



Annual Equality and Diversity Report

A reflection on the 2024-25 Year

Published: November 2025

Contents

	Pages
Foreword	Page 3
Section 1: Our Achievements and Engagement Activities	Pages 4-9
Section 2: Understanding our Customers	Pages 10-14
Section 3: Understanding Our Workforce	Pages 15-17
Section 4: Understanding our Communities	Pages 18-36
Section 5: Compliments, Feedback and Complaints	Pages 37-38
Section 6: Equality Objectives	Pages 39-44

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 2024-25 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.

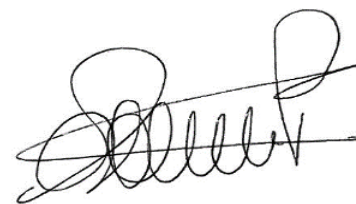
We hope that you find this document useful and informative. Further information, including the council's related Equality and Diversity Policy, can be found at: <https://folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/your-council/policies-plans-and-documents/equality-and-diversity>

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 2024-25. 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 [2024-25 Annual Performance Report: 'A snapshot of our year'](#).

01

Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Folkestone & Hythe Housing Service

In 2024-25, 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:

- Tenant Scrutiny Panel**
The panel continued its work reviewing different areas of the housing service. In 2024/25, it completed a review of the council’s anti-social behaviour (ASB) procedures, which helped shape the new standalone Housing ASB Policy. The panel also began reviewing housing communications.
- Independent Living Forum**
This forum meets quarterly and brings together tenant representatives from sheltered housing schemes to discuss relevant issues.
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey**
As required by the Regulator of Social Housing, the council conducted its annual tenant satisfaction survey between May and July 2024:
 - Responses received:** 713 (21.8% response rate)
 - Overall satisfaction:** 70%
- Tenant Communications**
Regular newsletters and bulletins were sent to all tenants:
 - “Your Voice, Our Action” bulletins: April and October 2024
 - Tenant newsletters: July 2024 and January 2025
These are available on the Council’s website.
- Support for Vulnerable Tenants**
A Housing Team manager is a permanent member of the District Vulnerability Panel, ensuring concerns about vulnerable tenants are raised and addressed in a multi-disciplinary setting.
- Inclusive Engagement**
The council encourages tenant involvement from all backgrounds by offering multiple contact methods:
 - Online
 - Telephone
 - In-person home visits

- Language Support**
Staff have access to professional translation and interpretation services to support tenants with language barriers

Making Homes Work for Everyone:

In 2024–25, we continued making progress on improving housing across the district:

- We built **23 new affordable homes** for rent and shared ownership, helping more people find a place to live.
- Our Private Sector Housing Team helped **prevent 372 hospital admissions or speed up discharges**, by making homes safer and more suitable.
- We brought **76 long-term empty homes** back into use, adding to the housing supply.
- We improved **317 private homes** through enforcement and support schemes like the Disabled Facilities Grant, Winter Warmth, and Home Safe loans.
- We awarded **99 Disabled Facilities Grants** to help people with disabilities adapt their homes.
- We spent **£404,455** on adapting council-owned homes to better meet the needs of disabled tenants:

Summary of Adaptation Works Completed in 2024–25:

Major Works	Minor Works
Closamat WC installations: 3 jobs Groundwork (ramps, paths, patios, fencing, dropped kerbs & driveways): 18 jobs Kitchens: 0 jobs FFS/Bathroom Refurbs: 40 jobs Stairlifts: 4 jobs Convert Dining Room to Bedroom: 0 jobs New install GF WC: 1 job	Grab Rails: 78 jobs Mop stick Rails & Drop-Down Rails: 36 jobs Over bath Showers: 6 jobs Plumbing & Bathroom Alterations: 18 jobs Door Widening & New Doors (Internal & External): 2 jobs Kitchen Alterations: 4 jobs Electrics: 5 jobs Galvanised Rails: 28 jobs Upvc Doors & Windows: 11 jobs New Fence/gates: 2 jobs New Fire alarm: 1 job New Concrete & steps: 7 jobs

Total Jobs by Category:

Major Works Jobs	Minor Works Jobs
66	198
Combined Total: 264 jobs	

01 Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Supporting People at Risk of Homelessness

The Council worked with local partners, including the **Rainbow Centre** and **Porchlight**, to help people who are homeless or at risk of rough sleeping. The aim is to prevent homelessness and support people into safe, long-term housing.

What Support Was Provided:

- Outreach teams identified and supported rough sleepers.
- Emergency accommodation helped people off the streets quickly.
- People were signposted to mental health and other support services.
- Help was given to find long-term housing in both council and private homes.
- Support was offered to prevent people losing their homes again.
- Intensive housing support was provided for those with complex needs.

Working Together:

- The council supported the Rainbow Centre to deliver the **Winter Shelter Project** that helped **15 people** with emergency accommodation during the winter months.
- Funding was provided to the Rainbow Centre to support people with insecure housing.
- Ongoing support was given to help people settle into permanent homes.

Looking Ahead:

- A new supported housing project by the Rainbow Centre is set to open in **Spring 2026**, offering year-round help for people affected by homelessness.

Folkestone- A Brighter Future

The council received £19.8 million from the government's Levelling Up Fund to improve Folkestone town centre.

Work on the project started on Monday 7 April 2025 and is expected to finish in Summer 2026.

To share the plans with the public, the council held an event at Folkestone Town Hall on:

- Friday 4 April (10am–6pm)
- Saturday 5 April (10am–3pm)

At the event:

- Final designs and details of the project were displayed.
- Visitors could try a virtual reality (VR) experience to see what the finished town centre will look like.
- Project partners were available to answer questions.

Folkestone Community Forum (FCF)

The **Folkestone Community Forum** was set up in **October 2023** by Folkestone & Hythe District Council to improve communication and collaboration between the Council and local groups in the Folkestone area.

What the Forum Does:

- Encourages two-way communication between the Council and community groups.
- Helps stakeholders understand each other's roles and goals.
- Shares updates and outcomes from meetings to guide decisions.
- Highlights local issues, builds relationships, and boosts community confidence.
- Ensures the community is fully involved in shaping the future of Folkestone Town Centre.

Folkestone & Hythe Youth Forum

A new Youth Forum was set up during the year. It gives c40 young people aged 14-19 a chance to share their ideas and help shape the future of the district. Councillors agreed to the idea at a Full Council meeting on 19th February 2025. The council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee helped prepare the work. The group meets twice a year. It talks about local issues and the role of local government. The first meeting of the forum was held on 26th February 2025 with the second one planned for 25th September 2025.

Engaging with the Wider Community

The Council continued to support the District Food Network (DFN), which is chaired by an independent member of the community working with the Rainbow centre.

Key Activities:

- The DFN met regularly to support food-related projects.
- The Mobile Food and Pantry Service, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), continued to operate across the district.
- Work began to expand the mobile food service to cover the Marsh area.

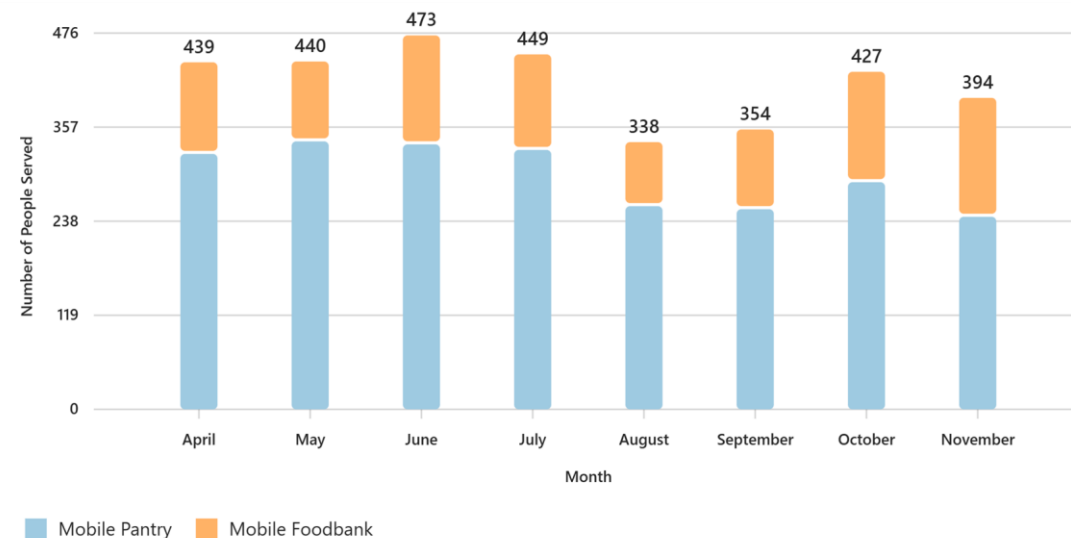
Partnerships and Promotion:

- A new food leaflet was developed, featuring the DFN's logo designed by students from Brockhill School.
- Stronger links were built with partners like Sunflower House, Folkestone Fringe, and others to better coordinate food-related activities.

01 Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Engagement with the wider community (Continued)

The graph below shows the **monthly usage of the Mobile Food Service** (Mobile Pantry and Mobile Foodbank) from **April to November 2024**:



The Council supported voluntary sector organisations through a series of networking events funded by grants. These events helped build connections, share resources, and promote wellbeing across the district. The following events took place in 2024/25:

- **17 July 2024** – *Networking Event on Connecting and Engaging* at **St Mary’s Bay Village Hall** (40 attendees)
- **30 September 2024** – *Meet the Funders* at **Three Hills Sports Park** (75 attendees)
- **3 February 2025** – *Networking Event on Wellbeing* at **Hawkinge Community Centre** (48 attendees)

Why These Events Matter

- Shared **essential information** with voluntary sector groups.
- Enabled **new projects** to be delivered locally.
- Attracted **additional funding** into the district.
- Strengthened **community collaboration** and engagement.

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

Annual Grant Funding (2024–25)

Community Support

- The Council awarded **£83,000** in member ward grants.
- These grants supported **99 local organisations**, including:
 - Local Schools
 - Hawkinge Community Events
 - Romney Marsh Community Hub
 - Touchbase Care CIC

The funding helped deliver **effective projects and services** across ward areas, strengthening community engagement.

Warm Spaces Initiative (Oct 2024 – Mar 2025)

- Funded through the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**.
- Provided:
 - **Fuel and food vouchers**
 - **Essential items** for those in need
- Offered **safe, welcoming spaces** during the winter months.
- Spaces were **well-used**, with people staying longer than in previous years due to the ongoing **cost-of-living crisis**.

Funded Projects & Their Impact

The Sports Trust:

- Delivered accessible sports and play facilities
- Focused on reducing health inequalities and engaging young people
- Ran holiday camps with food for referred children

Active Sport for Kent:

- Improved access to sports clubs and coaching
- Hosted conferences and webinars
- Provided funding guidance to local providers

Sarah Thomas Consulting:

- Ran volunteer networking sessions
- Supported health and wellbeing
- Delivered a “Meet the Funders” event to boost local funding success

01 Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Funded Projects & Their Impact (Continued):

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

- Service continued via Dover CAB
- Support via phone, email, and appointments
- Advice on debt, legal, housing, and consumer issues

Folkestone Quarterhouse

- Delivered arts, music, and educational activities
- Engaged families, schools, LGBTQI+ and hard-to-reach groups

Kent Coast Volunteering (KCV)

- Hosted Excellence in Volunteering Awards (June 6, 2024)
- 100+ nominations across youth, individual, trustee categories

Crowd-Funded Projects

- Supported initiatives like:
 - *Folke Art* (Creative Health for 55+)
 - *Touchbase Accessible Outdoors Adventures*
 - *Kent Lions Disability Football*

Folkestone & Hythe Community Safety Partnership (F&H CSP) – 2024/25 Update

During 2024/25, the statutory F&H CSP continued to meet and deliver key initiatives. A new **Community Safety Partnership Plan (2025–2028)** was published, outlining four strategic priorities:

- **A Local Focus**
- **It Starts with Anti-Social Behaviour**
- **Community Safeguarding**
- **Serious and Organised Crime**

Safer Streets Project

The CSP continued its work to make Folkestone town centre safer through the **Safer Streets** initiative. Funding was directed toward five key areas:

- CCTV upgrades
- Education programmes
- Safer parks
- Public guardianship
- Anti-social behaviour and crime prevention

Ongoing projects included:

- Upgrading and monitoring CCTV across Folkestone
- Training: Active Bystander, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and Contextual Safeguarding
- Youth outreach to address anti-social behaviour
- Mapping and signposting designated Safe Routes
- Graffiti and litter removal

Additional CSP Projects:

- **Safe Spaces:** In partnership with Bouverie Place, a network of shops now offers safe spaces for anyone in need.
- **Year 9 School Roadshows:** Held in September 2024 across all secondary schools, engaging over 900 students with support from PREVENT, Kent Police, the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), and domestic abuse awareness—combined with music and entertainment.
- **Knife Crime Prevention:** Working with Kent Police’s VRU, the CSP provided knife wands to venues like pubs and regularly monitored and emptied knife bins across the district.
- **Dame Kelly Holmes Provision:** Supporting disadvantaged young people in coastal communities through school-based activities focused on teamwork, decision-making, and positive choices.

01 Our Achievements and Engagement Activities

Community Safety & Engagement Highlights:

Youth Engagement:

- Fish Fest: Young people were taken on a special activity away from their usual routines. They gained new experiences and took part in learning-based competitions.

Retail Crime Prevention:

- Officers were funded to support Folkestone Alliance of Partners Against Crime (FAPAC).
- They built relationships with local retailers and encouraged better crime reporting.

Seasonal Wellness Events:

A series of wellness events were held throughout the year:

- Spring: 23 May 2024 – Folkestone Harbour Church
- Summer: 16 July 2024 – Cheriton Baptist Church
- Autumn: 20 September 2024 – Age UK Hythe & Lyminge
- Winter: 27 November 2024 – Age UK South Kent Community Church

Armed Forces Community Support:

- The district has a strong tradition of working with the armed forces.
- Support continued for serving personnel, veterans, reservists, and their families.
- The council actively supports the Gurkha veteran community in Cheriton through the Folkestone Nepalese Community Centre, which offers welfare services, meeting spaces, education, training and IT access.
- Officers and councillors attended multicultural events throughout the year.

Napier Barracks:

- The site remained in use, with partner agencies addressing issues like littering and anti-social behaviour.
- Education and community activities continued.

- Residents volunteered in the community—gleaning, gardening, litter picking, and cooking at churches.

Community Hubs:

Three hubs provided vital support across the district:

- **Folkestone** – Run by Age UK South Kent Coast
- **Hythe** – Run by Age UK Hythe & Lyminge
- **Romney Marsh** – Run by Romney Marsh Community Hub

Community Hub Activities: Supporting Inclusion & Wellbeing:

Regular Events & Drop-ins

- Digital Inclusion
- Dementia Cafés
- Cancer Support
- Armed Forces Support

Cost-of-Living Support

- Delivered through **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)** projects
- Includes **food and fuel vouchers** for those in need

Voucher Distribution

- Food Vouchers
- Fuel Vouchers
- Targeted to vulnerable and low-income households

Weekend Activities for Older Adults:

- Walking Tennis
- Exercise Classes
- Held at The Hub on the Beach, Greatstone

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.

Equality Impact Assessments:

Although EIAs are no longer a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010, the council continues to use them as good practice to ensure equality implications are considered before making decisions. EIAs are typically completed when introducing or significantly changing a policy or service, especially when decisions are made by elected Members at Cabinet Committee stage.

