

# Knowsley Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

## Digital Inclusion

### **T h i s   r e p o r t**

This report has been prepared jointly by Knowsley Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and partners of the Knowsley Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB).

Its purpose is to provide an analysis of Digital Inclusion in order to determine the following:

- How much impact does this issue have on local people?
- Can this impact be reduced through local action?
- Can local action reduce health inequalities?
- Will local action on this help address other issues too?

Understanding these things helps the HWB determine the level of priority that this issue should be given in the Borough's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

This is one of a series of reports that comprise Knowsley's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), which will inform Knowsley's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to establish the main barriers to digital inclusion within Knowsley and assess the extent to which residents and businesses are affected by the identified challenges. This report will identify those who are most at risk of digital exclusion and the associated disadvantages.

This report also highlights the potential impact of digital exclusion and inclusion on the health and wellbeing of Knowsley residents.

### **What are the most critical digital inclusion challenges facing Knowsley?**

ONS data estimated that in early 2011, 17.5% of the national population had never used the internet. Four years later, in January 2015, results from Knowsley's own Tracker Survey indicated that around 21% of residents still had never used the internet. This estimate may be a little higher than the actual figure locally, due to the way the surveys were carried out (see later), but all the evidence indicates that digital exclusion is a key issue in Knowsley.

The main barriers to digital inclusion can be summarised as:

- Participation – the absence of motivation, interest and confidence to use the internet.
- Skills – lack of the skills to be able to use the internet, computers and other digital devices.
- Accessibility – no, or limited, access to the right equipment to connect to the internet. This includes access to assistive technologies for those who need additional support to use the internet independently.

### **What is the scale of the problem, and who is most affected by digital inclusion issues in Knowsley?**

Typically those groups who are more likely to have their life chances adversely affected by digital exclusion include:

- older adults 65+;
- people with disabilities or long standing illnesses;
- people on low incomes (the unemployed, those on benefits, those living in social housing, ex-offenders, the homeless);
- people with low educational attainment and/or skill levels often linked with 2 above;
- adults aged between 45 and 65; and
- children in poverty.

The main body of the report goes into greater detail in relation to these groups and digital exclusion.

### **How are things expected to change over the next few years?**

Nationally, ONS data shows that the number of people who have never used the internet has fallen from 17.5% early in in 2011 to 10% by August 2015. Unfortunately there is no equivalent trend data for Knowsley, but it is likely that the Borough has also experienced a fall in the proportion of the population who have

never used the internet, albeit at a slower rate. This is because many of the factors that contribute to digital exclusion are more prevalent in Knowsley.

### **How good is the available intelligence, and where are the gaps in our knowledge?**

Knowsley's Tracker Survey is an important source of information on internet usage across the Borough. Two surveys (in October 2014 and January 2015) each involved in-street interviews with around 1,200 residents, providing a good deal of strong evidence about digital inclusion and exclusion locally. However, there are some considerations.

The Tracker Surveys were conducted during working hours in areas of high footfall across the Borough. This approach increased the likelihood that respondents would be unemployed people, or in retired or older age groups, or experiencing a long-standing illness or disability.

For example, unemployed people represented 14% of the survey samples, compared to the Borough's actual unemployment level of around 10%. Similarly, 34.5% of respondents reported that they had a long-standing illness or disability, which is above the estimate from the 2011 Census of around 25%.

As these groups are known to be at a higher risk of digital exclusion, the survey results are likely to overestimate the proportion of residents who are digitally excluded. However, this also means that the survey results relating to the underlying reasons for exclusion will be based on strong survey samples and should therefore provide valuable intelligence.

Additional in-house data regarding usage of online services has also been made available alongside partnership data.

Agencies such as GO ON North West are assisting in collating data at a regional and a more local level; however gaps in our knowledge and understanding on this issue remain. Excluding insight and feedback, there is limited local third sector intelligence – i.e. data relating to voluntary groups online activity or use of digital channels. This will be further developed through Knowsley's Digital Inclusion Strategy.

## DIGITAL INCLUSION

### 1. WHY IS DIGITAL INCLUSION IMPORTANT?

Being online and using technology is becoming an increasingly regular and important factor, for work, learning and recreational use. Good digital literacy skills and access to technology is beneficial in many different ways such as saving money through online shopping and helping people keep in touch with family and friends. Access to the internet allows businesses to develop the use of online communications and bolster publicity and sales. The diagram below provides an overview of the many advantages of being digitally able, illustrating that it can help to counteract the wider determinants to socioeconomic inequalities.

**Figure 1: The benefits of digital inclusion**



Over the last five years, the profile and importance of digital inclusion has evolved rapidly. Technology, and the benefits of using it, continues to develop at a pace. There is a risk that if Knowsley does not meet the national average for digital capabilities, then Knowsley residents could be left behind and miss out on the opportunities digital technology can provide. Vulnerable residents are at greatest risk, as digital exclusion can compound existing problems such as social exclusion. Failing to keep pace with the rest of society could potentially lead to an increase in health needs due to the links between social isolation/exclusion and mental and physical illnesses.

## 2. WHAT IS THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE FOR KNOWSLEY?

### 2.1 Motivation / Participation

The vast majority of respondents to the local Tracker (79%) have used the internet. Similarly, a significant proportion of respondents (76%) replied positively that they were 'interested' or 'very interested' in using the internet for a variety of purposes. This demonstrates that most residents value the benefits associated with internet usage and as such want to be digitally aware and active.

However, there is a minority who are yet to engage with digital technology. 21% of survey respondents indicated that they had 'never used' the internet. Of these, over half (57%) say they have no interest in using the internet. This therefore reflects that reluctance to become digitally able is present across the borough.

We know from consultations with the local advisory groups that some of the reasons for this reluctance are fear and mistrust of the internet and a lack of understanding of the benefits it can bring.

### 2.2 Skills

As at December 2014, Go ON UK defines basic online skills as having the capability to:

<b>send and receive email</b>	<b>browse the internet</b>
<b>use a search engine</b>	<b>complete online forms</b>

In Knowsley there appears to be a shortage of basic digital skills amongst residents. Results from the tracker surveys indicate that 35% of residents cannot carry out the four basic tasks. This is significantly higher than the national average of 20% and the North West average of 24%.

