact on children is considerable, as they are taken outside of their communities, schools and away from familiar settings. It can also affect the services that they are able to access locally, including mental health services through CAMHS, the local Youth Offending Service, or lower intervention services and interruptions in educational support.

- **Capacity of the Whole Life Commissioning Team** – the increasing demand on the commissioning function (including rising spend on commissioned placements) and market conditions has stretched resources away from strategic developments, and more towards day-to-day operational activity.

(2) In-House Residential Strategy

- **Decline in use of internal residential placements** - In the past three years, there have been fewer placements days used in the internal residential homes, despite the increase in capacity. However, the profile of children placed in the homes has been particularly challenging. In addition to developing the market, there is an ongoing need to consider Knowsley's own residential strategy, and ensuring that resources are used appropriately to support sufficiency. Additional work should consider what the optimal mix of mainstream and high needs residential homes should be and what capacity is required.
- **Quality of provision** – Ofsted reports show that our own residential provision is at least 'good' in Knowsley. At the end of September 2018, 96% of external placements used by Knowsley were rated 'good' or 'outstanding'.

(3) Fostering Provision

- **Age profile of Children Looked After in Knowsley** – Knowsley has a greater rate of younger Children Looked After in comparison to national rates. In particular, there are far more Children Looked After in Knowsley who are aged 5 to 10 years old, and there is a much lower rate of children who are aged 16 and over. This age profile will have implications for long-term planning for Children Looked After, with the potential for long-term demand coming from this age group as they grow older.
- **Foster Carers** – recent analysis shows that in Knowsley there are 63 foster carers aged over 60. While these foster carers offer experience and much needed support for children, they are also at higher risk of retiring. In 2017/18, while 15 foster carers were recruited, 15 established foster carers de-registered, resulting in no net gain of foster carers. In previous years there has been a net loss of foster carers, in line with national trends that shows an overall 2% decrease of foster carers from 2014. As such, placement choice can often be limited when considering the needs of a child and where they should be placed. While there are clear recruitment plans and strategies in place, the increases in numbers of younger Children Looked After means that there will be continued long-term demand placed on foster carers.

- **Meeting Needs** – Children Looked After are presenting with increasingly complex and challenging needs. There is a gap in the number of foster carers with higher levels of skills; there are currently two in-house carers receiving Level 4 skills payments, and another 46 have Level 3 skills payment. Whether it be internal fostering provision, or within the external fostering market, there needs to be a focus on both upskilling foster carers and recruiting new, skilled carers to more effectively support children within a family environment.

(4) Emotional and Wellbeing Support for Children

- **Children presenting with challenging or complex needs** – this includes Special Education Needs and Disabilities, mental and emotional health needs, and challenges that manifest in relation to child exploitation, in particular criminal exploitation. Much of this is related to children’s experience of neglect in their earlier life, and the severity of needs is often in relation to abuse, emotional difficulties and mental ill health. There are also a number of children who have high needs through Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- **Pressures and gaps in emotional health commissioned services** – there are significant pressures, and unmet needs, in respect of health commissioned services for Children Looked After with emotional and mental health needs. National pressures on CAMHS services are reflected in Knowsley, and while KMBC have invested in Tier 2 services to plug gaps (e.g. a dedicated emotional health & wellbeing service for CLA), there remain gaps around prevention and Tier 2/Tier 3 services in Knowsley. With children in residential placed outside of the Liverpool City Region there can be additional difficulties in getting timely access to support services also.
- **Impact of the gaps in services** - More complex needs often create pressure on carers and placements, resulting in placement breakdown and multiple moves. In comparison to those with multiple placement moves, children in long-term stable placements have much fewer missing from care episodes, school changes and long-term absence from school.

Together these critical issues (the cost of the external market, the suitability of the internal residential placements, the challenges relating to foster carers and the wellbeing of vulnerable children) point to the need to increase local sufficiency of placements, to ensure the capability of each placement to meet the needs of children, however complex their needs, and ensure that there is sufficient skilled support available for children. Improving placements and placement stability should underpin improved outcomes for children – in particular reducing the threat of exploitation and provide the foundation for an improved and stable relationship with education.

Sufficiency Action Plan 2018/19 *(N.B. this will be refreshed annually)*

	<u>ACTION</u>	<u>OUTCOME</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</u>	<u>COMPLETION DATE</u>
THEME 1: Market development in placement sufficiency (Head of Service, Whole Life Commissioning Team)				
1.	Allocated dedicated capacity at both the strategic and operational level from the Whole Life Commissioning Team. Current capacity is stretched across both levels, and needs to be strengthened in order to allow a more robust approach to children's commissioning activity.	Improved market shaping and engagement, alongside scrutiny and review of all commissioned services - to ensure ongoing value for money and impact.	Executive Director, Adult Services	April 2019
2.	Produce and publish a Knowsley children's 'Market Position Statement'	Provide a clear steer to local providers about what Knowsley needs in the future and help to shape the local market to better meet emerging demand. More children placed locally rather than out of borough.	Commissioning Manager	December 2018
3.	Knowsley to lead on the establishment of a 'Placement Portal' for placement teams across the Liverpool City Region to share market intelligence in real time, including details of placement vacancies, cost and quality.	Communicate across LCR more efficiently on the local market and reduce duplication of effort; sharing information on upcoming vacancies, monitoring reviews on the quality of providers, and general analysis on market trends and costs - ultimately leading to more placements being commissioned within LCR boundary.	Commissioning Manager, with LCR commissioning colleagues	September 2018
THEME 2: Growth of in-house fostering provision (Head of Service, Provider Services)				
4.	Expand in-house fostering provision to enable a greater proportion of children to be placed with	Increase the proportion of children looked after placed with in-house carers, thus reducing the overall reliance on externally	Head of Service, Provider Services, Fostering Team	March 2019

	Knowsley foster carers as opposed to commissioning of external independent foster placements.	commissioned independent fostering placements.	Recruitment Officer	
5.	To develop the “Knowsley Fostering Deal.”	Enable the Council to be competitive in the recruitment and retention of foster carers. This will support the net increase in the number of in-house foster carers.	Assistant Executive Director, Children’s Social Care	April 2019
6.	Implement the fostering skills payment policy to attract foster carers to work with older children	Reduce the proportion of independent fostering agency placements and also older children going into residential.	Head of Service, Provider Services	Immediately
THEME 3: Review of internal residential and strategy for meeting demand (Head of Service, Provider Services)				
7.	Undertake a costing and benchmarking exercise to determine whether it is more affordable to commission or create further in-house residential provision	Stabilise / reduce the unit cost for residential placement resulting in overall lower cost pressures.	Financial Management Service	December 2018
8.	Undertake a commissioning review of in-house residential provision (including Edge of Care), to ensure service is configured to meet emerging needs.	Configuring to meet local sufficiency needs, reduce the use of external residential placements, more children placed locally, and enable benchmarking of in-house and external placements with a focus on quality of care and ‘best value’.	Commissioning Team with finance colleagues and Head of Service (Provider Services)	January 2019 (proposals) April 2019 (implementation)
9.	Dependent on result of review & reconfiguration of in-house residential provision, (if sufficiency gaps remain) market testing exercise to explore in detail with providers the potential of developing bespoke solo/dual residential placements within the Borough.	Stabilise / reduce the unit cost for residential placements. Develop a wider provision of residential care locally to meet the different needs of children. Less children placed out of Borough.	Commissioning Team with Procurement	January-March 2019
10.	Continue with quality monitoring visits to commissioned providers to ensure impact and value for money for all placements.	Ensure all external placements are providing value for money and meeting their objectives.	Commissioning Team and quality assurance colleagues	Ongoing (programmed throughout year)