All committee and leadership reports must include comments on equality implications from the officer responsible for equality and diversity. This ensures potential impacts are properly reviewed.

EIAs completed in 2024–25:

- Corporate Plan – Our District, Our World 2025–30
- 2025–26 Budget Strategy
- Community Safety Partnership Plan 2024–27
- Housing Domestic Abuse Policy
- Housing Fair Access Policy
- Housing Assistance Policy
- Alternate-weekly refuse/recycling collections (hard-to-access properties)
- FOLCA 2 Redevelopment Project

Further details and published EIAs are available on the Council’s website.

Understanding Our Customers through Consultation

Consultation helps the council understand the needs of residents and service users, and assess how decisions may affect different groups.

Public Consultations in 2024–25:

- 2025–26 Budget Strategy
- Lower Leas Coastal Park – Play area refurbishment
- Princes Parade – Future use of the site
- Folkestone & Hythe Heritage Strategy

These consultations ensure that community voices are heard and considered in decision-making.

Improving our Customer Experience:

Supporting Our Customers:

We offer many ways for customers to get help and access services:

- Customer Access Point
- Telephone appointments
- Web chat
- Online forms
- Translation services
- British Sign Language (on request)
- Home visits by our Welfare, Council Tax, and Benefits teams

How Customers Contact Us:

- **Online services** are being used more, which has reduced phone calls.
- **Phone contact** is still popular — we received over **43,000 calls** in 2024/25.
 - Average wait time: **3 minutes**
- **Web chat** was used by **3,191 customers** and had **over 90% satisfaction**.

Customer feedback includes:

- *“Prompt and clear response and explanation”*
- *“All dealt with quickly and efficiently”*
- *“Amazing customer service. Efficient speedy resolution. Thank you”*
- *“Very helpful and kind service. Solved an issue that had been bugging me for years. Thank you!”*

Improving Customer Experience:

- We updated our **complaints policy** to meet Ombudsman standards.
- We share what we learn from complaints in our **Annual Complaints and Service Improvement Report**

Making Digital Services Better:

We’ve made big improvements to our online services in 2024/25, following our ‘**digital by choice**’ approach:

- We aim to make online services the easiest and most preferred option.
- Customers can now do things **24/7** online.
- We’ve reduced manual work for staff by automating updates.
- As of **31 March 2025**, we had **396 online forms**:
 - Some for customers
 - Some for internal use (instead of emails), helping improve efficiency and consistency

Improving our Customer Experience (continued)

Digital and Website Accessibility

- MyAccount sign-ups **exceeded the 80% target** — by 31 March 2025, **81.36% of properties were registered**.
- In July 2024, Smarter Digital Services reviewed the council's website. Their findings were:

- ✓ Overall impression: Very positive
- ✓ Content: Clear, easy to understand, written in plain English
- ✓ Page structure: Well-organised with helpful headings and bullet points
- ✓ Search: Robust and effective
- ✓ Usability: Very few barriers or issues identified

The website continues to be reviewed to ensure it meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Welfare Team:

Welfare Team Support (2024–25)

The council continued to deliver targeted support to vulnerable residents through various government funding streams.

Key Support Provided:

- Discretionary Housing Payments**
 - 325 applications received
 - 235 awards made
 - Total value: **£232,257**
- Council Tax Financial Support Payments**
 - 703 applications received
 - 407 awards made
 - Total value: **£225,912**

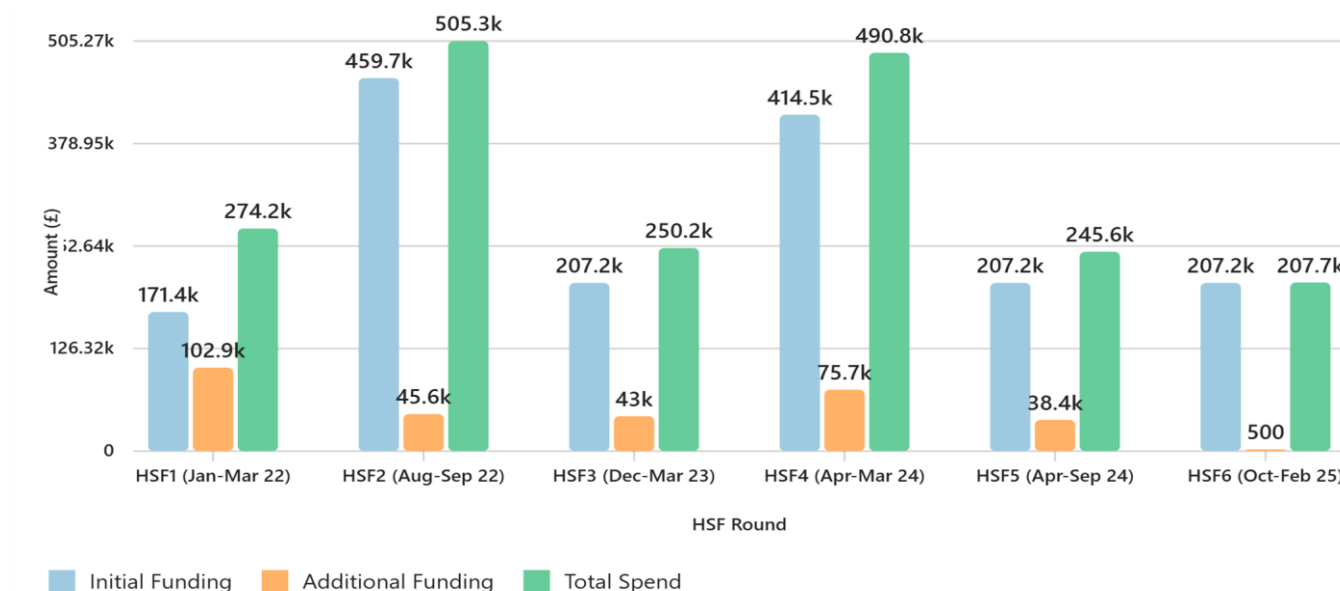
Household Support Fund (HSF):

The council also administered the **Household Support Fund**, aimed at helping households struggling with food, energy, water, and other essential costs.

- Funding was received across multiple rounds.
- Additional funds were secured through collaboration with **Kent County Council**.

- HSF2** included a larger allocation with **£364,150** specifically to support pensioners with energy bills.

Funding for Household Support Fund overview up to March 2025:

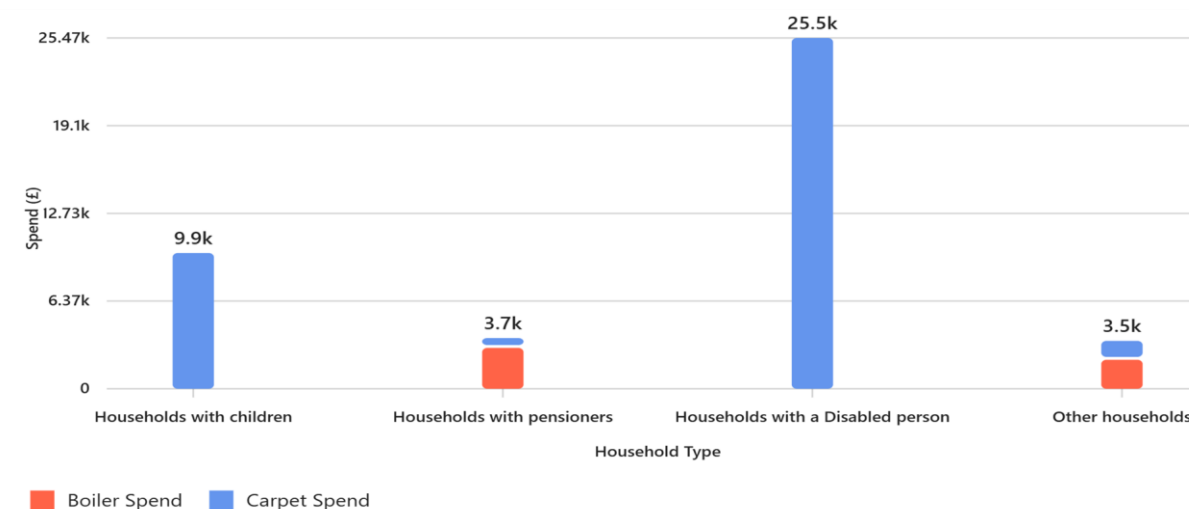


HSF5 Additional Support Summary:

During **HSF Round 5 (April–September 2024)**, the council received extra funding to support vulnerable households. Funded by **Kent County Council (KCC)**:

- Boiler Scheme**
 - £6,000 used to replace boilers for **2 households**
- Warm Essentials Fund (Carpets)**
 - £32,400 used to supply carpets to **33 homes**

The chart below breaks down how **boiler and carpet funding** was distributed across different household types in HSF5:



Improving our Customer Experience (continued)

HSF Round 6 Overview (Oct 2024 – Feb 2025):

Total Funding Received: £207,246

- £180,000 for food support
- £27,246 for housing support (Discretionary Housing Payment)

Support by Household Type:

Household Type	Number of Awards	Amount Spent
Families with children	454	£70,972
Pensioner households	190	£52,412
Households with disabilities	308	£52,451
Other households	194	£31,411
Total	1,146	£207,246

Support by Category:

Category	Awards	Amount Spent
Energy & Water	0	£0
Food	1,130	£180,000
Essentials linked to food/water	0	£0
Wider essentials	0	£0
Housing costs	16	£27,246

Additional Support:

- £500 promotional funding used for welfare event materials and leaflets.
- Council acts as referral agent to Kent County Council fuel scheme for all HSF applicants.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF):

- Funding secured to reduce cost of living and improve energy efficiency.
- Projects include bed provision, boiler support, and white goods distribution.
- Developed based on feedback from residents and partner agencies.

Project Outcomes (Feb 2023 – Mar 2025):

Support Type	Households Supported	Items Supplied	Value
Smaller utilities	40	40	£4,379
Boiler replacement	11	11	£36,936
Boiler service	10	10	£1,171
Oil tune ups and support	20	20	£6,809
White goods	261	262	£135,452
Beds/mattresses	152	165	£35,628
Food support	43	43	£6,500
Total	537	551	£226,875

Targeted Support Using LIFT:

- Council worked with PIP to identify vulnerable residents using the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT).
- Combined datasets helped identify households affected by policy changes and those missing out on support.
- Resulted in £50,631 in Council Tax Reduction for 83 low-income households.
- Focused support for 96 pensioner and private tenant households struggling financially.
- Issued £3,800 in food vouchers and nearly £700 in housing support (DHP).
- Outreach included calls, emails, and letters to residents.
- **Target Group:** 135 households just below the Pension Credit threshold (within £500/year).
- **Support Provided:** £300 in food/supermarket vouchers per household.
- **Total Disbursed:** £6,900.

Council Tax Engagement via Sigma's Reachout Project:

- **Purpose:** Engage residents with outstanding Council Tax who hadn't interacted with internal collections.
- **Approach:** Emphasis on help, impartiality, and confidentiality—not debt collection

Continued Support in 2024/25:

- **Focus:** Households receiving Council Tax Reduction but struggling with payments.
- **Cohorts:** Two groups of 150 households each (Nov 2024 & Feb 2025).
- **Note:** End-of-year reviews may not reflect full annual charges.

02 Understanding our Customers

Improving our Customer Experience (continued)

Winter Fuel Payment Outreach:

- **Response to Policy Change:** Identified 200 Pension Credit (PC) cases using LIFT.
- **Action:** Partnered with Sigma to encourage timely PC claims before December 2024 deadline.

Initial Outcomes (subject to change due to admin delays):

Metric	Value
Pension Credit cases awarded	42
Pension Credit cases refused	16
Council Tax Reduction weekly value	£2,387
Council Tax Reduction annual value	£124,120
Household Support Fund awards	2
Total HSF value	£600

Awards & Recognition (2024)

In 2024, the Council was a **finalist in four categories** at the **Institute of Revenues Rating & Valuation (IRRV) annual awards:**

- Excellence in Social Inclusion
- Excellence in Partnership Working (Service Delivery) – in collaboration with Sigma/Reachout
- Excellence in Innovation
- Benefits and/or Welfare Reform Team of the Year

Award Wins:

- Benefits/Welfare Team of the Year
- Excellence in Social Inclusion

Staff Development & Training:

The Council has implemented a comprehensive and inclusive staff development programme:

Mandatory & Regular Training

- **Equality and Diversity e-learning** – required for all staff.
- **Safeguarding training** – delivered in person every two months.
- **Preventing Extremism** – bi-monthly sessions via Kent County Council.

Specialist Training (2024–2025):

- **Mental Health Awareness** – June 2024
- **Disability Confident** – November 2024
- **Domestic Abuse Awareness** – January 2025
- **Deaf Awareness** – February 2025
- **British Sign Language (Level 1)** – two staff members enrolled in a 7-month course.

Mental Health First Aid:

- Around **45 Mental Health First Aiders** across the Council (≈10% of workforce), supporting both staff and residents affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

Management Development Programme:

- Ongoing programme includes content on inclusive leadership.
- October 2024: Delivered a **one-hour session on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** for managers.

Flexible Learning Approach

- Courses are designed to accommodate part-time staff and parents:
 - Shorter sessions or split over multiple days.
 - Avoid scheduling during school holidays.
 - Training and briefings are recorded for accessibility.

Section 3

Understanding Our Workforce

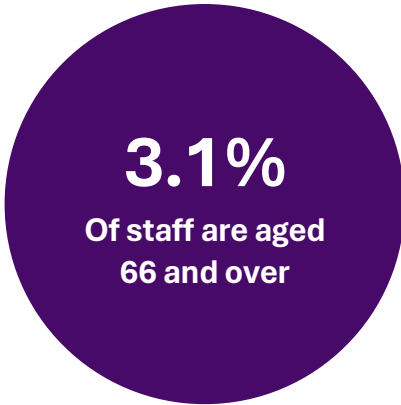
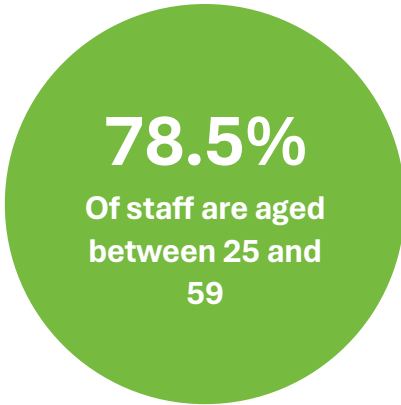
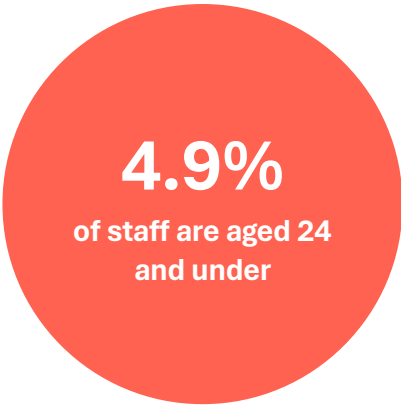
Introduction

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

On 31st March 2025 there were 452 members of staff employed by Folkestone & Hythe District Council. The number of full time equivalent staff was 393.19 FTE. Looking at the 2024-25 year as a whole, the average headcount was 448 and the average number of full time equivalent staff was 390.17.

Folkestone & Hythe District Council - Workforce Profile

All figures used in the workforce profile below are as at 31st March 2025 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	20	54	60	80	39	257
Male	7	17	28	41	69	33	195
Total	11	37	82	101	149	72	452

Summary of Key Workforce Insights:

Ethnicity and Disability:

- 6.6% of the council's workforce have declared a disability.
- 86.7% identify as being from white ethnic backgrounds.
- 6.4% are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups.
- 6.9% have not disclosed their ethnicity.

