



Annual Equality and Diversity Report

A reflection on the 2023-24 Year

Published: December 2024

Folkestone
& Hythe



District Council

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Foreword

Thank you for taking the time to read the council's Equality and Diversity Annual Report.

This report has been produced in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty created by the Equality Act 2010. The purpose of this document is to:

- Provide a range of demographic and socio-economic information. This can be used to better understand the needs of our local communities and those that may be affected by council services, policies and practices, and in order to inform decision-making and policy development.
- Demonstrate how the council has engaged with the community, taken actions to enable better understanding of different customer needs and ways to support them, and considered potential equality and diversity implications prior to making decisions.
- Outline the activities the council has undertaken during 2023-24 to promote equality, diversity and inclusion both amongst its workforce (officers and members) and within the community, and the positive measures that have been taken to remove barriers, improve access to services and increase customer satisfaction.

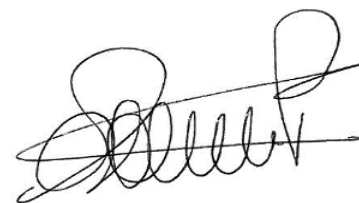
We hope that you find this document useful and informative. Further information, including the council's related Equality and Diversity Policy, can be found at: <https://folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-documents/equality-and-diversity>

Alternatively you can contact us at: policy@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Mike Blakemore
Cabinet Member for Community and
Collaboration



Dr Susan Priest
Chief Executive



Section 1

Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Introduction: The council has undertaken numerous projects throughout 2023/24. This section looks in more detail at some of the engagement activities we conducted over the year to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Our achievements are fully detailed in [2023-24 Annual Performance Report: 'A snapshot of our year'](#).

01 Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Folkestone & Hythe Housing Service

In 2023-24, the Housing Service has gone from strength to strength and continues to work towards our vision of: *An excellent, digitally enabled service that is easy to deal with and where tenants (customers) are at the heart of everything we do.* Key areas of work included:

- We established our Tenant Scrutiny Panel in September 2023. The panel chooses which areas of the housing service it wishes to scrutinise, and makes recommendations for service improvements. For its first review, the panel chose to examine the housing service's approach to complaint handling. During 2023/24 the panel also commenced its second review, looking at the housing team's anti-social behaviour (ASB) procedures, to tie in with the creation of a standalone Housing ASB Policy.
- Our Independent Living Forum continues to meet quarterly, where tenant representatives of the Independent Living (sheltered housing) service meet to discuss issues relevant to them.
- A refresh of our Tenant Engagement Strategy, to ensure alignment with the Regulator of Social Housing's updated consumer standards, and to ensure our tenant engagement work develops and increases.
- Our 2023/24 tenant satisfaction survey was sent to all tenants between May and August 2023. We received 683 responses (equating to a response rate of 20%) and the results showed 71% overall satisfaction with the housing service, which is a 3% increase from the 2022/23 survey.
- Our regular tenant newsletters and bulletins were sent to all tenants: a "Your Voice, Our Action" tenant bulletin was sent in May 2023, with tenant newsletters sent in July 2023 and April 2024.
- A manager from the Housing Team is a standing member of the F&HDC District Vulnerability Panel, ensuring that any concerns about vulnerable or potentially vulnerable tenants can be promptly raised in a multi-disciplinary setting.
- The engagement and involvement of council tenants from all backgrounds is encouraged and enabled by the provision of multiple contact methods including online, by telephone and in person via home visit.
- Staff have access to professional translation and interpretation services.

We have continued to work on delivering homes that meet the needs of our changing population and during the 2022/23 year we have:

- Delivered a total of 74 new affordable homes with partners for rent and shared ownership continuing to boost the supply of much needed homes in the district.

- 369 hospital admissions prevented or hospital discharges accelerated as a result of Private Sector Housing Team and partner intervention.
- Brought 43 long term empty homes within the district back into use.
- Improved 387 private sector homes for local people as a result of enforcement action and the provision of the Disabled Facilities Grant, Winter Warmth and Home Safe loans.
- Awarded a total of 90 disabled facilities grants to support those with disabilities adapt their own homes

We have invested over £404,940 on disabled adaptations works to our HRA housing stock during the year (2023-24) with the following improvement works undertaken:

Major Works		Minor Works	
Job Type	Number of Jobs	Job Type	Number of Jobs
Closamat WC	1	Grab Rails	92
Groundwork (ramps, paths, patios, fencing, dropped kerbs & driveways)	24	Mop stick Rails & Drop-Down Rails	43
Kitchens	3	Over bath Showers	7
FFS/Bathroom Refurbs	34	Plumbing & Bathroom Alterations	33
Stairlifts	12	Door Widening & New Doors (Internal & External)	4
Convert Dining Room to Bedroom	1	Kitchen Alterations	8
		Electrics	5
		Galvanised Rails	26
		Upvc Doors & Windows	12
		Carpentry	4
		Sound Proofing	1
		Radiator Alterations	2

01 Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

The Council has continued to implement its Homelessness Prevention Strategy, working closely with our local partners, including the Rainbow Centre and Porchlight, to deliver a range of services to prevent vulnerable people from becoming rough sleepers and, where people are already rough sleepers, provide services to support them to access accommodation and help move to a more settled way of life. The services include:

- The provision of outreach services to identify and verify people rough sleeping in the district.
- The provision of emergency accommodation to help people move away from the street.
- Sign-posting to mental health and other support services.
- Support to assist people to access long-term accommodation both within the social and private housing sectors.
- Support services to prevent tenancy breakdown and a potential return to the streets.
- The provision of accommodation services for the most entrenched rough sleepers, including intensive housing support.
- Joint working with other services, in particular the Rainbow Centre and Porchlight, in scoping the development of all year-round accommodation for rough sleepers, pending their move on into secure housing, with the provision of emergency pods for immediate access.

The council provides funding to the Rainbow Centre in Sandgate Road, Folkestone, to enable them to provide a range of support services to vulnerable people with a history of rough sleeping or who are living in insecure accommodation. People assisted through the service during the year are then being helped into longer term accommodation.

The council also supports the Rainbow Centre to deliver the Winter Shelter project, providing emergency accommodation to vulnerable homeless people during the winter months. A total of 26 people were supported through the project over the winter 2023/24. The project also continues to support clients once they move on into longer term accommodation.

Folkestone- A Brighter Future

Following the council being successfully awarded £19.8 million from the government's Levelling Up Fund for the Folkestone – A 'Brighter Future' project to transform Folkestone town centre. A total of three public engagement events have taken place during the year focusing on designated sections of town centre.

The public consultation for the project's phases sought to effectively engage the community like never before. The design of Folkestone's digital twin allowed the public to see the proposed changes to the town digitally and for the first time in virtual reality. This approach increased public engagement ten-fold and encouraged better-informed feedback, improving project outcomes for all those impacted by the changes. Over 1,000 people attended the three engagement events during the year of which 235 of those were children from local schools.

The Folkestone Community Forum

In October 2023, the Folkestone Community Forum (FCF) was established by Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC) cabinet members to create a forum for members, officers and representatives of stakeholder groups to have meaningful engagement in an effective and efficient way. The purpose of the FCF is to provide a forum for:

- Two-way communication and engagement between the Council and stakeholder groups in the Folkestone Town Council area
- Stakeholders to increase awareness of their respective roles and ambitions
- Output from meetings to inform members of the FCF on key town centre issues, help shape proposals and inform decisions
- To flag local issues, build relationships, increase community confidence and disseminate information to the wider community

The aim of the group is to ensure that the community are fully engaged in the development of Folkestone Town Centre and the outcome reflects the community's aspirations.

Engagement with the wider community

The council continued to support the District Food Network (DFN). The Network is chaired by an independent member of the community working with the Rainbow centre. The group meets once every two months and has supported delivery of the Community Fridge, the Hythe Pantry and other food-related projects, including supporting the delivery of UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) work.

Work began during 23/24 with local schools to design a DFN logo for the Network to use in its communications.

01 Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Engagement with the wider community (Continued)

During 2023/24 Extensive work was carried out with partners to realise the UKSPF funded mobile food and pantry service (in conjunction with other funding). The work included:

- Further locations added
- Promotional work
- Money Advisor attached to the service
- Community garden work linked to the Harbour Church location
- Showcased at the Kent Food Summit at the University of Kent on 6th Oct 23 as the first of its kind nationally
- Volunteers supported to run the service
- Early designs on cooking demos

Usage data for the mobile food service was developed and below are some figures:

Date	Mobile Pantry	Mobile Foodbank	Total
Jan 2024	113	67	180
Feb 2024	116	50	166
Mar 2024	150	57	207

The Council also supports voluntary sector organisations through a series of networking events (through a grant as listed below). In 2023/24 the following was delivered:

Date	Event	Theme	Location	Attendees
13/09/23	Meet the Funders	N/A	Three Hills	65
01/11/23	Networking Event	Working Together	Quarterhouse	37
08/02/24	Networking Event	Organisational Sustainability	Hythe Cricket and Squash Club	35

These events provide essential information to the voluntary sector and also enable more projects to be delivered in the district as well as more funding to come into the area.

In addition to the above the below gives a summary of other support and funding the Council provides.

Annual Grant Funding

The council has continued to support charities, the voluntary and community sector through grants.

Over £87,000 in member ward grants have benefitted local charities and community groups, further enhancing the council's involvement with local communities, and assisted with the delivery of efficient and effective projects and services to ward areas. 97 organisations benefitted from these grants including Age Uk, Custom Folkestone CIC, Romney Marsh Community Hub, and Touchbase Care CIC.

The council also continued to work in partnership with KCC on the Crowd Fund Kent scheme, where ongoing funds were made available to support local projects that join the scheme.

In the winter of 2023/24, continued to support warm spaces in the district. This funding enabled community spaces across the District to give the community much needed support through the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, felt particularly acutely through the winter months.

In 2023-24 annual grant funding was renewed by the council for the following community organisations.

- **The Sports Trust:** To provide accessible sports and play-based facilities and activities within the district, focusing on reducing health inequalities and engaging children and young people to encourage healthy lifestyles as well as reduced anti-social behaviour. The Sports Trust continues to provide a large variety of sporting experiences across various sites including the Urban Skate Park, F51 and sea sports initiatives.
- **Folkestone Sports Centre Trust:** During 2023/24 this grant continued to provide accessible sports and wellbeing facilities and activities for all age groups within the district.
- **Active Sport Kent:** To improve access to sports clubs and coaching activities across the district. The partnership ran conferences and webinars and provided support and guidance to sports clubs and leisure providers on how to access funding.

01 Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Annual Grant Funding (Continued)

- **Academy FM:** To support a community radio station which promotes the district, works with young people, aids community interaction and raises awareness of local issues and activities. The station continued to promote local initiatives. This funding ceased in December 2023.
- **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB):** To deliver debt, legal, housing and consumer advice on the council's behalf and working closely with council teams. The CAB was extremely busy addressing problems of hardship and dealing with residents adversely affected by the cost-of-living crisis.
- **Sarah Thomas Consulting (formerly Red Zebra):** To support the running of volunteer networking sessions across the district to increase volunteering, support the voluntary and community sector as well as improve health and wellbeing. To run a meet the Funders event to enable voluntary sector organisations for more effective bid writing and bring more funding into the district.
- **Folkestone Quarterhouse:** To deliver a programme of visual, performance and musical arts, educational and performance activities to families, schools and hard to reach groups in the district. Although the Quarter House was closed due to the pandemic, Creative Folkestone were able to deliver online services including projects with schools and other organisations. The range of online projects increased and other events took place in the community as services returned back to normal.
- **Kent Coast Volunteering (KCV):** During 2023/24 a grant was given to KCV to begin planning the first volunteering Awards scheme for the District to celebrate the contribution that volunteers made to the area. The planning began in 23/24 for delivery in 24/25 (June 24).

The council continues to support the Crowdfund Kent scheme that was launched by Kent County Council to contribute match funding to local projects that participate via the Spacehive Crowdfunding platform. Some of the funded projects the council contributed to in 2023/24 include:

- From Care to Where, a project to support care experienced young people access outdoor activities
- Super Befrienders, a project running a befriending service to reach some of the most isolated people in the district
- Confidance, a project for learning disabled adults to learn to dance and be active.

Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership (F&H CSP)

During 2023/24 the statutory F&H CSP continued to meet and progress key activity including the administration of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) funding to deliver projects to vulnerable and diverse communities across the district.

In October 2023 the Community Safety Partnership, Kent Police and Kent Police and Crime Commissioner were successful in their bid to the Home Office' Safer Streets Fund. This means they were given total of £271,351.60 to continue work to make Folkestone town centre even safer.

The funding has been used by our Community Safety Partnership to invest in transformative crime prevention initiatives that focus on reducing levels of neighbourhood crime, anti-social behaviour and violence against women and girls.

In Folkestone the funding focused on five key areas:

- CCTV
- Education programmes
- Safer Parks
- Public guardianship
- Anti-social behavior and crime prevention

This meant the launch of new initiatives as well as building on the work the CSP already do. Projects included:

- Upgrading the Folkestone Town Council CCTV network,
- Upgrade and re-connect 5 deployable CCTV cameras.
- Upgrade the Folkestone Area Partnership Against Crime (FAPAC) radio network and provide tools to advertise / increase membership
- Active Bystander Training, VAWG Training and Contextual Safeguarding Training
- Youth Outreach to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour
- Map and Signpost Safe Routes
- Graffiti and litter removal
- Develop Safe Taxi Scheme and safety improvements to the taxi ranks
- Establish new Neighbourhood Watch area and promote messaging systems such as Our Watch

01 Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership (F&H CSP) (Cont)

- Ask Angela Safe Spaces – We have worked with Bouverie Place to Develop a safe place for members of the public. This started from a conversation with Bouverie Place to provide safeguarding awareness and support due to it being a risk location for suicides. Shops have joined the scheme and we have created a safe space for people to access for any reason they may need.
- Year 9 School Roadshows in September 2023 to all secondary schools. Engaging with over 900 young people, providing awareness and support from PREVENT, Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), Kent Police, DA awareness, with music and entertainment.
- Local Engagement Meetings, starting in April 2023, to engage with Members of the Public. These are held Quarterly across the District where anti-social behaviour trends are discussed and what is being done to resolve the concerns.
- Collaborative working with Kent Police's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to support the police with the provision of knife wands (to detect people who may be carrying concealed weapons) for premises such as pubs. In addition to support, education awareness we also regularly monitor and empty the Knife Bins in District.
- PREVENT Safety Bus - Engaging with young people providing online safety awareness and guidance. at Folkestone academy in March 2024

Engagement with local Armed Forces Community

The Folkestone & Hythe District has a long tradition of cooperation between its civilian community and the local armed forces. In 2023/24, engagement activities continued to support the local armed forces community which includes those serving, in the regular or reserves, veterans and their families.

The council continues to support the Gurkha veteran community in Cheriton at their community centre on the ground floor of the library building. The centre is run by the Folkestone Nepalese Community (FNC), a charitable incorporated organisation and includes welfare support office, a meeting room, event and socialising spaces, and an IT room.

The council's Armed Forces Lead Officer (AFLO) has left the organisation but essential work is split across a number of service areas. Members of the welfare team support drop ins at community spaces for veterans and the manager of the FNC is sent information regularly to help support the Nepalese Community including health advice.

Napier Barracks

The Use of Napier Barracks continues, and partner agencies worked with the managing agents to deal with issues such as littering and Anti-Social Behaviour. The site is largely settled, and ongoing education continues. NGO groups provide a range of activities on site. The allotment on site has grown and residents have continued to carry out volunteering in the community through the year including, gleaning, supporting community gardens and cooking at Church venues etc. Asylum hotels in the district were gradually decommissioned through 23/24.

Community Hubs

The three community hubs based at: Folkestone: being run by Age UK South Kent Coast; Hythe: being run by Age UK Hythe & Lyminge; and Romney Marsh: run by the Romney Marsh Community Hub have continued to provide support to people within the district in a variety of ways, including:

- Hosting partner agencies and events; for example, digital inclusion events, drop-in sessions by Council welfare officers to assist vulnerable people fill in Household Support Fund forms, Dementia Cafes, etc.
- Assisting in the development activities as part of the District Food Network and supporting the delivery of UKSPF projects including distribution of items such as slow cookers from the Home Essentials element of the work (managed by the welfare team).
- Helping with work to support Ukrainian refugees, including continuing with hosting drop-in sessions, and distributing mobile phones and sim cards for the council.
- Providing food and fuel vouchers and other support to vulnerable people through their own funding streams as well as supporting Council initiatives.
- Signposting clients to support with cost-of-living issues and other support (e.g. sign posting to mental health support as well as continuing to build networks to expand focus). The hubs provided emergency support over Christmas 2023 and ran a toy appeal.
- The hubs have been integral to running the warm spaces initiatives.

Section 2

Understanding our Customers

Introduction

In this section we look at the council itself, how we are filling our statutory duties and how we are targeting our services to the particular needs of our residents.

02 Understanding our Customers

Equality Impact Assessments

Under the Equality Act 2010 there is no longer a requirement to produce Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs). However, the council believes it is good practice to have an EIA framework in place in order to fully consider any potential equality implications prior to making decisions. As such, the council is committed to ensuring that EIAs are completed when the council introduces or significantly revises a policy or service and that they are carried out in the correct manner, including, for example, appropriate consultation with affected parties.

EIAs are most often conducted when a new or significantly revised policy or service is set to be considered by elected Members, normally at Cabinet Committee stage. Further information, including copies of reports and associated EIAs, can be found at: <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/moderngov/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>

During 2023/24 council completed the following EIAs:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Implementing a charge for the Proof of Life Verifications Service
- Planning Enforcement Protocol 2024

In addition, all reports that are submitted to council Committees or the Corporate Leadership Team require comments on equality implications from the officer leading on equality and diversity. This further ensures that potential implications are considered prior to making decisions.

Understanding Our Customers through Consultation

Consultation provides an important means of understanding the needs of service users and local residents. It also allows the council to assess what impact decisions will have on different groups.

The following public consultations were undertaken during 2023/24:

- Folkestone: A Brighter Future public engagement
- Folkestone and Hythe Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
- Sale of Windmills (Kent County Council)
- Change to Committee System of Governance
- 2024/25 Budget Strategy
- Changes to family and youth services (Kent County Council)
- District-wide Carbon Plan
- Review of Polling Places and Stations

Improving our Customer Experience

Supporting Customers

We have various mechanisms to support customers to access services and information, including the customer access point, telephone appointments, web chat, online forms, translation and British Sign language service on request and a visiting officer service for council tax and benefits.

Our Web Chat service continues to be a popular way to contact us and in 2023-24, 91.14% of customers who rated the service stated they were happy with the service they received.

Feedback for the webchat service is continually monitored and reflects how useful many of our customers find this service.

Some examples of feedback, include:

- *"Always helpful, I hope you get extra holiday from your manager"*
- *"Extremely helpful and the response to my enquiry was quick and efficient"*
- *"Very good. Very fast and efficient"*
- *" Quick with straightforward answers"*
- *"10/10 very helpful and understanding!"*
- *"Very prompt efficient service. 10 out of 10"*
- *"Great customer service. Helped with the issue straight away"*

My Account and Website Accessibility:

We have continued to develop our online services to try and make 'digital' the interaction of choice by our customers by making it quicker and easier. This in turn saves processing time for some back-office staff as their systems are automatically updated avoiding the need to rekey information. MyAccount is regularly promoted on social media channels and is continually improved to incorporate additional online transactions and the take up has remained steady, in addition a lot of work has been undertaken for internal customers to enable them complete online forms as opposed to sending emails to be processed.

02 Understanding our Customers

Improving our Customer Experience (continued)

My Account and Website Accessibility (continued)

As at 31/03/24 there were 321 forms available to our customers and at the end of March 2024 74.54% of households had signed up for MyAccount.

The website platform has been replaced and we now use the JADU platform which brought with it improved functionality. One of the key benefits was an improved search capability which makes it easier for the customers to find the information they require avoiding the need to contact the council. The site is constantly reviewed to ensure it meets the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). A project was initiated, working the service areas, to review their pages for clarity and to ensure that the information on our website was relevant and up to date.

Welfare Team:

During 2023/24 the Council has been administering different Government funding streams to maximize and target support to the most vulnerable qualifying residents. The Council received 435 applications for Discretionary Housing Payments and made 275 awards during the year to a value of £220,135. On top of this the team also received 697 applications for Financial Support Payments (for Council Tax) and made 395 awards, supporting residents with £177,862 in awards.

Government have also allocated additional funding to Councils to support vulnerable households under a scheme called the Household Support Fund (HSF). This funding is for the purpose of supporting households who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs. Eligible spend included food, energy and water payment support. It also included essentials linked to energy and water.

During earlier rounds of HSF, the Council has received initial funding allocations and has worked closely with KCC to receive additional funds to support residents and operate additional schemes. The following tables demonstrate the support offered up to March 2024 for each round of HSF. It should be noted that during HSF2 the scheme had a larger fund but different criteria under national guidance which included £364,150 to support pensioners with energy bills (or equivalent).

Funding for Household Support Fund overview up to March 2024:

Round	Initial Funding	Additional Funding	Total Spend
HSF1 (Jan 22 to Mar 22)	£171,359	£50,000 £52,880 (admin)	£274,239
HSF 2 (Aug 22 to Sep 22)	£459,669	£45,600	£505,269
HSF 3 (Dec 22 to Mar 23)	£207,246	£43,000	£250,246
HSF 4 (Apr 23 to Mar 24)	£414,492	£20,700 £30,000 (boilers) £25,000 (carpets)	£490,192

Round 4 of HSF covered the period April 2023 to March 2024. For this round the Council received initial funding of £414,492. There was a priority for allocation on food support throughout the year and warm clothing and bedding during the winter months. This was offered via supermarket vouchers for the most convenient supermarket for the resident.

The Council also received an additional £20,700 in funding. This was used to support additional households struggling with food in March 2024.

The table below shows a breakdown of the volumes and spend during this period:

HSF 4 (April 2023 to March 2024)		
Awards split by household composition	Volumes	Spend
Households with children	1,964	£200,295
Households with pensioners	515	£44,315
Households with a Disabled person	839	£72,040
Other households	1,312	£118,542
Total	4,630	£435,192

Awards split by category	Volumes	Spend
Energy & Water	11	£1,250
Food	3,176	£330,550
Essentials linked to food and water	0	£0
Wider essentials	1,442	£102,020
Housing costs	1	£1,372

The Council was also offered additional funding to operate a boiler scheme. This was successfully operated alongside the Council's Home Essentials Fund to offer further boiler support. The Council fully utilised the £30,000 to fund replacement boilers for 11 households.

02 Understanding our Customers

Improving our Customer Experience (continued)

Welfare Team (continued):

The Council also received additional funding to operate a warm essentials fund on behalf of KCC to supply new carpets for households in the district. The additional funding of £25,000 was used to support 19 homes. A full breakdown of this additional funding is listed below:

HSF 4 additional streams				
Awards split by household composition	Boiler Volumes	Boiler Spend	Carpet Volumes	Carpet Spend
Households with children	2	£8,350	11	£14,092
Households with pensioners	3	£9,585	0	£0
Households with a Disabled person	6	£12,065	6	£8,548
Other households	0	£0	2	£2,360
Total	11	£30,000	19	£25,000

The Council also operate as an official referral agent to the KCC fuel scheme, referring every application for HSF for further support through the county-wide support scheme.

The Council successfully bid for funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The welfare team continue to administer the element of this funding that focusses on interventions to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change. Elements of this scheme have been developed following smaller projects and demand through previous rounds of HSF such as the bed project, boiler support and provision of white goods. These areas have also been identified when liaising with residents and partner agencies, demonstrating that the scheme is being delivered in response to resident need.

The scheme is individually funded for each year and will close at the end of March 2025. Much like HSF, there is an application process hosted on the Council's website. The Council also uses its own data to potentially identify eligible residents for support.