11.	Look at a business case to establish SAILS provision (Supported Accommodation and Independent Living), including the option of training flats for care leavers	Young people supported into independence as part of transition from being in care. Improved tenancy sustainment post-18.	Head of Service, Children Looked After & Commissioning Manager	December 2018
12.	Liverpool City Region to support Nugent Care in their feasibility study to expand secure accommodation placements locally	Better control of costs and quality for secure placements and collaboratively negotiate the price. Less children going into secure units outside the City Region.	LCR Commissioning Managers	January 2019 (dependent on DfE timescales)
Theme 4: Emotional and well-being support for Children Looked After (Head of Service, Children Looked After)				
13.	Review the current offer and re-commission a bespoke therapeutic Children Looked After support provision, with a focus on enhancing placement stability. This will be undertaken in the context of the ongoing THRIVE developments led by the CCG, and align to any future model that emerges.	Support children (and their foster carers) experiencing emotional and mental health difficulties in order to prevent placement breakdown (and prevent higher cost placements).	Head of Service, Children Looked After, Commissioning Team	April 2019
14.	Complete a workforce skills audit of staff working in Children's Social Care, specifically social workers, residential childcare officers and foster carers, to understand and respond to children experiencing emotional and mental health difficulties.	Will identify any gaps in the skills of the workforce to support children experiencing emotional and mental health difficulties. Commission training/development programme that will enable the workforce to be appropriately skilled. Improve placement stability.	Children's Principal Social Worker / Senior Workforce Development Practitioner	February 2019
THEME 5: Supporting children on the 'edge of care' (Head of Service, Provider Services)				
15.	Prevention Fund bid to work with children to prevent them from entering secure accommodation or high cost residential placements. Will also include supporting children to move out of these type of placements.	Reduce the number of children going into secure and high cost placements. Support children in the 'step-down' from secure or high cost placements to move into community-based placements.	Head of Service, Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Unit	January 2019

16.	Extend the MST programme with a focus on supporting children experiencing neglect between the ages 6 – 17 years.	Prevent children entering care as a result of neglect. Where children do need to enter care, decisions will be made at an earlier point in a child's life, increasing the chances of achieving better long-term outcomes.	Head of Service, Children's Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Unit	January 2019
THEME 6: OTHER / MISCELLANEOUS				
16.	Development of a performance scored card in order to monitor / evaluate the effectiveness of the Sufficiency Action Plan.	Will highlight any risk factors regarding non-deliverables as set out in the Action Plan. Will support the Children's Social Care Financial Scrutiny meeting as part of the governance arrangements.	Policy & Performance	December 2018
17.	Knowsley Council and Liverpool City Region colleagues continue to lobby the Government on the cost pressures.	Secure additional funding for Children's Services at the next spending review.	Executive Director Children and Liverpool City Region DCS colleagues with support from Finance	Ongoing

Sufficiency: Evidence Base

1.0 National demographics of children looked after show that:

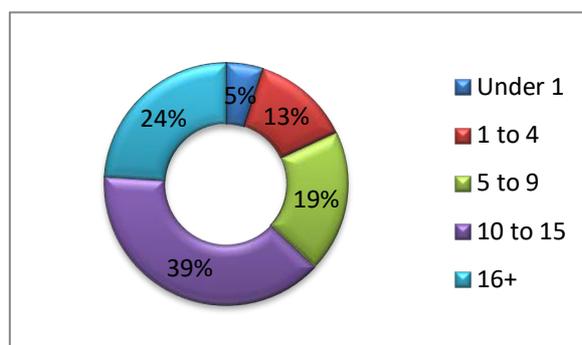
1.1 **Population** - The number of looked after children continue to increase; it has increased steadily over the last nine years. At 31 March 2017 there were 72,670 looked after children, an increase of 3% on 2016. This equates to a rate of 62 children per 10,000.

1.2 **Changes to population** - For the last two years, the changes seen in the characteristics of looked after children, those who become looked after and care leavers, are influenced by the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children cohort who tend to be non-white British, older children, with a main category of need of absent parenting.

1.3 **Gender** - There are slightly more males than females looked after – at 31 March 2017, 56% of looked after children were male and 44% were female. These proportions have been quite stable in recent years.

1.4 **Ethnicity** - Looked after children are predominantly white. 75% of looked after children at 31 March 2017 were white, 9% were of mixed ethnicity, 7% were black or black British, 5% were Asian or Asian British and 3% were other ethnic groups.

1.5 **Ages** - Over recent years, the numbers of looked after children aged under 1 year have decreased; there has been very little change in the number of 1-4 year olds and 5-9 year olds this year; after decreasing slightly in recent years the 1-4 year old group has stabilised around 9,200 children in 2017 and the 5-9 year old group, after increasing in recent years, has stabilised around 14,100.



Source: Department for Education SSDA 903 January 2018

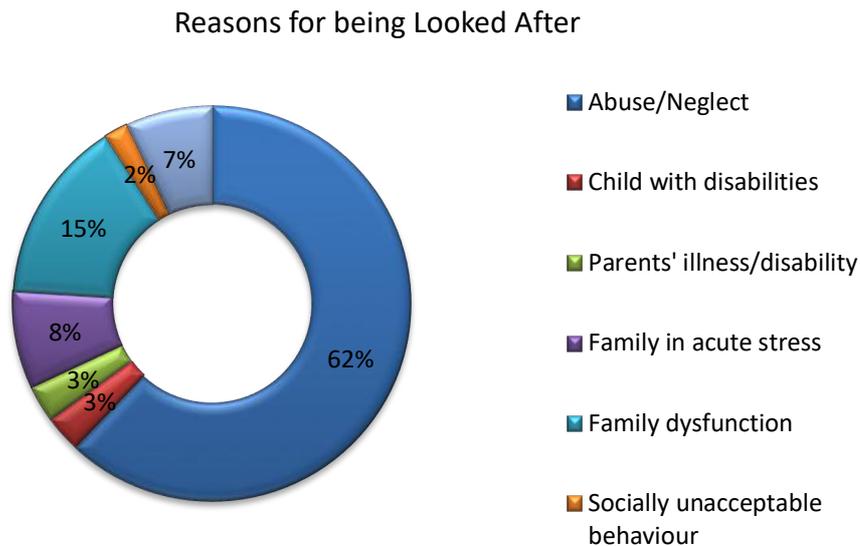
1.6 **Legal Status** - 50,470 children were looked after at 31 March 2017 under a care order, up 10% on 45,750 in 2016 and up from a low of 40,070 in 2014, which represents an increase in numbers over the last three years of 26%. The numbers of children looked after under a voluntary agreement under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 was highest in 2015 at 19,350, but has since fallen to 16,470 in 2017.

1.7 **Number of placements** - 68% of looked after children at 31 March 2017 had only had one placement during the year, 21% had 2 placements, and 10% had 3 or more placements.

1.8 **Placements** - 53,420 children in foster placements, up from 50,560 in 2013. 62% of children fostered were placed within the council boundary and 17% were fostered by

a relative or friend. 380 children (1%) were placed with a carer who is also an approved adopter (fostering for adoption), or where they were subject to concurrent planning.

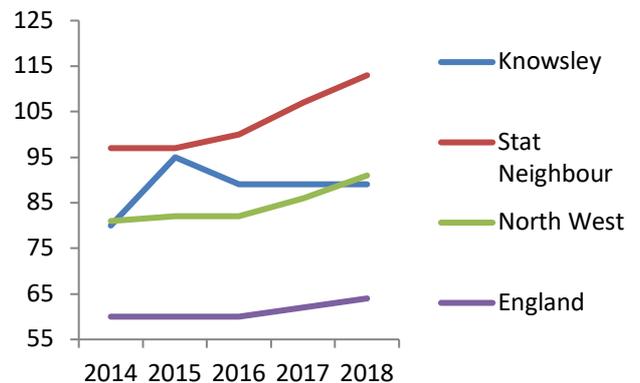
1.9 **Reason for being looked after** - When a child is assessed by children's social care their primary need is recorded. For children who are looked after at 31 March 2017, the proportions of children with each recorded category of need is very similar to previous years. 61% (44,600 children) were looked after due to an initial need of abuse of neglect, 15% (11,150) family dysfunction, 8% (6,030) family in acute stress and 7% (5,100) absent parenting:



Source: Department for Education SSDA 903 January 2018

2.0 Demographics of Children Looked After in Knowsley

2.1 **Population** – Knowsley’s population of Children Looked After has remained stable over the last three years, at c.290 children. This equates to 89.0 per 10,000 children in Knowsley, which is higher than the national rate of 64.0, but significantly lower than the rate of Knowsley’s statistical neighbours of 113 children per 10,000. In addition to our Children Looked After, there are currently more than 60 young people aged over 18 who receive services and support as care leavers.