Working Hours and Pay Grade:

- 25% of staff work part-time (≤36 hours/week).
- 78.8% of part-time staff are female, indicating a gendered pattern in working hours.
- Further analysis is available via the gender pay gap reporting section.

Turnover:

- 50 staff left the council in 2024/25.
 - Crude turnover rate: 11.16% (includes all types of departures).
 - Voluntary turnover rate: 8.26% (resignations and retirements only).

Staff Grievances

There was one staff grievance raised in 2024/25, 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
2024/25	0	0

Workforce Practices Supporting Equality and Inclusion

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

Fair Recruitment and Promotion:

- Recruitment processes are designed to be transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory.

- Manager training ensures that those involved in hiring and promotion understand and apply equality principles.

Fair Pay and Job Evaluation:

- The council uses a job evaluation process to ensure fair and equal pay by assigning the same pay grade to roles of equal value.
-

Flexible and Agile Working:

- The People Strategy and Agile Working Framework promotes smarter working.
- Most staff can work flexible hours and from various locations, including home.
- Before recruiting externally, the council considers whether full-time roles can be offered as part-time or job share.

Training Accessibility:

- Recognising that part-time work can affect access to training, the council offers:
 - Shorter courses
 - Split sessions
 - Hybrid delivery
 - Recorded sessions for flexible viewing

Staff Support and Concerns:

- Staff concerns can be raised informally with managers or formally via whistleblowing or grievance procedures.
- Management training includes equality, diversity, and inclusion to ensure concerns are addressed appropriately.

Equality and Diversity Training:

- All staff complete mandatory E&D training upon joining and regularly thereafter.
- Additional learning and development initiatives are in place to further embed inclusive practices.

Section 4

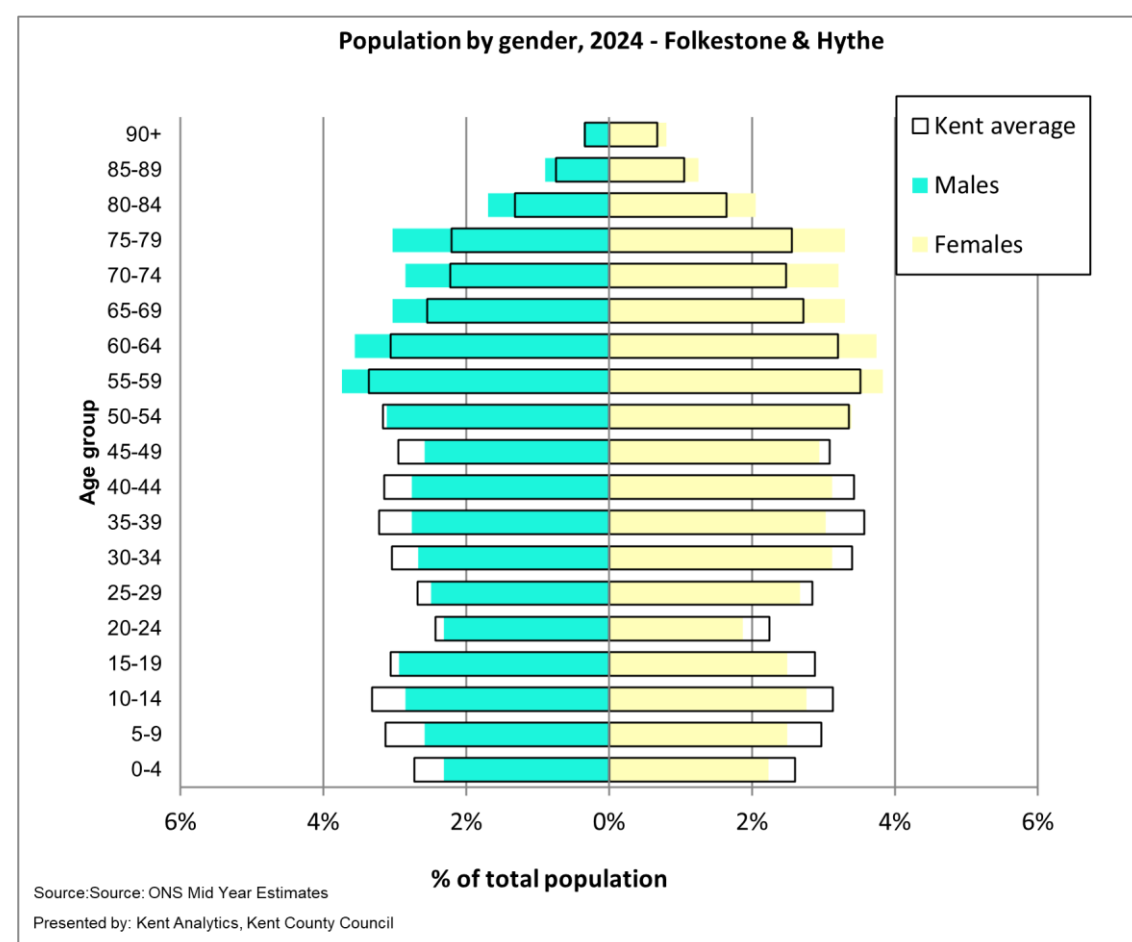
Understanding our Communities

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.

Age and Sex: Overview

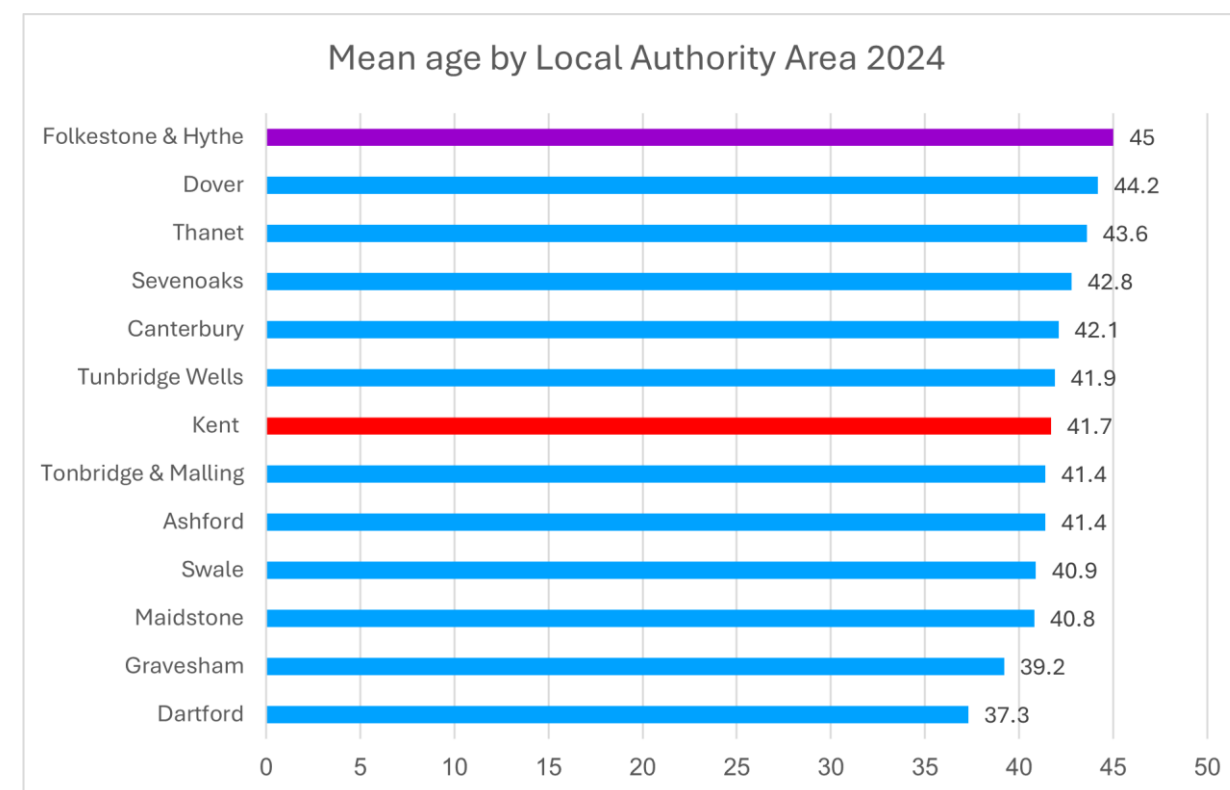
In the graph below, green shows the proportion of males in each age group and peach females. The blocked sections show the Kent average for each age group.



Population Age and Gender Profile – Folkestone & Hythe

- **Gender Split:**
 - **51.5%** of the district's population is **female**
 - **48.5%** is **male**
 - This mirrors the overall gender distribution across **Kent**.
- **Age Distribution:**
 - The district has a **lower proportion of residents aged under 45** compared to Kent overall.
 - Conversely, there is a **higher proportion of residents aged over 45**, indicating an older population profile.
- **Age-Gender Dynamics:**
 - **Under 25s:** More **males** than females.
 - **25 and over:** 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 37.3 years old.



Source: KCC 2024 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 - 2024

37.3

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 - 2024

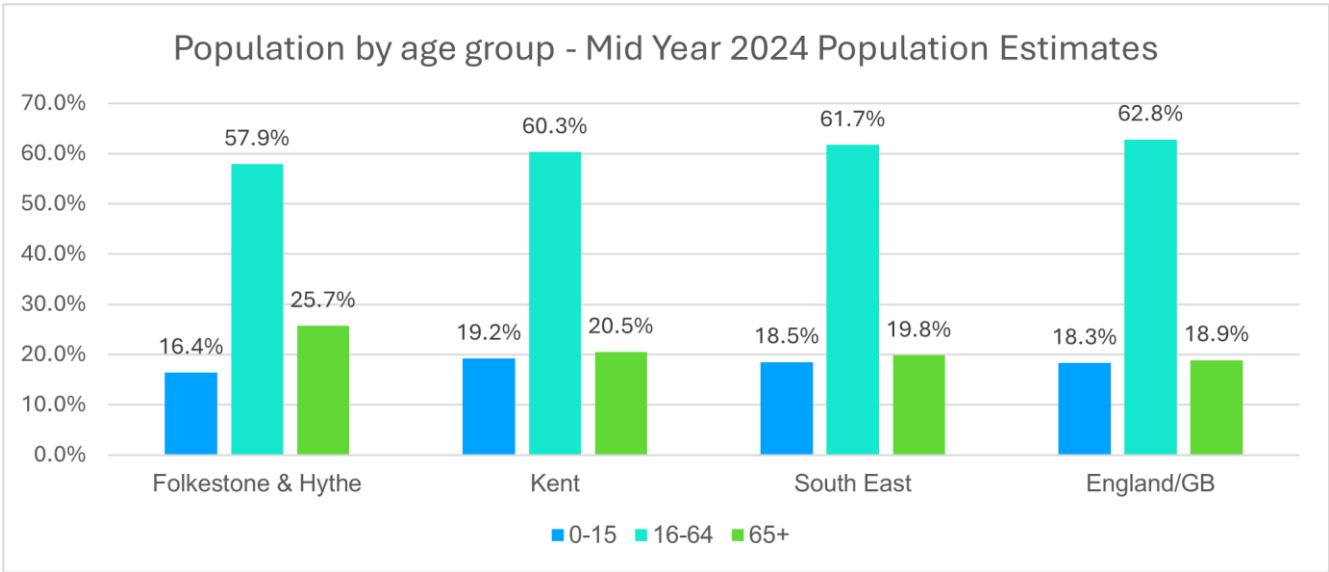
04 Understanding our Communities

Age and Sex (continued):

The average male at (44.0 years) is younger than the average female (45.9 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, 2024 mid-year population estimates

Children and Young Adults:

Age group	No.	% of Folkestone & Hythe population	% of Kent overall*
0-3 – Early Years Children	4,000	3.6%	4.2%
4-10 – Primary Age Children	8,000	7.1%	8.5%
11-18 – Secondary age children	10,300	9.2%	10.2%

Source: KCC Interactive Population Forecast Toolkit - 2024

Working Age’ Population (16-64):

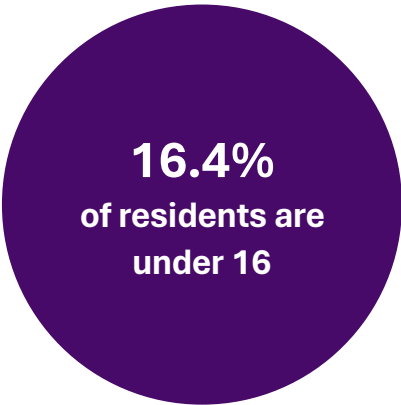
Folkestone & Hythe	Number	%
16-64	65,000	57.9 % of F&HDC residents are 16-64
Female	33,200	57.4% of females in the district are 16-64
Male	31,800	58.3% of males in the district are 16-64

Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2024

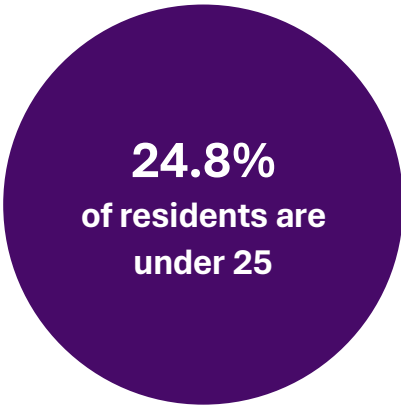
Older Population:

Age Group	Number	% of Folkestone & Hythe Population
65-69	7,100	6.3%
70-74	6,800	6.1%
75-79	7,000	6.3%
80-84	4,200	3.7%
85-89	2,400	2.2%
90 and over	1,400	1.2%

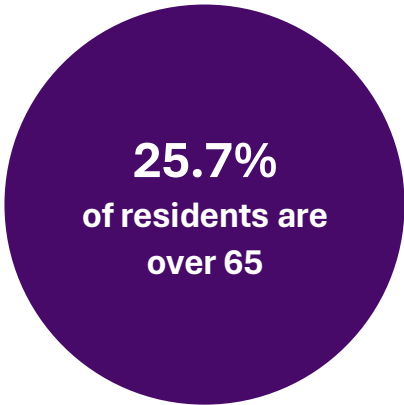
Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2024



Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2024



Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2024



Source: KCC District Profile – ONS Mid Year Estimates - 2024

Population Changes and Forecasts

Historical Population Growth – Summary & Commentary:

Population in 2024:

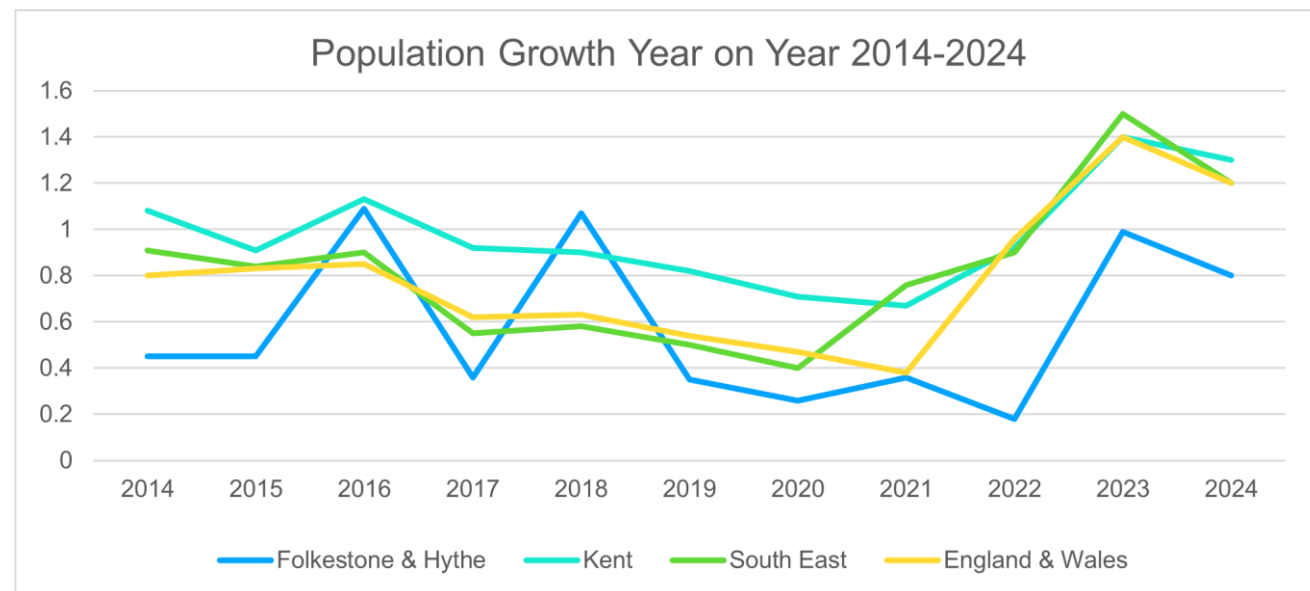
Folkestone & Hythe's population was 112,400, representing 6.8% of Kent's total population.