The scheme launched in February 2023 and the table below shows the support offered up to the end of March 2024:

Home Essentials Fund February 2023 to March 2024			
	Households supported	Items supplied	Value
Smaller utilities	256	256	£18,457
Boiler replacement	15	15	£40,537
Boiler service	12	12	£1,092
Oil tune ups and support	36	36	£9,695
White goods	130	151	£69,569
Beds/mattresses	115	138	£36,634
Food support	29	29	£5,000
Total	593	637	£180,984

In May 2023 Sandgate Parish Council requested that the Welfare Team help utilise £1,500 of ward grants to support low-income families in the parish. During June 2023 an officer contacted families in the parish to offer additional support. The families were identified using the Council's Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) to help identify families to target support to where it is most needed. This resulted in 15 families receiving a supermarket voucher (for the store of their choice) for food shopping for £100 each. Other support was also offered through other schemes that the Council operates such as the Household Support Fund.

Following the success of the grant scheme this was repeated for Sandgate Parish Council during February 2024 with an officer reaching out to further identified families in the parish and utilising the £1,500 to support a further 15 families.

Members of the welfare team also conducted a campaign to promote pension credit and contacted residents during the year which resulted in 64 new households going onto Pension Credit, increasing their overall annual income by £229,474. A breakdown of this work can be found below:

Folkestone and Hythe Pension Credit outcomes	
Total number of new claimants	64
Take up percentage	23%
Average age of new claimants	70
Total annual amount awarded	£229,474
Average life expectancy	80 years
Total annual amount awarded x difference between average age of new claimant and life expectancy	£2,294,740
Cost of Living payments as a result of campaign	£57,600

02 Understanding our Customers

Improving our Customer Experience (continued)

The Council trialed working with Sigma on the Reachout project. This was to engage with a significant proportion of people that haven't previously engaged with internal collections for outstanding Council Tax. The key was to offer of help, impartiality and confidentiality; and being clear they are not collecting debt.

By not having the Council make the initial call, the agents are able to take time to understand individual circumstances and challenges, then help people understand what free grants, support and advice is out there to improve financial, emotional, mental and physical wellbeing or support through crisis –and help them access this support, including through partnerships with a leading debt charity.

They then also raise awareness of the initiatives and support FHDC offer residents in problem debt or vulnerable circumstances and warm transfer customers (pass whilst on the phone) to our internal teams so we can work with our customers to resolve the debt resulting in better and more sustainable outcomes for residents.

We trialed three cohorts to investigate which would produce the best results. The first cohort was for 550 accounts for residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction but rather than send a reminder we attempted to make contact to offer support. The second cohort was for 239 accounts for residents that had already been summonsed for court due to unpaid Council Tax. The final cohort was for 404 accounts for residents in receipt of Council Tax Reduction who had received a reminder due to a missed payment or instalment.

The table below shows the additional support that was offered. It should be noted that 9 cases also received support via the Home Essentials Fund and 13 cases were referred to Kent County Council for fuel support. 1 case also received support to claim Pension Credits which was awarded and therefore they received additional support in Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit, whilst other support would also be available once the benefit was awarded.

	Financial Support Payment awarded	Financial Support Payment refused	Section 13A(1C) awarded	Section 13A(1C) refused	Council Tax Reduction awarded	Total
Cases	21	17	1	2	4	45
Value	£8,788.77		£385.84		£1,233.60	£10,491.37

Follow up work has also demonstrated that working with the vulnerable groups in cohorts 1 and 3 showed that 62% and 65% of arrangements made respectively, were being made in May 2024.

In 2023 the Council were finalists for four Institute of Revenues Rating & Valuation (IRRV) annual awards: Excellence in Social Inclusion, Excellence in partnership Working in Community Involvement & Debt resolution (with Policy in Practice), Excellence in Education and/or staff development and Benefits and/or Welfare Reform Team of the Year

The Council were recognised as being highly commended in the category for Excellence in Education and/or staff development.

The work carried out as part of the Reachout project with Sigma was also nationally recognised as being shortlisted for the CIVEA (Civil Enforcement Association) enforcement excellence awards in April 2024 in the category of Best Vulnerable Support Initiative, acknowledging excellence in sustained welfare support for an individual or individual

Developing Our Staff

All staff are required to undertake specific equality and diversity e-learning on a regular basis. We also provide safeguarding training to ensure staff know how to support vulnerable people, and we deliver training on preventing extremism via Kent County Council (in February 2024) which gives our staff an understanding of radicalisation and who can be drawn into it.

We support staff in understanding people with different support requirements and relevant staff members were trained in the following areas: Improving the customer experience for people with dementia (Alzheimer's Society); Understanding Autism (National Autistic Society); Refugee awareness; Understanding Domestic Abuse, Equality, diversity, and inclusivity awareness Working with Customers with mental health issues.

We now have approximately 40 Mental Health First Aiders across the Council (c 9% of our workforce) so that we can better support staff and those customers struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis or other pressures they may be under.

In addition, we run a Management Development Programme on an ongoing basis and offer formal management qualifications that enable our middle managers and team leaders to understand how to further equality and diversity in the workplace and how best to work well with people from a variety of backgrounds. Recognising the demographic profile of our staff we offer a range of flexible development opportunities and put on shorter courses or split over different days to enable part-time staff to attend. We also avoid running training during school holidays to give our staff who are parents the best chance of being able to attend. We record our training and staff briefings to ensure everyone has the opportunity to access this information.

Section 3

Understanding Our Workforce

Introduction

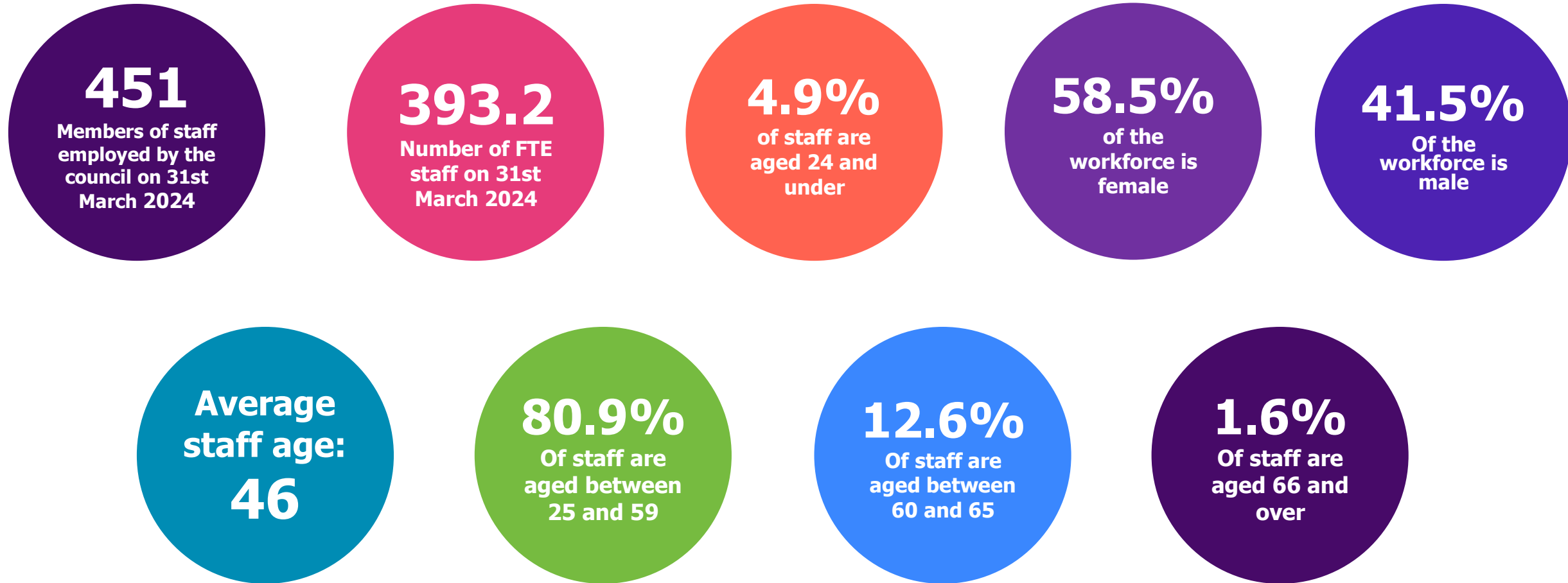
In this section we provide a brief overview of the characteristics of our own workforce.

On 31st March 2024 there were 451 members of staff employed by Folkestone & Hythe District Council. The number of full time equivalent staff was 393.2. Looking at the 2023/24 year as a whole, the average headcount was 457.5 and the average number of full time equivalent staff was 401.37.

03 Understanding Our Workforce

Folkestone & Hythe District Council - Workforce Profile

All figures used in the workforce profile below are as at 31st March 2024 and include staff the council directly employs.



Number of staff by age and sex:

Age	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60	Total
Female	4	26	48	64	89	33	264
Male	6	14	24	44	68	31	187
Total	10	40	72	108	157	64	451

03 Understanding our Workforce

Ethnicity and Disability

- 4.9% of the council's workforce have declared a disability.
- 85.6% of the council's workforce have indicated that they are from white ethnic backgrounds and 6.7% from black and minority ethnic groups. The remaining 7.7% have not declared their ethnicity.

Working Hours and Pay Grade

- 25.1% of the council's workforce are part-time and contracted to work 36 hours per week or under.
- Analysis shows a correlation between sex and working hours. 78.8% of part-time staff are female. Analysis of sex, working hours and pay can be found on the gender pay gap reporting section of the council's website: [Understanding and reducing the gender pay gap | Folkestone & Hythe District Council \(folkestone-hythe.gov.uk\)](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/understanding-and-reducing-the-gender-pay-gap)

Turnover

- 63 people left the council's employment during 2023/24. This represents a 'crude' staff turnover rate of 13.77%. The 'crude' turnover figure includes reasons such as redundancy (including voluntary redundancy) and those engaged on a casual, seasonal or short-term basis to, for example, provide maternity cover or support the annual electoral registration canvass. The voluntary turnover rate, which counts resignations and retirements only, was 9.62%.

Staff Grievances

There was one staff grievance raised in 2023/24, which was not equality related.

Year	Total	Equality Related
2019/20	1	0
2020/21	1	1
2021/22	0	0
2022/23	1	0
2023/24	1	0

Policies and Practices

The council is committed to promoting equality and diversity through its employment policies and practices.

- Our robust recruitment processes and associated manager training ensure that employment and promotion practices are fair, non-discriminatory and support equality of opportunity.
- Our job evaluation process ensures we pay our staff fairly and equally through assigning the same pay grade to roles of equal value.
- The council has a People Strategy and Agile Working Framework in place to support our smarter, agile, working culture. Working flexibly is encouraged and supported, with the majority of staff having the ability to work flexible hours and in a range of locations including from home.
- Prior to recruiting externally, or seeking candidates for promotion, if a post is full-time we carefully consider whether it could be undertaken on a part-time or job share basis.
- Working part-time can impact on the ability to attend training courses, which may then impact on career progression. We therefore consider our training programmes carefully and offer a range of flexible development opportunities. We increase the accessibility of training by putting on shorter courses, splitting the training over different days, or record sessions so they can be viewed at any time.
- If members of staff have concerns these can be raised with managers or formally through the council's whistleblowing or grievance procedures. Management training takes place to support equality, diversity and inclusion, and to ensure that any concerns are acted upon swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff undertake specific equality and diversity training when they first join the council and then on a regular basis thereafter. We also have a range of initiatives and learning and development activities aimed at furthering equality, diversity and inclusion. Further information on these can be found in the Developing Our Staff section.

Section 4

Understanding our Communities

Introduction

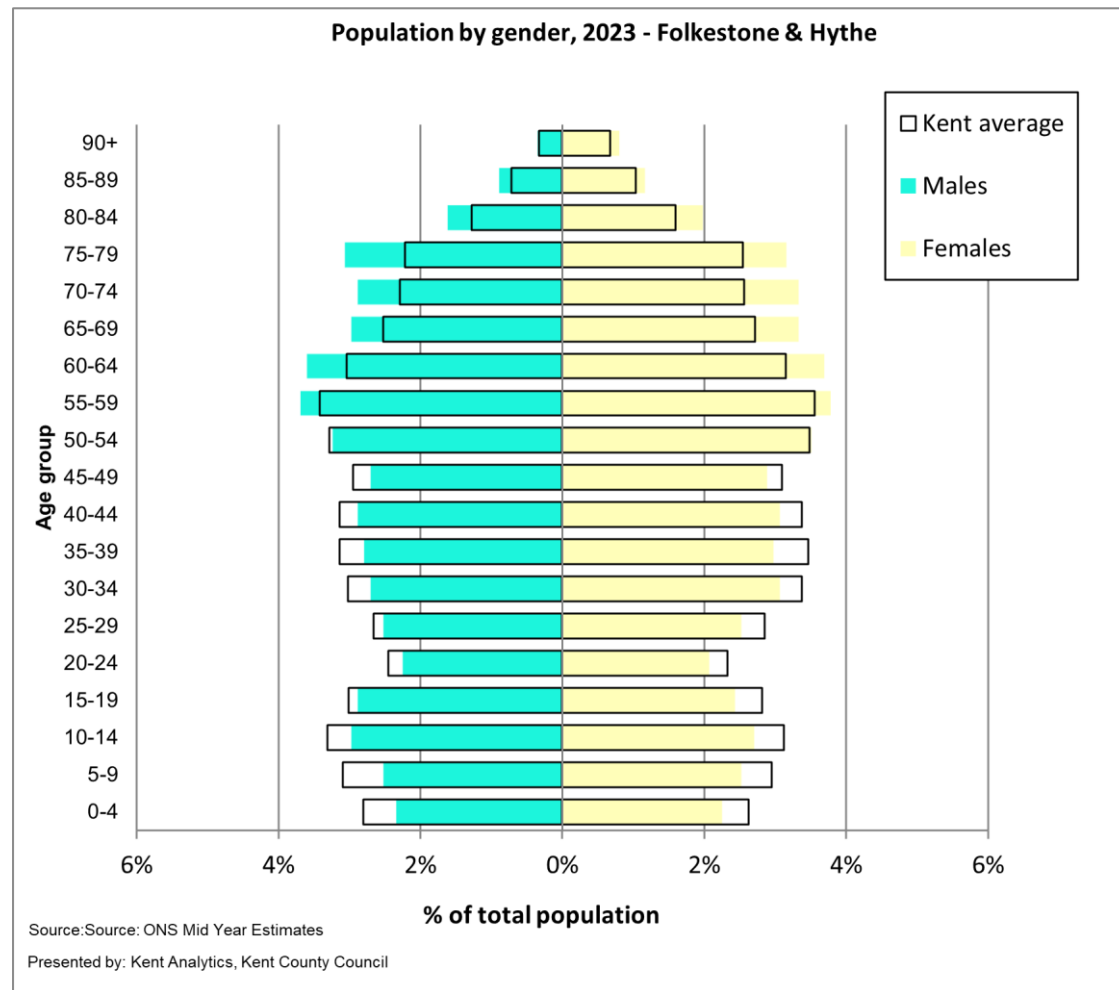
This section provides a brief overview of the characteristics of the district's population and draws comparisons with Kent and the wider South East. We outline the age profile of the district, the proportion of males and females in each age group, and how the population is likely to change over the coming years. We then go on to look at the ethnicity, religion and health of our communities. We finish by considering the economic profile of the district, including employment rates, income and deprivation.

04 Understanding our Communities

Age and Sex:

Overview

In the graph below, green shows the proportion of males in each age group and peach females. The blocked sections show the Kent average for each age group.

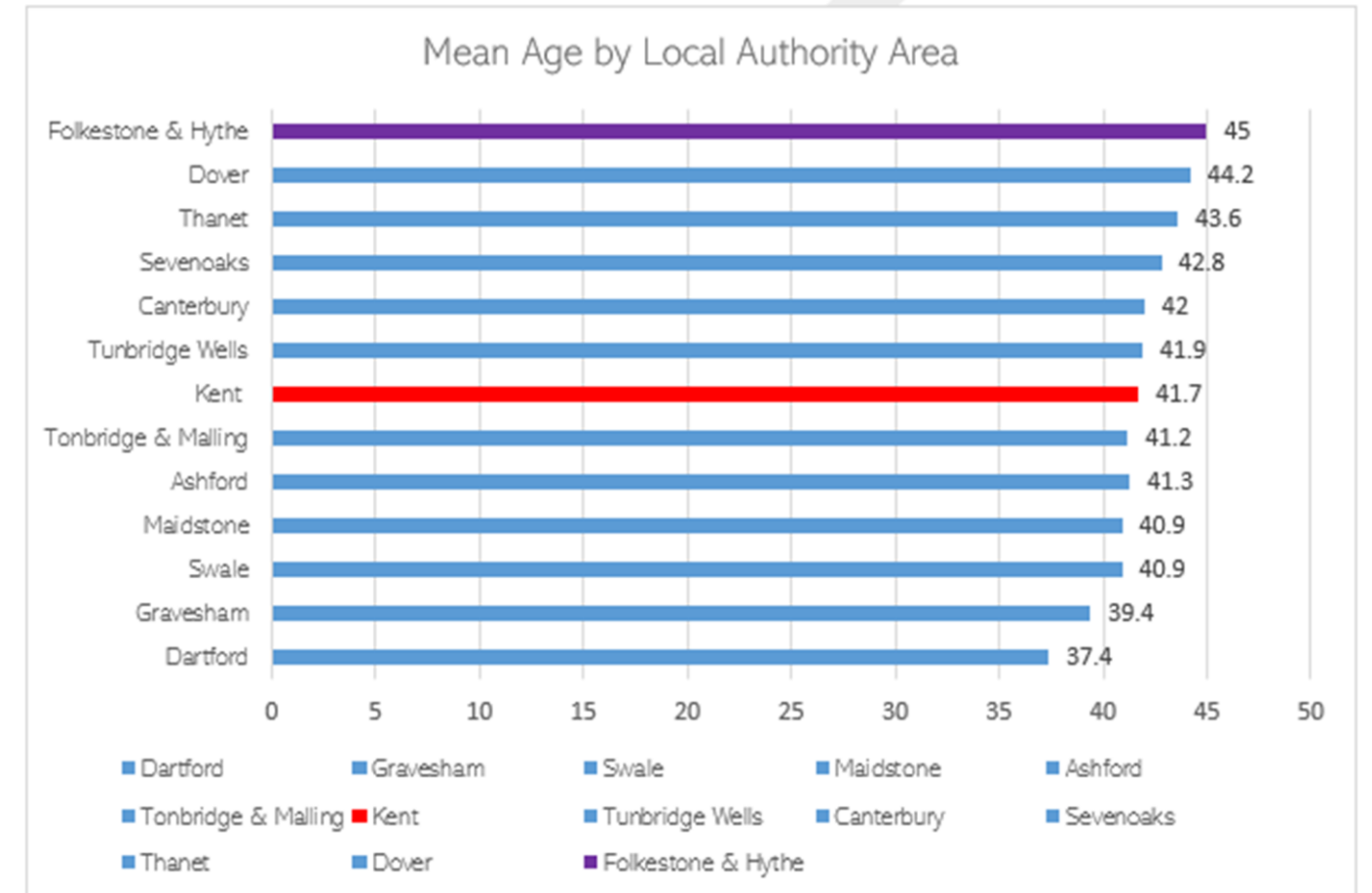


51.3% of Folkestone & Hythe's population is female and 48.7% is male. This percentage breakdown is reflective of Kent as a whole.

There is a lower proportion of residents aged under 45 when compared to Kent overall. The district has a larger percentage of residents aged over 45.

The male to female ratio changes with age. There are more males under the age of 25 than there are females. From age 25+ there are more females than males.

The average Folkestone & Hythe resident is 45 years old, which is the highest in the County when compared to with other local authority areas. The graph below shows the lowest average age to be in Dartford at 37.4 years old.



Source: KCC 2023 Mid-Year Population Estimates: Age and sex Profile

45 years old

The age of the average Folkestone & Hythe Resident

Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2023

37.4 years old

The average age of a Dartford Resident. The lowest of all Kent local authority areas

Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2023

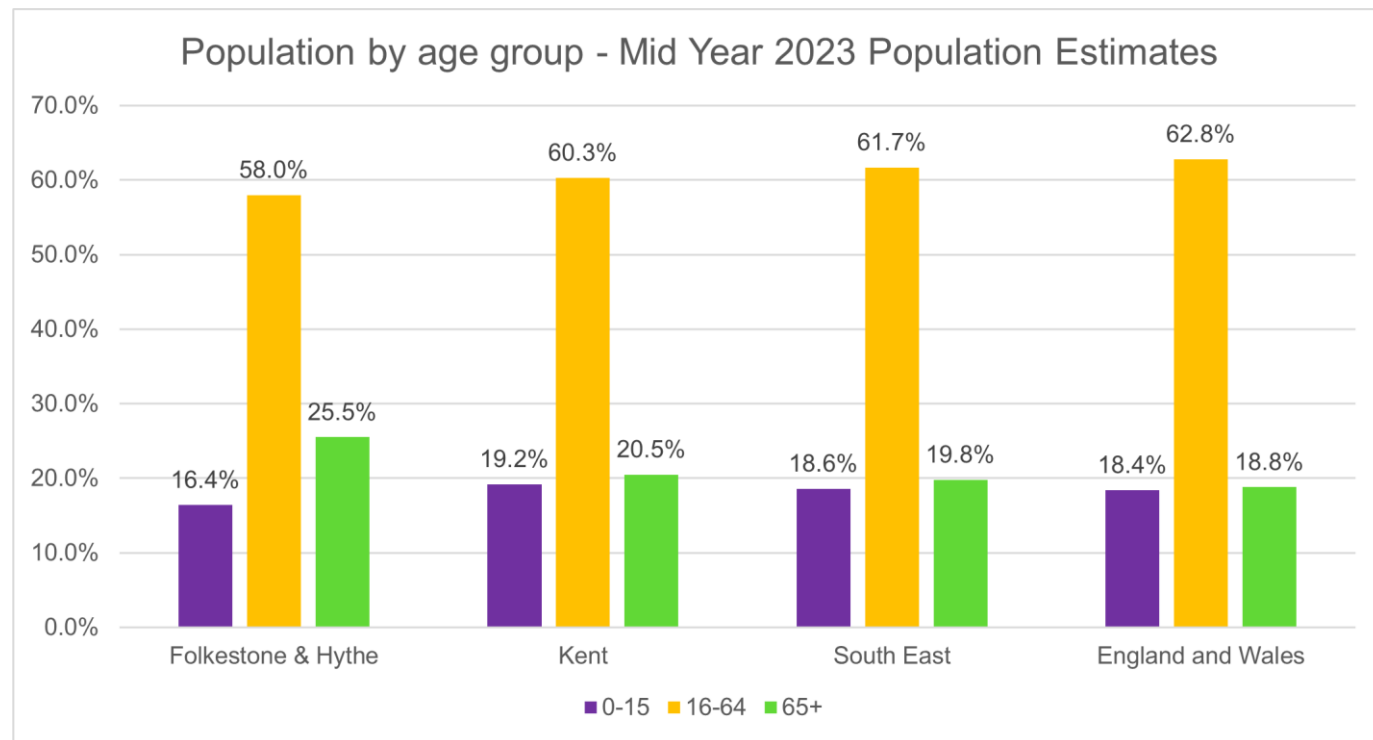
04 Understanding our Communities

Age and Sex (continued):

The average male at (44.0 years) is younger than the average female (46 years).