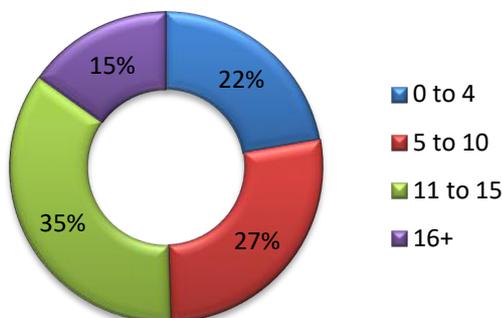
CLA population rate per 10,000 31st March

While the longer-term view on Knowsley’s numbers of Children Looked After is stable, in 2018/19 there have been an increase in numbers, peaking at 300 in November 2018. 66% of new Children Looked After in 2018 had been on Child Protection Plans previously.

2.2 **Gender** – in Knowsley, 47% of Children Looked After are female, and 51% are male. There is also an increased recognition of gender variance, with a small number of Children Looked After who identify as transgender.

2.3 **Ethnicity** – Knowsley’s Children Looked After population has less ethnic diversity than the national demographic. In Knowsley, 94% of Children Looked After are White–British (273 children), and 17 children come from other ethnic backgrounds. While this is in alignment with the population in Knowsley, it is important to be aware of the diversity of Children Looked After when recruiting foster carers.

2.4



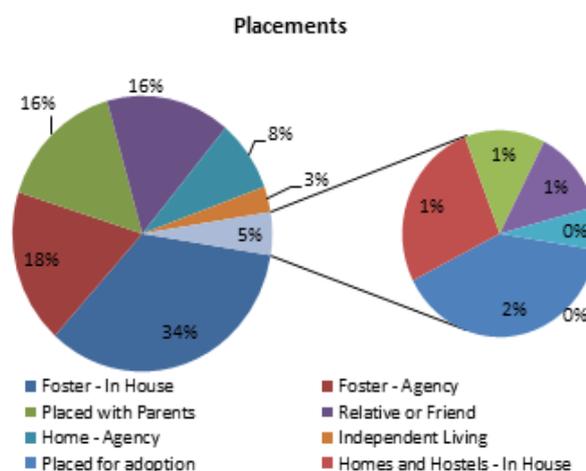
Ages – Knowsley has a greater rate of younger Children Looked After in comparison to national rates. In particular, there are far more Children Looked After in Knowsley who are aged 5 to 10 years old, and there is a much lower rate of children who are aged 16 and over. There has been little variation over the last 3 years, with smaller over-16 cohorts and younger children. This age profile will have implications for long-term planning for Children Looked After, with the potential for long-term demand coming from this age group.

- 2.5 **Legal Status** – 71% of Children Looked After are on full care orders, 7% are accommodated under Section 20, and 19% are subject to interim care orders.
- 2.6 **Sibling Groups** – one of the ongoing challenges for sufficiency in Knowsley has been accommodating large sibling groups together. Analysis of care joiners in 2017/18 shows that of 59 sibling groups, the vast majority was made up of just one child entering care, and 20 children entered care as part of large sibling groups (three or four children within the large sibling group).
- 2.7 **Locations of highest need in the Borough** – Northwood in Kirkby and Stockbridge Village have the highest rate of Children Looked After, with Prescott South and Page Moss also having had high rates of children becoming looked after.

3.0 Placements for Knowsley Children Looked After

3.1 Current use of placements – Autumn 2018

The majority of children are accommodated in foster care placements, with 36% of children looked after by KMBC mainstream foster carers, 16% by friend and family carers and 18% looked after by independent agency foster carers; this equates to 208 children (72%) in foster care. There are also 47 children placed with parents (16% of the looked after population).



There are 25 (9%) children in external residential placements; and four children (1%) in internal residential homes.

Knowsley differs from national placement trends in the higher proportion of children who are placed with parents; at the end of 2017/18, 13% of Knowsley CLA were placed with parents compared to a national figure of 6%.

3.2 3-Year Placement Trends

In this section, the data considered reviews the total number of placements and placement days used within the last three financial years; this information allows for

a more precise understanding of trends in placements rather than considering trends based on end of year position.

Over the last 3 years, the churn of children coming in and out of care has reduced significantly. This has meant that the total number of placements needed for children has fallen by 47, and the total placement days has reduced by 6,961 days from 2015/16 to 2017/18.

In particular, the number of days used in placements provided by external agencies has reduced from 2015/16 to 2017/18:

- Independent fostering agencies – 23 fewer placements, which equates to 1,493 fewer placement days used.
- Independent residential homes – 10 fewer placements, which equates to 2,683 fewer placement days used.
- The number of parent and child placements has increased by one placement, which equates to 263 more days.
- Youth Offending Institutes – five fewer placements, which equates to 308 fewer days used.

The use of internal placements has also changed from 2015/16 to 2017/18:

- While the same number of in-house foster placements has been used, in-house foster care placement days have increased by 873 days, which means that children are spending more time in in-house provision.
- The use of friend and family fostering has increased by nine placements and 2,398 days.
- Despite the increase in capacity, the use of in-house residential placements has declined by three placements and 2,683 days.

The data relating to overall external placements is positive, in relation to managing the total number of days spent in higher cost placements. However, as the costs of independent placements have increased, there is a projected overspend of £1.2m for 2018/19, and three out of the last four years have also had overspend from the independent placement budget.

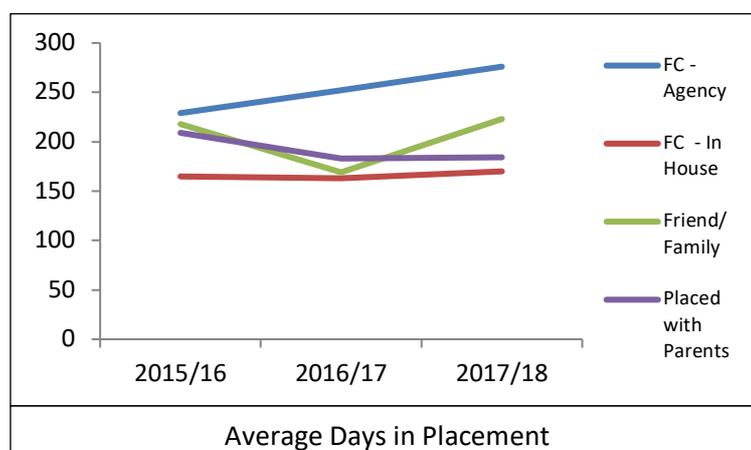
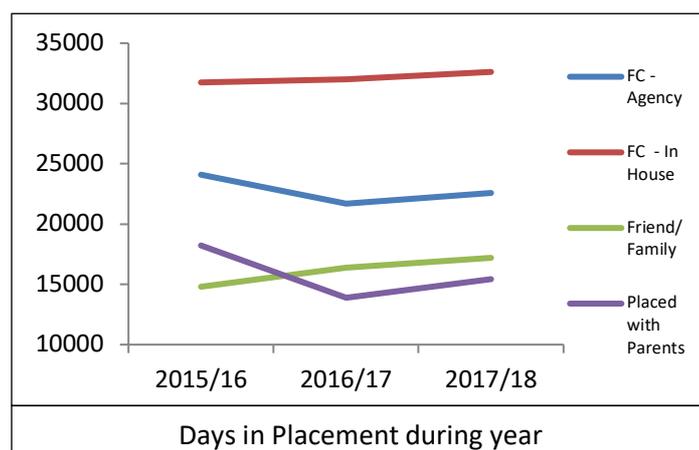
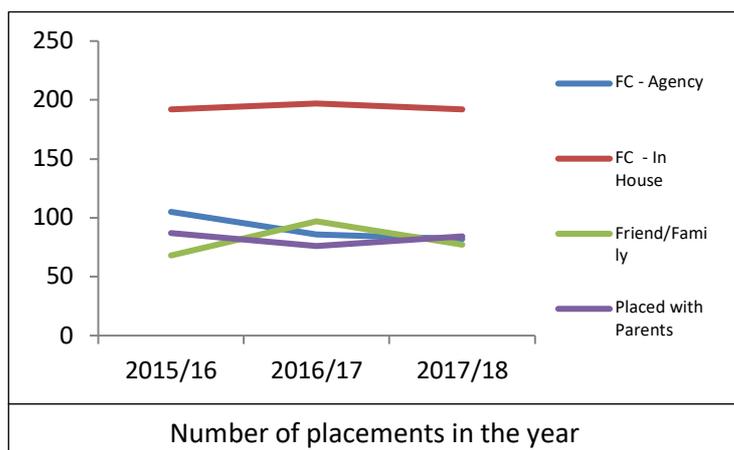
The trend data shows that the use of in-house residential placements has decreased; despite opening additional residential capacity. This suggests that provision available should be reviewed in more detail to understand the patterns around usage and how this can be maximised going forward.