Growth Over 10 Years:

From 108,200 in 2014 to 112,400 in 2024, the district saw a 3.8% increase. This is below both regional and national averages.

Comparative Growth Rates (2014–2024):

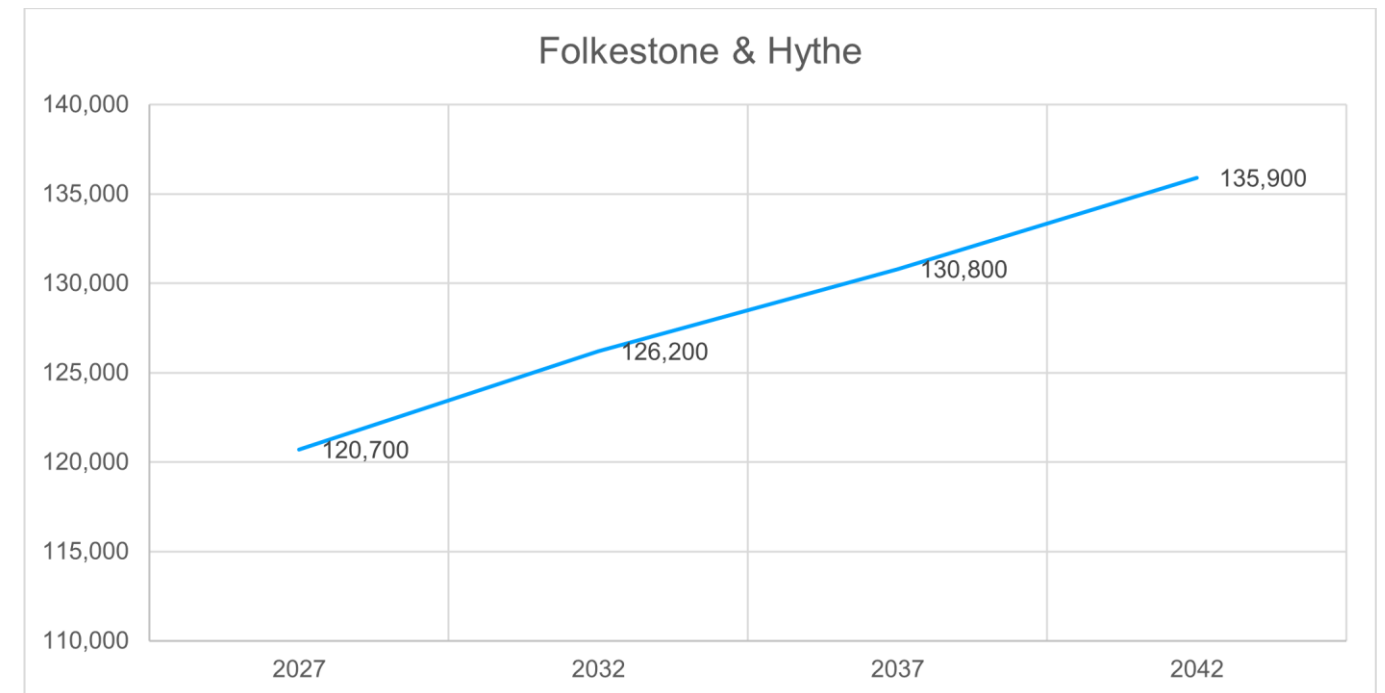
- South East: Average annual growth of 0.84%
- England & Wales: 0.75%
- Kent: 0.88%
- Folkestone & Hythe: Growth is more sporadic, influenced by localised factors such as housing development, migration patterns, and economic conditions.



Source: KCC Interactive mid-year population estimate toolkit 2025

Population Growth Forecasts

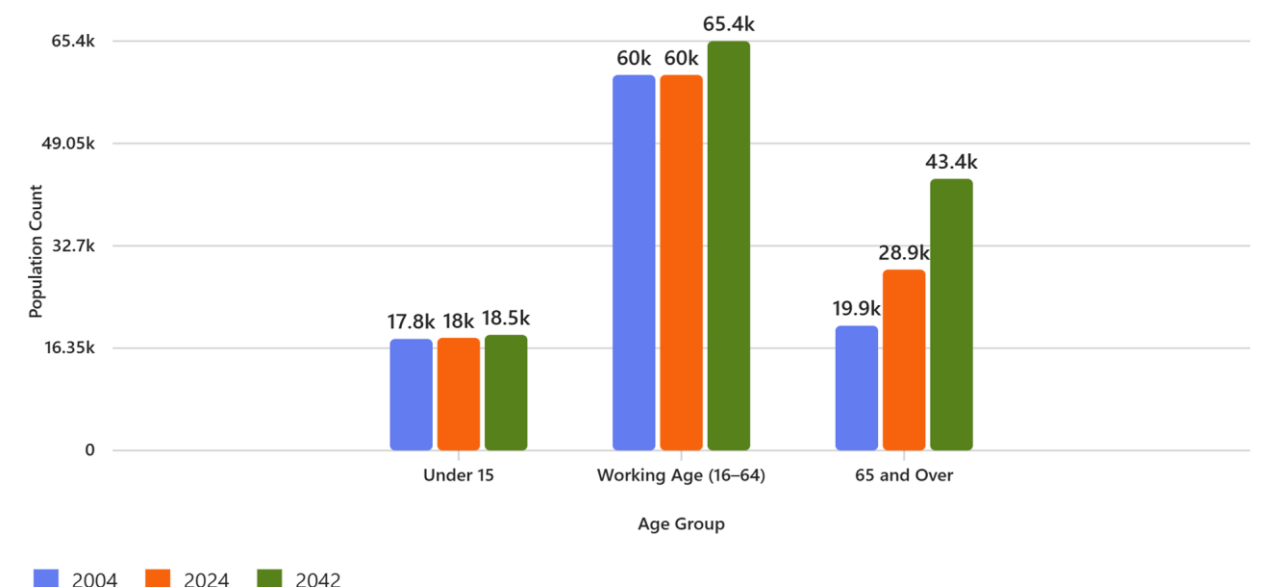
Folkestone & Hythe's population is expected to grow by 22.4% by 2042, reaching around 135,900 people. In comparison, Kent's overall population is forecast to grow by 18.1% during the same period. These estimates do not include any future housing or development projects that may affect population growth.



Population Changes – At a Glance:

- Over the last 20 years (2004–2024), the biggest growth in Folkestone & Hythe's population was among people aged 45 to 70, which increased by 19%.
- The number of residents aged under 45 grew by just 1% during the same period.
- The number of people aged 65 and over rose by 45%, from 19,900 to 28,900.
- Looking ahead to 2042, the number of residents aged 65+ is expected to grow by another 50%, reaching 43,400.
- The working-age population (16–64) is forecast to grow by 9%.
- The number of children aged under 15 is expected to increase by 2.6%.

Age distribution chart for Folkestone & Hythe (2004–2042)



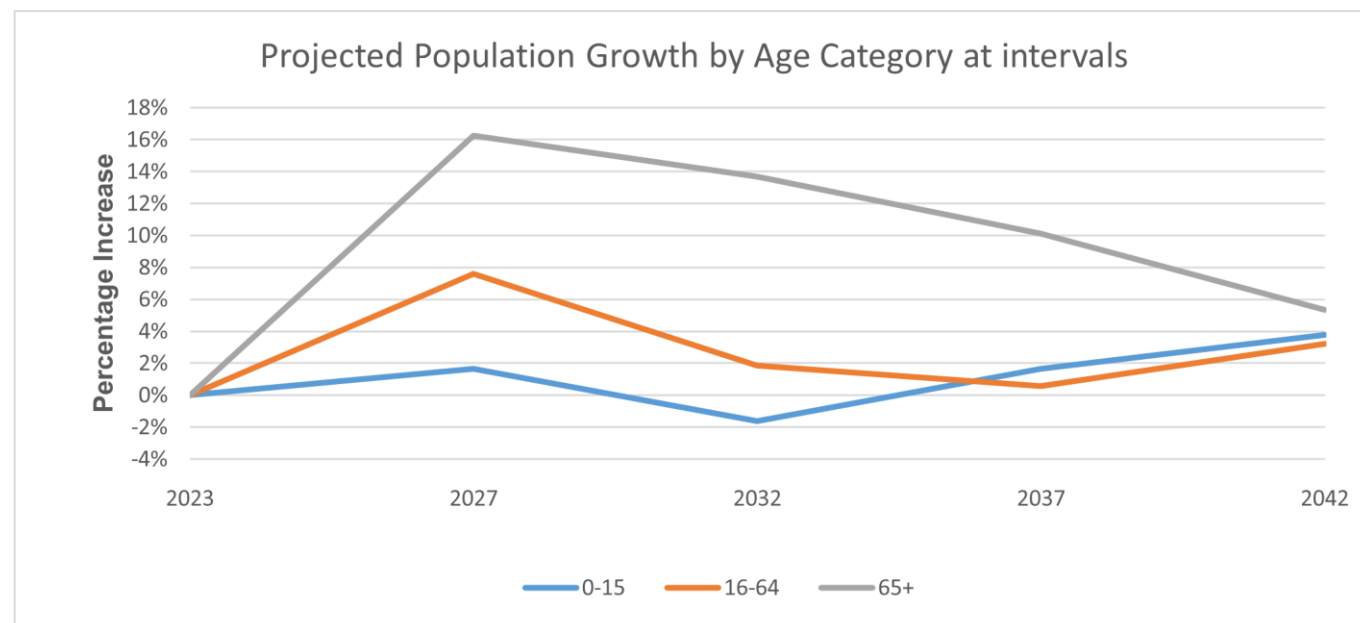
04 Understanding our Communities

Population Changes

Current Population Projections: Folkestone and Hythe (2024-2042):

Year	Total Population	Age Group		
		0-15	16-64	65 and over
2024	111,000	18,700	67,200	28,900
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

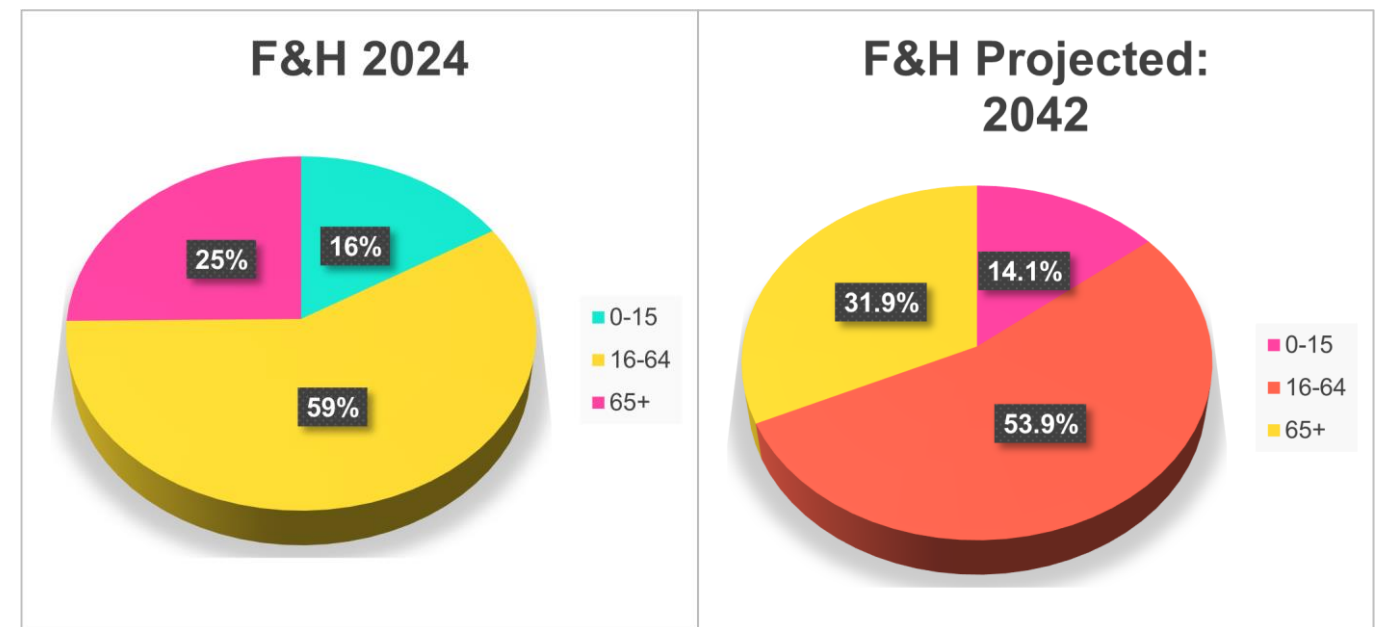
Source: KCC Interactive Population Forecast Toolkit - 2023



Ageing Population in Folkestone & Hythe

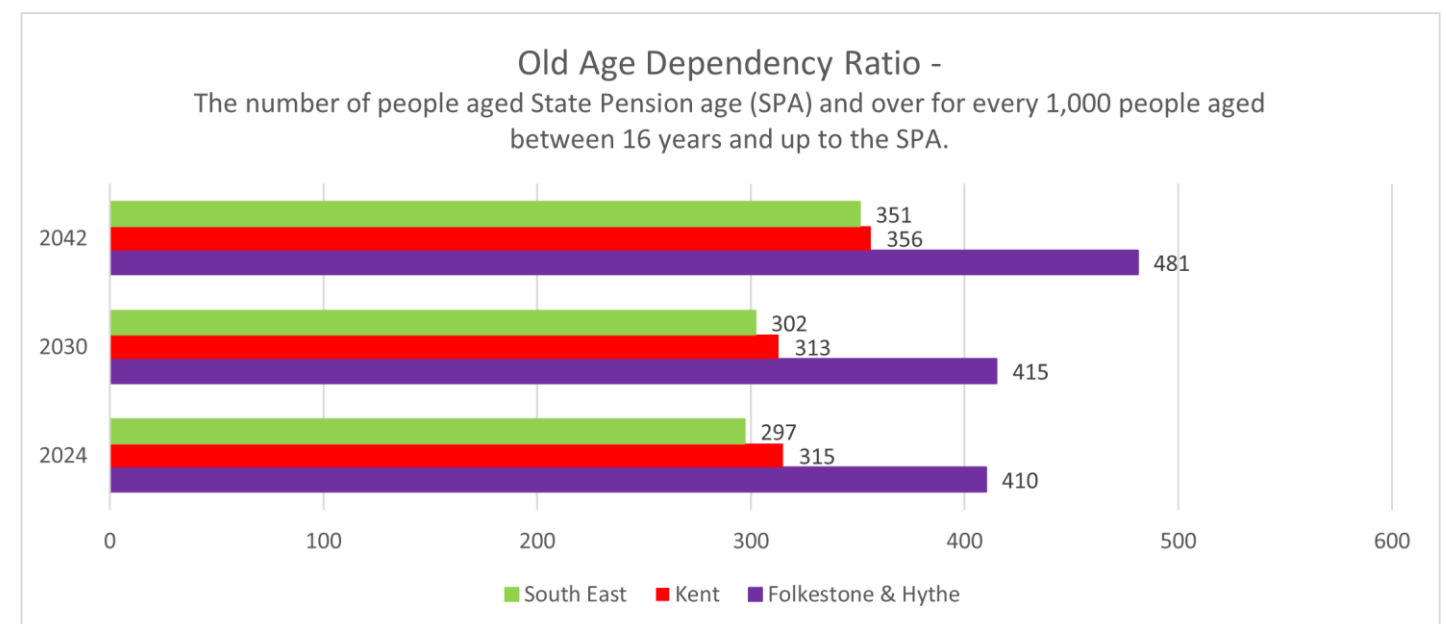
- **26% of residents** in Folkestone & Hythe are currently aged **65 and over**.
- By **2042**, this is expected to rise to **32%**, with the number of older residents increasing from **28,900 in 2024** to **43,400**.
- While an ageing population is a national trend, the growth in this age group is **especially notable in Folkestone & Hythe**, and will have important implications for local services, housing, and community support.