In comparison with regional and national figures, Folkestone & Hythe has:

- A lower than average proportion of residents aged under 15
- A lower than average proportion of residents of 'working age' between 16 and 64
- A higher than average proportion of residents aged 65 and over



Source: KCC District Profile / ONS, 2023 mid-year population estimates

Children and Young Adults:

Folkestone & Hythe	Number	%
16-64	64,400	58.0 % of F&HDC residents are 16-64
Female	32,700	57.5% of females in the district are 16-64
Male	31,700	58.6% of males in the district are 16-64

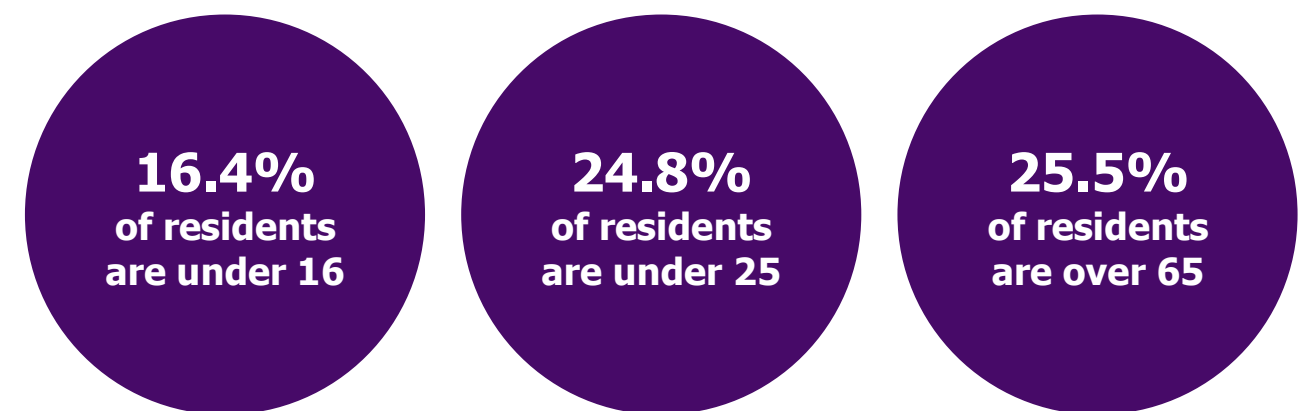
Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2023

Working Age' Population (16-64):

Age Group	Number	% of Folkestone & Hythe Population
65-69	7,000	6.3%
70-74	6,900	6.2%
75-79	6,900	6.2%
80-84	3,900	3.5%
85-89	2,300	2.1%
90 and over	1,300	1.2%

Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2023

Older Population:



Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2023

Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2023

Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2023

Age group	No.	% of Folkestone & Hythe population	% of Kent overall*
0-3 – Early Years Children	3,900	3.6%	5.6%
4-10 – Primary Age Children	7,900	7.1%	5.7%
11-18 – Secondary age children	10,000	9.0%	6.1%

Source: KCC Interactive Population Forecast Toolkit - 2023

04 Understanding our Communities

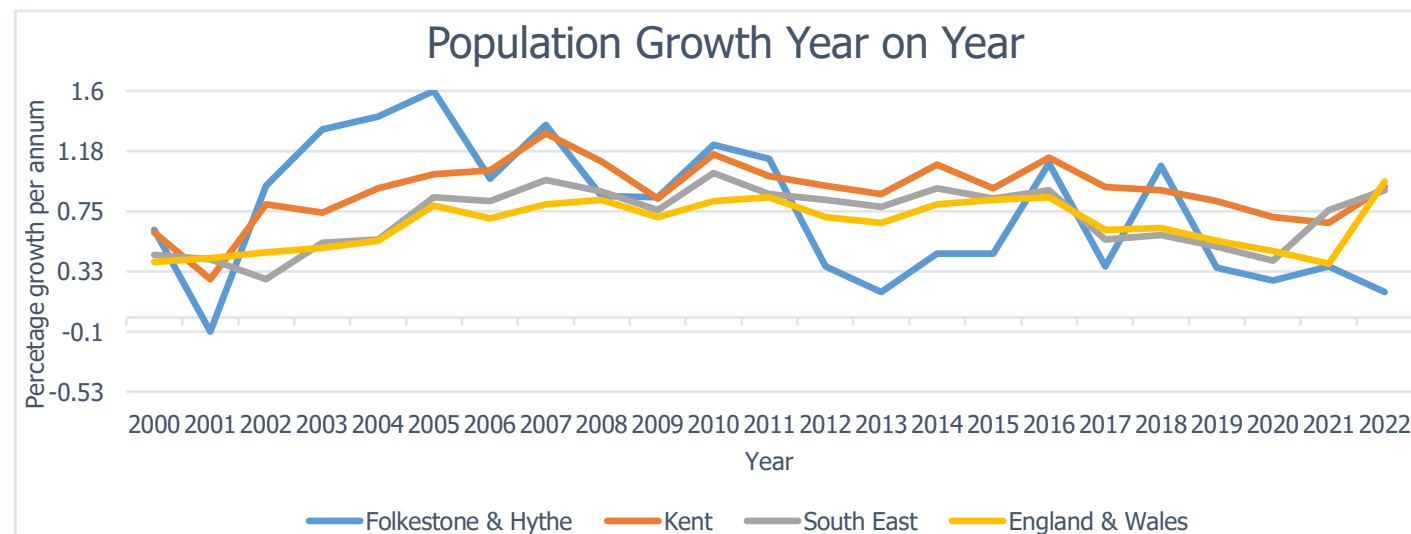
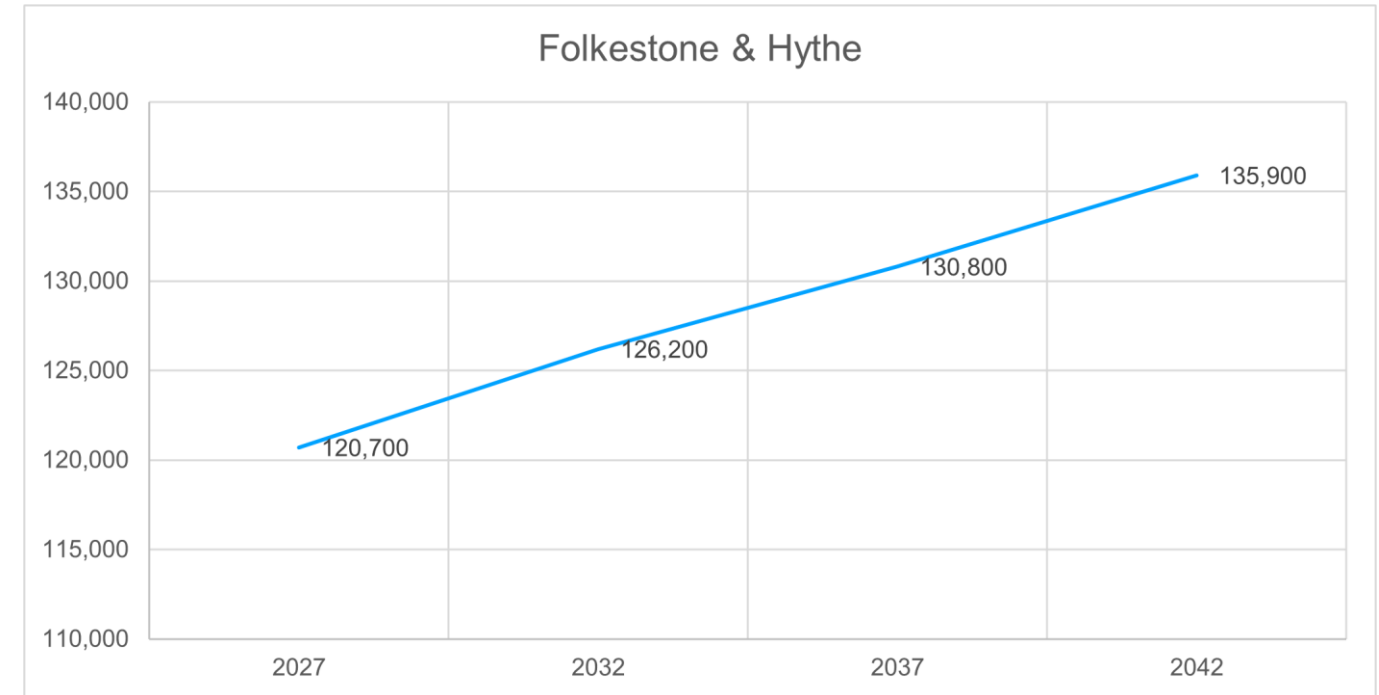
Population Changes and Forecasts

Historical Population Growth

The most recent population figures based on 2023 ONS Mid-year population estimates that the population of Folkestone & Hythe was 111,000 in 2023. This accounts for 6.8% of the total population within the Kent County Council area.

In 2013 the population of Folkestone & Hythe stood at 107,900. In the ten-year period between 2013 and 2023, Folkestone & Hythe's population grew by 2.8%. This is, however, below regional and national averages.

Over the last 10 years (2013-2023) population growth across the South East has risen more quickly averaging 1.17% per annum in comparison to England and Wales, which averaged 0.67% per annum. Kent experiences higher annual growth in comparison to England and Wales, averaging a population increase of 0.8% per annum over the same time period. As a smaller geographical area, population growth in Folkestone & Hythe is much more sporadic, with localised factors a major contributory factor.



Source: KCC Interactive mid-year population estimate toolkit 2021

Population Growth Forecasts

Folkestone & Hythe's population is forecast to rise by 22.4% over the next 19 years, reaching an estimated 135,900 by 2042, while Kent as a whole is expected to grow by 18.1% over the same period. Estimates, however, do not take into account any future developments in the district.

Population Changes

Historically, Folkestone & Hythe's population growth has varied between different age brackets. In the 20-year period between 2000 and 2020 the most significant population growth was amongst those aged between 45 and 70, with residents in this age bracket increasing by 39.3%. The number of residents aged under 45, however has remained largely the same over this period, increasing by only 0.73%.

When considering residents over the age of 65 specifically, between 2000 and 2020 there was an increase of 45%, from 19,300 to 28,000 people. It is forecast that between 2023 and 2042 there will be a forecasted increase by a further 15,100 over the subsequent 20 years, a rise of 53.3%. Conversely, numbers of residents of 'working age' (between the ages of 16 and 64) is forecast to rise by 13.8% and numbers of those under the age of 15 are expected to shrink by 0.52%.

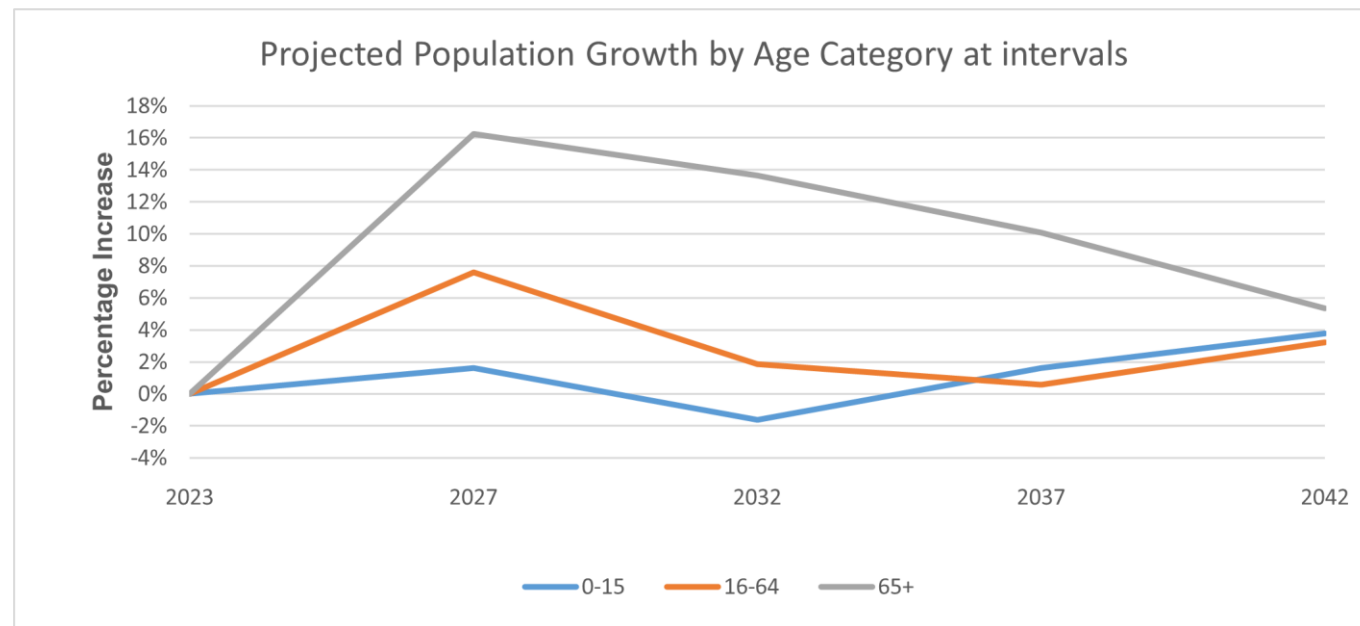
04 Understanding our Communities

Population Changes

Current Population Projections: Folkestone and Hythe (2023-2042):

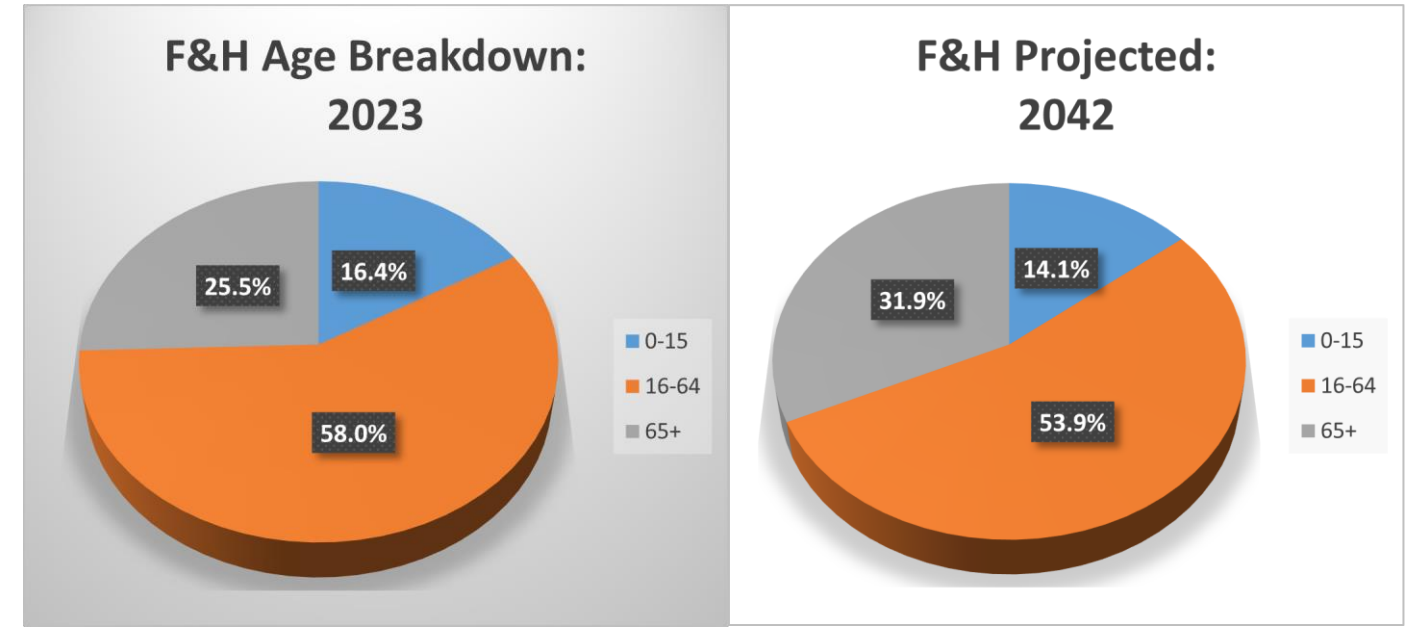
Year	Total Population	Age Group		
		0-15	16-64	65 and over
2023	111,000	18,200	64,400	28,300
2027	120,700	18,500	69,300	32,900
2032	126,200	18,200	70,600	37,400
2037	130,800	18,500	71,000	41,200
2042	135,900	19,200	73,300	43,400

Source: KCC Interactive Population Forecast Toolkit - 2023

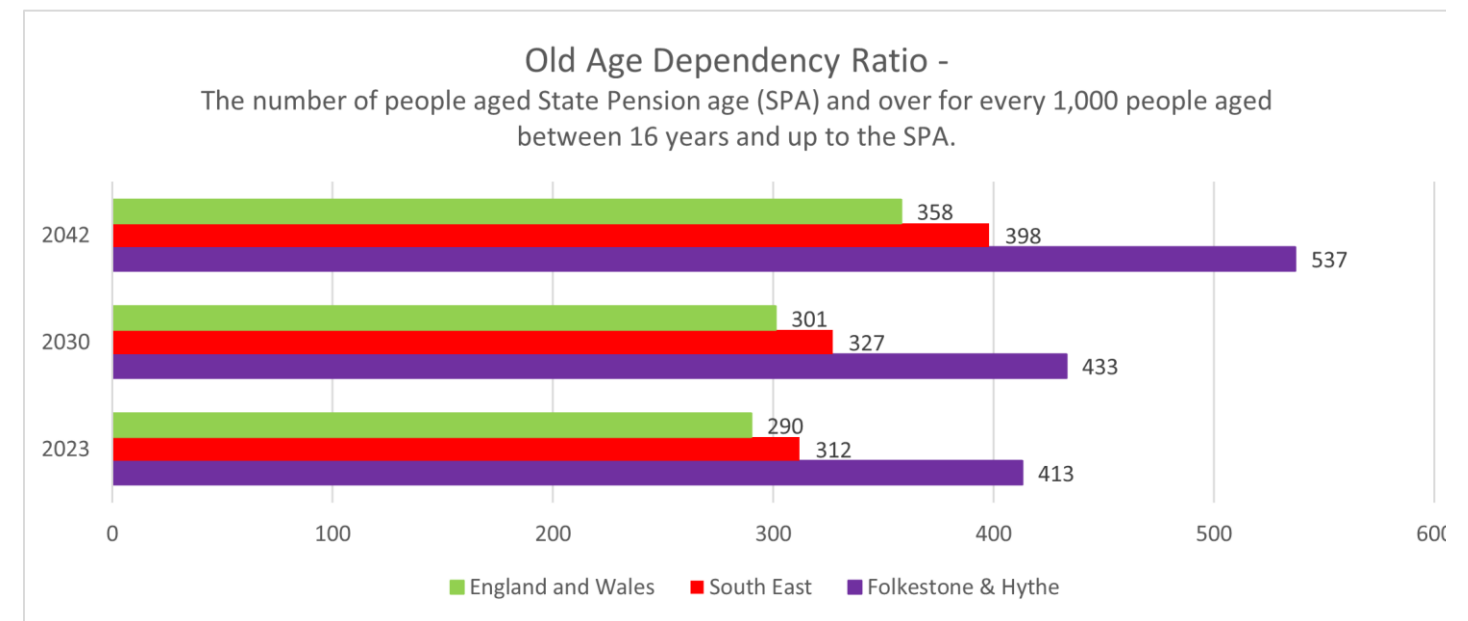


Residents over the age of 65 currently account for 25% of Folkestone & Hythe's population. By 2042 this is expected to have increased by 6.5% a more significant increase than the 4.5% anticipated across Kent.

The concept of an 'ageing population' is, of course, not solely confined to the Folkestone & Hythe district and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) forecast continued growth in the proportion of the population aged over 65 across the UK. However, future estimates for Folkestone & Hythe, particularly relating to the proportion of the population over the age of 65, are notable rising from 29,300 in 2023 to 43,400 by 2042.



The graph below shows that the number of people aged state pension age (SPA) and over for every thousand people aged 16 years up to the SPA (known as the Dependency Ratio) is projected to grow significantly faster for Folkestone & Hythe from 413 in 2023 to 537 in 2042 than for the South East region and England & Wales.



04 Understanding our Communities

Population: Household Composition

The 2021 census reported 48,338 households in the Folkestone & Hythe district.

66.6% of households lived in accommodation that was owned (either outright, with a mortgage, or part-owned through a shared ownership scheme), 10.8% lived in homes that were social rented (including through F&HDC) and 22.5% lived in homes that were privately rented. The remaining percentage lived under other arrangements.

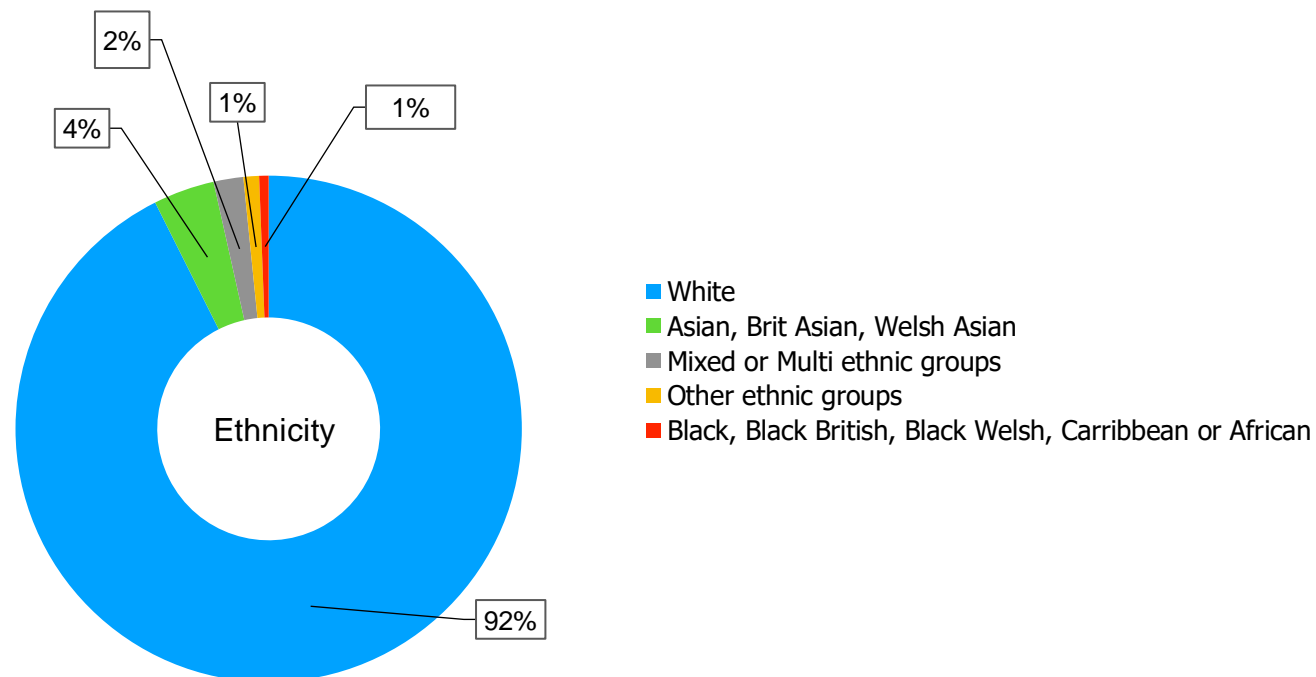
Nearly 70% of all households in the district were composed of one or two people.

Of the 48,338 households in the district, a third were one-person households. 45% of those that lived on their own were aged over 65.

The majority (61.8%) were single family households. The 2021 census classified these by the “type of family” (married, same-sex civil partnership or cohabiting couple family, or lone parent), by the number of dependent children, or recorded that all occupants were over the age of 65. 32.5% of households were one person households and 5.7% were classed as other household types. Source: 2021 Census.