3.3 Fostering – use of placements

The use of foster care has changed slightly over the last 3 years; while there has been a decrease in the number of independent fostering agency (IFA) placements used, there has been an increase in number of days that children have spent in agency foster care. The use of in-house placements has remained stable over the three-year period, with children spending fewer average days in in-house foster care than any other foster care provision. This suggests that agency foster care is meeting longer-term care

needs for a smaller number of children, whereas in-house foster care is meeting emergency and more short-term accommodation needs. The lower average days spent in in-house provision is also indicative of the lack of consistency in making quality matches between children and foster carers.

The below charts show the 3-year trends for the different foster care placements used for children looked after, by the total number of placements, total days spent in placement, and average days in placement by placement type. This shows that Knowsley's in-house provision is the most used and the least stable:



In addition to placement trends, data shows that for those children placed in independent fostering agencies:

- 80% live within 10 miles;
- 92% are under 16; and
- 67% have been in the same placement for at least 2.5 years.

For children looked after by KMBC mainstream and friends and family foster carers:

- 97% live within 20 miles;
- 91% are under 16; and
- 33% have been in the same placement for 2.5 years or more.

The difference in the long-term stability of these placements is significant – in-house placements are less stable than independent foster care placements for children under 16. This is connected to how well children are initially matched to a foster carers, and how well their needs are met.

Overall, children in foster care placements:

- There are an equal split of male and female children looked after in foster care placements;
- The number of disabled children – only 5% of placements in fostering are for children with disabilities;
- The majority of placements are for children in the 10-15 age group.

In the last three years, the main difference in the children looked after in foster care has been a decrease of children in adoption placements, and there are now fewer children who have been in care for 2.5 years or more (41% of children in 2015/16 had been in care for more than 2.5 years, and a third had been in the same placement).

Foster Carer Recruitment and De-Registrations:

- In 2017/18, there were 123 enquiries to become a foster carer with Knowsley MBC, resulting in the approval of nine mainstream foster carers, and 11 Family & Friend foster carers
- This is a conversion rate of 7% of enquiries becoming mainstream foster carers
- Nationally, 11% of enquiries converted to applications – with 18% of initial enquiries in the LA sector, compared to 8% in independent fostering agencies (IFAs), converting to applications. Overall, IFAs attract more initial enquiries each year (and have done for the last 5 years), but convert to approval at a lower rate.¹
- In 2017/18, there were 20 de-registrations of in-house foster carers; 13 of these were Friend and Family foster carers and 7 were mainstream foster carers. More than half of those de-registering did so under Special Guardianship Orders.

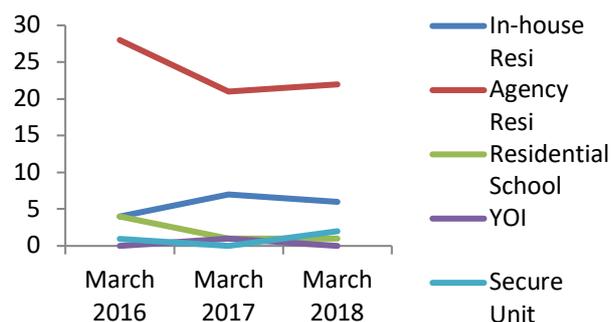
Projections for fostering:

The numbers of younger children looked means that there will be long-term demand for placements to be met through foster care. In addition to gaps in relation to accommodating older children with behavioural challenges, disabled children and large sibling groups, the foster care market also struggles to provide sufficient placements for all children aged 12 and older, which needs to be addressed through diversifying the in-house foster carer cohort. As there has been a national reduction in the numbers of people applying to become foster carers for both local authorities and Independent Fostering Agencies, this will mean that Knowsley will have to buck the national trends and be in a position to recruit more foster carers over the coming years, as well as upskilling existing carers to meet emerging, more challenging needs.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-in-england-1-april-2016-to-31-march-2017/fostering-in-england-2016-to-2017-main-findings#recruitment-and-retention>

3.4 Children in Residential Care

In Autumn 2018, there were 32 children in residential care. Demand for residential care has decreased over the last three years; the majority of demand is met through external residential provision.



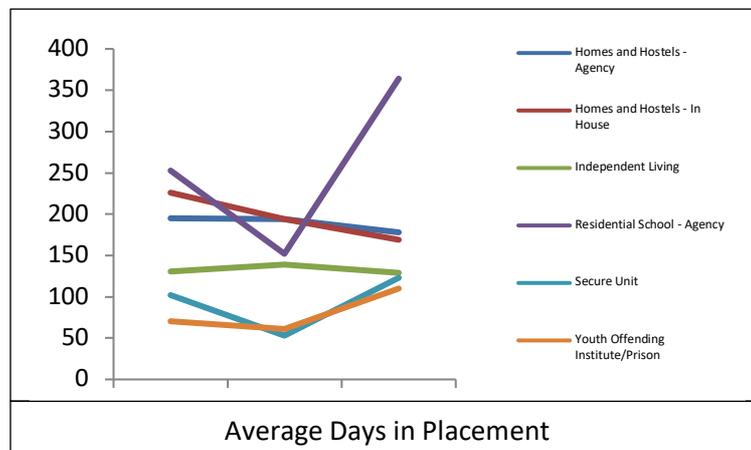
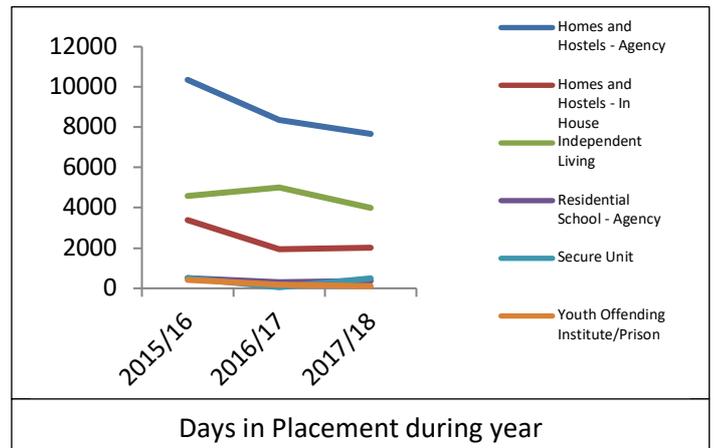
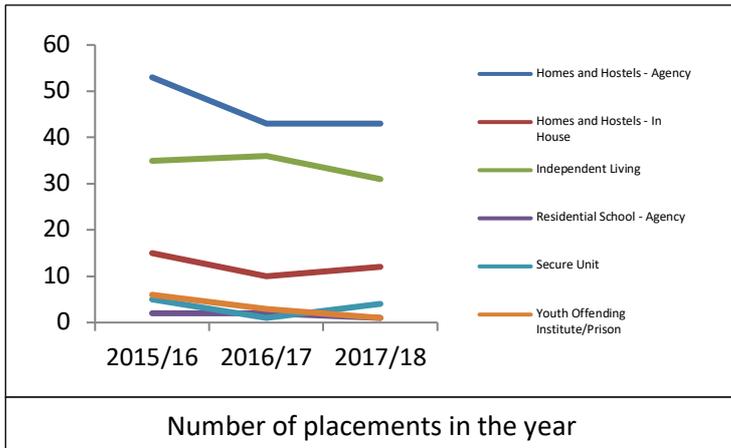
The demographics of children in residential care has changed over the last three years:

- There are fewer children overall;
- More girls now require residential accommodation;
- Fewer children subject to Section 20 orders in residential (which was a specific outcome related to the Edge of Care strategy);
- The number of disabled children in residential placements has decreased – this cohort is mostly male, and have stable placements;
- There are more children in the 10 to 15 years old age band.