Supporting this finding, 28% of non internet users said they would require advice on how to use the internet in order to start going online.

The relatively low level of residents with Maths and English skills, compared to national and averages is likely to be a contributing factor to Knowsley's low levels of digital skills. Consultation feedback suggests that a lack of confidence and fear to ask for support are also issues amongst this group.

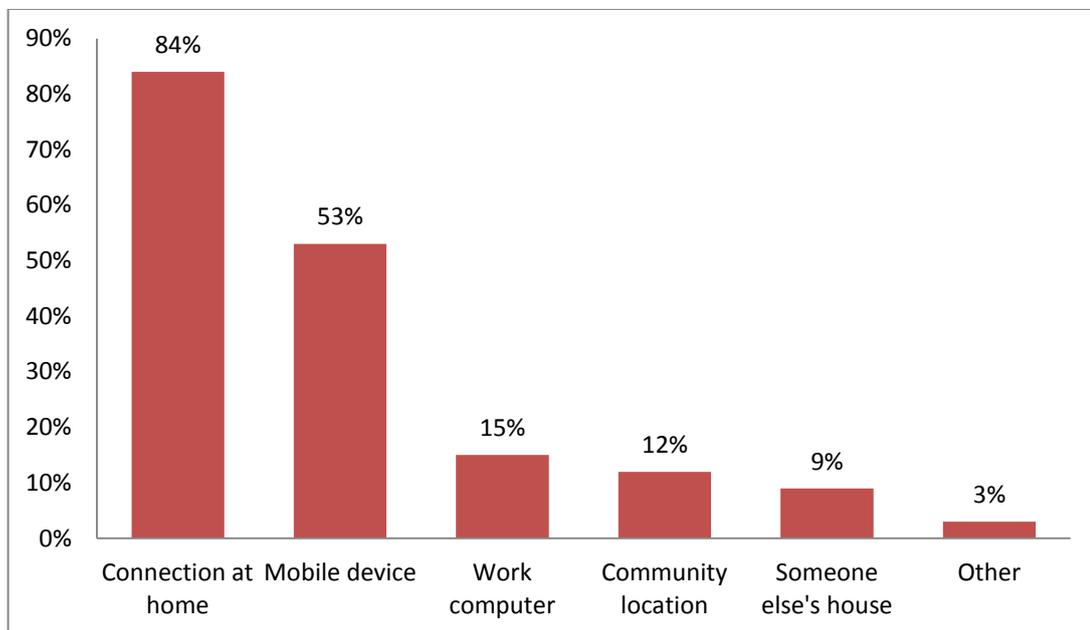
Analysing IT related professions is a way to determine the level of those who have a higher proportion of IT skills. In terms of adults in IT related occupations, around 1.7% of Knowsley residents fall within this employment sector.<sup>1</sup> Again this is below regional and national comparisons of 2.8% for both the North West and England.

### 2.3 Accessibility

Tracker data found that of all internet users, the vast majority go online via an internet connection at home (84%), the second most frequent response at 53% was 'anywhere using a mobile phone'.

**Figure 1: How respondents would access the internet/emails if they needed to**

**Source: Knowsley's tracker survey (winter 2014/15).**



Work has been conducted by First Ark, utilising Point Topic data, to understand household take up of Broadband connections. The findings from this work are fairly positive and show that Knowsley has fixed broadband connectivity that is around or above the national average for both business and residents.

	<b>Knowsley</b>	<b>UK</b>
<b>Household take-up of Broadband connections</b>	76.2%	78.3%
<b>Business take up Broadband connections</b>	85.9%	85.8%

<sup>1</sup> NOMIS 'Occupation (minor groups)' (2011).

However with 24% of households and 14% of businesses across Knowsley with no broadband connection, there is still room for improvement to make it more accessible.

Affordability has been highlighted as a key barrier to accessing the internet in Knowsley. According to local insight, the cost of computers and broadband subscriptions present issues for some residents. Consultation feedback from the Local Advisory Groups found that respondents residing in Huyton and Kirkby, where deprivation is more prevalent and the proportion of unemployed residents exceeds that of the Borough as a whole, cited affordability as one of the main barriers to using the internet. The tracker survey found that across the whole of Knowsley, 12% of respondents identified cost as a challenge to access.

## 2.4 Channel shift

Public services are increasingly shifting to digital channels. This can be evidenced with Universal Credit; a welfare benefit launched in 2013 to replace six means-tested benefits and tax credits: Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support. Evidence suggests that shifting to digital channels in Knowsley will be challenging. Research by CACI has found that Knowsley represents one of the top 5 local authority districts with communities least likely to research local government services online.<sup>2</sup>

These messages were reinforced with feedback from a Knowsley Council customer survey. Consultation with One Stop Shop customers found that over half of residents still prefer to talk to a person rather than contact the council online when it comes to seeking advice, making a complaint or paying a bill. Feedback from a front line staff focus group on digital inclusion indicates that older people in particular express a preference to speak to somebody; this can be linked to increased loneliness experienced by older people due to occurrences associated with this age group such as retirement. It is worth nothing however, that in a similar survey with customers who called the Contact centre, fewer customers expressed this preference. This suggests that phone users may be more willing to engage in online services.

Monthly statistics from Knowsley's Digital Steering Group demonstrate local website usage between September and October (2014) and are outlined in the table below:

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<sup>2</sup> CACI, article summarising CACI report: <http://www.digitalbydefaultnews.co.uk/2014/04/25/which-councils-have-communities-most-likely-to-engage-with-online-services/> (April 2014) (full report unavailable).

**Figure 2: Local website usage (September – October 2014)****Source: Knowsley's Digital Steering Group**

	Knowsley Council	Knowsley Police	Knowsley Housing Trust (KHT)	Knowsley Chamber of Commerce
Website visits	70,044	1,371	2,476	1,730
Forms completed online	57	64	45	

Numbers for online leisure bookings in Knowsley look relatively promising; since April 2014 there have been a total of 79,693 bookings for fitness classes and squash courts, of which 16,280 were processed online, representing 20.4% of all leisure centre bookings.