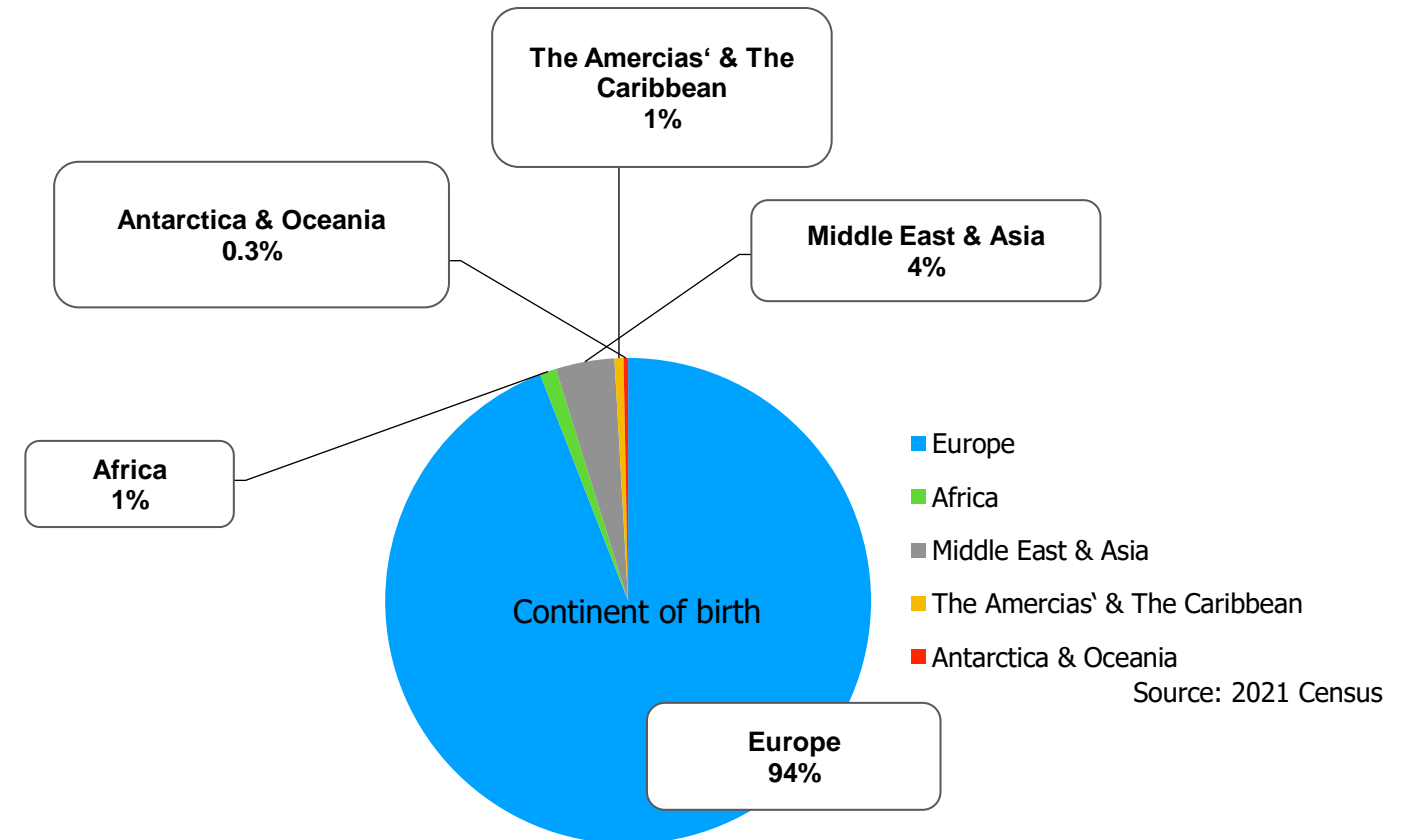
Ethnicity

The 2021 census shows that 92.6% of Folkestone & Hythe’s population are from white ethnic backgrounds followed by Asian, British Asian or Asian Welsh (3.9%), Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (1.9%), Other ethnic groups (1.0%) and Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African (0.6%), as defined by census category.



10.5% of Folkestone & Hythe residents were born outside the UK. 7% of those born outside the UK have been resident in the UK for over 10 years. The chart below shows the continent of birth for the district’s residents:

Folkestone & Hythe Residents: Continent of Birth



2.3% of households in Folkestone & Hythe do not contain any people that have English as their main language. This is lower than the national average (7.1%). Source: 2021 census

In 2023/24 a total of 1,663 households approached the council as homeless of which 1,064 (63.9%) approaches stated they were from white ethnic backgrounds and 22 (1.3%) from Asian ethnic backgrounds, 41 (2.4%) were from Black ethnic backgrounds, 11 (0.6%) from Arab backgrounds, 50 (3%) from mixed ethnicity backgrounds, 457 (27.4%) from other ethnic groups and 18 (1%) did not state their ethnicity.

04 Understanding our Communities

Religion

Of all residents in the district, the largest proportion (48%) declared that they were Christian in their religion. However, a significant proportion (41.8%) declared that they had no religion. Other faiths were less represented in the district population: 1.5% of residents declared that they were Hindu, 2% Buddhist, 1% Muslim and 0.1% Jewish.'

Source: 2021 Census

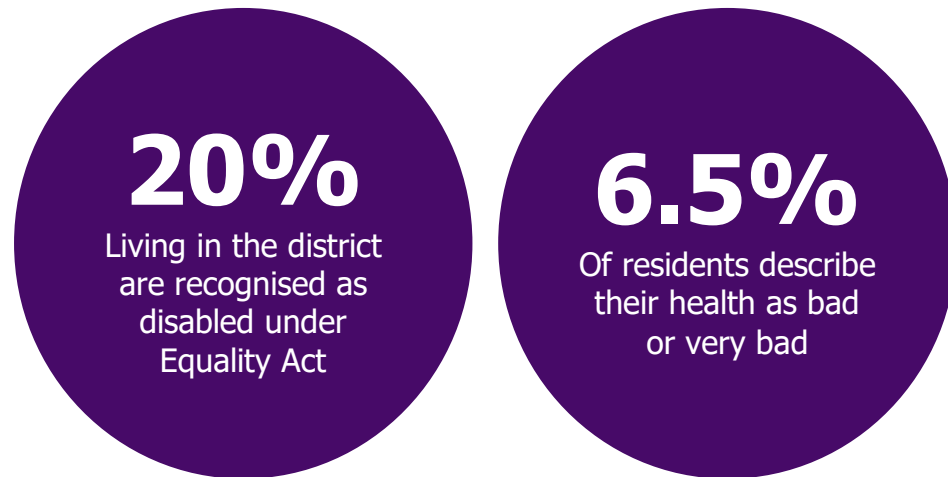
Health

Overview

6.5% of Folkestone & Hythe residents describe their health as bad or very bad. This is slightly higher than the national average (England 5.2%).

Over 20% of those that live in the district are recognised as disabled under the Equality Act. This is higher than Kent (18%), South East (16%), and national (England: 17%) comparisons.

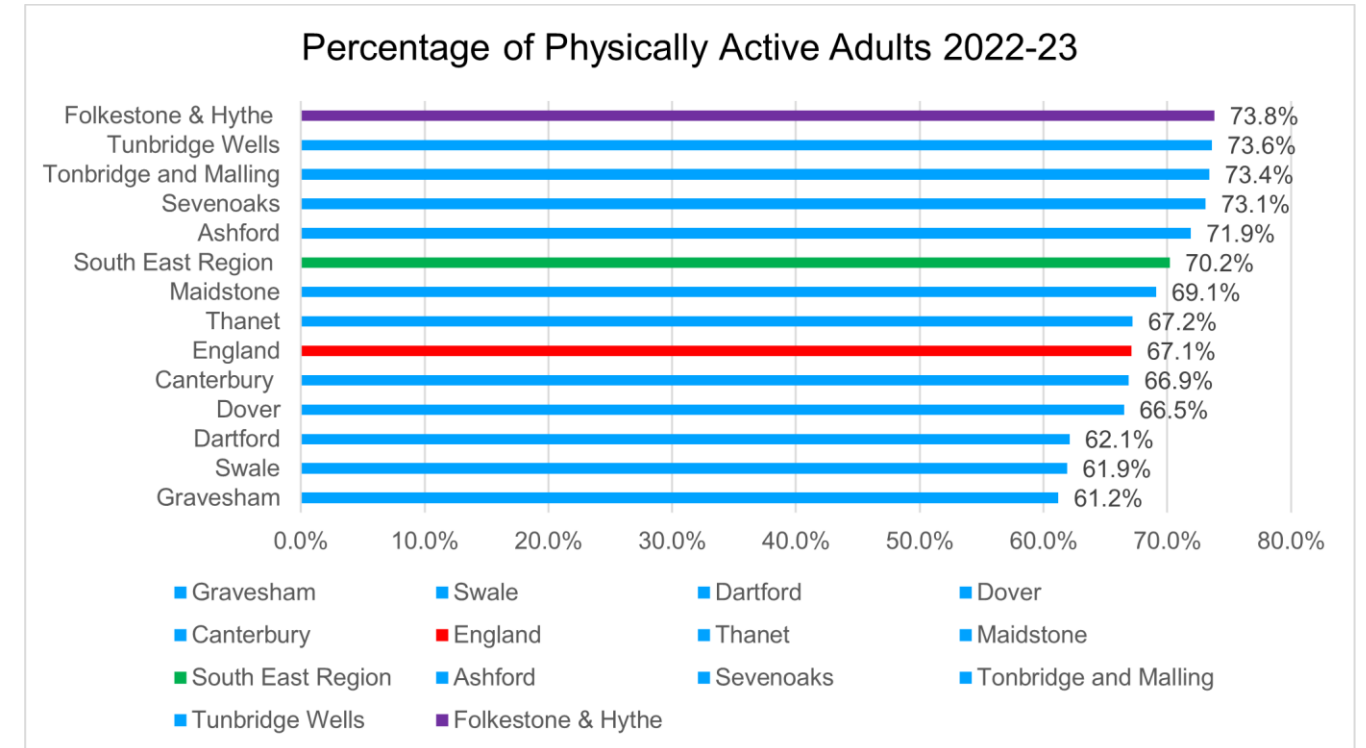
Source: KCC District Profile: 2021 Census



The data on physical fitness, obesity, alcohol-related hospital admissions, self-harm and smoking prevalence set out on, were sourced from the latest Public Health England's - Public Health Outcomes Framework:

Physical Fitness

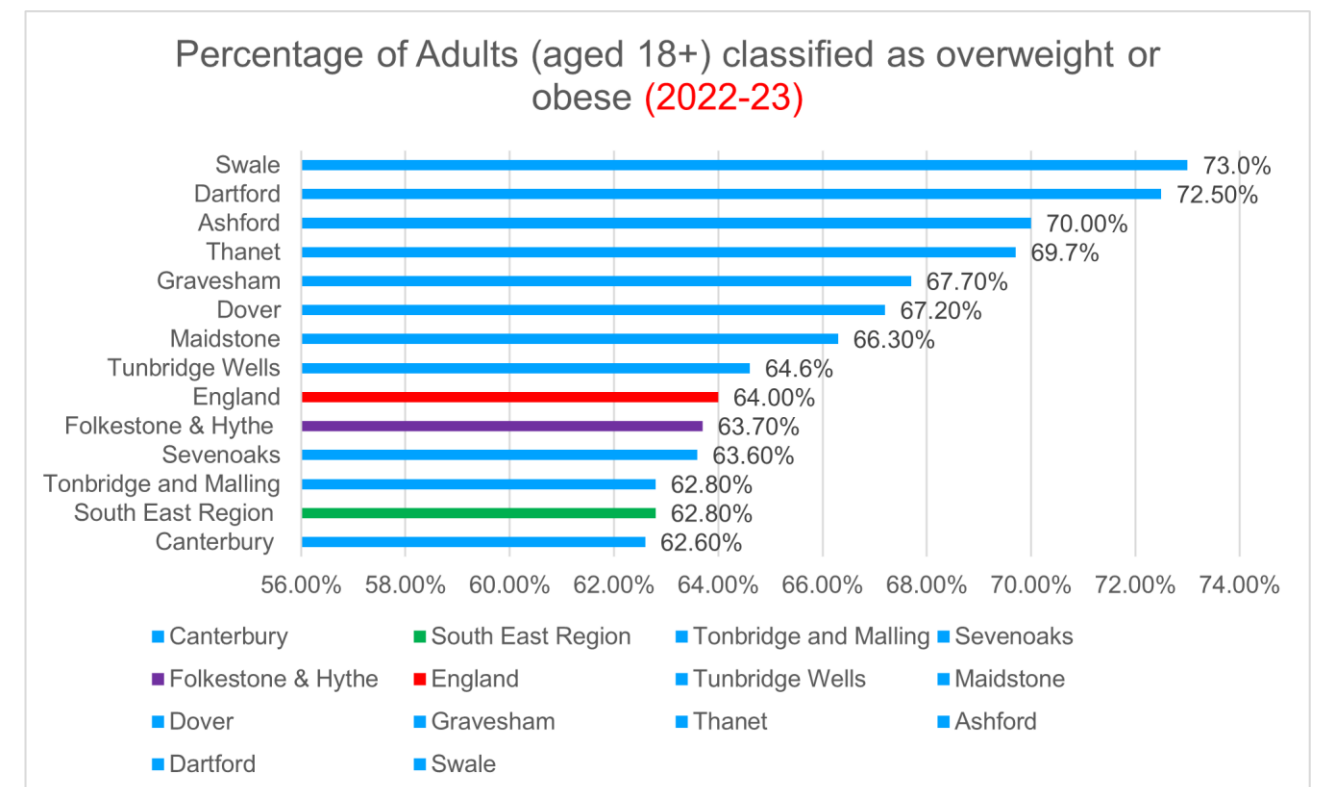
In 2022/23 73.8% of Folkestone & Hythe adults were classed as 'physically active' above the English national average. The following graph sets out how Folkestone & Hythe compares with other Kent Local Authority areas:



Obesity

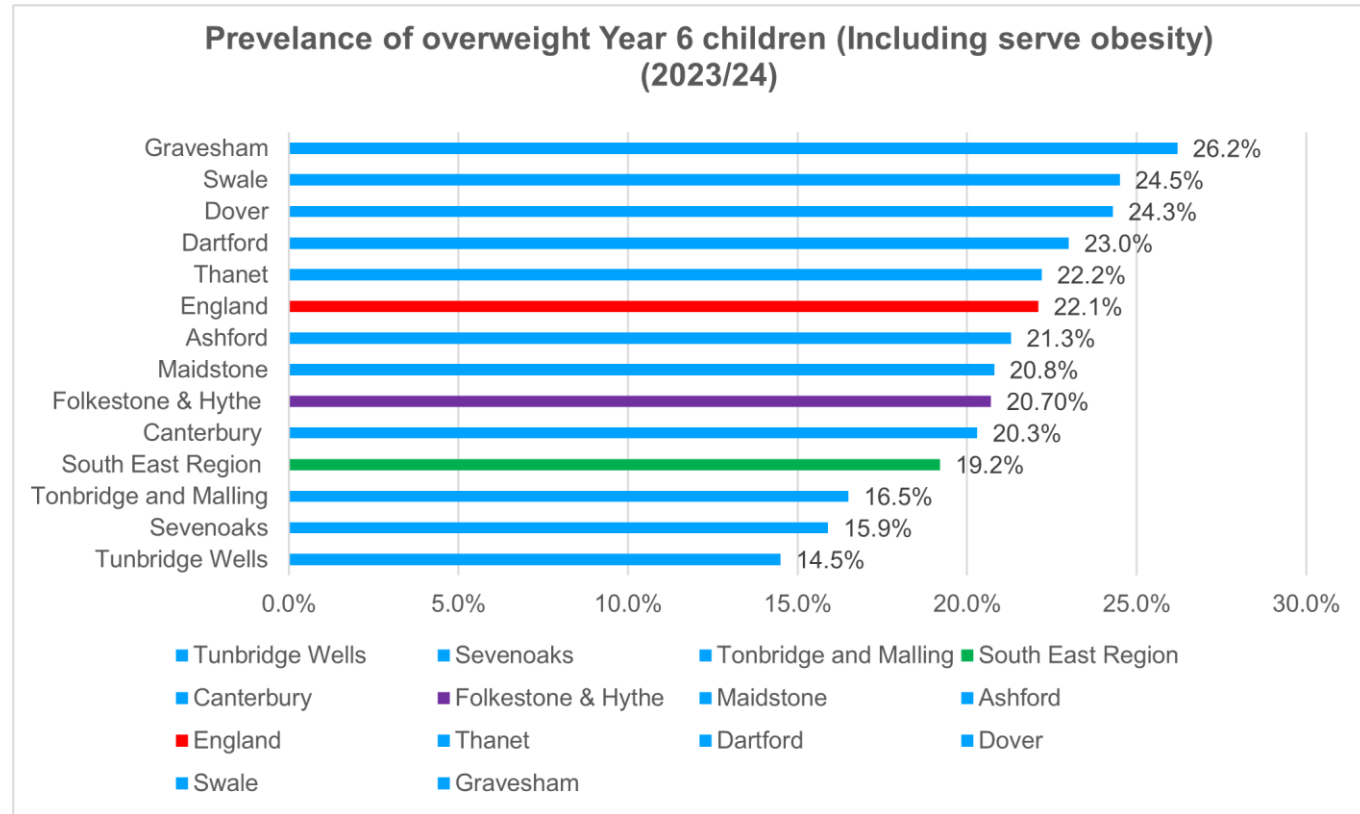
In 2022/23, 63.7% of adults in the district were classified as overweight and the latest data from 2022/23 shows 20.7% of 10-11 year olds (Year 6 school age) were classified as obese. Both figures are above the South East average, but below the national average.

The graphs below set out how Folkestone & Hythe compares with other Kent Local Authority areas for obesity in both adults and Year 6 school age children:

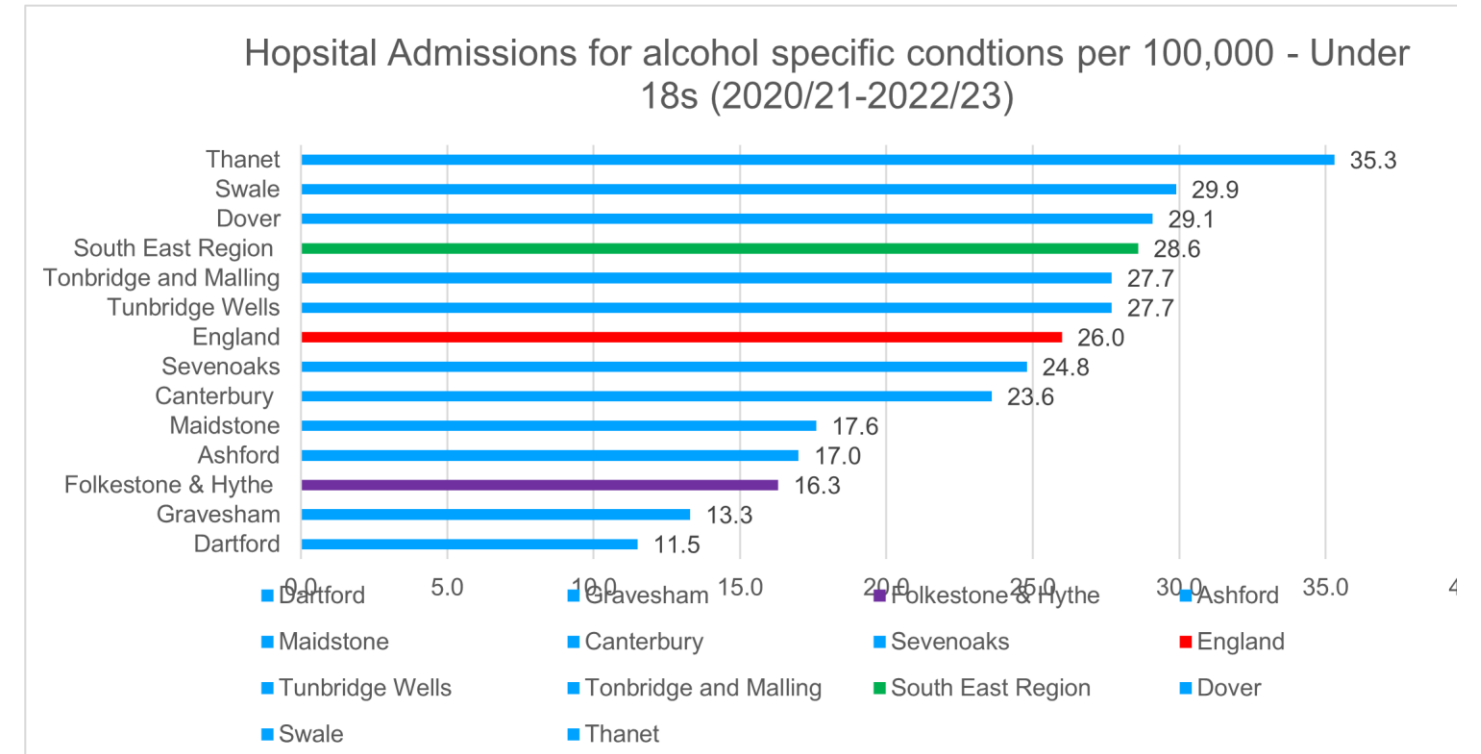


04 Understanding our Communities

Obesity (Continued):

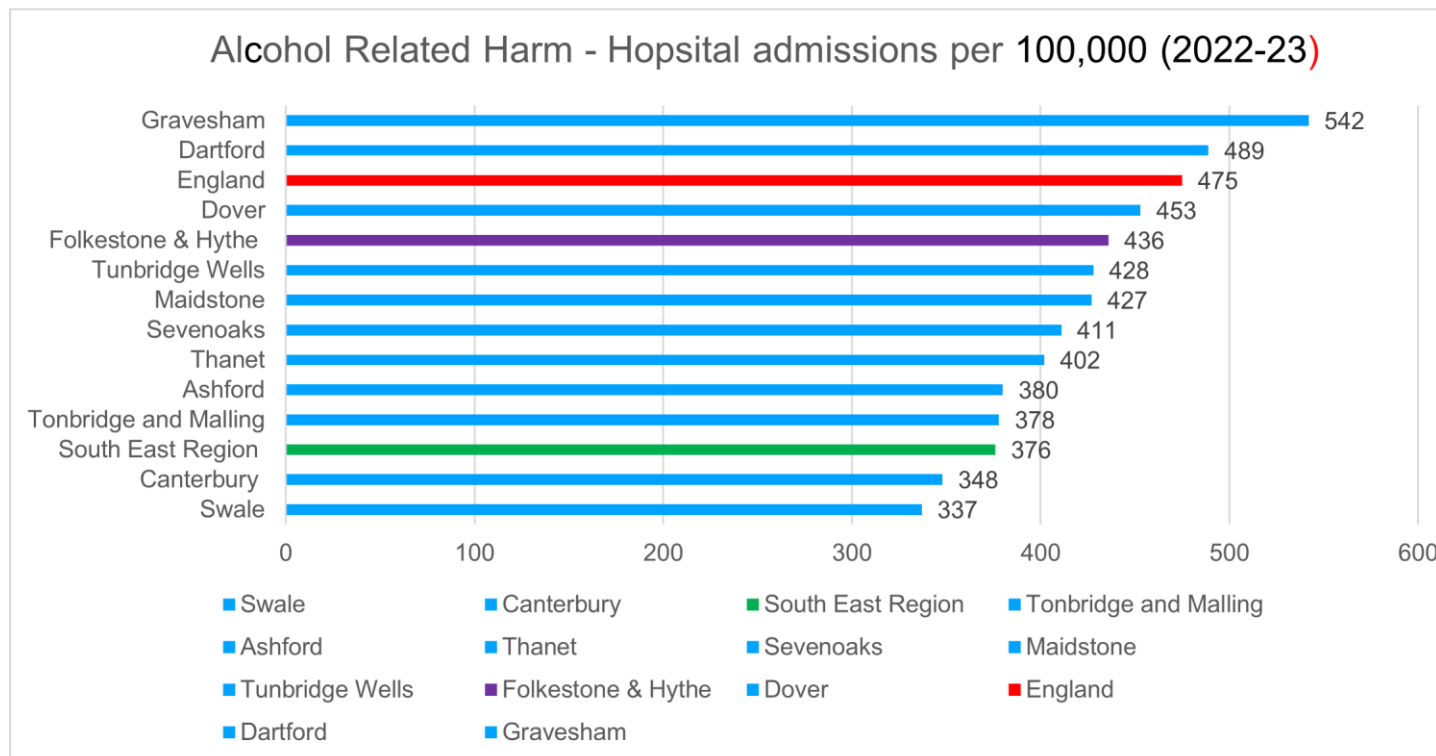


However, the rate of alcohol-specific hospital admissions among under 18s in the district is below the average across England with 16.3 per 100,000 recorded, compared with 26 per 100,000 nationally. The graph below sets out how Folkestone & Hythe compares with other Kent Local Authority areas:



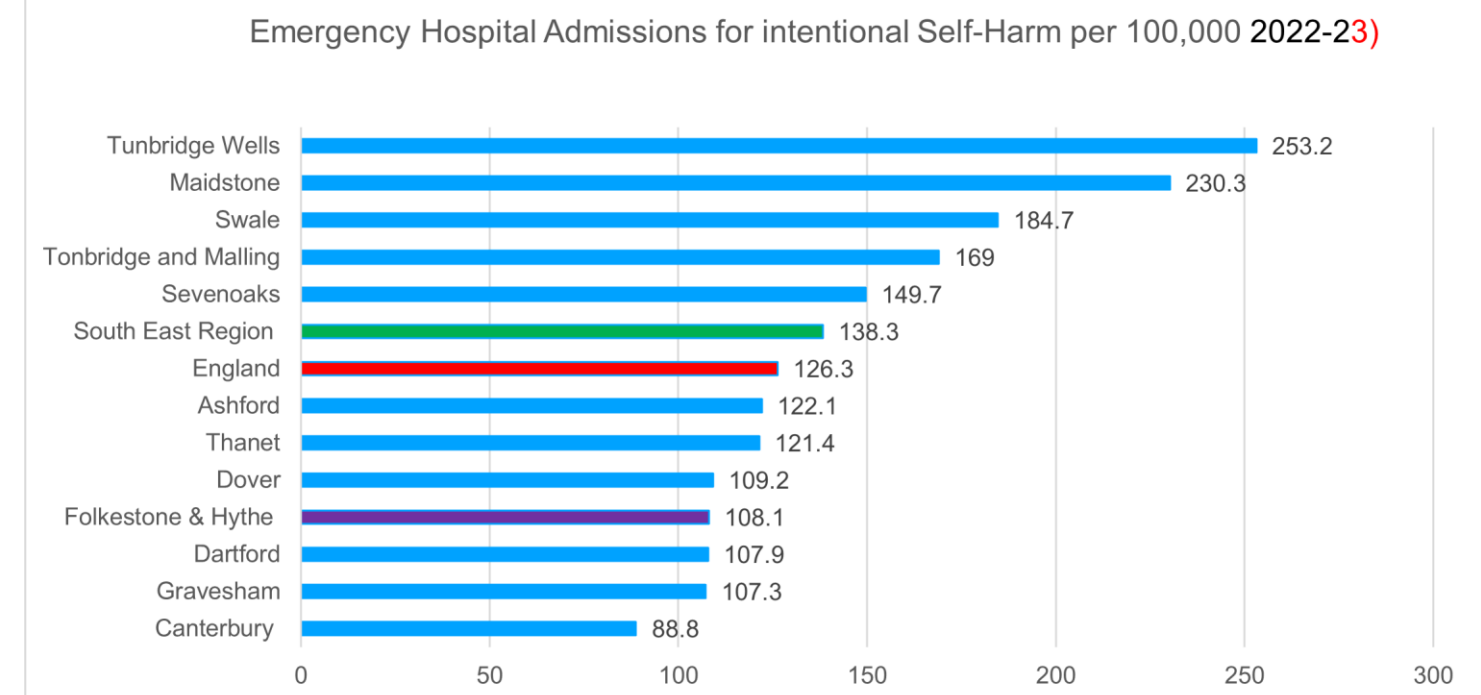
Alcohol-related hospital admissions

The rate of alcohol-related harm hospital admissions for adults is better than the average across England with 436 per 100,000 recorded in the district during 2022/23, compared with 475 per 100,000 in nationally.