Projected Population by age category 2024 vs 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 410 in 2024 to 481 in 2042 than for the South East region and England & Wales. This highlights the district's **accelerated ageing trend**, which may require more targeted planning for health, housing, and social care services.

Old Age Dependency Ratio Graph 2024 vs 2042



Household Composition in Folkestone & Hythe (2021 Census)

- There were **48,338 households** in the district.
- **66.6%** lived in **owned homes** (outright, with a mortgage, or shared ownership).
- **10.8%** lived in **social rented housing** (including council homes).
- **22.5%** lived in **privately rented homes**.
- The remaining households lived under **other arrangements**.

Household Size:

- **Nearly 70%** of households were made up of **one or two people**.
- **One-third** of all households were **single-person households**.
 - Of these, **45%** were aged **65 and over**.

Household Type:

- **61.8%** were **single-family households**, including:
 - Married or cohabiting couples
 - Same-sex civil partnerships
 - Lone parents
 - Families where all members were aged 65+
- **32.5%** were **one-person households**.
- **5.7%** were **other household types**.

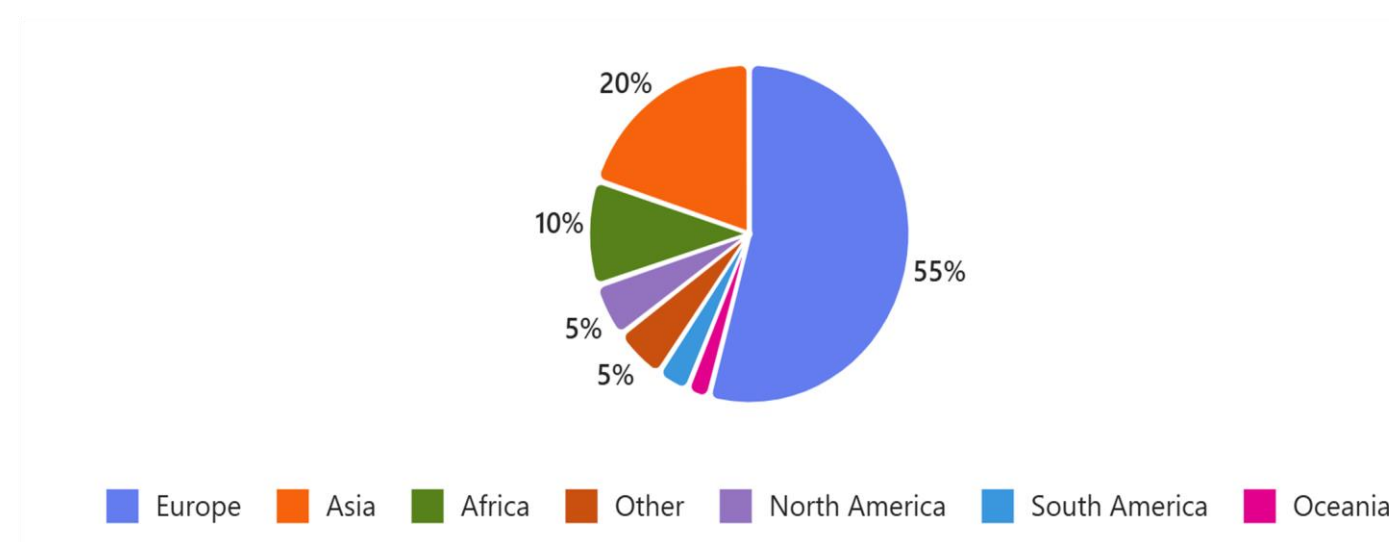
Ethnicity in Folkestone & Hythe (2021 Census)

- **92.6%** of residents identified as **White**.
- Other ethnic groups included:
 - **Asian, British Asian or Asian Welsh: 3.9%**
 - **Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: 1.9%**
 - **Other ethnic groups: 1.0%**
 - **Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: 0.6%**

Key Insight:

- 10.5% of residents were born outside the UK.
- Of those, 7% have lived in the UK for over 10 years.
- The chart shows the distribution of birth continents, helping to visualise the district's international diversity:

Continent of Birth Pie Chart for residents of **Folkestone & Hythe** who were born outside the UK, based on the 2021 Census data:



Household Languages:

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

Households approaching the Council:

In 2024/25 a total of 1,375 households approached the council as homeless of which:

- 918 (66.8%) approaches stated they were from white ethnic backgrounds
- 23 (1.7%) from Asian ethnic backgrounds
- 26 (1.9%) were from Black ethnic backgrounds
- 1 (0.1%) from Arab backgrounds
- 26 (1.9%) from mixed ethnicity backgrounds
- 10 (0.7%) Other backgrounds
- 19 (1.3%) Don't know/refused.
- 352 (25.6%) Blanks

Religion

Religious Affiliation in Folkestone & Hythe

- **48%** of residents identified as **Christian**.
- **41.8%** said they had **no religion**, reflecting a significant secular population.
- Other faiths were less represented:
 - **2%** identified as **Buddhist**
 - **1.5%** as **Hindu**
 - **1%** as **Muslim**
 - **0.1%** as **Jewish**

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

22%

Living in the district are recognised as disabled under Equality Act

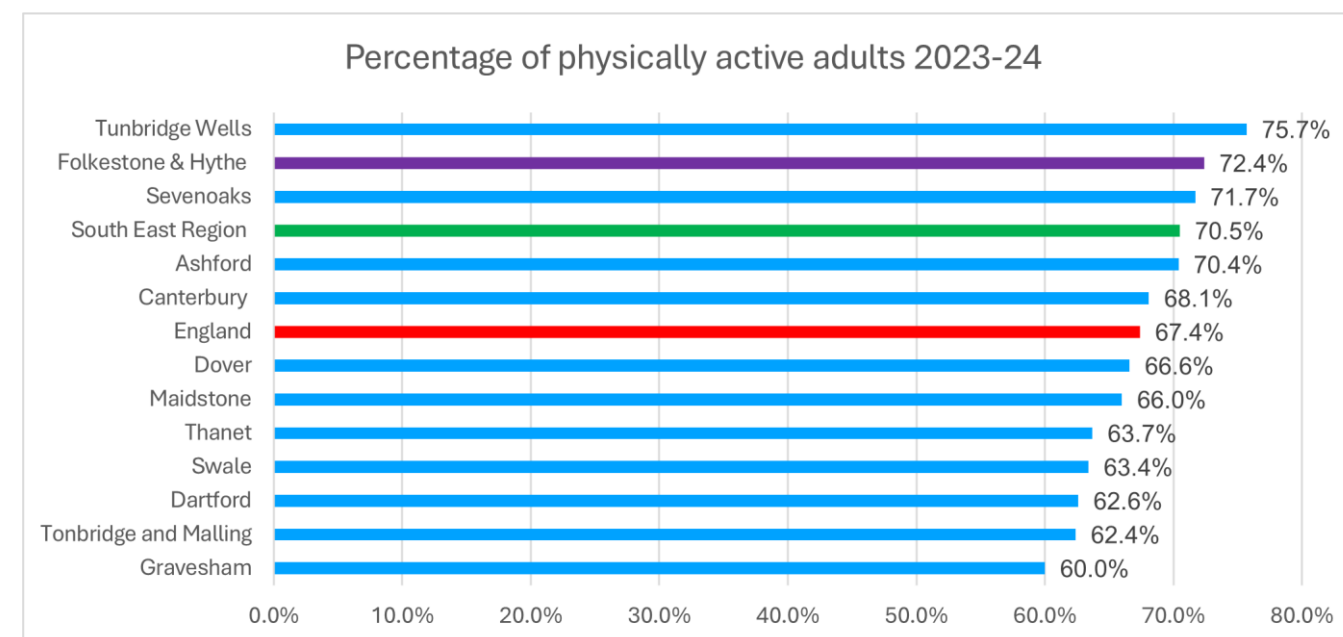
6.5%

Of residents describe their health as bad or very bad

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

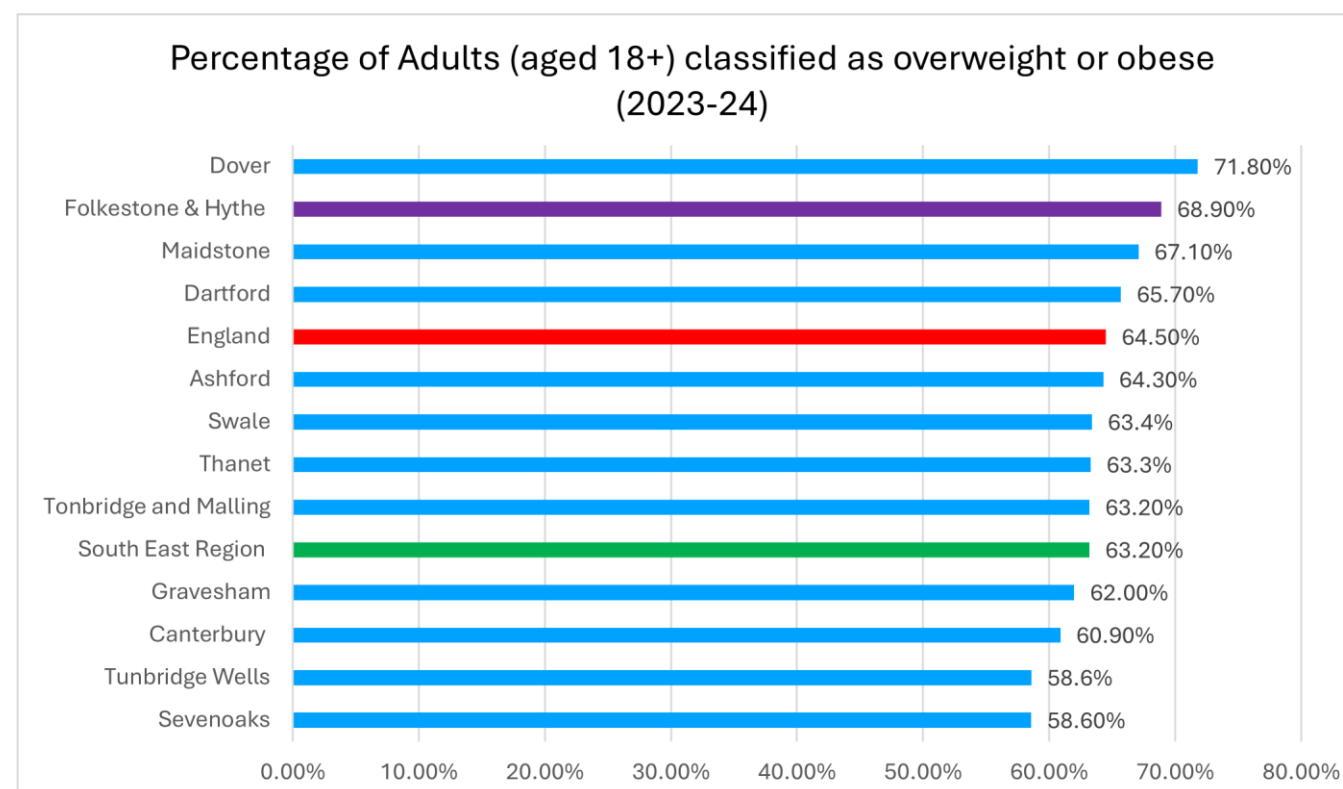
In 2023-24 72.4% of Folkestone & Hythe adults were classed as 'physically active' above the English national average. The following graph sets out how Folkestone & Hythe compares with other Kent Local Authority areas:

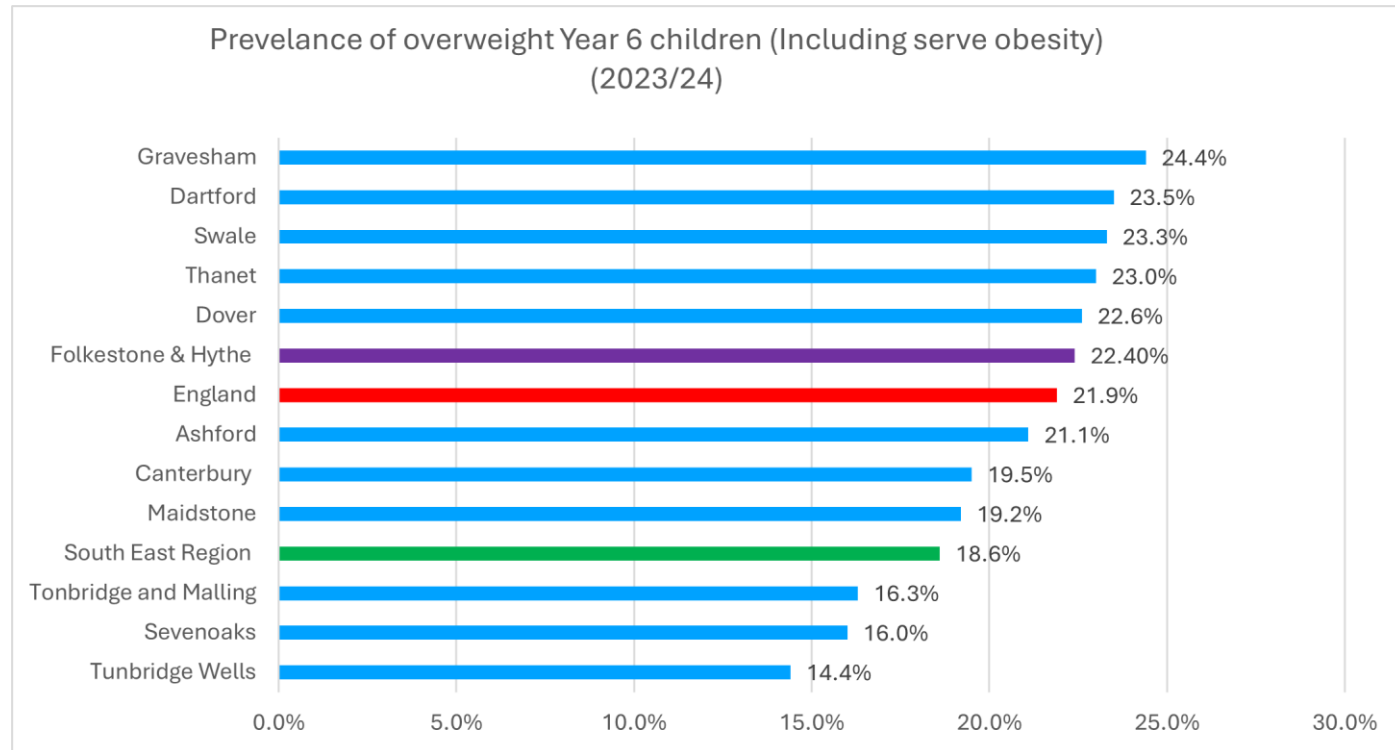


Obesity

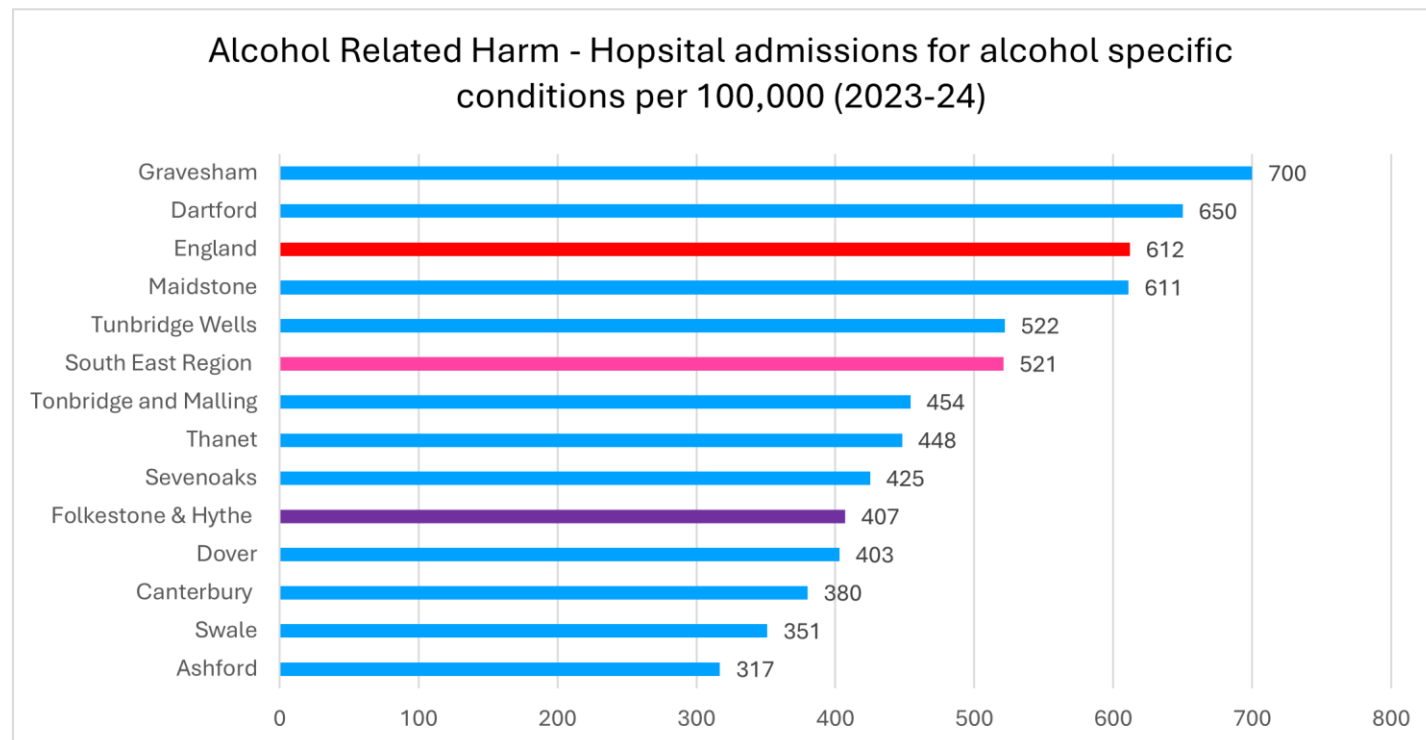
In 2023-24, 68.9% of adults in the district were classified as overweight and the latest data from the same year shows 22.4% of 10-11 year olds (Year 6 school age) were classified as obese. Both figures are above the South East and national averages.

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:

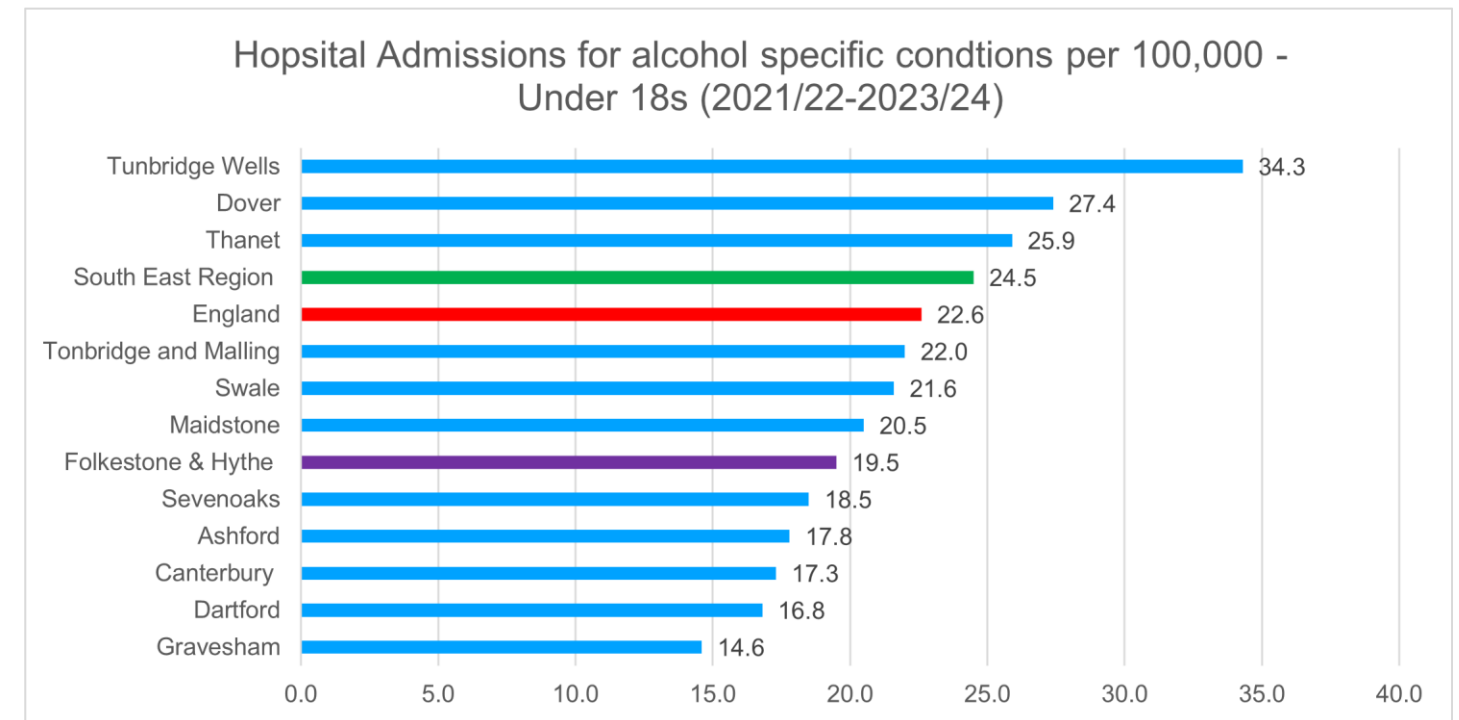


Obesity (Continued):**Alcohol-related hospital admissions**

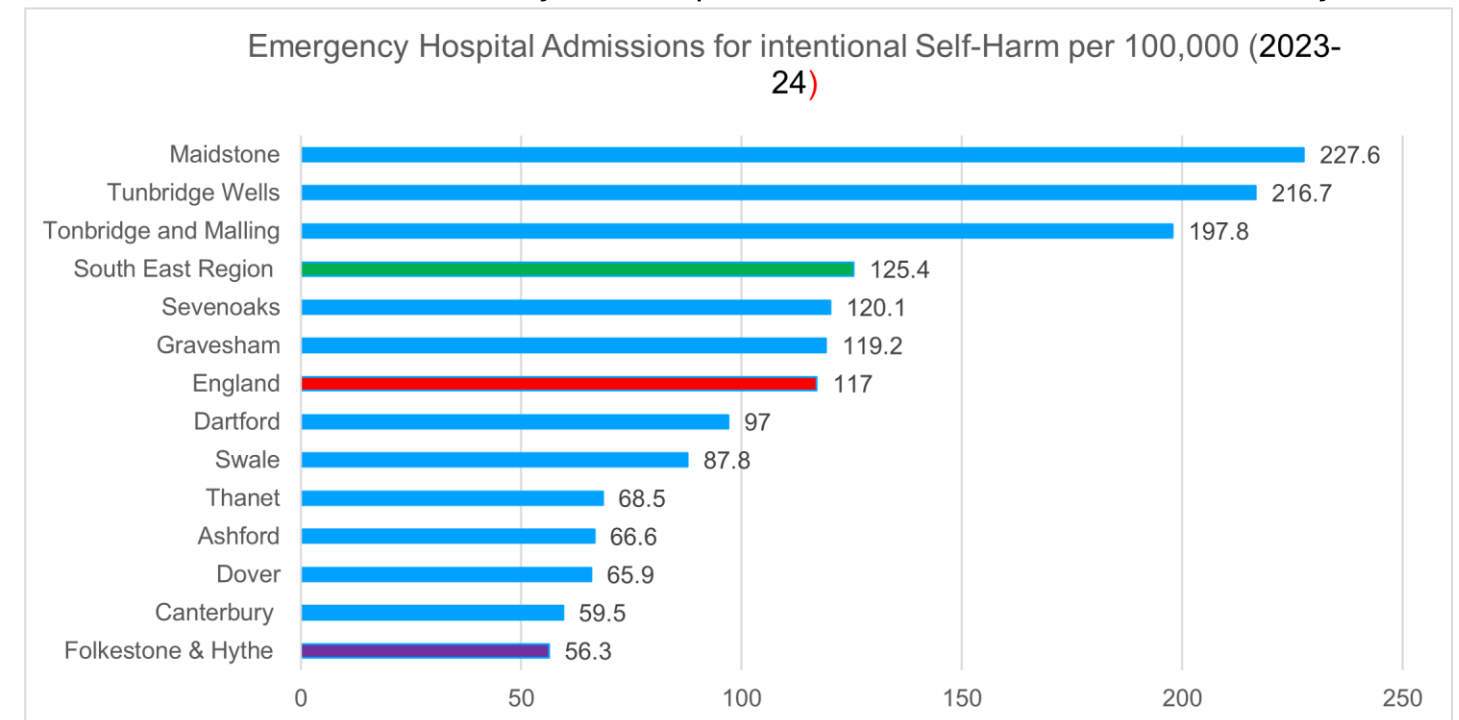
The rate of hospital admissions for alcohol specific conditions in adults is better than the average across England with 407 per 100,000 recorded in the district during 2023-24, compared with 612 per 100,000 nationally.



However, the rate of alcohol-specific hospital admissions among under 18s in the district is below the average across England with 19.5 per 100,000 recorded, compared with 22.6 per 100,000 nationally. The graph below sets out how Folkestone & Hythe compares with other Kent Local Authority areas:

**Emergency Hospital Admissions for intentional Self-Harm**

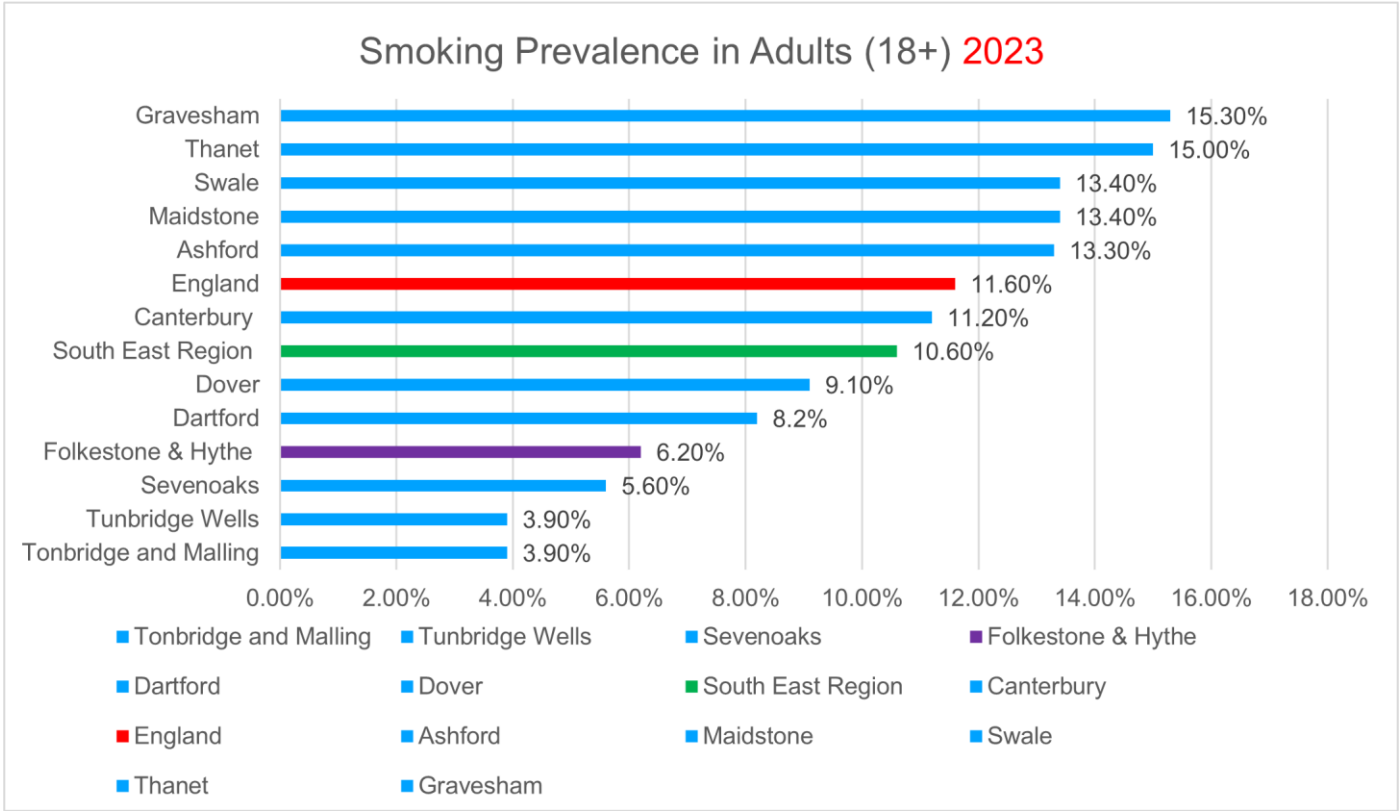
The number of emergency hospital admissions for intentional self-harm in the district in 2023-24 was 56.3 per 100,000, which is below both the regional and national average. The graph below sets out how Folkestone & Hythe compares with other Kent Local Authority areas:



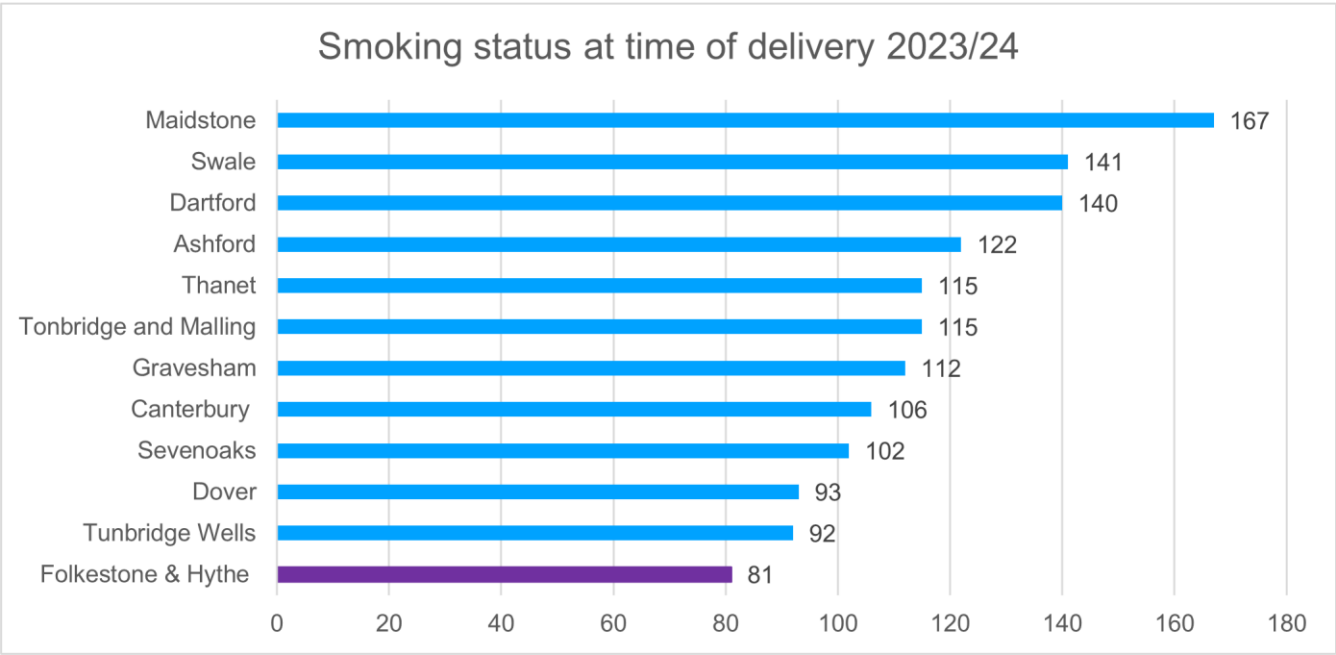
04 Understanding our Communities

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.

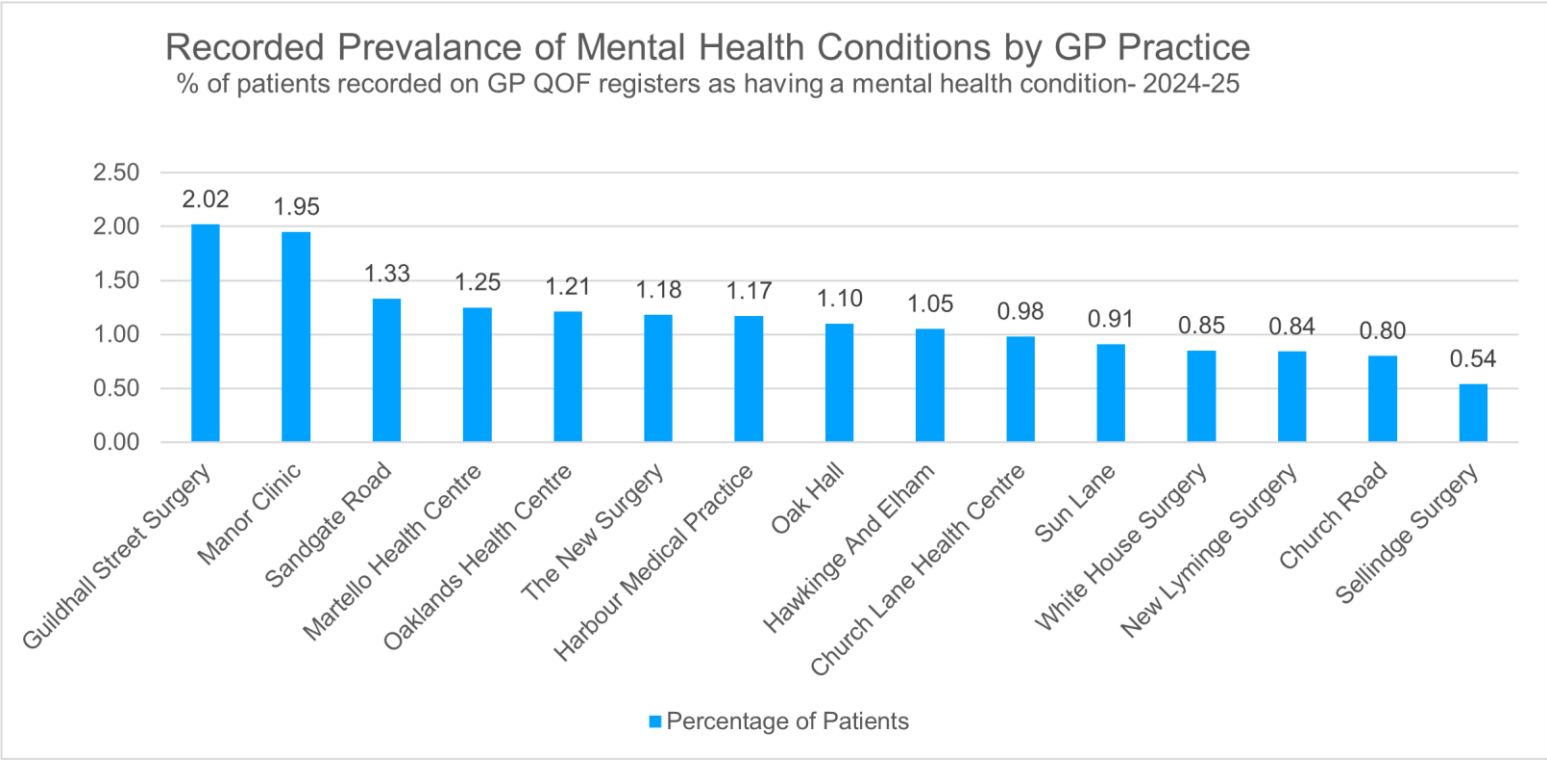


In 2023/24, 81 women in the district were recorded as smokers at the time of child delivery, the lowest out of twelve Kent local authority areas. The highest was Maidstone with 167 recorded.

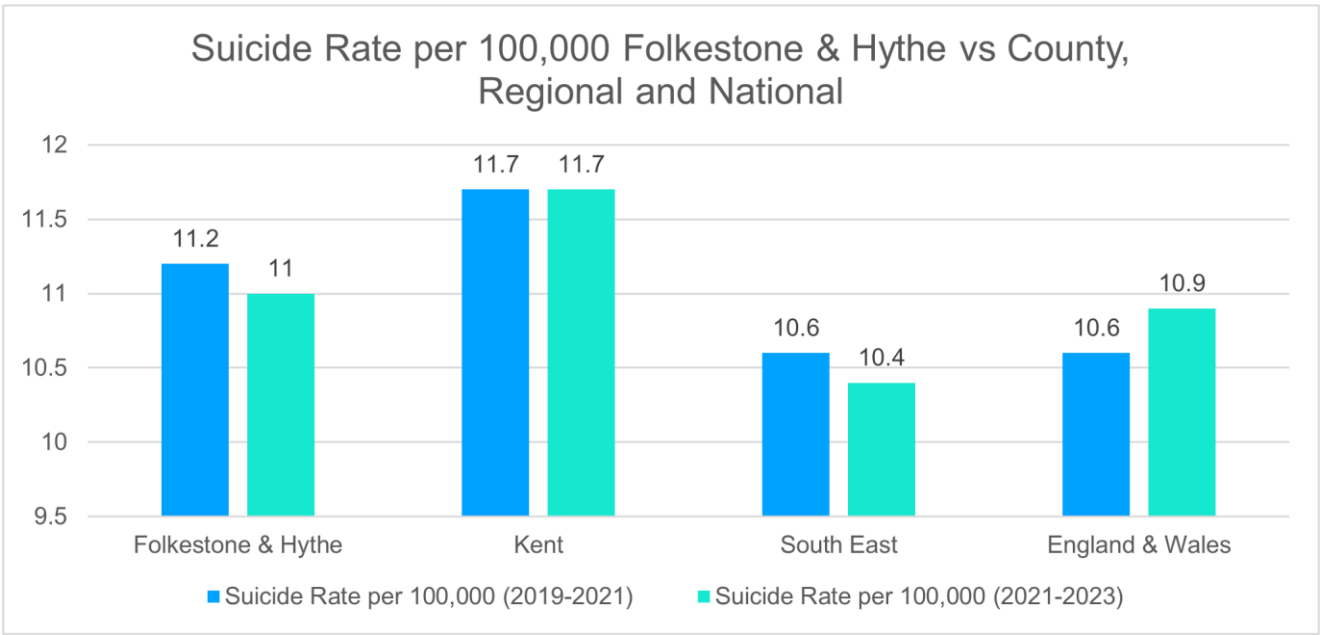


Mental Health and Suicide

The prevalence of mental health conditions in 2024-25 by GP practice in the graph below shows Guildhall Street Surgery (Folkestone) as recording the highest prevalence (2.02%) 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).



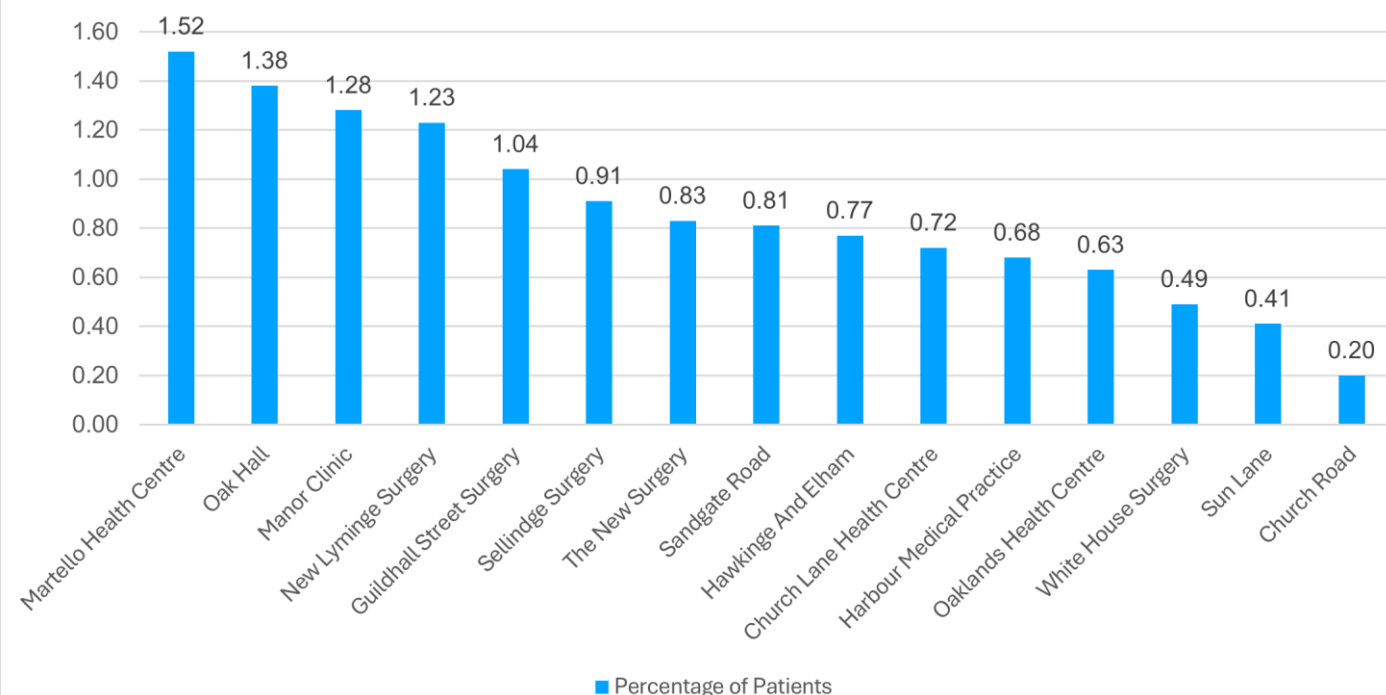
Suicides per 100,000 of population by Kent Local Authority Area
(2021-23)



Learning Disabilities

The latest figures recorded in 2024/25 on the prevalence of learning disabilities by GP practice show a variance across the district with the highest at Martello Health Centre in Dymchurch (1.52%) and the lowest at Church Road Surgery in Lyminge (0.20%).

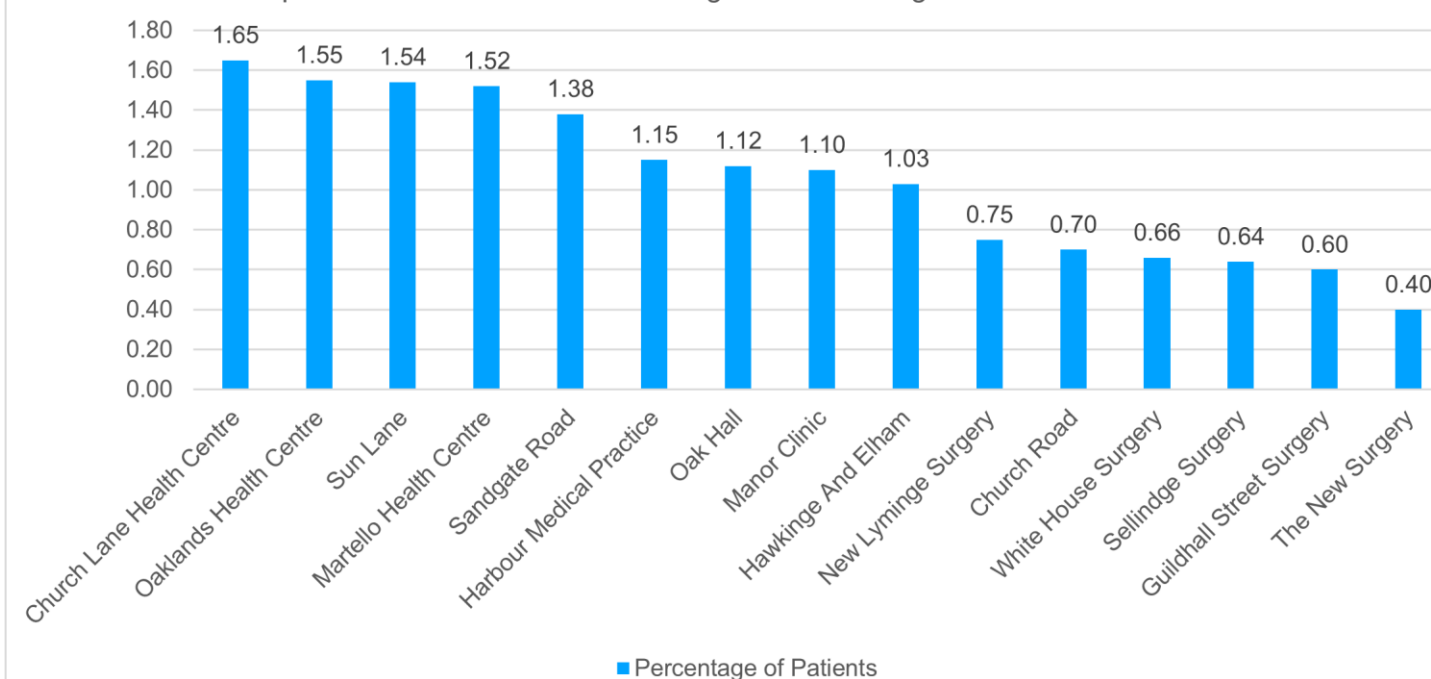
Recorded prevalence of learning disabilities by GP Practice
% of patients recorded on GP QOF registers as having a learning disability - 2024-25



Dementia

The latest data recorded in 2024/25 for prevalence of dementia by GP surgeries shows a variance across the district with the highest number being recorded at Church Lane Health Centre in New Romney (1.65%) and the lowest at The New Surgery in Folkestone (0.40%).