There are of course many factors that impact on these website statistics which go beyond customer preferences, individual digital skills and access. Other influencing factors include the usability of online services, the scope and range of services provided online and the effectiveness of how they are promoted. These issues will be explored further through the development of Knowsley's Digital Inclusion Strategy which will aim for all partners to provide high quality and secure online products and services that customers want to use.

## 2.5 Supporting Growth

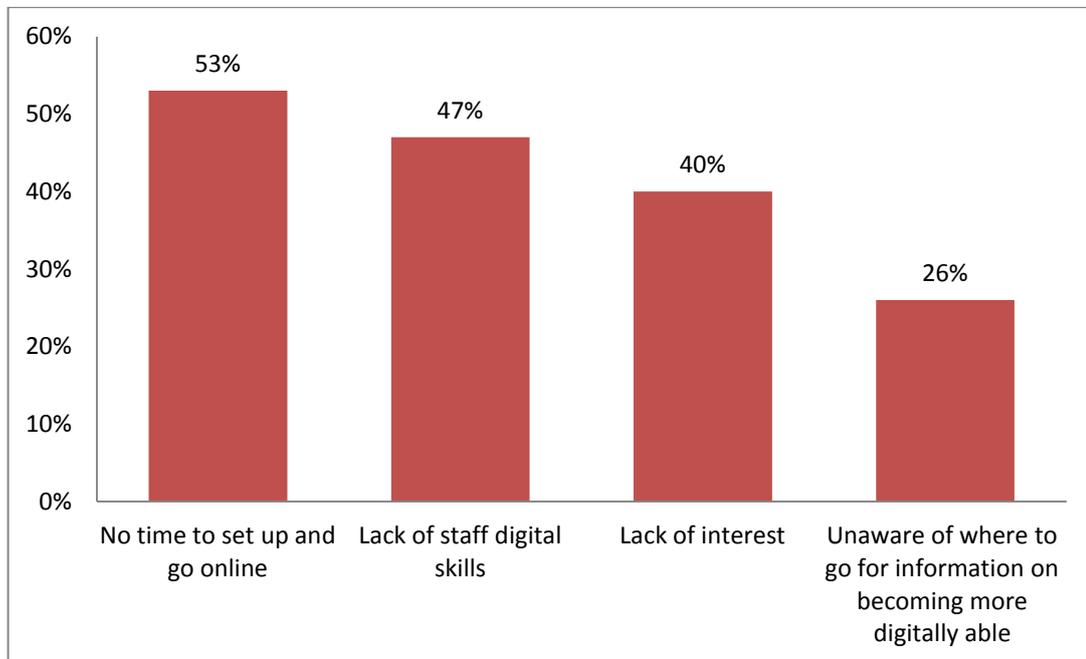
Joint research was undertaken by First Ark and the Knowsley Chamber in March 2015 with 193 small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), representing 6% of all SME's in the Borough. The respondents were representative across all sectors and business sizes 1-9 employees (Micro businesses) 54%, 10-49 employees (small businesses) 36% and 50-249 employees (medium businesses) 10%.

Results from the local survey indicate that medium sized businesses are more likely to have the digital capabilities that are increasingly needed in today's market. Evidence suggests that medium sized businesses in Knowsley are more likely have an email account for all staff, a website and a social media outlet, when compared to micro and small businesses (1-49 people). For example, around 53% of medium businesses who were surveyed provide email accounts for all staff, compared to just 25% of micro and small businesses. Results also showed that medium sized businesses are more confident in securely sending emails when compared to small businesses; this is also the case with search engine optimisation to advertise, as well as using social media to drive growth.

When businesses were asked what issues prevented them from getting online, the most common answers given were:

**Figure 3: Factors preventing local businesses from getting online**

**Source: Local survey conducted by First Ark and the Knowsley Chamber (March 2015)**



It is typically micro and small businesses in Knowsley that experience these issues. For instance, 98% of the respondents that reported poor digital skills as a barrier were from small business, with just 2% from a medium sized business.

It is also of note, that the majority of micro and small businesses surveyed were from retail (12%); transportation, distribution, storage (11%); and accommodation and food services (10%). These industries are typically customer focused and often involve working face-to-face with clients; therefore they are less likely to require digital skills to enhance their jobs/service. This may go far to explain why they are considerably less confident in their digital capabilities when compared to medium sized businesses.

In contrast, manufacturing and engineering services made up the majority of medium businesses surveyed (47%). Manufacturing and engineering services are concerned with research, design and development of systems, processes, machines, tools and equipment. These types of services are familiar with technology and technological processes, so effective digital skills and awareness may be due to this.

## 2.6 Health implications

Health issues can contribute significantly to digital exclusion and results from Knowsley's tracker surveys reflect this. An estimated 52% of respondents who suffer from a disability or long term illness reportedly had no online skills and 13% of respondents to the autumn 2014 tracker survey indicated that physical and learning difficulties were the main barrier to getting online. Challenges included physical difficulties in using equipment and problems in understanding computer screens and keyboards. Residents experiencing digital exclusion due to health needs are at a further disadvantage as it can prevent access to online health services, for example; access to GP / pharmacy online prescription services or information and advice to support healthy living. This is a major problem as residents suffering from health problems are amongst those who would have the most to gain from online services.