Emergency Hospital Admissions for intentional Self-Harm

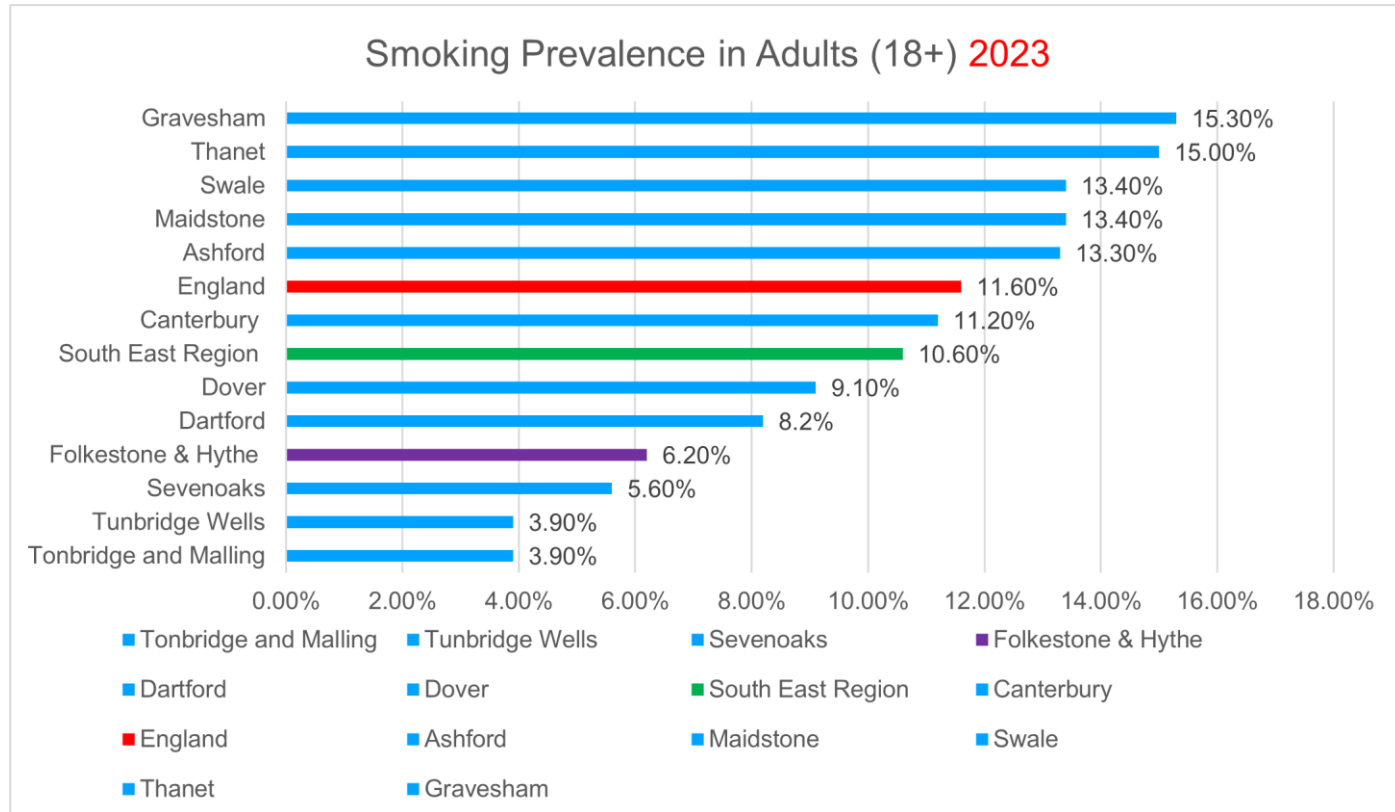
The number of emergency hospital admissions for intentional self-harm in the district in 2022/23 was 108.1 per 100,000, which is below both the regional and national average. The graph below sets out how Folkestone & Hythe compares with other Kent Local Authority areas:



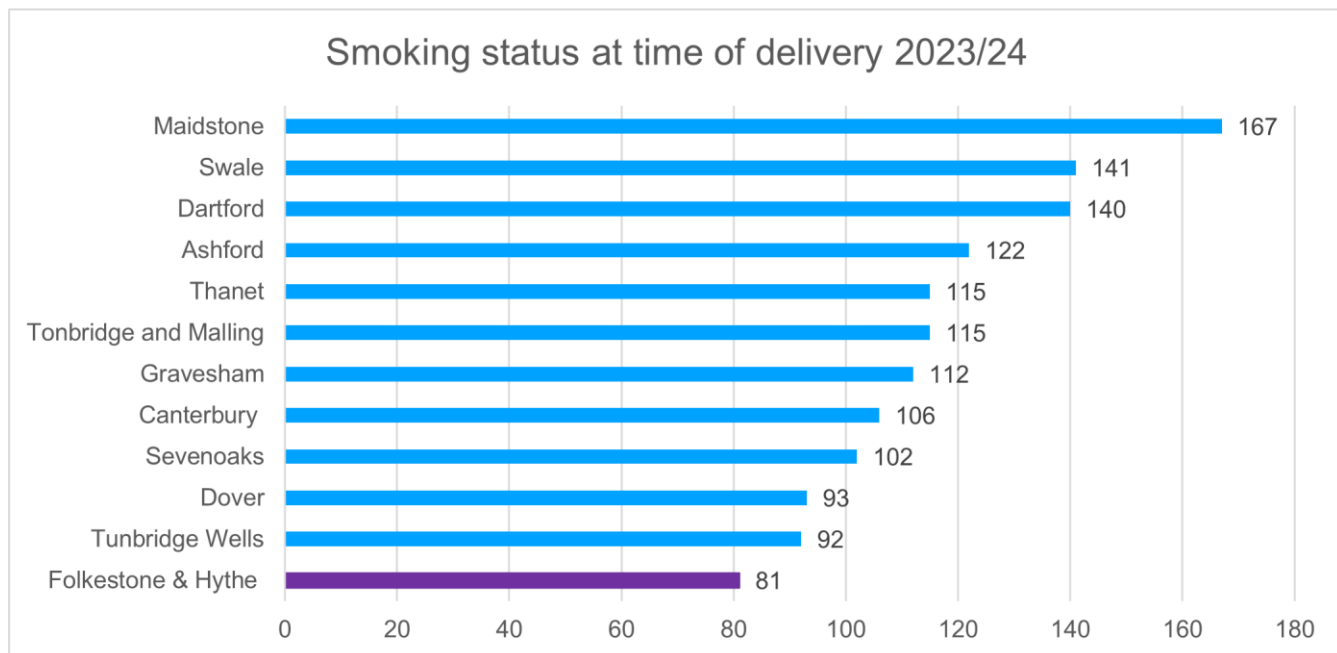
04 Understanding our Communities

Smoking:

6.2% of those over the age of 18 are smokers - this is significantly lower than the other Kent local authority areas, the national average and the average for the South East.

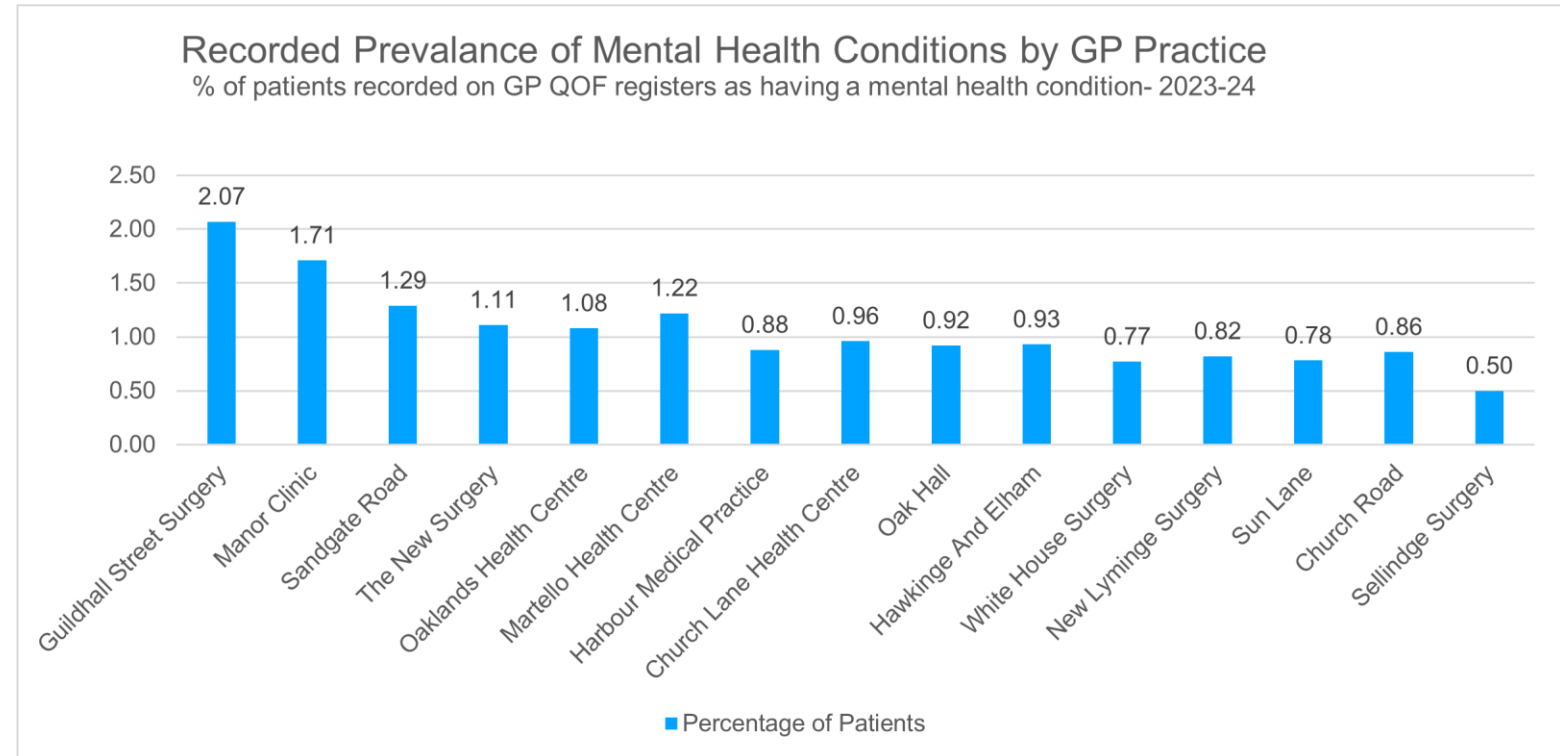


In 2023/24, 81 women in the district were recorded as smokers at the time of child delivery, the lowest out of twelve Kent local authority areas. The highest was Maidstone with 167 recorded.

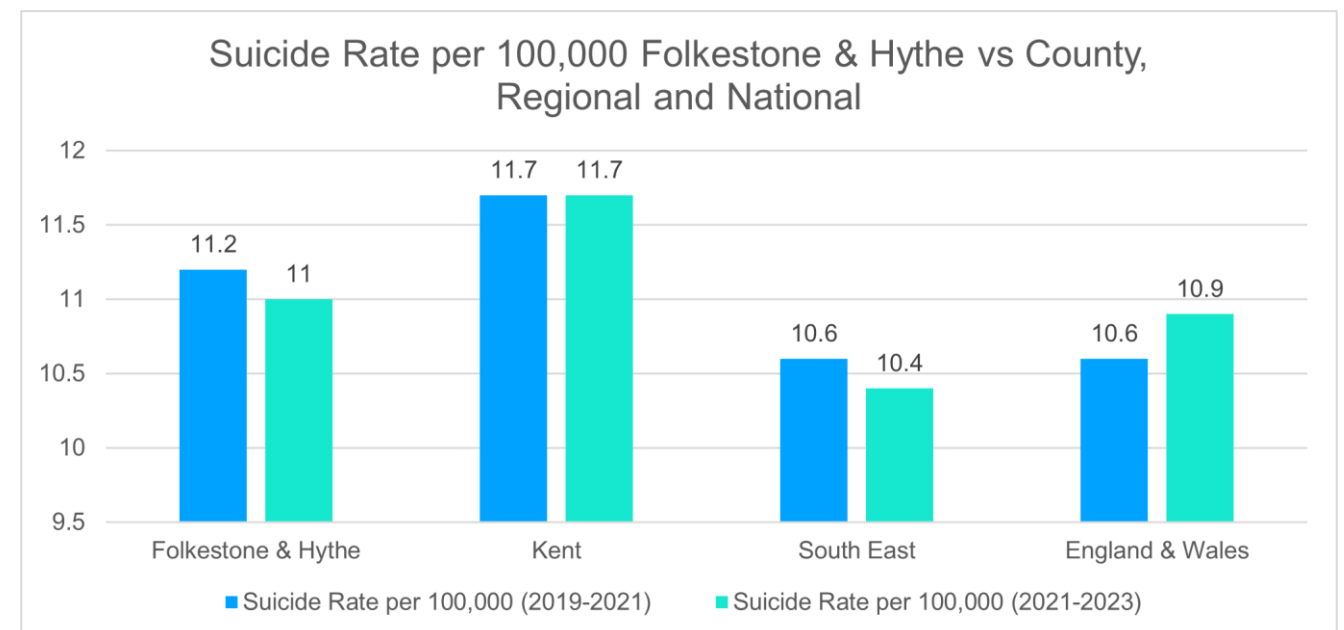


Mental Health and Suicide

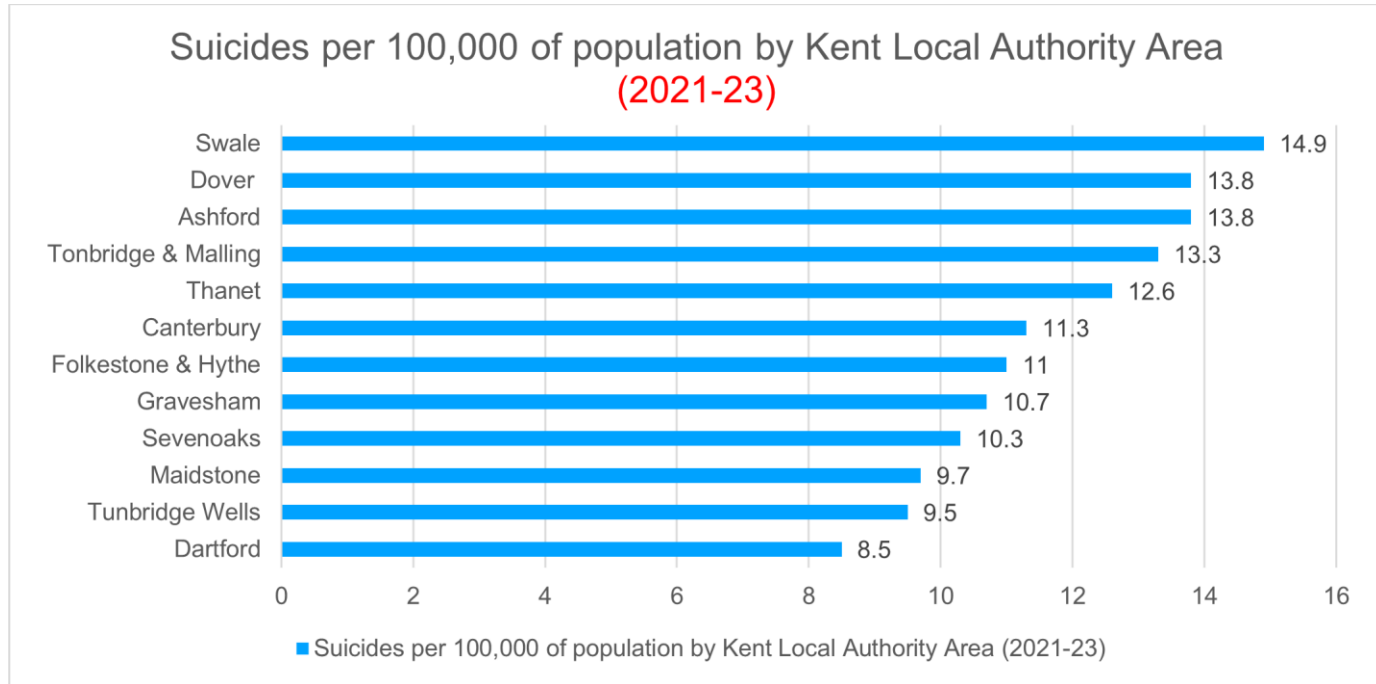
The prevalence of mental health conditions in 2023-24 by GP practice in the graph below shows Guildhall Street Surgery (Folkestone) as recording the highest prevalence (2.07%) and Sellindge Surgery recording the lowest (0.5%) on the register of their patients:



The suicide rate in the district is above the average for Kent, the South East and England & Wales as a whole. Data for the period from 2021 to 2023 recorded by the ONS shows the rate at 11 per 100,000 of the population, the seventh highest amongst the Kent districts, the highest being Swale (14.9 per 100,000). The rate across Kent overall was 11.7, 10.4 in the South East and 10.9 nationally (England & Wales).

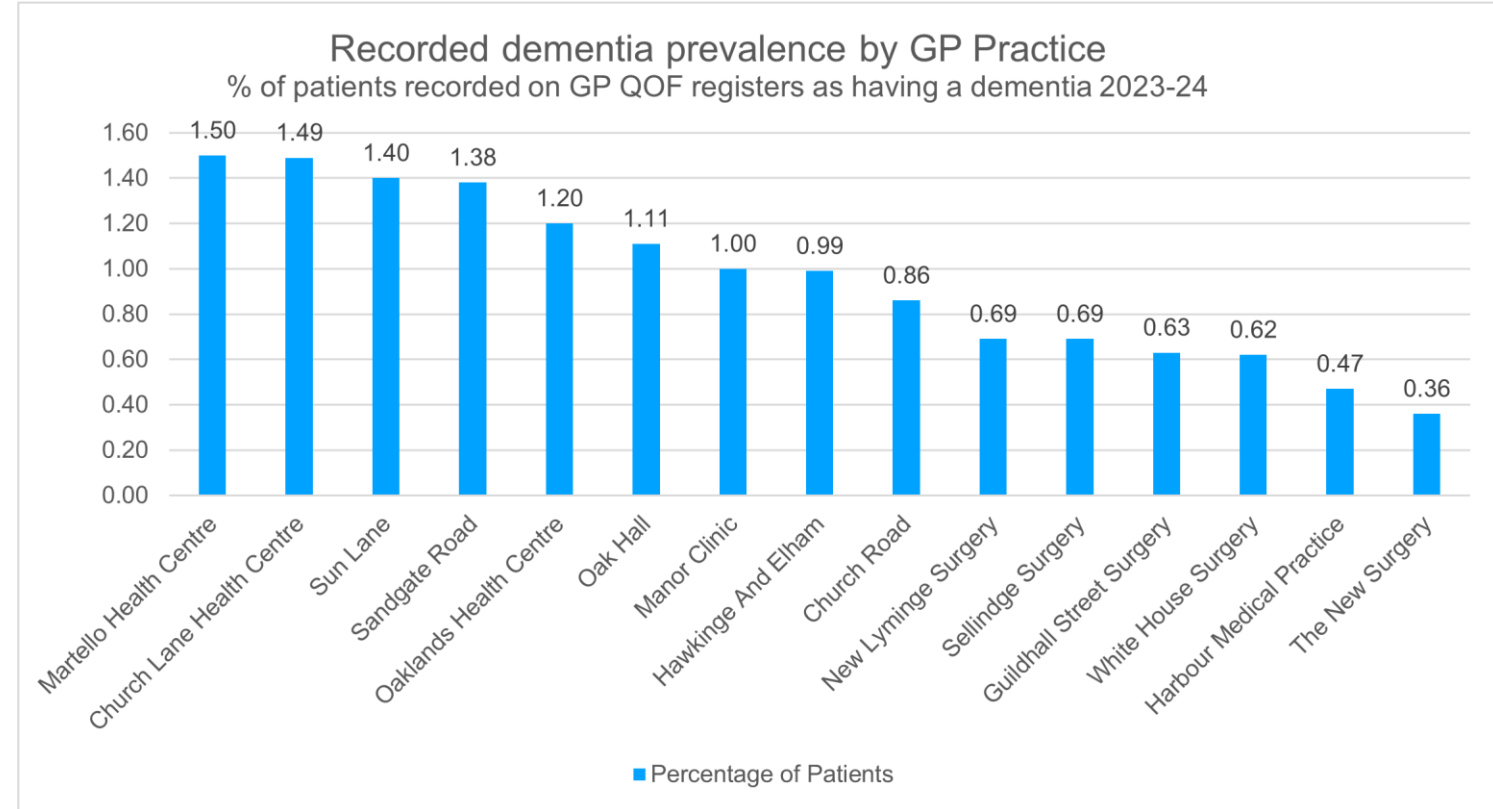


04 Understanding our Communities



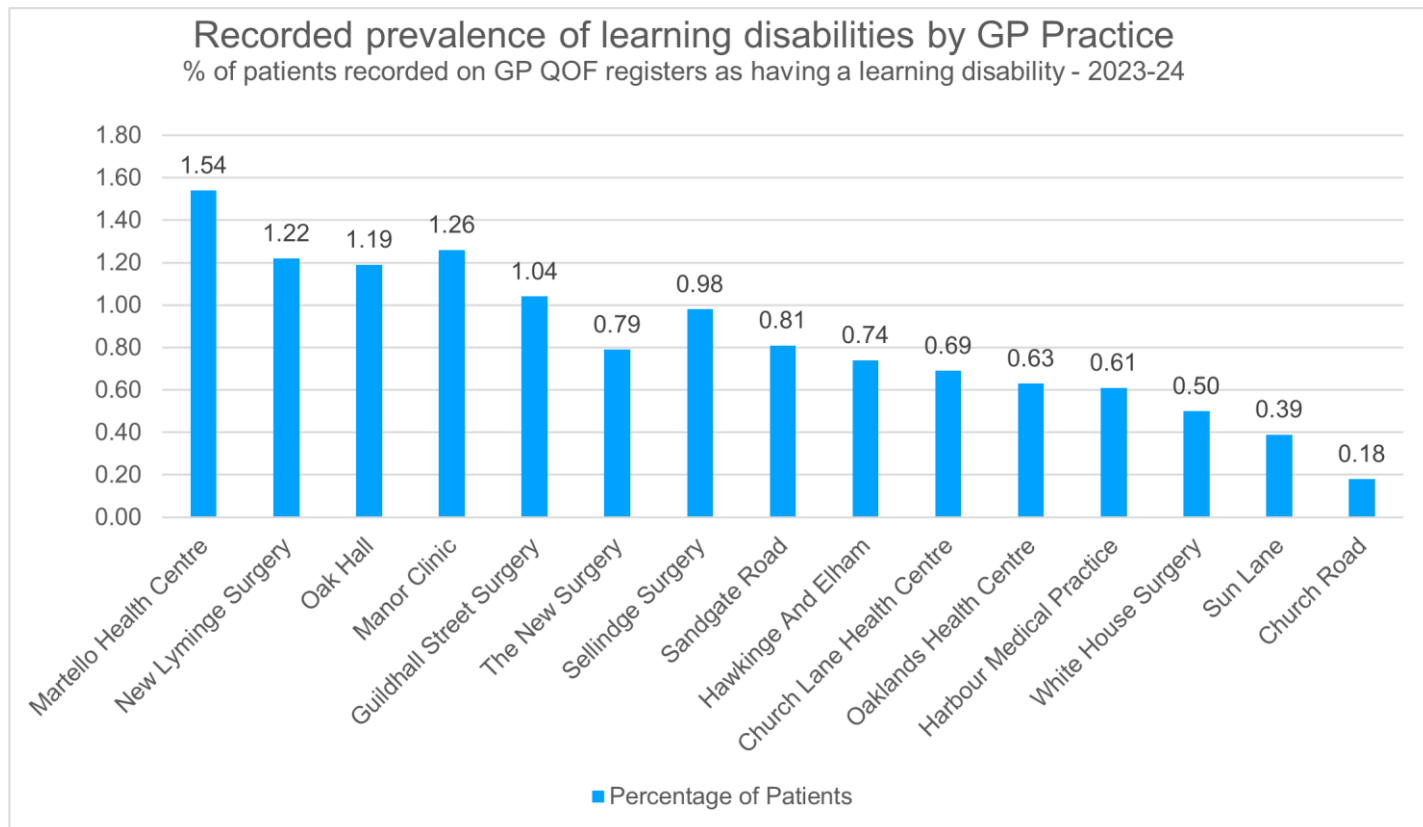
Dementia

The latest data recorded in 2023/24 for prevalence of dementia by GP surgeries shows a variance across the district with the highest number being recorded at Martello Health Centre in Dymchurch (1.50%) and the lowest at The New Surgery in Folkestone (0.36%).