While demand has fallen slightly for residential care, more children in residential are now in care under full care orders (as opposed to being subject to voluntary Section 20 orders), and have been in care for longer. There is also a significant difference in where children are placed – in 2015/16 more children were placed locally (in Knowsley, Liverpool and St. Helens) and within the 20 mile boundary. In 2018, 60% of children in residential placements are placed more than 20 miles from their home address.

The below charts show how residential placements have been used in the last three years – instead of showing just the snapshot data, The charts show the total number of placements used, total number of days spent in placements and average days in placements:

- There has been a big decline in use of agency residential, that has been sustained across two years, but that the use of agency residential dwarfs in-house with far more placement days being used, and more days spent in external residential during the year;
- Despite an increase in capacity, few days are spent in in-house residential;
- There has been a slight decline in use of semi-independent placements across the three-year period;
- Average days in placement per placement shows the stability of placements; in 2017/18 residential school is most stable; internal/external placements are virtually the same and independent living are not very stable.



Projections for residential:

Demand for residential placements has reduced slightly over the three-year period, but current and future demand will be focused on complexity, and supporting young people who have behavioural challenges. With the age group 10-15 years old being the largest proportion of Children Looked After, over the next five years, there is potential for increased demand on residential placements as these young people (majority of whom are on full care orders) may require residential accommodation. It will be increasingly important to understand the profile of children requiring residential services, to identify triggers earlier.

3.5 Supported and Independent Living (SAIL)

While at any given time, there are normally 10 Children Looked After aged 16 or 17 in support and independent living, over the past three years (the period 2015/16 to 2017/18), there has typically been 31-36 independent placements used within the year, which is indicative of children moving in-between multiple placements.

Information about children in supported and independent living placements shows that:

- The overall numbers of children and placements are stable at 10. In 2017/18, there were 31 placements, for 24 children, with five having at least two placements; in 2016/17 there were 36 placements for 25 children, and in 2015/16 there were 26 children in 35 placements;
- The majority of those in SAIL placements are male (76%); over the three-year period, 57 were male and 18 were female;
- The proportion of placements used in-borough has increased; in 2015/16, 37% of SAIL placements were in-borough, whereas in 2017/18 in-borough placements accounted for 48% of SAIL placements. Those outside of the borough tend to be in surrounding areas of Liverpool and St Helens, with a very small number outside of the Liverpool City Region.

Projections for SAIL:

There are 73 Children Looked After aged 14 to 16 years old, three of whom are already in semi-independent placements. The current cohort of children who are in semi-independent placements are children who have had multiple placements often in residential homes. There are currently 17 children aged 14-16 years old that are in residential placements, some of whom are accommodated under Section 20, and have had multiple placements. Based on current figures, the numbers of children requiring semi-independent placements is not expected to exceed the current rates. With the amount of movement seen in these placements, it will be the quality of independent placements that requires consideration.

3.6 Secure and Youth Offending Institute Placements

Over a three year period (2015/16 to 2017/18) there have been a total of 10 secure placements used, totalling 1,054 days in this period. While this is a small cohort of children, and slight fluctuations can make a big difference to the figures, the main difference is that the average days spent in secure have gotten marginally longer – from 100 days to 123 days.

In the same three-year period, there have been 10 placements in Youth Offending Institutes, totalling 710 days. With Youth Offending Institutes, numbers in such placements have decreased from 2015/16 to 2017/18; whilst average length of placement has increased from 70 to 110 days.

Nationally, the availability rate of secure children's homes has fallen, while the occupancy rate has remained stable, and there has been an overall increase in the proportion of children accommodated for longer period in 2018.

3.7 Projections for Knowsley CLA Population

Factors which are likely to influence the Children Looked After population within a local authority are:

- Change in size of child population;
- Change in demographics;
- Economic climate (both in terms of pressure on families and impact on public services);
- The number of children subject to child protection plans;
- The number of children and young people seeking asylum;
- Local or national research or reviews related to child care services;
- The Council's involvement in the Signs of Safety as a practice framework.

In the last five years, the numbers of Children Looked After have been within 230 and 315 children at any one time. In the next three years, it is anticipated that this will be a narrower range – between 270 children and 310 children. In the current cohort of Children Looked After, there is a greater proportion of younger children, which might suggest that if children are brought into care earlier, that there may not be the numbers of older children coming into care driving the numbers as happened in 2015. In addition, the improvement of the early help offer in Knowsley could support fewer children requiring care in the longer-term.

3.8 Strengths & Challenges

Knowsley's Children Looked After population has been stable over the past three years. The fluctuations and the churn of children becoming looked after has reduced, while the overall rate of children looked after remains well above national levels. This stability within the numbers of Children Looked After should allow for improved planning in relation to placements, and how well the needs of children are met.

Knowsley has moved on significantly since the last Sufficiency Position Statement in 2014. In addition to the stability in demand, there are fewer older children coming into care on Section 20 orders. Part of the Edge of Care strategy was designed to specifically target this group of children who had driven demand for residential placements in particular, and therefore the strategy has proven to have had a positive impact over the period.

However, despite this greater stability and overall reduced use of external placements, there are increasing financial and sufficiency challenges locally (reflecting the national picture) which – alongside the projections for Knowsley's CLA population and complexity - need to be addressed over the coming years.

4.0 Market Developments in Knowsley

One of Knowsley's commissioning priorities is to ensure that the Borough has sufficient placements available locally to meet the needs of our children and young people. It is often in the best interests of a child to reside inside the Knowsley borough as this will help to ensure stability with education and ability to maintain close links with family and friends. Where Knowsley's in-house provision (residential children's home or foster carer) cannot meet need, our aim is to work closely with external Providers to ensure that sufficiency is met.

There may be occasion where some Knowsley children may not be able to be placed locally due to risk, and where this occurs an appropriate out of borough placement will be sourced to meet specific need.

4.1 Residential Children's Homes

Including KMBC, there are 7 providers of residential children's home within the Knowsley borough. In total there are 17 children's home accounting for 56 beds overall. 13 beds belong to KMBC and 43 beds belong to private providers. In terms of geographical spread across the Borough, they are located as follows:

- 1 x Cronton,
- 6 x Kirkby,
- 4 x Huyton,
- 6 x Whiston/Prescot.

Supply has increased slightly over the past three years, with the opening of new provision from existing providers (KMBC and Lytham Care). However, despite this apparent increase in sufficiency, Knowsley has just one placement (as at November 2018) with a private provider within the borough. This is an anomaly that Knowsley is seeking to address over the coming years.

Home	Provider	Classification	Beds	Postcode
Farnworth House	Continuum	EBD, MH	2	WA8
Logwood	IDEM	LD	3	L35
The Holt	KMBC	EBD	4	L32
Fullerton Grove (Short Breaks)	KMBC	LD	4	L36
Bedford Close	KMBC	EBD	3	L36
Oasis (Edge of Care)	KMBC	EBD	2	L32
Rose House	Lytham Care	EBD, LD	2	L32
Lytham House	Lytham Care	EBD, LD	5	L32
Westfield	Lytham Care	EBD, LD	1	L32
Lily House (<i>opening soon</i>)	Lytham Care	TBC	2	L32
Brook Cottage	New Start	EBD, LD	4	L34
Spencer House	New Start	EBD, MH, LD	4	L35
Fieldview	Progressive Futures	EBD	3	L34
Wayside	QPC	LD	5	L36
Bluebell Cottage	QPC	EBD, LD	4	L35

Derby Cottage	QPC	EBD	3	L34
Lawrence House	QPC	EBD	5	L36
17 Homes	7 Providers		56	

Knowsley is part of the collective North West approach to commissioning residential placements via the regional Flexible Purchasing System (led by Placements North West), which came into place in April 2018 (replacing previous iterations of the regional framework arrangements). This is Knowsley’s primary route-to-market for sourcing external residential placements, with increasing numbers of placements being made via this route (i.e. ‘on framework’) than previously.