Older adults aged 65 and above in Knowsley represent the cohort most susceptible to digital exclusion. Those aged 65+ are also more likely to experience social isolation due to the association between old age and mobility difficulties and occurrences such as bereavement and retirement. There is therefore a risk that older adults who experience both social and digital exclusion in Knowsley may go on to encounter health needs due to the links between social isolation and mental and physical health problems. Opening up supported access to this group would therefore bring additional social and health and wellbeing benefits. Nationally 81% of people over 55 suggest that being online makes them feel part of modern society and can help to reduce loneliness.<sup>3</sup>

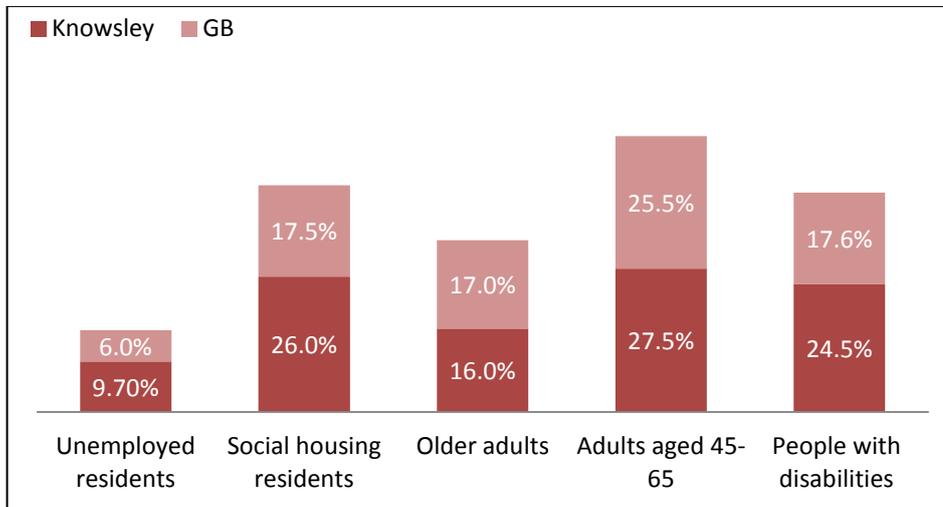
## 3. WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Typically those who are more likely to have their life chances adversely affected by digital exclusion are:

- older adults 65+;
- people with disabilities or long standing illnesses;
- people with low incomes (the unemployed, those on benefits, those living in social housing, ex-offenders, the homeless);
- people with low educational attainment and/or skill levels often linked with 2 above;
- adults aged between 45 and 65; and
- children in poverty.

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<sup>3</sup> Digital Unite, 'The importance of digital inclusion.'

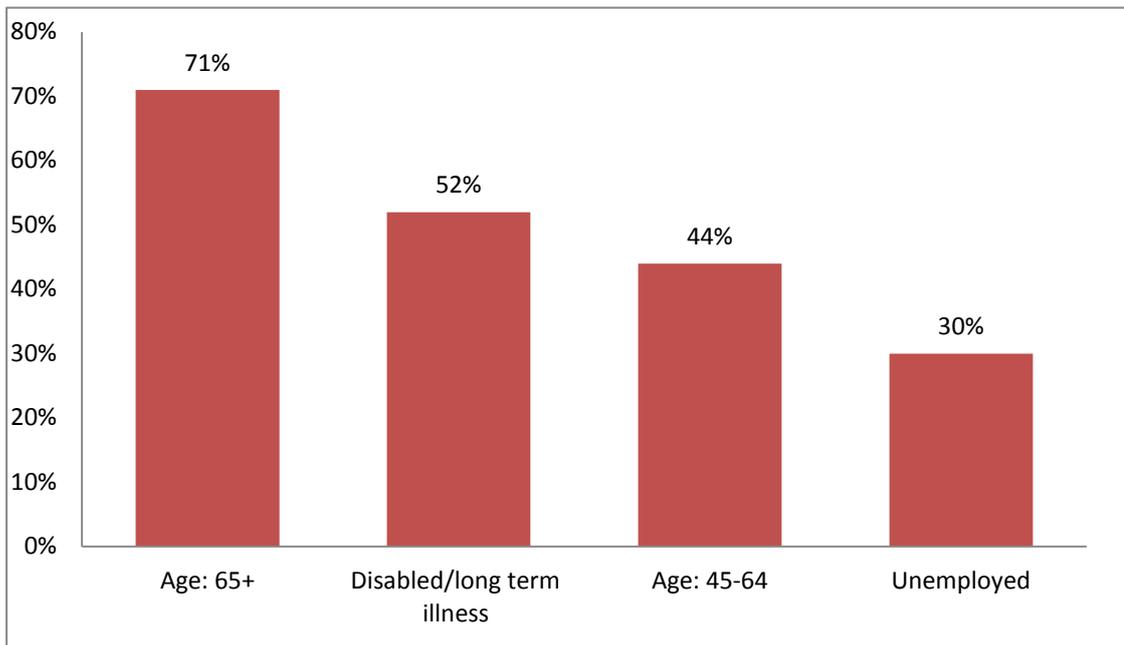
**Figure 4: Knowsley and national demographic averages.****Source: NOMIS**

Those residents who fall under these categories are more at risk of a higher cost of living, less integration into society and are less likely to find suitable employment due to their susceptibility to digital exclusion.

### 3.1 Older adults

Older adults are disproportionately affected by digital exclusion. Results from Knowsley's tracker survey in January 2015 found that 52% of respondents aged 65 and above have never used the internet. A lack of digital skills and a general disinterest in getting online can be attributed to this. In Knowsley, older adults represent 16% of the population; this is comparable to the national average which stands at 17%.

Results from Knowsley's tracker survey show that 71% of residents aged 65 and over have no digital skills. This is somewhat expected as older people are less likely to have had the opportunity to develop digital skills through their education or work place, as the internet and digital technology have gradually gained prominence over the last two decades. The graph below demonstrates that older adults represent the most vulnerable age group susceptible to digital exclusion in Knowsley.

**Figure 5: Percentage of tracker survey respondents with no digital skills****Source: Knowsley resident tracker survey (autumn 2014, winter 2014/15)**

Access to online services is particularly important for older adults due to the health benefits that stem from it. For instance internet usage amongst the elderly has been associated with reduced loneliness.

### 3.2 Disability/limiting long-term illness

Having a long term health problem or disability can impact on accessibility to online services. This may be due to a physical impairment that can prevent the actual use of a computer, or a learning disability that can inhibit basic literacy skills necessary for digital activity. Locally, 24.5% of residents suffer from a long-term health problem or disability;<sup>4</sup> this is considerably higher than the national average of 17.6%,<sup>5</sup> as such Knowsley has a larger proportion of at risk residents of digital exclusion.

Local results from Knowsley's tracker surveys show that 52% of the respondents who suffer from a disability or long term health condition do not have basic digital skills. Ensuring that residents with disabilities and long term health problems have access and the ability to use the internet is important as it can help them to access services and opportunities that will improve their quality of life, for instance GP and prescription services.