Learning Disabilities

The latest figures recorded in 2023/24 on the prevalence of learning disabilities by GP practice show a variance across the district with the highest at Martello Health Centre in Dymchurch (1.54%) and the lowest at Church Road Surgery in Lyminge (0.18%).



Births & Deaths

In the recent past there have generally been more deaths per year in the district than births. This trend has continued with the latest figures from 2023 showing 898 live births and 1,738 deaths. This is in contrast with the picture for Kent as a whole, where the live birth rate is higher than the death rate.

Source: ONS, Births in England and Wales: Summary Tables, 2023

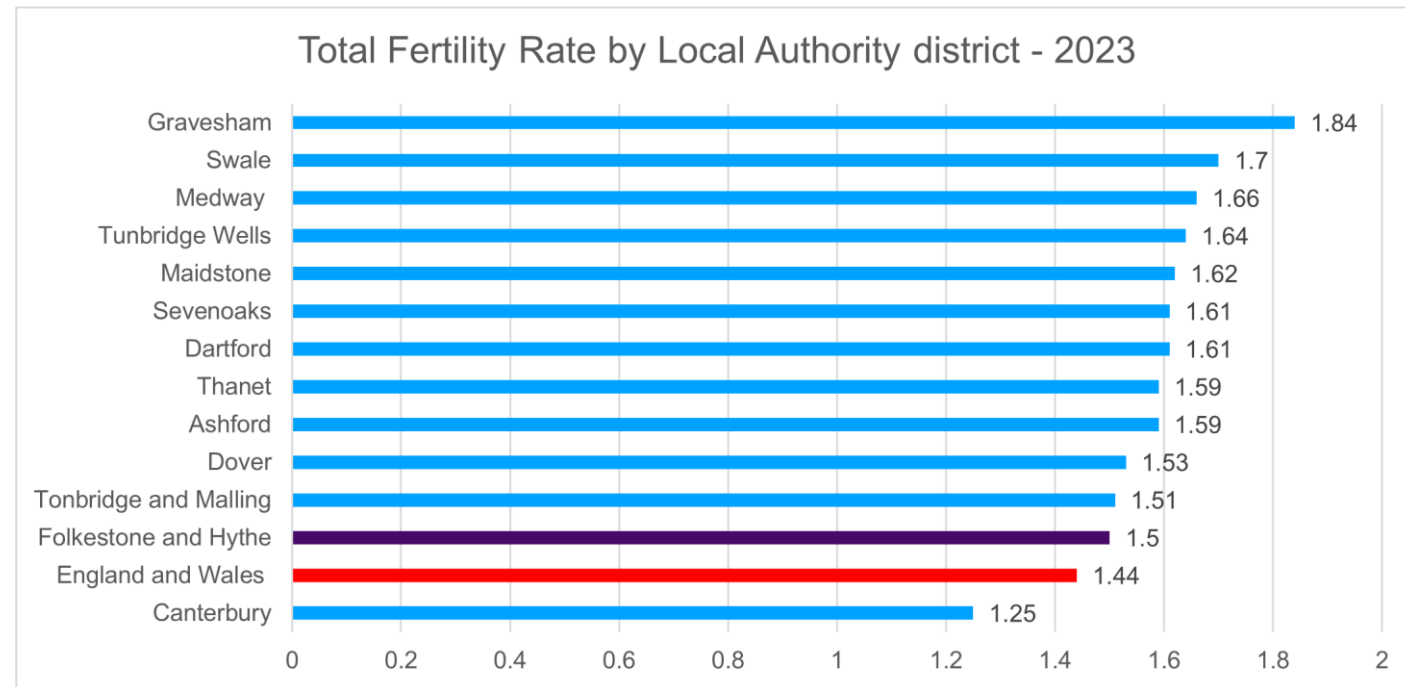
ONS: Deaths registered monthly in England and Wales, 2023

04 Understanding our Communities

Total Fertility Rates

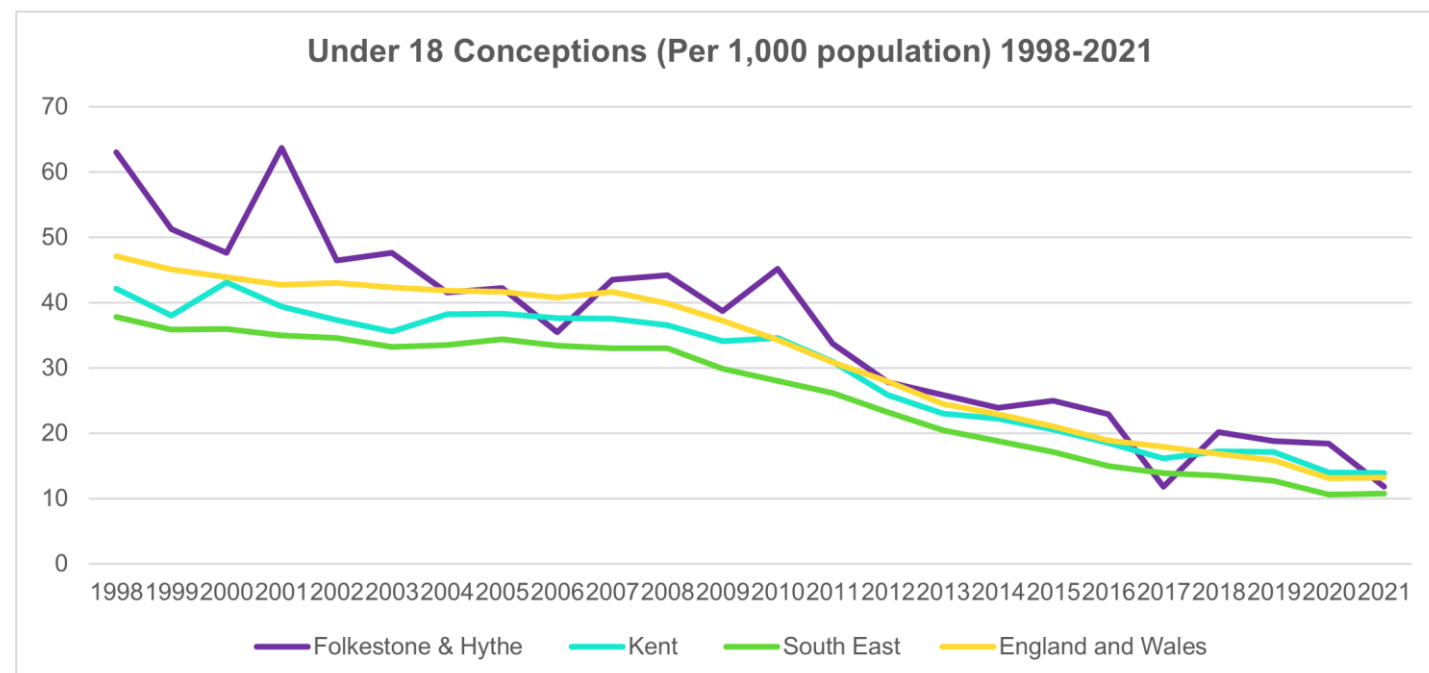
The total fertility rate is defined as 'the average number of live children that a group of women would bear if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of the calendar year throughout their childbearing lifespan'.

Folkestone & Hythe has the second lowest total fertility rates (1.5) in 2023 compared with neighbouring East Kent local authority areas. The graph below shows the total period fertility rate for the district to be above the England and Wales (1.44) average

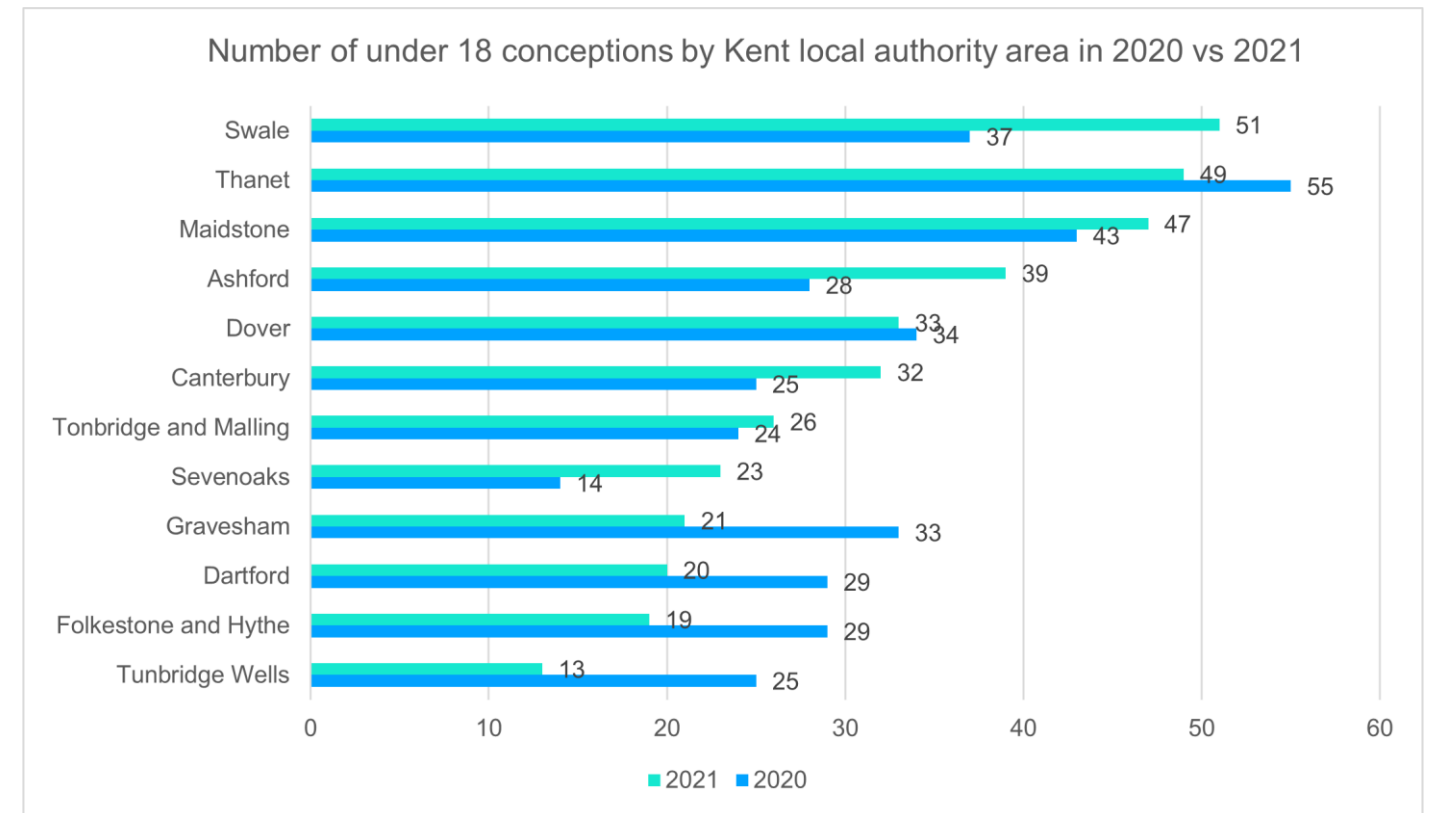


Teenage Pregnancies:

Under 18 conception rate – An Historical Comparison:



Teenage Conceptions: A Kent Comparison



The latest ONS data on conceptions from 2021 in the above graph shows all Kent local authorities ranked from highest to lowest in terms of under 18 conceptions. Swale was recorded as having the highest number in 2021 with 51 conceptions, previously Thanet was the highest in 2020. Folkestone & Hythe, previously recorded a total of 29 conceptions in 2020, which decreased to 19 in 2021. Tunbridge Wells recorded the lowest number within the County in 2021.

Life Expectancy

The latest available data from the period shows the average life expectancy of a Folkestone & Hythe resident to be similar to the county average:

	Folkestone & Hythe	Kent	South East
Male	77.7	81.1	83.8
Female	82.3	76.8	80.1

Source: ONS: Life expectancies for local areas of the UK: Between 2001-03 and 2020-2022

At the age of 65 years, the average female in the Folkestone & Hythe District lives for a further 20.8 years, with the average male living for a further 18.2 years.

04 Understanding our Communities

Disability Benefits

12.3% of Folkestone & Hythe residents claim disability benefits, defined as including Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance. Across all Kent authorities, Thanet (at 13.1%) has the highest percentage of disability benefit claimants. The table below shows the proportion of each age bracket claiming disability benefits and how this compares with county, regional and national figures.

	Folkestone & Hythe	Kent	South East	England & Wales
Overall	12.3%	9.3%	7.6%	8.4%
0-15	8.8%	7.6%	6.0%	5.8%
16-64	10.1%	7.3%	5.8%	6.8%
65+	3.8%	3.4%	2.8%	3.9%
Young People (24 and under)	9.2%	7.7%	5.9%	5.6%

Source: KCC District Profile/ DWP, November 2023

There are a number of reasons why people may claim disability benefit and people may claim for more than one condition. Looking at why people in Folkestone & Hythe district claimed the benefit, figures show that 63.2% of disability benefit claimants in the district claim due to a physical disability, and in addition 18.6% of the total also claimed for a mental health condition, and 14.2% of the total due to a learning difficulty.

People Providing unpaid care:

Age Range	Percentage
65 and over	26.7%
16-64	70.6%
0-15	2.7%

Source: KCC District Profile/ DWP Longitudinal Study, November 2023

Percentage of age groups claiming carers allowance Unpaid Care

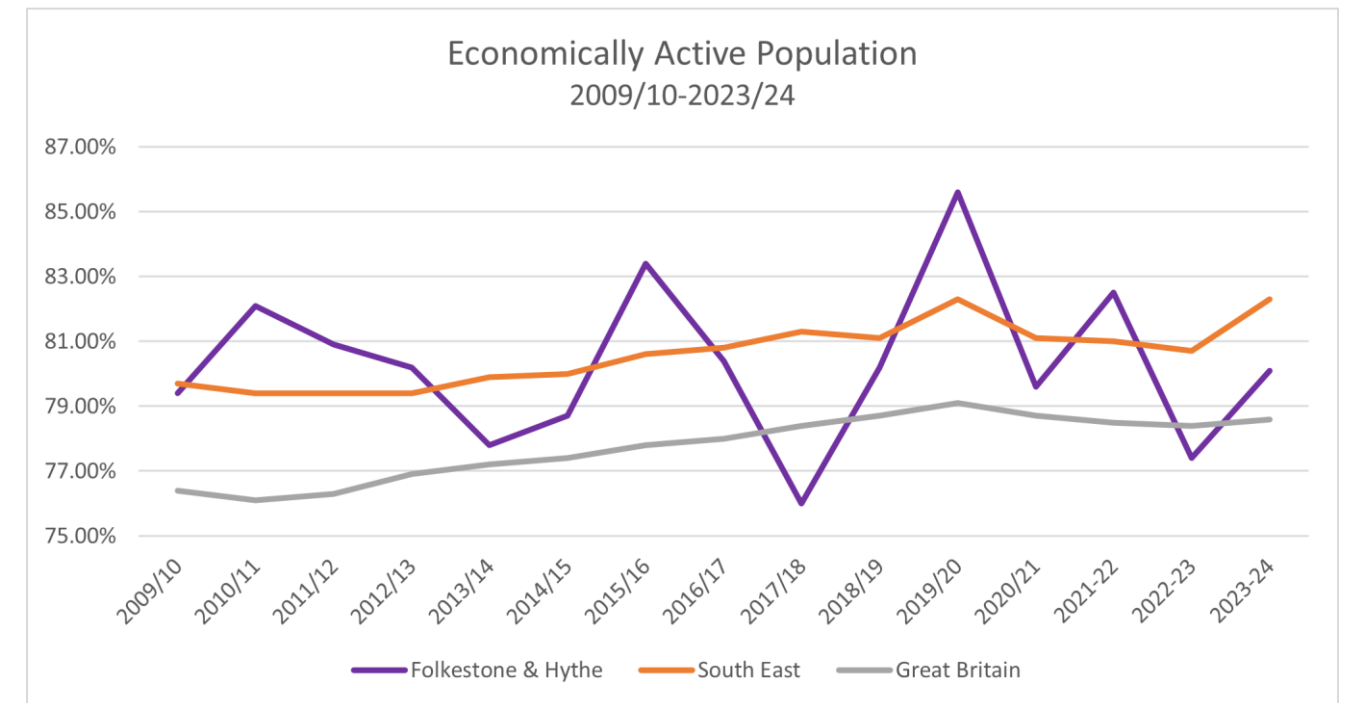
Age Range	Folkestone & Hythe	Kent	Great Britain
16-24	1.4%	1.0%	0.9%
25-64	3.7%	3.1%	2.9%
65 and over	2.8%	2.3%	2.8%

Source: KCC District Profile/ DWP Longitudinal Study, November 2023

Economic Profile

Labour Supply & Economic Activity

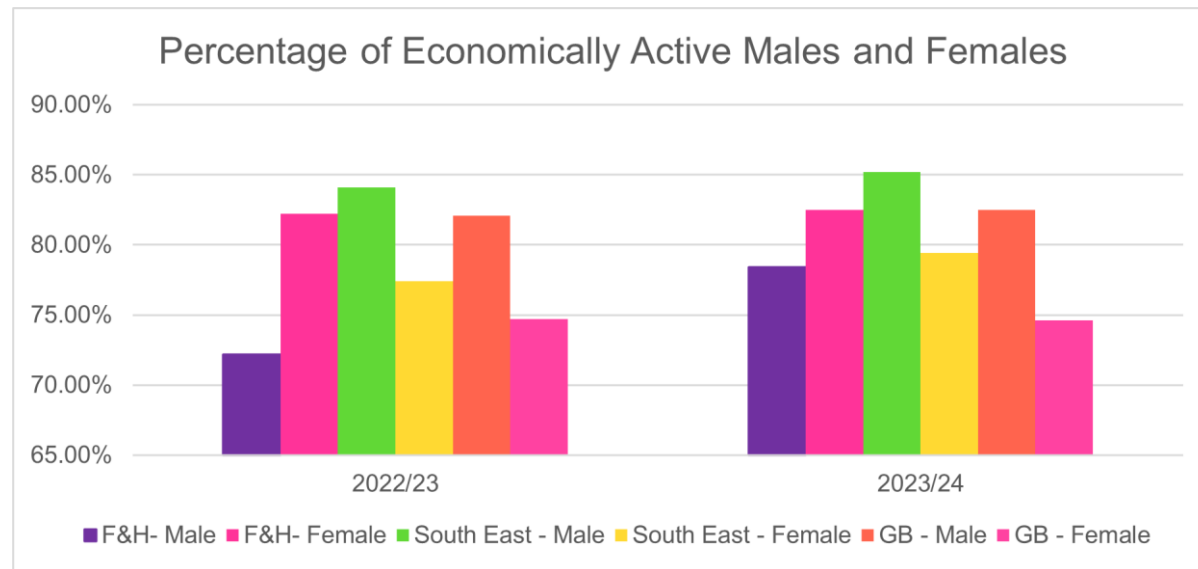
In 2023-24, 80.1% of those aged between 16 and 64 were 'economically active', defined as 'either in employment or unemployed and available for and actively seeking work' compared with 77.4% in 2022-23.



There has historically been some differential between the proportion of economically active men and women. In 2016/17 for example, 85.9% of males were economically active in comparison to 74.8% of females. In 2023-24, the proportion of economically active females increased to 82.5% and the proportion of economically active males decreased to 78.4%. The graph on the following page shows a comparison with the year before.

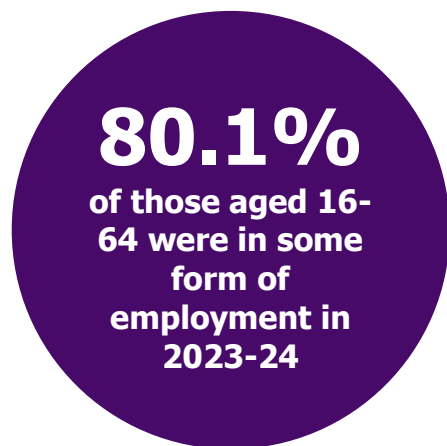
04 Understanding our Communities

Economic Profile (continued)

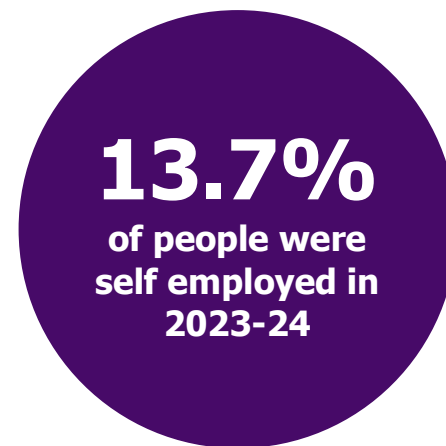


In 2023/24, 80.1% of those aged 16-64 were in some form of employment. The majority of people aged 16-64 who were classed as employees has fallen from 60.5% in 2022/23 to 57.4% in 2023/24. The number of those classed as self-employed has decreased from a high of 20.8% in 2019/20 to 11.9% in 2020/21 as a likely result of the pandemic. In 2022/23, the figure has continued to decrease to 11.3%, but in 2023/24 this has increased slightly to 13.7%.