However, given the wider market forces (increased demand for residential placements across the North West, with increasing costs), it is clear that Knowsley (in collaboration with the rest of Liverpool City Region) need to work closely with local providers to help shape provision to better meet local needs. At the same time as reviewing KMBC’s in-house residential offer to ensure it is configured to match emerging needs, it is apparent that Knowsley does not need any more larger (e.g. 3+ beds) children’s homes for general needs; but rather there is need for smaller (solo/dual) homes with specialisms for adolescents with complex needs/challenging behaviour (this includes: mental health, child exploitation, learning difficulties, autism – many of which are undiagnosed needs).

4.2 Supported and Independent Living (SAIL)

The provision of SAIL accommodation for 16/17 years old Children Looked After is not a regulated sector (unlike children’s homes, which must be registered with Ofsted). This means it can be difficult to fully track and profile the provision within any Local Authority area, including Knowsley. Moreover, there are three strands to this market:

- 1) Group living units (e.g. multi-occupancy house, with support staff on-site)
- 2) Accommodation with floating support (e.g. a 2-bed house with support staff)
- 3) Floating support only (e.g. staff supporting a young person in their own property)

However, there is a North West framework of providers who have met minimum standards, and the ones with ‘group living’ accommodation in Knowsley are listed below:

Type	Provider	Area	Postcode
Group Living	After Care: The Next Step	Huyton	L36
Group Living	Omega Care Group	Prescot	L34
Group Living	Revolve Therapy	Huyton	L36

For SAIL placements, Knowsley’s primary route-to-market is via the regional ‘Dynamic Purchasing System’, which came into place in 2014, and is currently subject to a review for its future iteration. The existing framework has 79 providers, with 42 operating in the Merseyside/Cheshire area alone; given the relatively low demand for such placements (see 3.5 above), there therefore appears sufficient provision locally, and regionally. However, irrespective of quantity, Knowsley – as part of a Liverpool City

Region approach – are working to put into place clear expectations (i.e. LCR Quality Standards) for local providers to work towards, and are keen to shape this alongside local providers. Ultimately, Knowsley aim to ensure that local providers can deliver a high quality offer and good standard of property for our young people in areas that will meet their need.

Knowsley Council also has in place a formal agreement with Knowsley Housing Trust (KHT) to allow 16/17 year old Children Looked After, who are tenancy-ready, to access 1-bedroom flats (with KMBC acting as the guarantor and licensee, until the young person turns 18 and can inherit the tenancy), with floating support commissioned separately. This is a model that is projected to be rolled out across Liverpool City Region with other Registered Social Landlords, as it has been acknowledged as good practice and facilitating flexibility for care leavers to move across local boundaries whilst remaining close to local links (college, family, etc).

4.3 Fostering

Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) provide an important resource for local authorities in sourcing foster placements both locally and further afield – particularly when in-house foster provision has been exhausted. However, the number of IFA carer households within Knowsley has declined slightly over recent years, which mirrors the regional picture of a shrinking market and challenges in recruiting new carers – for instance, the estimated number of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) households across the North West has fallen 11% in just two years (1933 households in 2018, down from 2172 in 2016).

IFA Households in Knowsley			
<i>(source: Placements North West census data 2016-2018)</i>			
Organisation	2016	2017	2018
Alpha Plus	2	2	2
Barnados	6	4	6
By the Bridge	1	2	3
Cambian (<i>combined with By the Bridge in 2017</i>)	1		
Care Today/Parallel Parents	6	4	3
FCA	7	7	4
Foster Careline		2	2
Fostering Cooperative	1		
Fostering Limited			4
Fostering Matters	1	1	2
Fostering People	4	3	4
Fostering Solutions	12	14	7
NFA	7	6	7
Orange Grove	1	1	1
SWISS	1	1	1
TACT	2	1	1
Three Circles		1	1
Together Trust	1	1	1
Grand Total	53	50	49

Similarly, within Liverpool City Region (LCR), the number of IFA households is estimated to have reduced by 13% over the same two-year period (417 households in 2018, down from 480 in 2016). At a time of rising demand regionally, this is impacting on the ability of IFAs to take new placements. In the LCR region, only 11% IFA households are estimated to be without a placement (in Knowsley, this is estimated to be 8%; the NW average is 15%). This is suggestive there is very limited capacity in the sub-region considering the nature of fostering (i.e. some carers may want a break between children, Staying Put arrangements). As a snapshot of local IFA usage, in November 2018, Knowsley had placements with 6 (of the 49) in-borough IFA households.

A knock on effect of this saturated fostering market is that children who would normally be placed in a fostering placement are having to be found alternative placements, mostly in the residential sector (and so increasing demand in this sector) – for instance, over a recent 6-month period (January-June 2018), Knowsley made 5 placements in the residential sector which were initially intended to be fostering placements. This indicates that supply is not keeping up with demand, and there is a clear need - both locally and regionally - for more foster carers, particularly with specialist skills in working with more challenging behaviour, primary-school age up to adolescents, and having the capacity to take sibling groups.

5.0 Leaving Care and Care Leavers

5.1 Leaving Care and Care Leavers

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 states that a care leaver is someone who has been in the care of the Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks or more spanning their 16th birthday. Care leavers will often be living independently at age 18, whereas national data shows that 50% of all 22 year olds remain living in their family home. Those leaving care may struggle to cope with the transition to adulthood and may experience social exclusion, unemployment, early pregnancy, health problems, end up in custody or homeless.

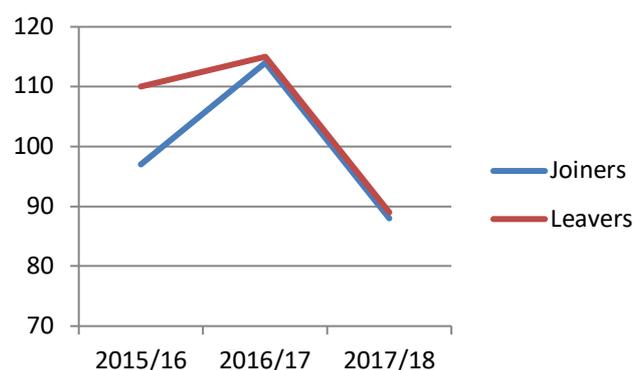
There are no official statistics on some aspects of care leavers' lives, such as whether they have timely access to health services, whether they feel they left care at the right time, or the extent to which they have poor social outcomes such as unemployment, homelessness, mental illness or criminal activity.

5.2 National data on Leaving Care

The number of Children Looked After who ceased to be looked after fell for the first time in 2017 after rising steadily since 2008. There were 31,250 children who ceased to be looked after in 2017, a decrease of 2% on 2016. 8,700 children ceased to be looked after on their 18th birthday, which is 28% of all children ceasing to be looked after. The next largest group is children aged 1 to 4 years – 7,160 children ceased to be looked after which is 23% of all children ceasing to be looked after. The number and proportion of children ceasing to be looked after in the 1 to 4 years age group have fallen from 28% since 2014 – this is likely a reflection on the fall in the number of children who have been adopted.

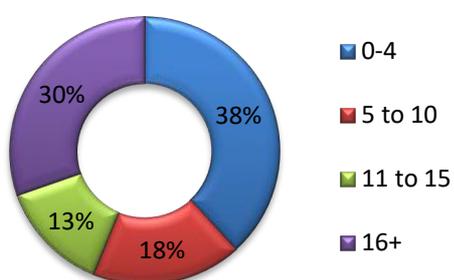
5.3 Leaving Care in Knowsley

Over the last three-year period, the rate of children leaving care has aligned with the overall entry into care, with the greater stability in the cohort showing a reduced number leaving care:



In 2017/18, there has been a noticeable reduction in the numbers of children leaving care after a short period of time (0 to 3 months), with more children leaving care after years rather than months. This can be affected by factors such as fewer children being adopted, and fewer children looked after under Section 20 orders.