<sup>4</sup> NOMIS 'Long term health problem or disability' (2011)

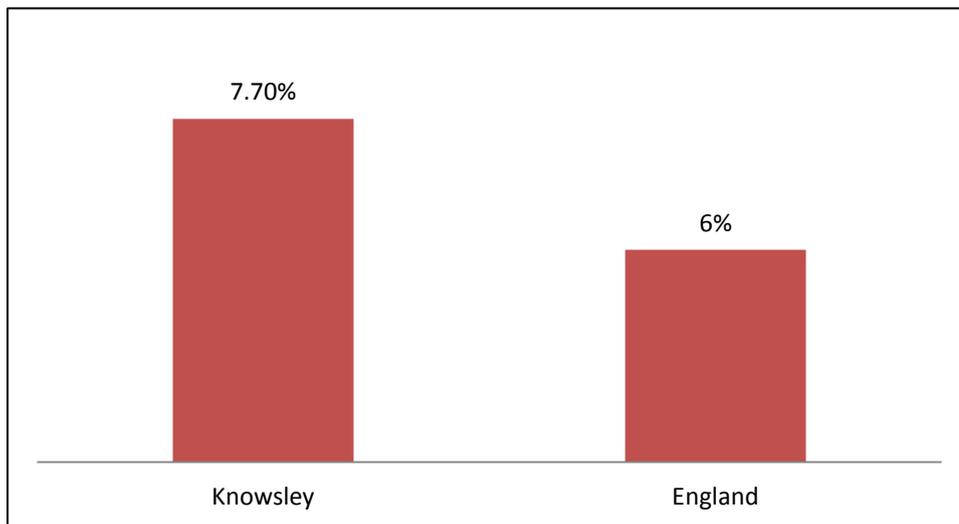
<sup>5</sup> NOMIS 'Long term health problem or disability' (2011)

### 3.3 People with low incomes

In Knowsley there are more people who are unemployed or on low incomes compared to the national average. The rate of unemployment in Knowsley is 7.7%, compared with 6% for England, and 8.4% for the wider Liverpool City Region (Annual Population Survey Apr 14 – Mar 15). This is defined as the proportion of economically active working age (16-64) residents who are out of work, and actively seeking work. To add to this, the average weekly earning in Knowsley currently stands at £380; this is below the national average weekly earning of £420. The characteristics of residents on lower incomes are more associated with the barriers to using digital channels.

**Figure 6: National and local levels of unemployment<sup>6</sup>**

Source: NOMIS



Affordability has been identified as an issue for unemployed and low income families. Insight from Knowsley's Engagement Forum<sup>7</sup> found that a significant barrier to digital inclusion revolved around cost, with stakeholders indicating that the price of maintenance and equipment is a particular concern. Research also indicates that individuals in this cohort are less likely to have the digital skills and capabilities necessary to get online and make efficient use of the internet. Results from both tracker surveys show that 30% of all respondents who say they are unemployed are unable to perform basic digital tasks. This is most likely linked to general low skills / educational attainment

<sup>6</sup> The proportion of economically active working age (16-64) residents who are out of work, and actively seeking work.

<sup>7</sup> Knowsley Engagement Forum (September 2014) groups represented at the forum are: Physical Disability Partnership Board, Learning Disability Partnership Board, Carers Partnership Board, Older People's Partnership Board, Healthwatch Knowsley, Knowsley Community and Voluntary Services, Knowsley Youth Mutual, Patient Participation Group, Knowsley Clinical Commissioning Group Lay Member for Patient and Public Involvement, Knowsley User-led organization and Autism Services Development Group.

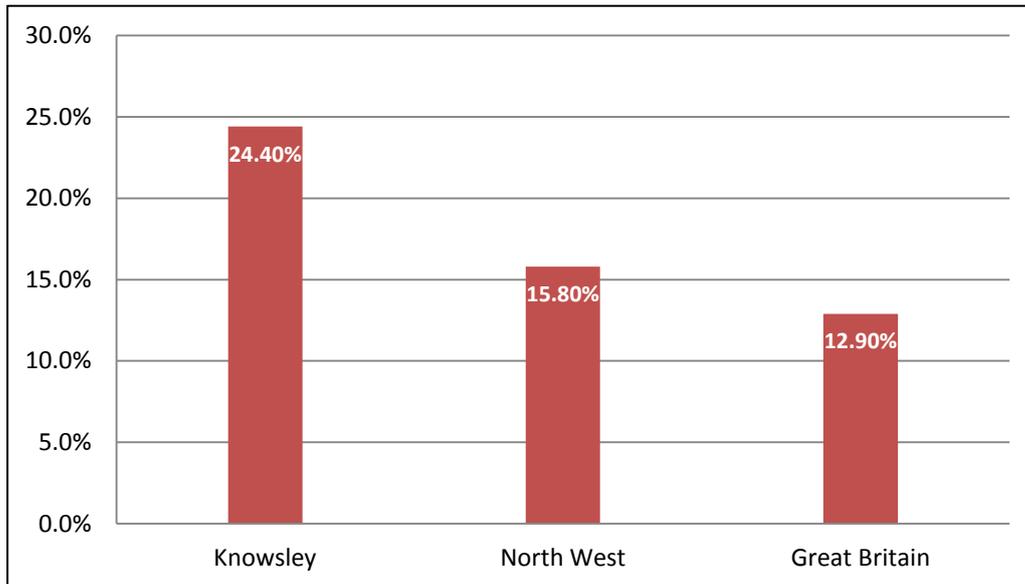
which are characteristics that are more common amongst individuals with low incomes.

Having limited digital skills and access to online services presents major challenges for the unemployed and residents with low incomes; in particular it can inhibit the process of finding employment opportunities. Many jobs for instance are now posted online only (around 25%<sup>8</sup>) so access to the internet enables more effective job searches. To add to this, unemployed/low income residents are less likely to be able to take advantage of the financial benefits generated from the internet. Access to the internet enables price comparisons across a variety of services and essential goods, such as energy suppliers, insurance policies and online grocery shopping.