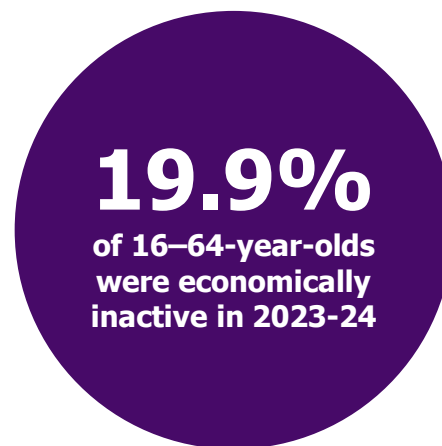
The proportion of residents classed as 'economically inactive' has shown a decrease for the monitoring year - in 2022/23 22.6% of those aged 16-64 were unavailable to work in 2023/24 the figure has fallen to 19.9% is now above the average when compared to the South East (17.7%) and Great Britain as whole (21.4%).



Source: NOMIS



Source: NOMIS

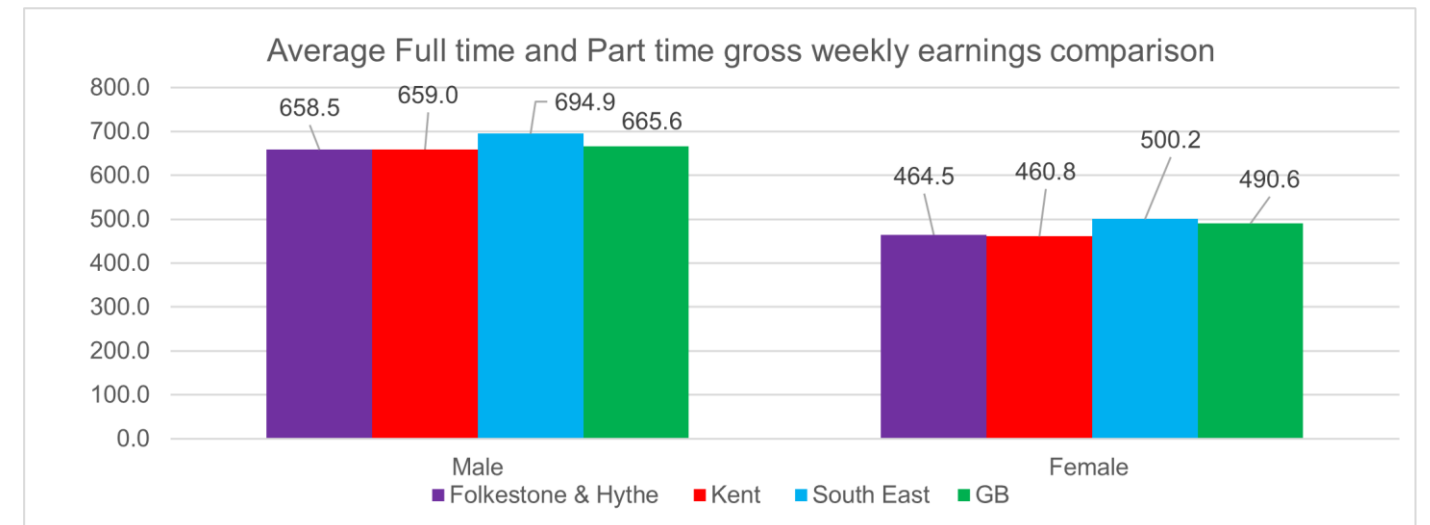


Source: NOMIS

Earnings and Income

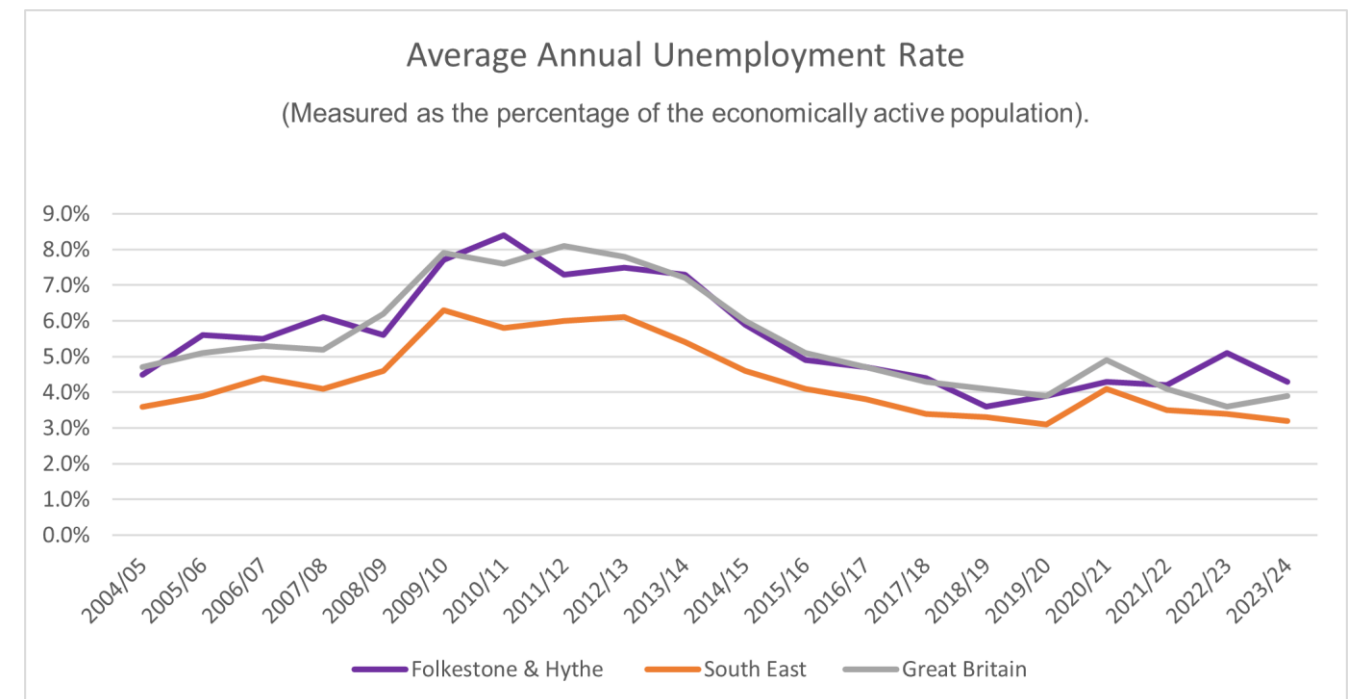
The average gross earnings for a Folkestone & Hythe resident in 2023/24 was £659.10 per week which is slightly higher than those for the average Kent resident (£651.60 per

week), but lower than the South East (£704.30 per week) and Great Britain as a whole (£681.70 per week).



Unemployment and Working Age Benefits

The unemployment rate in the district has decreased from 5.1% in 2022/23 to 4.3% in 2023/24, however it is above the South East (3.2%) and Great Britain (3.9%) averages. The graph below shows the average unemployment rate from 2004/05 to 2023/24:



04 Understanding our Communities

Employment by Occupation: Proportion of those in Employment in 2024

	Folkestone & Hythe	South East	Great Britain
Soc 2010 major group 1-3	54.2%	57.6%	52.9%
1 Managers, directors and senior officials	#	13.5%	11%
2 Professional occupations	30.5%	28.3%	26.6%
3 Associate professional & technical	#	15.8%	15.3%
Soc 2010 major group 4-5	18.4%	17.7%	18.2%
4 Administrative & secretarial	#	8.9%	9.4%
5 Skilled trades occupations	#	8.7%	8.7%
Soc 2010 major group 6-7	#	13%	14.6%
6 Caring, leisure and Other Service occupations	#	7.8%	8.4%
7 Sales and customer service occs	#	5.1%	6.2%
Soc 2010 major group 8-9	#	11.7%	14.3%
8 Process plant & machine operatives	#	4.3%	5.4%
9 Elementary occupations	#	7.3%	8.9%

Sample size too small for reliable estimate

Source: NOMIS

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Unemployment and Working Age Benefits (continued)

The 'claimant count' is the proportion of those aged 16-64 claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. At the end of 2023/24 the claimant count recorded a slight increase within the district from 4.0% in March 2023 to 4.2% in March 2024. The current count is still higher in comparison to the South East (3.0%) and national average (3.8%). When we consider claimant count by age, there appears to be a higher claimant count amongst 18-21 year olds

Age Range	Folkestone & Hythe	South East	Great Britain
16+	4.0%	2.8%	3.7%
16-17	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
18-24	6.6%	3.7%	4.9%
(of which 18-21)	7.0%	3.7%	5.0%
25-49	4.6%	3.2%	4.2%
50+	2.8%	2.1%	2.7%

Source: NOMIS 2023

Deprivation

Folkestone & Hythe is a diverse district. Not dissimilar to other local authority areas in East Kent, it has areas that are within the most deprived 10% of England and areas that are within the least deprived 10%.

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), 2019

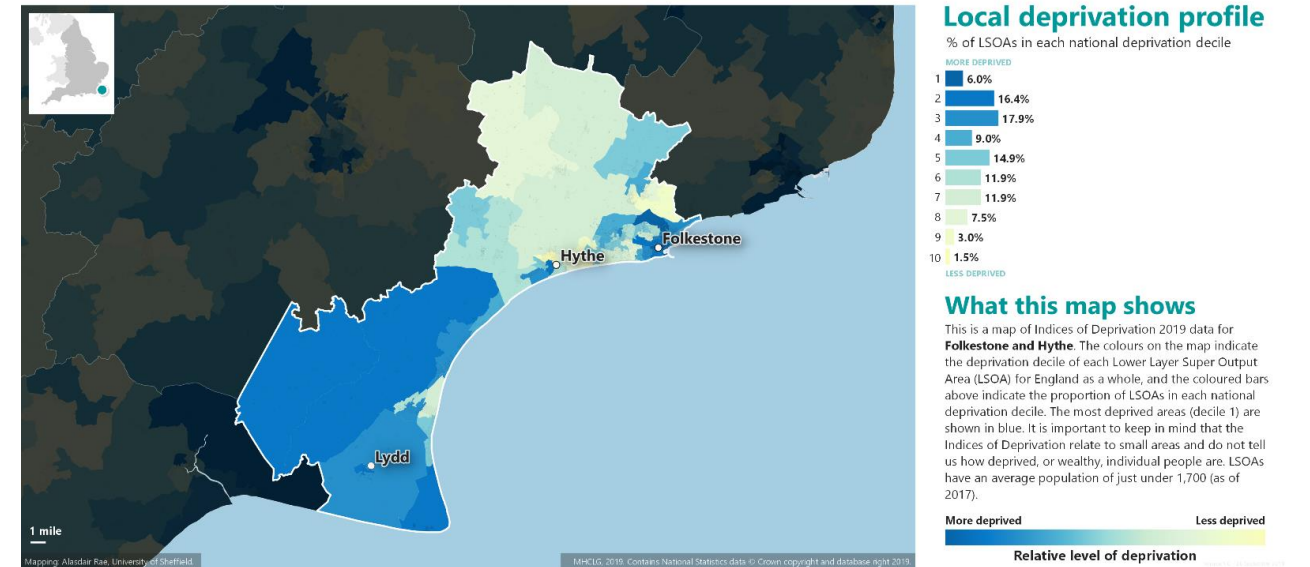
The map below shows the latest indices of multiple deprivation (2019) based on combined data from income, employment, education, skills and training, health deprivation and disability, crime, barriers to housing and services as well as living environment deprivation. The darkest blue areas show the worst deprivation. Data is split into areas generated by the Office for National Statistics based on population size called Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) rather than by electoral ward.

LSOA Definition: Lower-Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are small areas designed to be of a similar population size, with an average of approximately 1,500 residents or 650 households. There are 32,844 Lower-layer LSOAs in England. LSOAs are a standard statistical geography produced by the Office for National Statistics for the reporting of small area statistics.

English Indices of Deprivation 2019

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE



Above: Map of Folkestone & Hythe showing a 2019 profile of deprivation. Darker coloured areas on the map represent the more deprived areas and lighter coloured areas least deprived.

The table below shows how Folkestone & Hythe compares to other Kent local authority areas in an Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD):

Local Authority	IMD - Rank of average score* (Out of 317 local authorities in England)	Ranking for Deprivation in Kent
Thanet	30	1
Swale	56	2
Folkestone & Hythe	90	3
Dover	113	4
Gravesham	123	5
Dartford	154	6
Ashford	158	7
Canterbury	179	8
Maidstone	185	9
Tonbridge and Malling	234	10
Sevenoaks	251	11
Tunbridge Wells	274	12

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), 2019

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Table Notes

***IMD - Rank of average score:** The average score summary measure is calculated by averaging the Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) scores in each larger area after they have been population weighted. The resultant scores for the larger areas are then ranked, where the rank of 1 (most deprived) is given to the area with the highest score.



Source: MHCLG 2019



Source: MHCLG 2019



Source: MHCLG 2019

Seven Domains of Deprivation:

The rank of average score provided to an area is calculated using an area's individual scores across the seven Domains of Deprivation (DoDs):

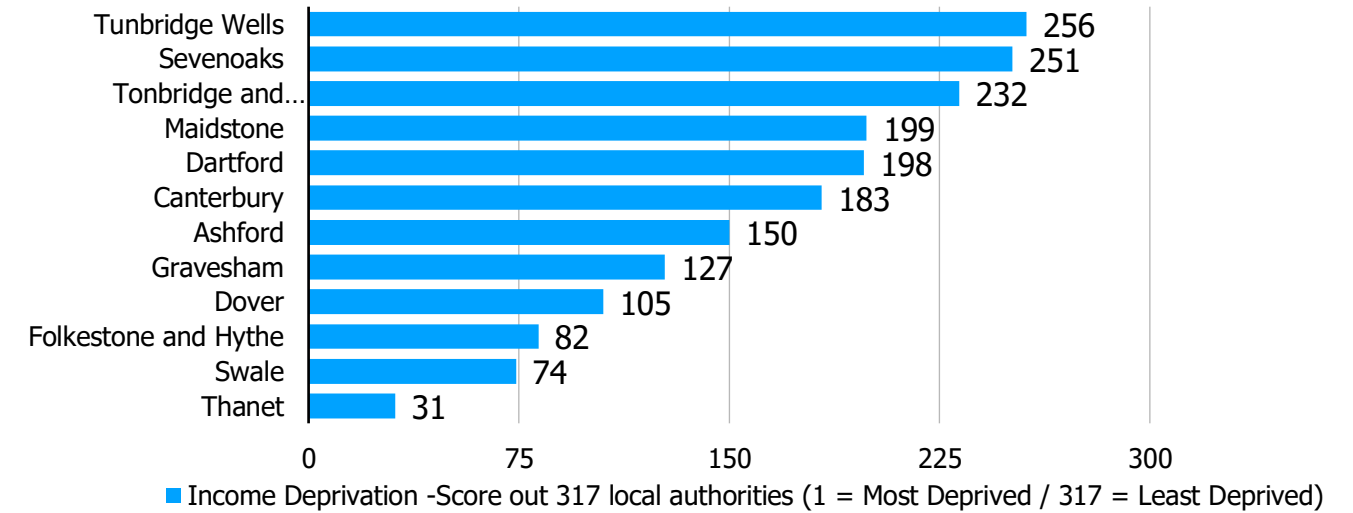
1. Income
2. Employment
3. Education
4. Health
5. Crime
6. Barriers to housing and services
7. Living environment

Each of the above domains is based on a suite of indicators that are used to calculate an overall ranking for each local authority area.

The following graphs show how the district compares with other Kent local authority areas on the Seven DoDs, where the ranking of 1 is classed as 'most deprived' and 317 'least deprived'.

1. Income:

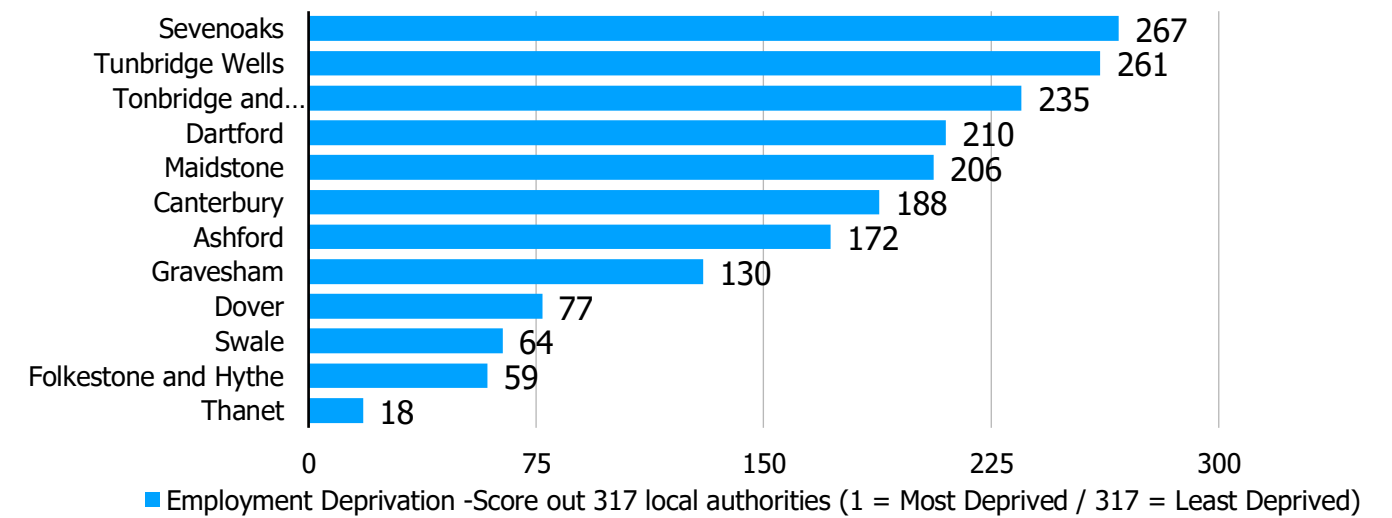
Income Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



The above graph shows Tunbridge Wells to be the least income deprived and Thanet to be the most income deprived. Folkestone & Hythe is ranked as the third most deprived for income out of the twelve Kent local authority areas.

2. Employment:

Employment Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)

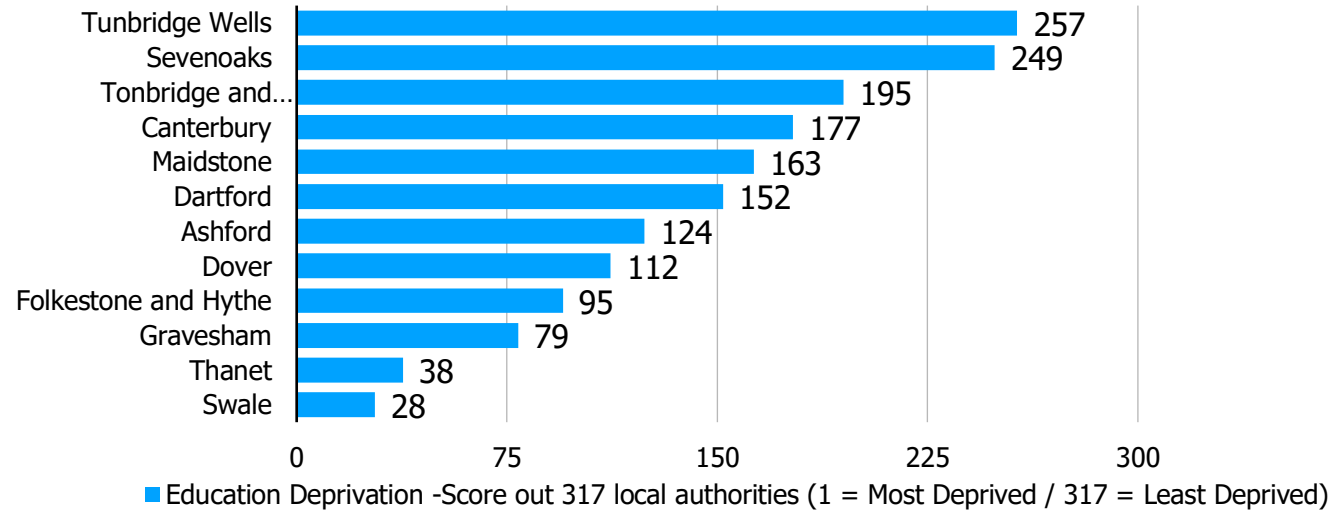


The above graph shows Sevenoaks to be the least employment deprived and Thanet to be the most employment deprived. Folkestone & Hythe is ranked as the second most deprived for employment out of the twelve Kent local authority areas.

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3. Education:

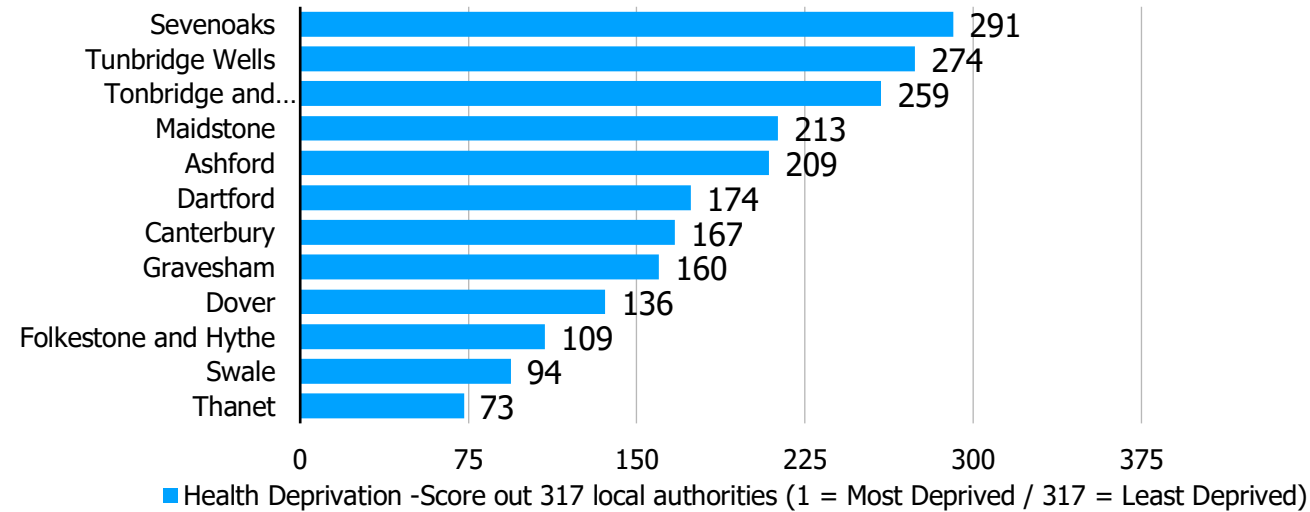
Education Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



The above graph shows Tunbridge Wells to be the least education deprived and Swale to be the most education deprived. Folkestone & Hythe is ranked as the fourth most deprived for education out of the twelve Kent local authority areas.

4. Health:

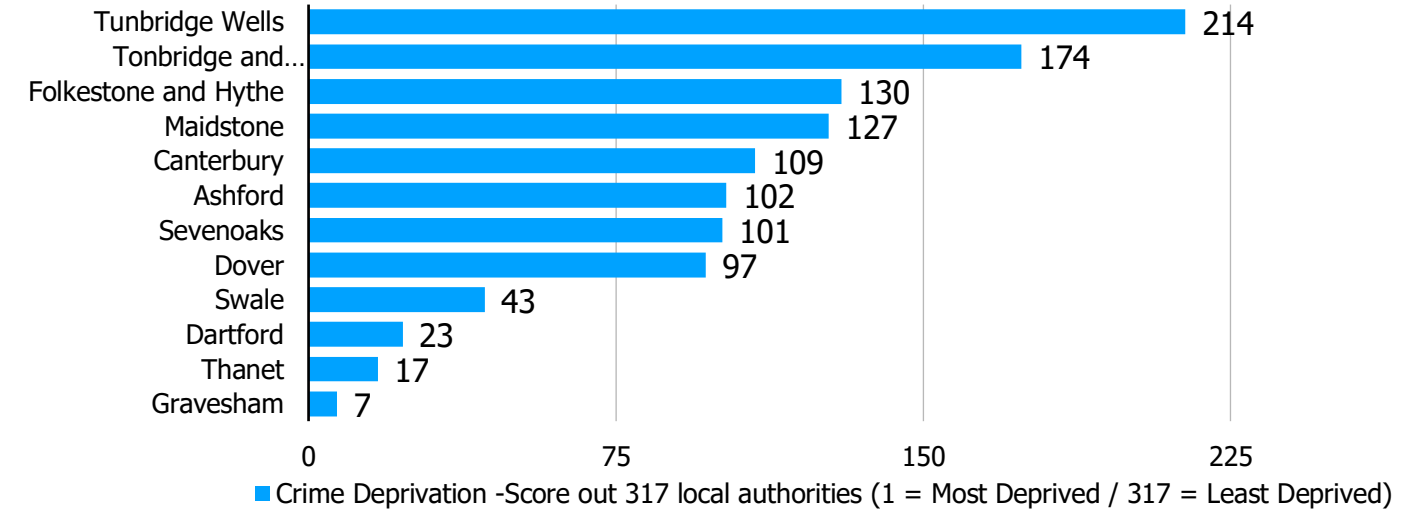
Health Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



The above graph shows Sevenoaks to be the least health deprived and Thanet to be the most health deprived. Folkestone & Hythe is ranked as the third most deprived for health out of the twelve Kent local authority areas.