Leavers by length of time in Care	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
0-3 months	20	24	11
4-6 months	8	12	16
7-12 months	23	14	11
1-2 years	13	30	14
2-3 years	3	15	20
3 yrs+	43	20	17
TOTAL	110	115	89



In 2017/18, more children aged 0 to 4 left care than other age ranges, with 30% of young people leaving care after the age of 16 years old. The majority of children leaving care left from being placed with parents and from foster care. Those who left care from foster care left from in-house foster carers and friends and family placements, with many fewer children and young people leaving care from agency placements.

5.4 Exit from Care

In the last three years, 30% of children left care to return to their parents or relatives; 19.7% left care under a Special Guardianship Order and a further 12.7% of children were adopted. 12% of children were 18 and over, including those who have transitioned to adult social care. 18.8% of those who care were designated as “care ceased for any other reason”.

There has been positive development on the increasing numbers of children who have left care for Special Guardianship Orders.

5.5 Care Leavers

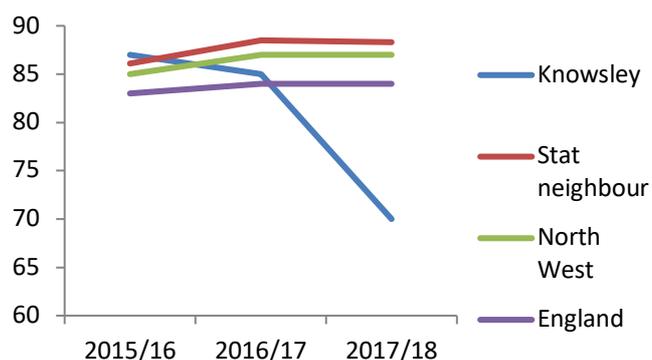
In Knowsley, there are 118 young people open to the Young Person’s Team (including older Children Looked After), and of these 62 are regularly ‘in touch’ with the Young Person’s Team as Care Leavers. The number of young people in touch is expected to increase in the next few years, with the change in legislation to extend care leavers duties to age 25.

		Female	Male	Transgender Female	Total:
Eligible	16	5	12		17
Eligible	17	8	8	2	18
Relevant	17		1		1

Former Relevant	18	11	16		27
Former Relevant	19	8	13		21
Former Relevant	20	12	9		21
Former Relevant	21	5	8		13
Total:		49	67	2	118

5.6 Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation

The Department for Education collects information from local authorities on where care leavers are living on or around their 19th, 20th and 21st birthdays and whether this accommodation is deemed 'suitable'. Over the past two financial years, Knowsley's rate of care leavers in suitable accommodation has fallen significantly, against the overall national and regional trends.

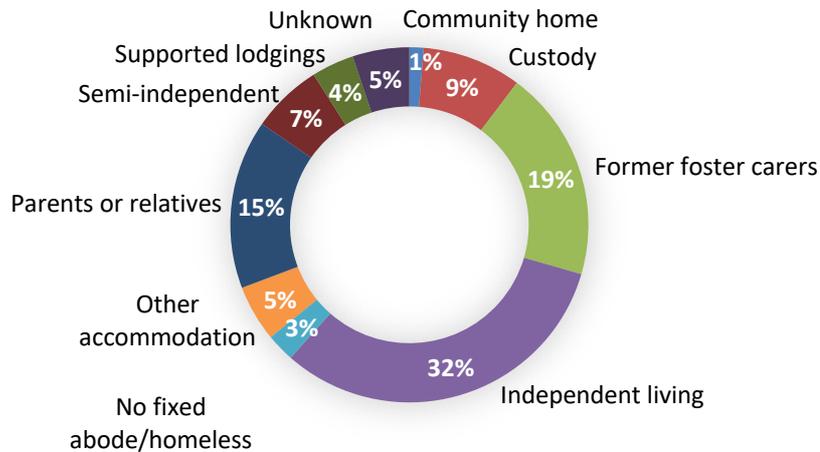


This is due to care leavers being in custody or being homeless, and with the cohort being small – changes make a significant difference. In 2018, 95% of Care Leavers who are in touch are in suitable accommodation.

5.7 Accommodation for Care Leavers

32% of care leavers are in independent living. This is often a challenge in Knowsley to find suitable accommodation for care leavers, as there is a lack of appropriate housing stock in the Borough. One-bedroomed flats that would be suitable for care leavers tend to be in tower blocks in undesirable areas, reducing the amount of choice available.

Accommodation for Care Leavers



5.8 Staying Put

The numbers of Care Leavers who ‘stay put’ with their foster carers has remained consistent between 16 and 19 young people over the past 12-months. 19% of care leavers live with their former foster carers.

5.9 Custody

Nationally, care leavers are over-represented in the criminal justice system. Research by the Ministry of Justice found that 24% of the adult prison population had been in care at some point as a child. In Knowsley, 9% of the care leavers’ cohort are in custody, and this has been a consistent position for the last two years. Children Looked After are often vulnerable to exploitation, and criminal exploitation (in relation to Organised Crime Gangs and County Lines) is a particular vulnerability. Currently, there are 14 Children Looked After who are open to Shield (Knowsley’s services to safeguarding children exposed to exploitation) for criminal exploitation. There will be significant future risks for these children, in terms of both their health and wellbeing and future risks of criminality.

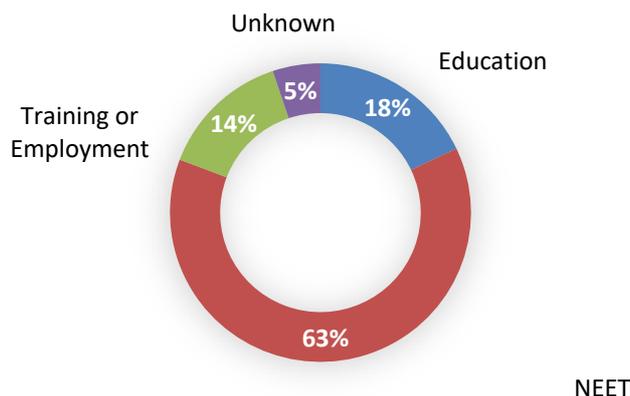
5.10 Education, Employment and Training

63% of care leavers are not in education, employment or training, and a further 5% are unknown. 32% are in education, employment or training. Education results for Knowsley children are often poor and this is also the case for children looked after, which can lead to ongoing challenges in terms of sustaining education, employment or training.



Knowsley is consistently significantly below national, regional and statistical comparators for care leavers in education, employment and training. The challenge for some care leavers is that they have been exposed to intergenerational worklessness and low paid work and overcoming this is an ongoing challenge. Current figures in 2018, show that in addition to the 63% of care leavers who are NEET, a further 5% are “unknown”:

Activity For Care Leavers



6.0 Complex Need

Since the last sufficiency statement, demand for placements has been more stable, but there has been an increase in cases where children presenting with complex needs. This includes Special Education Needs and Disabilities, mental and emotional health needs and challenges in relation to child exploitation.

6.1 Placement Stability

Placement moves and breakdowns can contribute to poor outcomes for children, and are often symptomatic of children’s previous experiences and difficulties. While planned moves may support long-term stability and improved matching between children and foster carers,

The age that a child enters care can affect placement stability, with teenage entrants to care being the least stable group of group of children looked after, as they are likely to have strong attachments to birth families, are more likely to have complex needs and present challenging behaviours. More complex needs often create pressure on carers and placements, resulting in placement breakdown and multiple moves.

6.2 Three or more placement moves

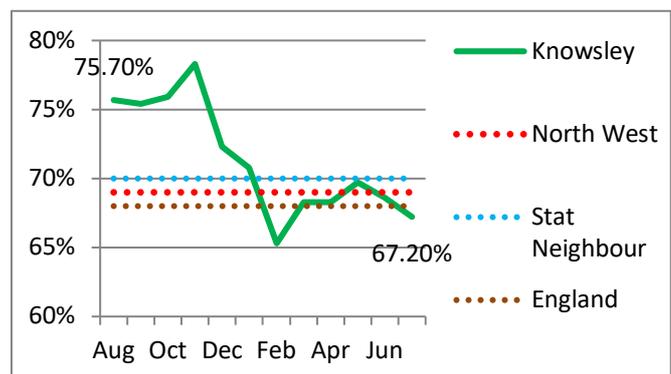
12.9% of children looked after have had 3 or more placement moves in the last 12-months (to July 2018). This figure has deteriorated over the last 6-months. Of those children who have moved three times, 5% are in either adoptive placements or permanent placements. This means that a high proportion of those children could move again.