Universal Credit was implemented in Knowsley in July 2014. This development in access to benefits means that going online is the only way to apply for and manage Universal Credit applications for the majority of those in receipt of benefits. This affects a disproportionately higher level of Knowsley residents due to the high levels of claimants; approximately 24.4% of local working-age residents are dependent on DWP benefits. This is significantly higher than the North West and national averages which stand at 15.8% and 12.9% respectively. There is a danger that those who are most vulnerable and reliant on these services in Knowsley could be “left behind” during this channel switch due to a lack of digital skills and access. Alternatively, there is the possibility that Universal Credit will boost digital skills, as claimants (though reluctantly) have to use online channels.

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<sup>8</sup> UK online centres: <https://www.ukonlinecentres.com/>

**Figure 7: Working-age client group - key benefit claimants (May 2014)****Source: NOMIS**

### 3.4 Adults aged between 45 and 64

Results from the tracker survey also indicate that there is a significant lack of online skills amongst adults aged between 45 and 64 in Knowsley. The tracker survey found that for those aged between 45 and 54 in Knowsley, 39% have no digital skills and for those aged between 55 and 64 49% are lacking in their digital skills. This is significantly higher than the national figure; nationally just 9% of those aged 45-54 have no digital skills and for 55-64 year olds this figure stands at 18%. This is a particular risk for residents in this age category who are seeking employment, as digital skills are often a key requirement.

### 3.5 Social Housing

Locally, around 26% of residents live in social housing; this is significantly higher than the national average of 17.5%. Although social housing is not a causal factor of digital exclusion, there is a correlation between social housing and low income, which can be a casual factor of digital exclusion. Low income may also be a reflection of low skills and attainment which might also impact on internet usage and skills. Residents living in social housing are therefore more likely to experience digital exclusion and the disadvantages that stem from it, due to the association between low incomes and a lack of affordability and skills.

Adding weight to this argument, it is estimated that nationally, 37% of those who are digitally excluded are social housing tenants. This is supplemented by further research carried out in Knowsley by First Ark; 40% of those who

responded to the First Ark research in 2014 purposely directed at social housing tenants, stated that they did access the internet but for those who didn't the main reason was due to the cost implications.

### **3.6 Homelessness**

Another group that faces exclusion due to their circumstances are those who are currently homeless. 213 people in Knowsley applied for assistance under the Housing and Homelessness Act in 2013/14 of these 63 (30%) were accepted as being statutorily homeless and in priority need. Violent breakdown of a relationship and parents/friends no longer willing to accommodate are the main reasons behind people becoming homeless. Accessing this group will be a challenge due to the nature of the issues involved.

### **3.7 Offenders**

Offenders and ex-offenders have a higher tendency to be digitally excluded due to the fact that they are more likely to experience other characteristics that are linked with low internet usage, such as low incomes. The risk of re-offending drops significantly when digital skills, training and support is used to complement existing approaches<sup>9</sup>.

Within Knowsley there are approximately 1,800 offenders which are on the current caseload of the Probation Service. This is the number of offenders who have served a custodial sentence of 12 months or more. Allowing access to this cohort to develop digital skills could improve educational opportunities and prevent the possibilities of further re-offending.

### **3.8 Children in poverty**

In Knowsley 29.8% of children are growing up in poverty. The cost of accessing the internet is a key challenge for families living in poverty. This can inhibit further learning at home, which could be of particular benefit to children in poverty who experience inequalities in educational outcomes.

## **4. WHICH AREAS OF THE BOROUGH ARE MOST AFFECTED?**

Knowsley's autumn tracker survey found that 22.1% of respondents can perform none of the tasks that define digital skills. Based on insight from the tracker survey, Huyton represents the area with the highest number of residents unable to perform any of the four digital skills (27%). Kirkby also

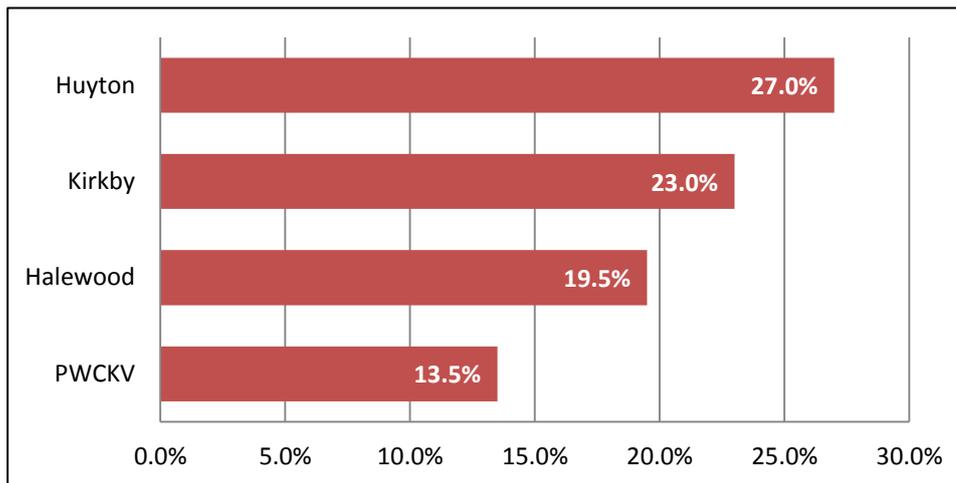
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<sup>9</sup> Government Digital Service, 'Government Digital Inclusion Strategy', (2014).

represents a vulnerable area with 23% of those unable to perform any of the four digital tasks. The table below provides an area breakdown for the average percentage of respondents who could not perform any of the four digital tasks.

**Figure 8: Percentage of residents unable to complete any of the basic online tasks by area.**

**Source: Knowsley resident tracker survey (autumn 2014)**



The issues facing Knowsley are more representative of social demographics which present themselves in different communities across the Borough. It is not surprising for instance that a higher proportion of respondents in Huyton and Kirkby, where deprivation and unemployment is prevalent, are unable to perform basic online tasks. It is widely accepted that unemployment/low income and deprivation can act as a significant barrier for digital inclusion; research indicates that individuals in this cohort are less likely to have digital skills and capabilities due to a general low skills base. In addition, individuals from more deprived areas are less likely to be online due to the costs of computer maintenance and broadband subscriptions.