5. Crime:

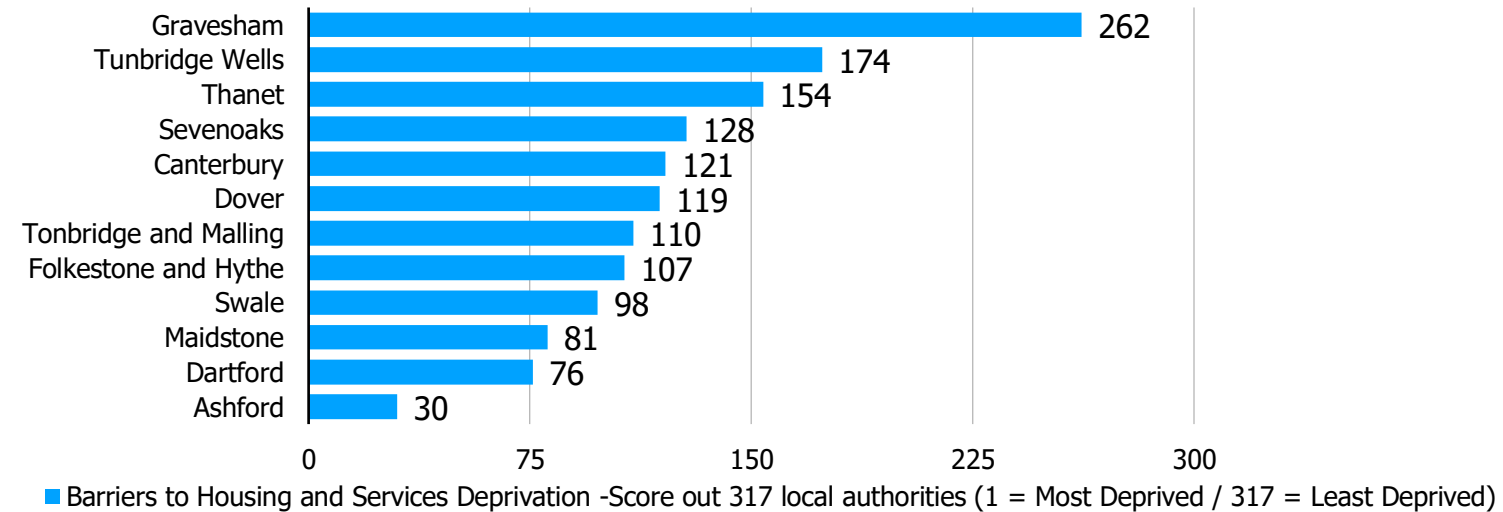
Crime Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



The above graph shows Tunbridge Wells to be the least crime deprived and Gravesham to be the most crime deprived. Folkestone & Hythe is ranked as the third least deprived for crime out of the twelve Kent local authority areas.

6. Barriers to Housing Services

Barriers to Housing and Services Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



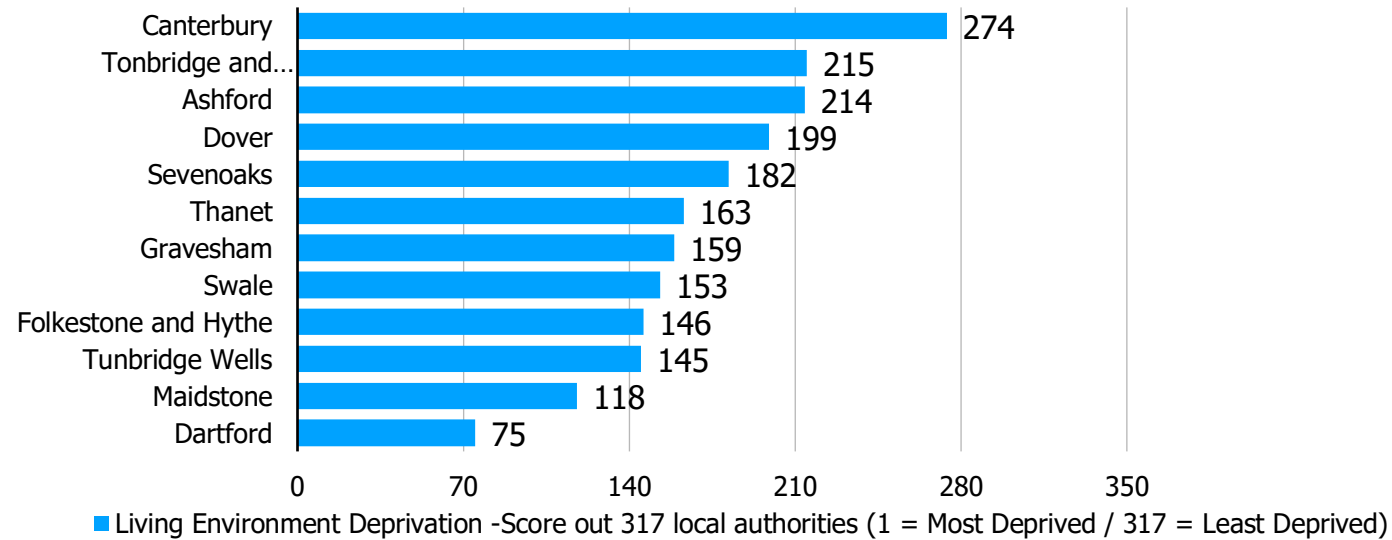
The above graph shows Gravesham to be the least deprived in relation to barriers to housing and services and Ashford to be the most deprived in this area. Folkestone & Hythe is ranked as the fifth most deprived for barriers to housing and services out of the twelve Kent local authority areas.

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Seven Domains of Deprivation (continued):

7. Living Environment:

Living Environment Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



The above graph shows Canterbury to be the least deprived in relation to Living Environment and Dartford to be the most deprived in this area. Folkestone & Hythe is ranked as the fourth most deprived for living environment out of the twelve Kent local authority areas.

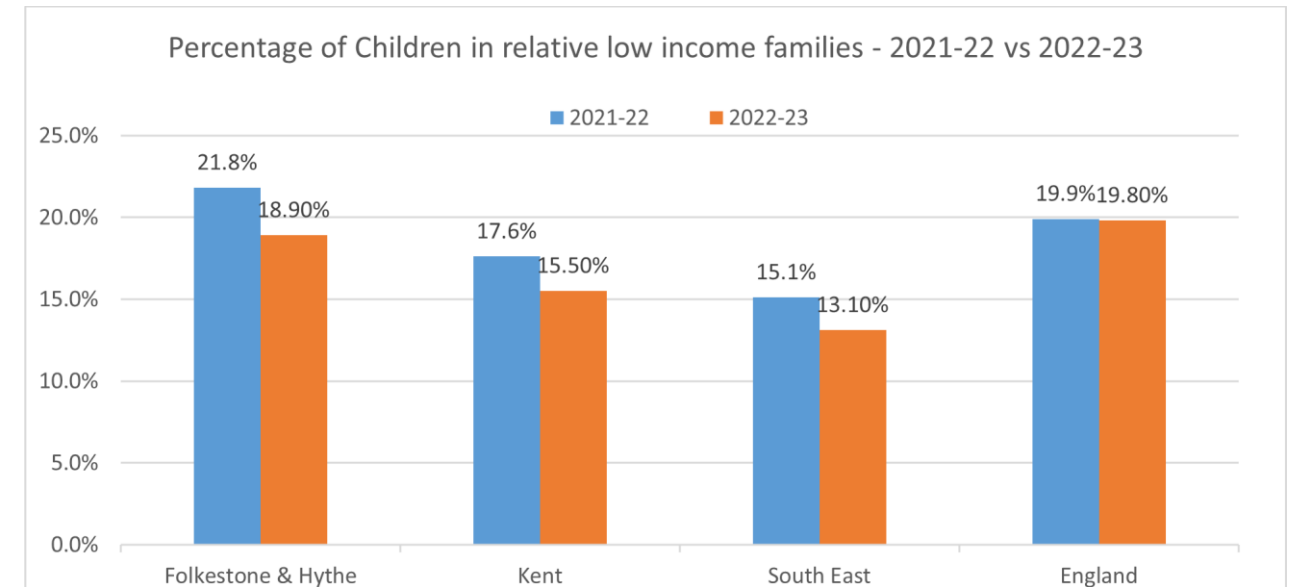
Child Poverty:

Child poverty figures show the proportion of children living in relative low-income families.

Relative low income is defined as a family in low income before housing costs in the reference year.

The latest data from 2022/23 shows that 18.9% of children are in relative low-income families in Folkestone & Hythe and this is “significantly worse” than the average across Kent and the South East.

The following graph provides a comparison between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 years.

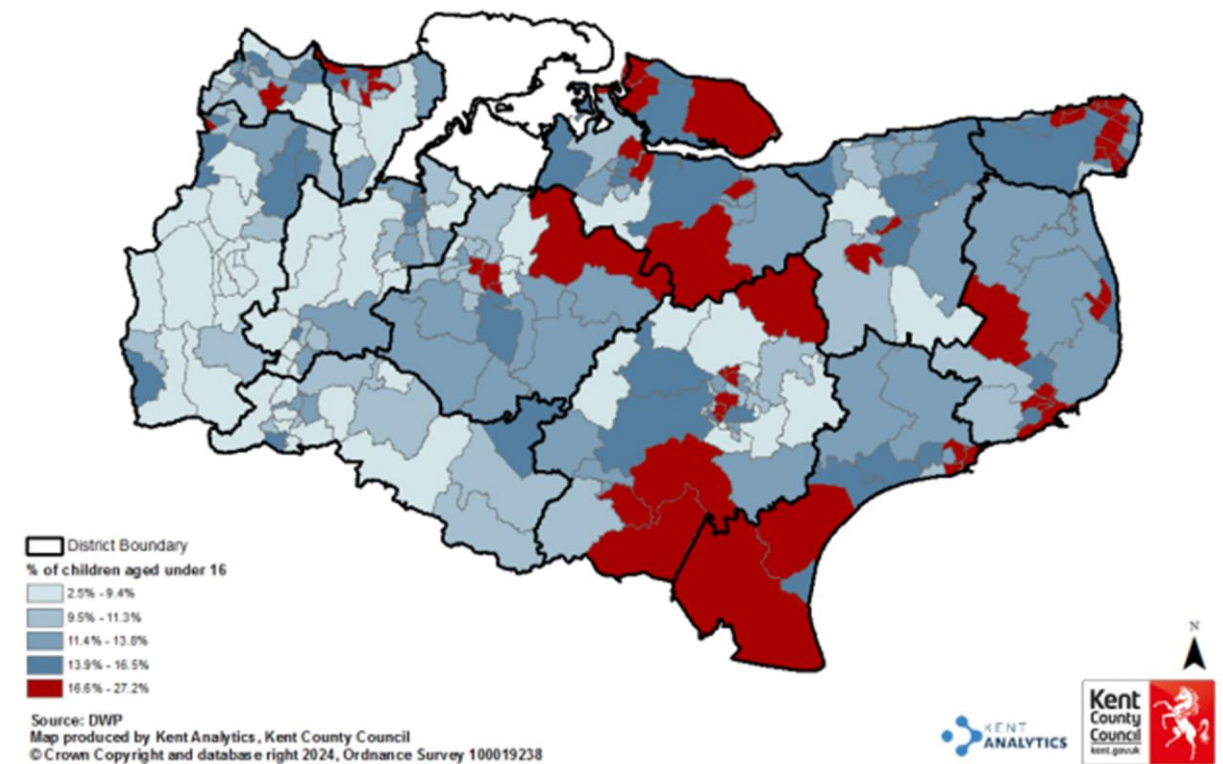


Source: Table 12b KCC Strategic Commissioning Statistical Bulletin 2024– Children in Poverty

The heat map below shows the percentage of children living in relative low-income families across Kent wards in 2022/23. In Folkestone & Hythe, the map shows the highest proportion of children living in relative low-income families (shaded in dark red) to be situated in the Folkestone Central, East and Harbour wards as well in the Romney Marsh and Walland and Denge Marsh wards in the western part of the district.

Map 1: Percentage of children living in absolute low-income families

Percentage of children in absolute low-income families 2022/23



04 Understanding our Communities

Data Sources:

The most up-to-date data at the time of publication has been utilised when compiling this demographic and socio-economic information. Further information can be found at the following sources:

General:

The 2021 district profile, published by Kent County Council's Strategic Business Development & Intelligence Unit on 9th September 2024, contains data from the ONS mid-2023 population estimates as well as the 2021 census:

[Area profiles - Kent County Council](#)

Population:

Census 2021 (Interactive Maps) - [Census Maps - Census 2021 data interactive, ONS](#)

KCC Interactive mid-year population estimate toolkit: provides access to population estimates by gender and single year of age for all 12 Kent local authority districts and Kent County as a whole back to 2003:

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/excel_doc/0007/158902/Interactive-population-estimates-toolkit.xlsm

KCC Housing Led Forecasts Interactive population toolkit (2021):

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/excel_doc/0019/12880/Interactive-population-forecast-toolkit.xlsm

ONS: Births in England and Wales: Summary Tables (2022)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/liv ebirths/datasets/birthsummarytables>

ONS: Deaths Registered monthly in England and Wales (2024)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/de aths/datasets/monthlyfiguresondeathsregisteredbyareaofusualresidence>

ONS: Conception Statistics – England and Wales (2021)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/co nceptionandfertilityrates/datasets/conceptionstatisticsenglandandwalesreferencetable s>

ONS: Subnational Ageing Tool: Interactive tool to compare current and projected indicators of ageing across local authorities, regions and countries in the UK:

[Subnational ageing tool - Office for National Statistics](#)

ONS: Life expectancy for local areas of the UK: between 2001 to 2003 and 2020 to 2022: [Life expectancy for local areas in England, Northern Ireland and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

KCC Births and Deaths in Kent - 2020

https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/13827/Births-and-deaths-bulletin.pdf

Labour market profiles of the district are constantly updated by the ONS National Online Manpower Information System (NOMIS): [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

NOMIS: annual survey of hours and earnings

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/asher>

Health:

Public Health England's [Public Health Outcomes Framework \(Folkestone & Hythe\) - at a glance summary \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

KCC Statistical Bulletin 2024 - [Children in Poverty](#)

[Suicides in England and Wales by local authority \(2023\) - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Quality and Outcomes Framework, 2023-24 - NHS England Digital](#)

Deprivation: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) - English indices of multiple deprivation 2019

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

Section 5

Compliments, Feedback and Complaints

Introduction

In this section we provide an outline of the comments we have received from customers relating to equality and diversity matters.

The council records compliments, feedback and complaints received from customers. These are categorised, analysed and reported on so that improvements can be made to services.

Further information can be found at: <https://folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/your-council/council-information/make-a-complaint-or-compliment>

05 Compliments, Feedback and Complaints

Compliments, Feedback and Complaints - Overview in 2023-24:

During 2023-24 the council received 291 complaints and 132 compliments. Of the 291 complaints received:



Stage One complaints are investigated and responded to by the complaints investigator or a specialist of the relevant service area. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response their complaint will be progressed to Stage Two, where it is investigated by the lead officer of the service area to which the complaint relates.

Of the 291 complaints received, 1 was related to equality and diversity issues. The nature of the complaint related to:



Stage 1 Complaint: Automatic Number Plate Recognition system at Sandgate Road Car Park for a blue badge holder driver

A total of 14 complaints during the year were progressed to the Ombudsman (9 to Local Government Ombudsman of which: 1 was upheld, 1 was partially upheld and 6 were not upheld and 1 resulted in no further action) and (5 to Housing Ombudsman of which 2 were upheld and 3 resulted in no further action). No ombudsman complaints related to Equality and Diversity.

Section 6

Equality Objectives

Introduction

In this Annual Equality and Diversity Report we have given an overview of the issues affecting the district, the policies and procedures the council has in place and the work we are doing, on our own and with our partners to address these issues.

The Equality and Diversity Policy (2021-25) has an associated action plan. The final section provides an update on these actions.

06 Equality Objectives

	Action	Lead Function	Deadline	2023-24 Update
1.	Ensuring Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are completed where they are required (i.e. where the council introduces a new policy or service, or where there is a significant revision to an existing policy or service) and that they are carried out in the correct manner (e.g. with appropriate consultation with affected parties).	Senior Performance Officer	Ongoing	<p>EIAs are documented as part of the service planning process annually and managers complete EIAs when a policy or service is introduced or revised. The EIAs undertaken during the year have been documented in section 2 of this report.</p> <p>Reminders are sent to managers to ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken when a new policy or service, or where there is a significant revision to an existing policy or service.</p>
2.	To introduce a dedicated complaints report that will focus on equality related issues that arise under the council's corporate complaints policy and will reported to the Corporate Leadership Team on a six month basis to assist with identifying and addressing any equality related issues within a council service.	Senior Performance Officer	Ongoing	<p>All complaints with an equality and diversity element are logged with a specific suffix for reporting purposes. Any subsequent actions taken and lessons learnt are recorded and monitored through Salesforce to ensure completion of any actions. Lessons learnt and actions taken are published in the annual complaints report was reported to the Corporate Leadership Team. The 2023/24 Report is now published on the council website.</p>
3.	Involving services users and local communities (including people with protected characteristics) in the design of council services.	All Service Leads	Ongoing	<p>In Housing, our Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel (STAP) includes members of varying ages, genders and disabilities, including one who is a wheelchair user and one who is registered blind. In 2023/24, STAP were consulted on and influenced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Housing Revenue Account Business Plan • the content of our 2024 tenant satisfaction survey • an options appraisal of repairs & maintenance (R&M) services, to inform the procurement of a new R&M contract • our service charge de-pooling project • the Regulator of Social Housing's consultation on its revised consumer standards • updates to our Tenant Engagement Strategy • our Housing Anti-Social Behaviour Policy • updates to our Right to Buy Policy • updates to our Management Transfer Procedure • the procurement of both a new housing communal cleaning contract and a new telecare (lifeline) system for the Independent Living schemes, with STAP members sitting on the evaluation panels for both tenders <p>The District Food Network (DFN) have involved young people in the design of its logo and in doing so helped to raise awareness of the work the DFN does and has sought wider thinking from young people.</p> <p>Transportation has carried out informal consultations with residents and businesses to aid the design of parking schemes.</p> <p>Local community contacts have been involved in the development of the Folkestone and Hythe Health Alliance and its key priorities. Likewise the Council has participated in local forums to listen to views (e.g. FCF).</p> <p>Some early work has begun on establishing a Youth forum to help listen to the voice of yps in shaping services.</p>

06 Equality Objectives

	Action	Lead Function	Deadline	2023-24 Update
	All managers undertaking stage 2 EIA exercise will consult appropriately and publish the results.	All Service Leads	As required	No Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessments undertaken during the year.
4.	Routinely publishing the result of consultation exercises on the council website and disaggregating the results (where possible) for different equality groups.	All Service Leads	As required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Folkestone – A Brighter Future' between summer 2023 and spring 2024. The community engagement took place online and face to face at three separate engagement events. These public engagement events were opportunities for residents to look at the detail of what is being proposed, to talk to those working on the project and to make comments on the plans. Sample feedback of all three phases of engagement were published online. • The result of the consultation about future leisure and play facilities at East Cliff was published in July 2023. • The results of consultations for controlled parking zones within the district are published on the council's website.

06 Equality Objectives

	Action	Lead Function	Deadline	2023-24 Update
5.	Run training for staff on the particular issues faced by minority and vulnerable groups to support them to deliver appropriate services to ALL customers (e.g. Dementia awareness).	Organisational Development	Ongoing	<p>Specific training delivered during this period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the customer experience for people with dementia (Alzheimer's Society) (June 2023) Understanding Autism (National Autistic Society) (September 2023) Refugee awareness (November 2023) Understanding Domestic Abuse (January 2024) Equality, diversity, and inclusivity awareness (February 2024) Working with Customers with mental health issues (March 2024).
6.	To ensure councillors and staff receive regular updates on Prevent, Safeguarding vulnerable people and partnership working as part of the council's wider role.	<p>Community Safety Specialist</p> <p>Health, Wellbeing & Partnerships Senior Specialist</p>	Ongoing	<p>All staff are able to access essential eLearning on PREVENT. The website has been updated to provide more detailed information and links to key documents, campaigns and initiatives.</p> <p>New PREVENT posters following the Summer's unrest have been uploaded. The Intranet has also been updated. A new training plan for this area of work is due to be launched during December 24 / January 2025.</p> <p>Members of OSC & Cabinet also receive updates and input to the renewal of the safeguarding policy every 2 years before being endorsed by full Council. There is now a version available on the website. CSP partnership work considers these subjects when the CSP plan is reviewed every year by members of OSC and is made available on the website too.</p>
7	Equality and diversity training is part of our induction and for all staff to undertake a mandatory refresh e-learning module every 3 years.	Organisational Development	Ongoing	<p>As part of their induction, all staff are required to undertake an EDI e-learning module. These are re-done every 3 years. As at the end of the financial year 2023/24, 86% of staff were up to date with their EDI e-learning.</p> <p>We hold quarterly inductions for new starters. As part of this process, we discuss our competency framework that includes understanding others' needs and showing empathy and respect.</p> <p>EDI is also a component of other training programmes such as ILM L3 Diploma for Team Leaders, and aspects of our Manager Development Programme e.g. recruitment & selection and absence management sessions.</p>
8.	Increase options for customers to connect and transact with us online to help focus resources on supporting customers who are not able to go online as defined within the council's Customer Access Strategy.	All Service Leads	Ongoing	<p>In 2023 the Housing team launched Housing Online, which is a self-service, sign-in tool where tenants can access their account themselves whenever they want to, doing everything from raising a repair or making a rent payment online.</p> <p>During 2023/24 we have continued to promote Housing Online to tenants to maximise take-up, to free up staff resources to support tenants who are unable to engage digitally. This was promoted by Housing Service staff, in our tenant newsletter and at our sheltered schemes to ensure all tenants were aware of the functionality and were supported in using it.</p>

06 Equality Objectives

	Action	Lead Function	Deadline	2023-24 Update
9.	Produce a 'Resident Involvement Strategy', ensuring that involved residents reflect the diversity of the council's tenants and leaseholders.	Housing Operations Lead Specialist	March 2021	The Tenant Engagement Strategy was refreshed in 2023/24 and approved by Cabinet on 20th March 2024.
10.	We will continue to evaluate our resourcing strategies, maximise accessible development opportunities, and promote flexible working approaches to support equality and diversity in our workforce.	Human Resources	Ongoing	<p>The council has an agile working framework in place alongside a set of principles to better enable flexible working approaches. The council's People Strategy also supports a culture that, amongst other things, supports smarter agile and flexible working. The council has enhanced this further by continuing to take part in a shared workspaces programme that enables staff to work from other local government offices across Kent.</p> <p>The continual review and development of our recruitment and retention strategies is also a theme within our People Strategy.</p> <p>Recording of training sessions has advanced accessibility as they can be viewed as any time. The development of hybrid training sessions has further advanced this.</p> <p>Specific management training on recruitment and selection took place in October 2023 and absence management in March 2024.</p> <p>In 2023/24 the council engaged in developing future local talent through supporting work experience placements, talking at school / educational establishments career events and supporting activities such as application form / CV writing and interview practice.</p>



www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

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