In 2017/18, 31 (8.3%) children had three or more placement moves during the year, the majority of whom were aged over 14. However, seven children were aged under 5-years old, and they tended to have had either a placement with parents or time spent in a mother and baby unit contributing to their placement moves. Seven children in the older cohort have had four or more placement moves, with their last placements being residential homes, independent living or into a secure unit. Overall, in the older cohort of children three children had a secure unit placement contributing to placement moves and three children started in foster care and their final placement in 2017/18 was in a residential home.

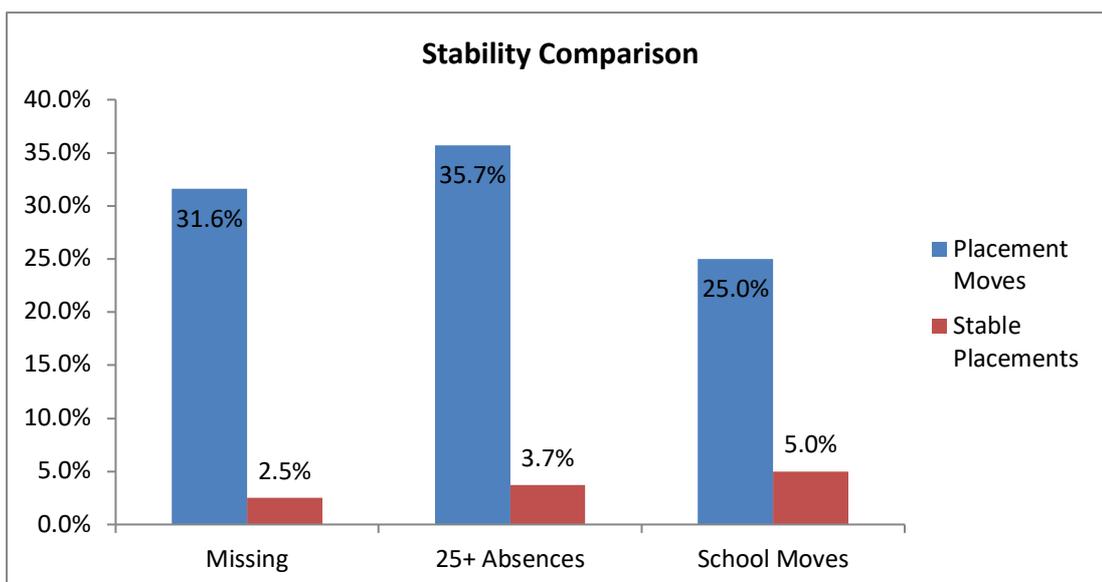
Data relating to younger children with multiple placement moves shows that the movements are probably more related to establishing permanency; multiple placements following a period of time placed with parents suggest that those conditions did not work, and then the children have moved from short term placements to longer term. Mother and baby units are specialist placements and do not offer any permanency. With older children, it is those whose needs and behaviours escalate to requiring specific needs and interventions who have had the most placement moves; they move into and in between residential homes, with some ending up in secure. This shows that there are some children whose needs are not being met in the placements available, and that initial placements are not well-matched for children. This can potentially contribute to further trauma and make settling in future placements more challenging.

6.3 Long-term stability

119 children under 16 have been looked after for two and half years or more. 80 of these children have remained in the same placement for 2 or more years, 67.2% of eligible children looked after. Current performance is below statistical neighbours (70%) and Knowsley's target of 75%.



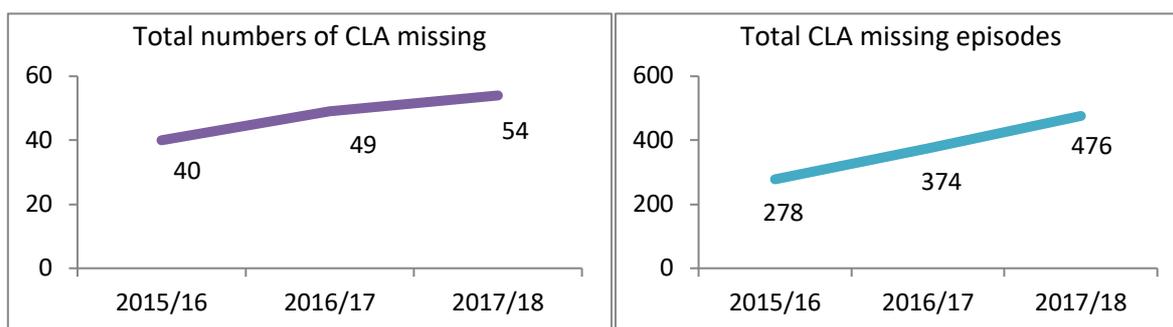
6.4 In comparison to those with multiple placement moves, children in long-term stable placements have much fewer missing from care episodes, school changes and long-term absence from school:



6.5 Missing episodes, higher rates of absence from school and school moves are all linked to increased vulnerability, in particular risk of exposure to both sexual and criminal exploitation. The reduced engagement with education (high rate of absence) also puts these children at risk of becoming NEET in future years.

6.6 Missing from Care

Children who are missing from care are monitored by Shield, and independent return interviews are carried out by Catch-22. Data quality for recording missing episodes (especially for children who have high rates of missing episodes) has been an ongoing challenge in Knowsley, and improved recording could account for increased numbers. However, data shows that over a three-year period the number of Children Looked After who have had missing episodes and the number of missing episodes has increased:



6.7 Although the change in numbers of Children Looked After with missing episodes is not significant, the numbers of missing episodes have increased by 71% since 2015/16. This is further reflected with the current cohort of Children Looked After, where missing episodes have increased.

6.8 In this three-year period, there have been issues with recording and data quality which could account for the increase. In 2017/18, there has been a decrease in the total number of non-CLA children missing from home.

6.9 Children with Disabilities

In 2018, there are 24 children with disabilities that are also looked after; accounting for 8.3% of the total looked after population. In addition, there are 57 children who are on Child Protection and Child in Need plans receiving short breaks. The most common causes of disability in children looked after are learning disabilities and children who have been diagnosed with autism.

Knowsley's rate of children looked after with SEND is in alignment with national levels:

	% CLA – SEN support	% CLA EHCP
National	29.6%	26.7%
Knowsley	27.5%	26.8%

Since 2014, there has been an overall downward trend for Children Looked After with EHC Plans, and an overall increase in Children Looked After receiving SEN support. From 2014 onwards there was an overall increase in the Children Looked After population in Knowsley (stabilising in 2016 onwards), and from the figures show that as the population has increased the numbers on EHC Plans has decreased.

6.10 Strengths & Challenges

Since the last sufficiency statement, demand for placements has been more stable, but there has been an increase in cases where children present with complex needs. This includes Special Education Needs and Disabilities, mental and emotional health needs and challenges in relation to child exploitation, in particular criminal exploitation. Effects are being seen in terms of placement stability, with a decline in the rate over the past 12 months, and this is a clear priority for Knowsley over the coming years to address.

More complex needs often create pressure on carers and placements, resulting in placement breakdown and multiple moves. In comparison to those with multiple placement moves, children in long-term stable placements have much fewer missing from care episodes, school changes and long-term absence from school.

It is acknowledged that there are significant pressures, and unmet needs, in respect of health commissioned services for Children Looked After with emotional and mental health needs. National pressures on CAMHS services are reflected in Knowsley, and while KMBC have invested in Tier 2 services to plug gaps (e.g. a dedicated emotional health & wellbeing service for CLA), there remain gaps around prevention and Tier 2/Tier 3 services in Knowsley. Knowsley will seek to take a joint approach with colleagues across the CCG and Public Health to address this over the coming years, particularly in the context of the children's mental health transformation plan.



Knowsley Council

If you would like to discuss Knowsley's Sufficiency Position Statement in more detail,
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