It should also be noted that in Huyton, older adults (65+), an age group less inclined to be digitally active, represent 20% of the respondents asked through the tracker survey. This is reflective of Huyton as an overall area, but it is higher than the overall percentage for older people in Knowsley which currently stands at 16%.

Consultation feedback from the Local Advisory Groups found that perceived barriers to digital inclusion varied across Knowsley. In areas where deprivation is more prevalent and the proportion of unemployed residents exceeds that of the Borough as a whole, such as Kirkby and Huyton, affordability was cited as one of the main barriers to accessing the internet. However in Halewood and Prescott, Whiston, Cronton and Knowsley Village

(PWCKV) where levels of employment are comparatively high and unemployment is low, a general disinterest in the internet and fear of technology were noted as primary barriers. The higher numbers of older adults in Halewood and PWCKV can be attributed to these specified barriers, as older adults are less inclined to go online due to a lack of interest.

## 5. HOW DOES THIS ISSUE IMPACT ON SERVICE PROVISION AND USE?

Accessing services online is becoming part of society and promoting online services makes sense for businesses and local authorities.

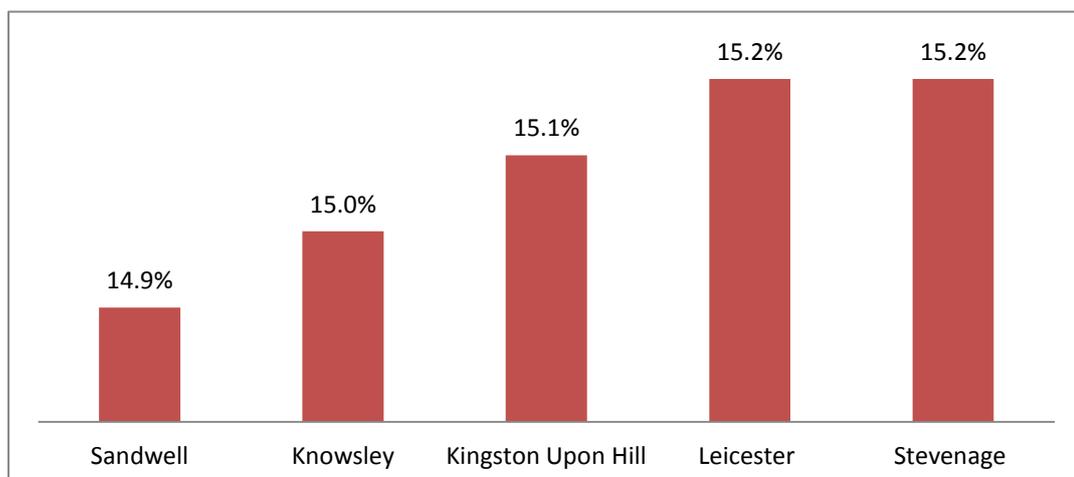
Accelerating the move to a 'digital only' delivery where possible, reflecting the needs of different groups and allowing for choice while balancing efficiency with service quality, is a challenge. Some of the obvious benefits to local authorities include:

- Allowing staff to spend more time on more complex issues and cases requiring their expertise
- Potential to make efficiency savings e.g. in transactional services
- Providing service users the opportunity to interact with the authority at a time that suits them

Research by Consultancy CACI suggests that shifting to digital channels in Knowsley will not be easy. The study found that Knowsley is amongst the 5 local authorities with the lowest use of online government services<sup>10</sup>.

**Figure 9: Top 5 local authority districts with communities least likely to research local government services online**

Source: CACI

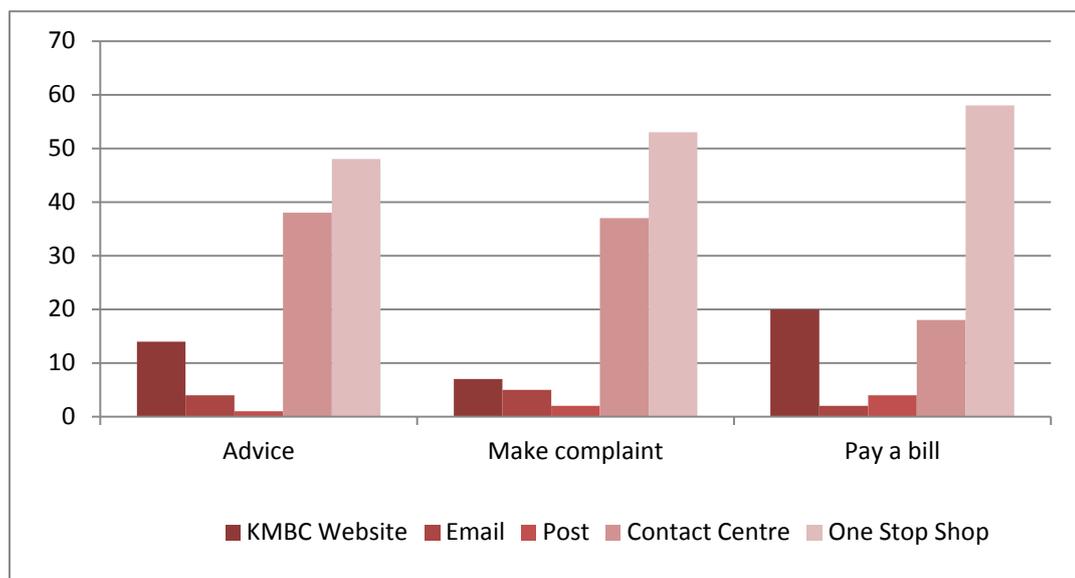


<sup>10</sup> CACI, article summarising CACI report: <http://www.digitalbydefaultnews.co.uk/2014/04/25/which-councils-have-communities-most-likely-to-engage-with-online-services/> (April 2014) (full report unavailable).

The findings of this study are supported by the results of the resident tracker survey in summer 2014 which asked residents a series of questions relating specifically to their opinions around contacting the council online. When residents were asked about their preferred method of contact with the council for issues such as advice, complaints and paying bills the favourable response still remained face to face contact via the one stop shop service. Residents also felt that telephone contact via the Council's contact centre was more favourable than contact via Knowsley's website.

**Figure 10: How residents use council services**

**Source: Knowsley tracker survey (summer 2014)**



The appetite for residents to access online services still has the potential to be developed with the cost benefits being one of the most efficient reasons to promote the move towards the a digital shift. Customer contact via more traditional face-to-face method is the most costly for local authorities, recent estimations of contact are:

- Face to face £8.62
- Telephone £2.83
- Internet based contact £0.15 (Source Itica Consulting)

Knowsley council has existing, strong digital services to build upon. For example, an independent review of 400 local authority websites has ranked the Council's site as 4th best in the country. The Sitemorse UK Index rates council websites across factors including accessibility, function and performance. The council has also launched a mobile app – offering a convenient tool for residents to contact the council. It is important to note however that issues with current customer facing IT systems have been

highlighted, which could discourage residents from interacting online. Also feedback from frontline staff highlighted IT skills gaps amongst staff, which can impact on the support offered to residents.

Libraries are often the first port of call for residents who are struggling with IT issues. They appeal to residents who do not want to engage on a formal training session. However, capacity in terms of available PCs and staff resource is perceived to be an issue. Also a general lack of public access locations to use the internet at certain times has been highlighted as an issue locally, e.g. lack of suitable PC suites in the daytime to provide digital skills training and lack of 'drop-in' use PCs at a weekend and evening.

## 7. DO WE HAVE EVIDENCE OF WHAT WORKS?

Digital inclusion is a fast-changing research topic. Whilst there is a lot of opinion and information available, robust research evidence is scarce and harder to access. More specifically, evidence on the digital inclusion landscape in the UK is subject to rapid change, and statistics can quickly become meaningless.

The list below summarises some of the main themes on what is commonly described as 'good practice' in tackling digital exclusion based on information provided through Go ON UK (the national digital skills charity):

- **Tailored approaches / incentives** – using the needs and motivations of individuals as the starting point to providing help and support – e.g. finding the right personal hook to encourage people to go online. Existing local examples in Knowsley include Gaywood Green which offers tenants a free tablet and restricted internet access, following completion of training.
- **Leveraging support and commitment from family, friends, formal volunteers and community groups** - there is no one size fits all; involvement of communities / family members can vary from signposting and promotion of personal stories on the benefits of the internet, to providing hands on support and training to show others how to go online.
- **Private sector involvement** – tapping into the expertise and resources of businesses, including local SMEs and those who are members of the Go On Programme (e.g. Argos, Barclays, and EE). To be successful it is important to have a clear business case and 'asks' in order to secure private sector buy-in.
- **High profile campaigns** – this involves comprehensive campaigns that promote the benefits of the internet as well as provide information and signposting to digital skills training and internet / wifi access points.

## 8. WHAT IS THE CURRENT POLICY DIRECTION?

Tackling digital exclusion is a national priority. The Government's Digital Inclusion Strategy (December 2014) sets out the government's commitment to reducing the number of people and organisations who are offline and lack digital skills and capabilities. The headline national target is to reduce the number of people who are offline by 25% every two years. If successful, by 2020 everyone who can be digitally capable will be. This will be delivered through 10 actions that not just the government but also partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors will take to reduce digital exclusion:

- Make digital inclusion part of wider government policy, programmes and digital services
- Establish a quality cross-government digital capability programme
- Give all civil servants the digital capabilities to use and improve government services
- Agree a common definition of digital skills and capabilities
- Boost Go ON UK's partnership programme across the country
- Improve and extend partnership working
- Create a shared language for digital inclusion
- Bring digital capability support into one place
- Deliver a digital inclusion programme to support SMEs and VCSEs
- Use data to measure performance and improve what we do

These actions should be considered in the development of Knowsley's local digital inclusion strategy and action plan.

## 9. CHALLENGES AND STRENGTHS

### Strengths

- Although results from the tracker survey indicate that 21.0% of respondents in Knowsley have never used the internet, evidently around 79.0% of residents have used the internet. (Although this remains below the national average).
- The majority of residents who responded to the tracker surveys have basic online skills; 65.2% of those surveyed were able to complete the four tasks that define basic online skills as at December 2014 (GO ON UK).

- A significant proportion of residents in Knowsley are interested in using the internet; 76% of respondents to the autumn 2014 tracker survey reported that they were either “interested” or “very interested” in using the internet. Of this proportion, the majority (46%) of respondents were “very interested in using the internet for as many things as possible”.
- According to figures generated from the tracker survey, the number of older adults (65+) with basic online skills is higher in Knowsley when compared to the national average. Results from the tracker survey suggest that 29% of older adults in Knowsley can carry out the four online tasks that define basic online skills. This is considerably higher than the national figure of 13%.<sup>11</sup>
- The number of households that access internet through take up of broadband in Knowsley (76.2%) is only marginally below the national average (78.3%).

### Challenges

- Of the 21% of respondents to the tracker survey who have never used the internet, 57% reported that they have no interest in using it at all. This is a major issue for Knowsley as motivating people to become more willing to use the internet is key in promoting health and wellbeing, economic security and moving local services online.
- Less people in Knowsley have digital skills when compared to the national and regional averages and any rate of decline in digital inclusion in the future is likely to be a lot slower than that of the national picture.
- Similarly to the national average, 24% of households in Knowsley do not have a broadband connection.

## 10. SOURCES OF EVIDENCE AND FURTHER INTELLIGENCE

Direct sources of intelligence and evidence:

- BBC Basic Online Skills May 2014 research
- Digital by default news
- Digital Unite, ‘The importance of digital inclusion’
- GO ON UK
- Government Digital Service, ‘Government Digital Inclusion Strategy’

<sup>11</sup> BBC Basic Online Skills May 2014 research

- Ipsos MORI BBC Digital Capabilities Update (2014)
- Knowsley Tracker Survey
- Office for National Statistics (ONS), Internet Access Quarterly Update: Q1 2014 (May 2014)
- UK online Centres