Recorded dementia prevalence by GP Practice
% of patients recorded on GP QOF registers as having a dementia 2024-25



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 2024 showing 946 live births and 1,454 deaths in 2024/25 year. This is in contrast with the picture for Kent as a whole, where the live birth rate is higher than the death rate.

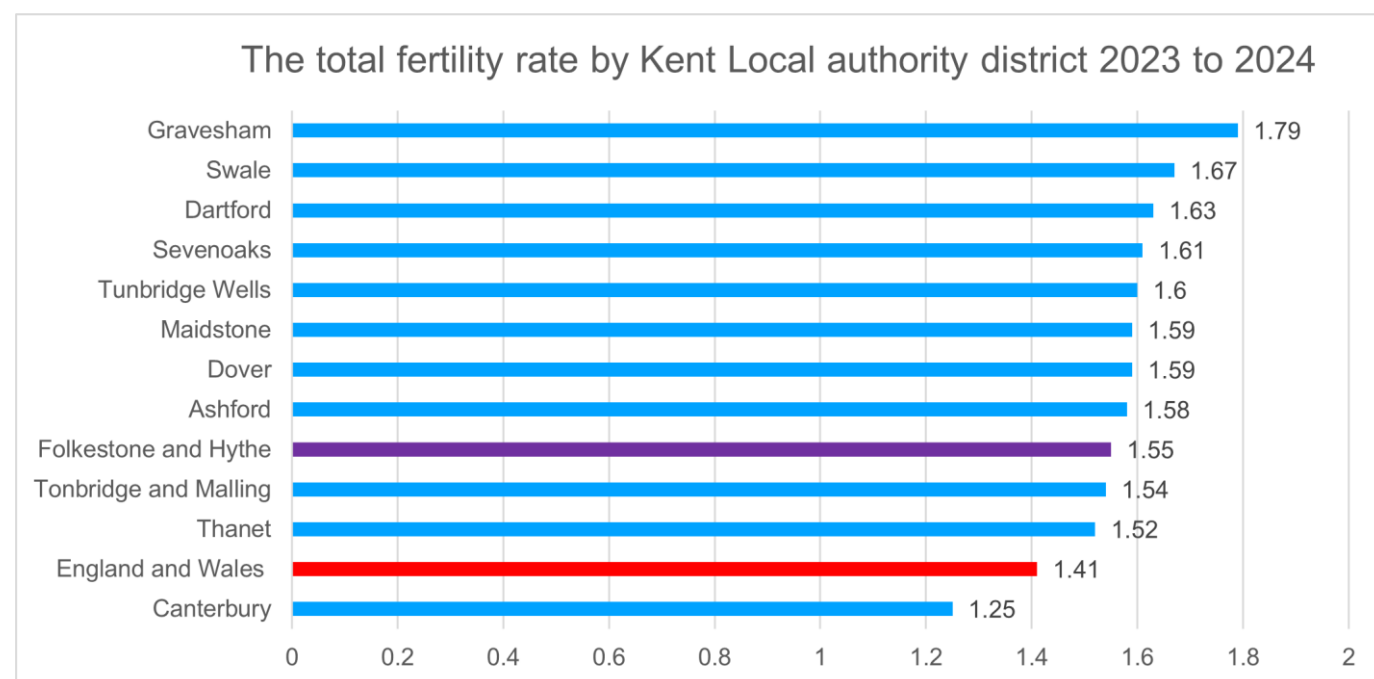
Source: ONS, Births in England and Wales: birth registrations 2024

ONS: Deaths registered monthly in England and Wales, 2025

Total Fertility Rates

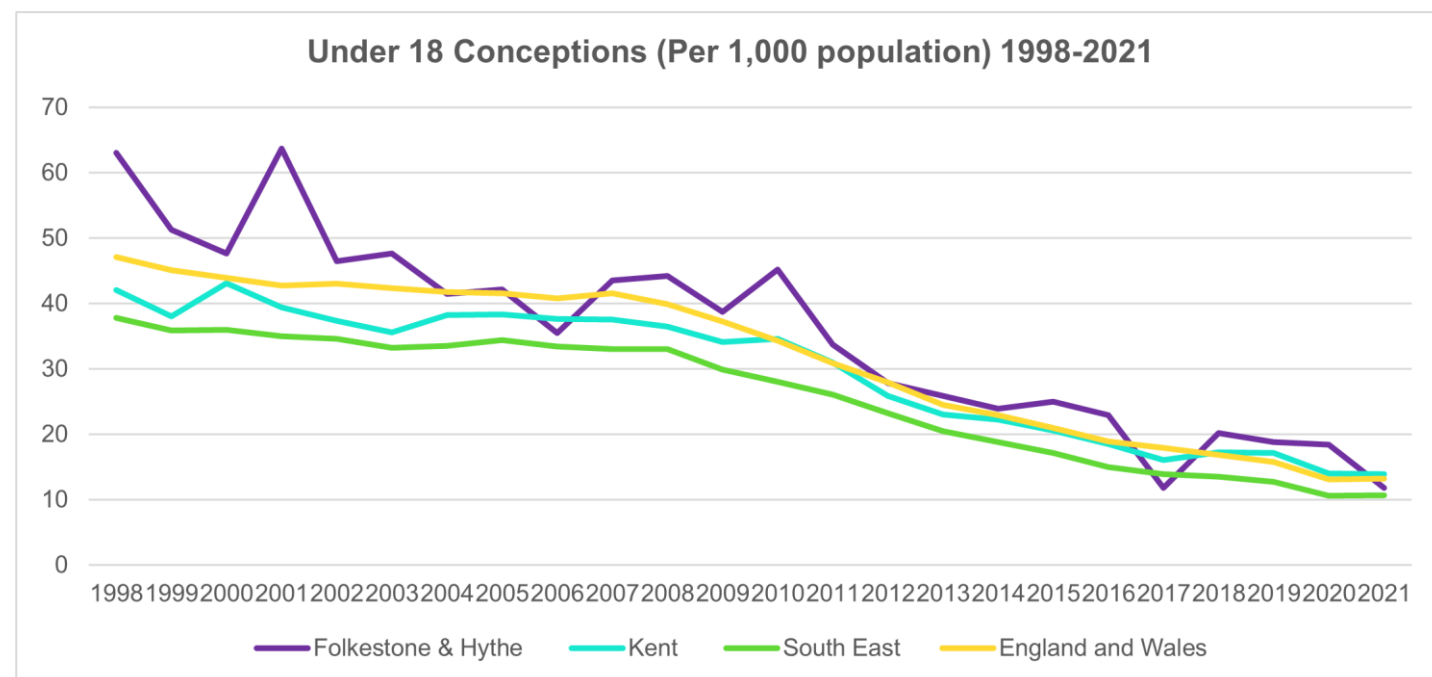
The total fertility rate is defined as ‘the average number of live children that a group of women would bear if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of the calendar year throughout their childbearing lifespan’.

Folkestone & Hythe has the fourth lowest total fertility rates (1.55) in 2024 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 (1.41) average:

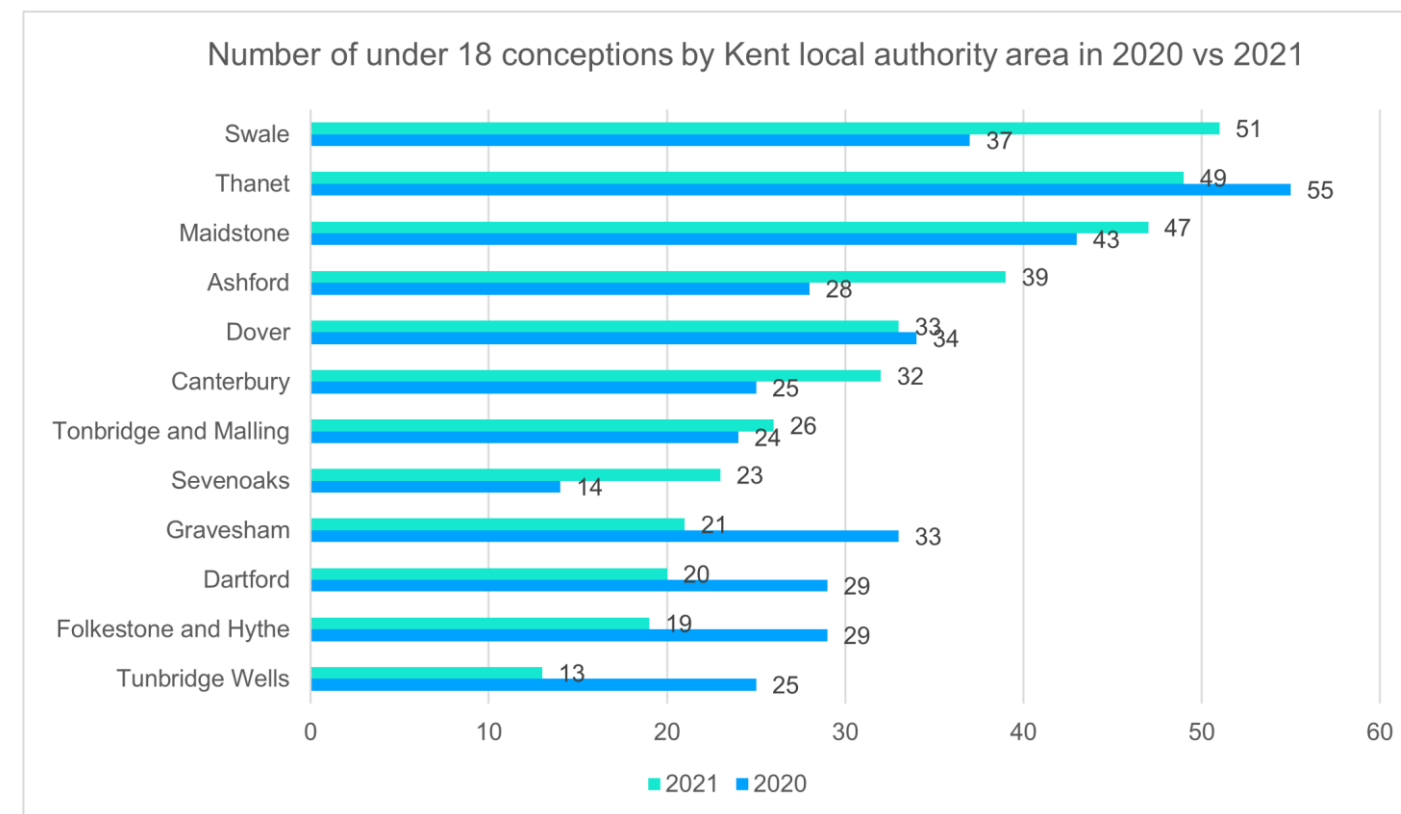


Teenage Pregnancies:

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	77.8	76.8	80.3
Female	82.6	81.1	84.1

Source: ONS: Life expectancies for local areas of the UK: Between 2001-03 and 2021-2023

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 18.6 years.

04 Understanding our Communities

Disability Benefits

14.4% 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 15.9%) 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	14.4%	11.1%	8.9%	10.8%
0-15	9.8%	8.8%	7.0%	7.0%
16-64	11.0%	8.3%	6.5%	8.1%
65+	25.0%	21.6%	18.4%	23.5%
Young People (24 and under)	10.4%	8.9%	6.9%	6.9%

Source: KCC District Profile/ DWP, February 2025

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 20.4% of the total also claimed for a mental health condition, and 14.5% of the total due to a learning difficulty.

People Providing unpaid care:

Age Range	Percentage
65 and over	26.7%
16-64	70.6%
5-15	2.7%

Source:: KCC District Profile September 2025

Percentage of age groups claiming carers allowance Unpaid Care

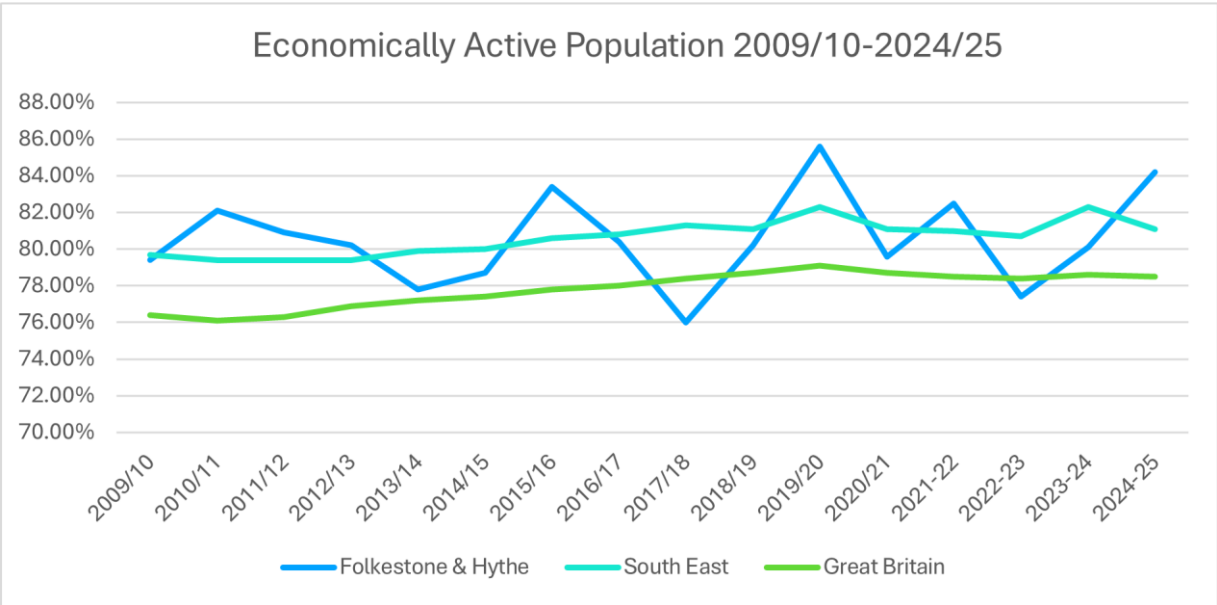
Age Range	Folkestone & Hythe	Kent	Great Britain
18-24	1.8%	1.4%	1.1%
25-64	3.8%	3.2%	3.0%
65 and over	2.9%	2.4%	2.8%

Source:: KCC District Profile/ DWP, February 2025

Economic Profile

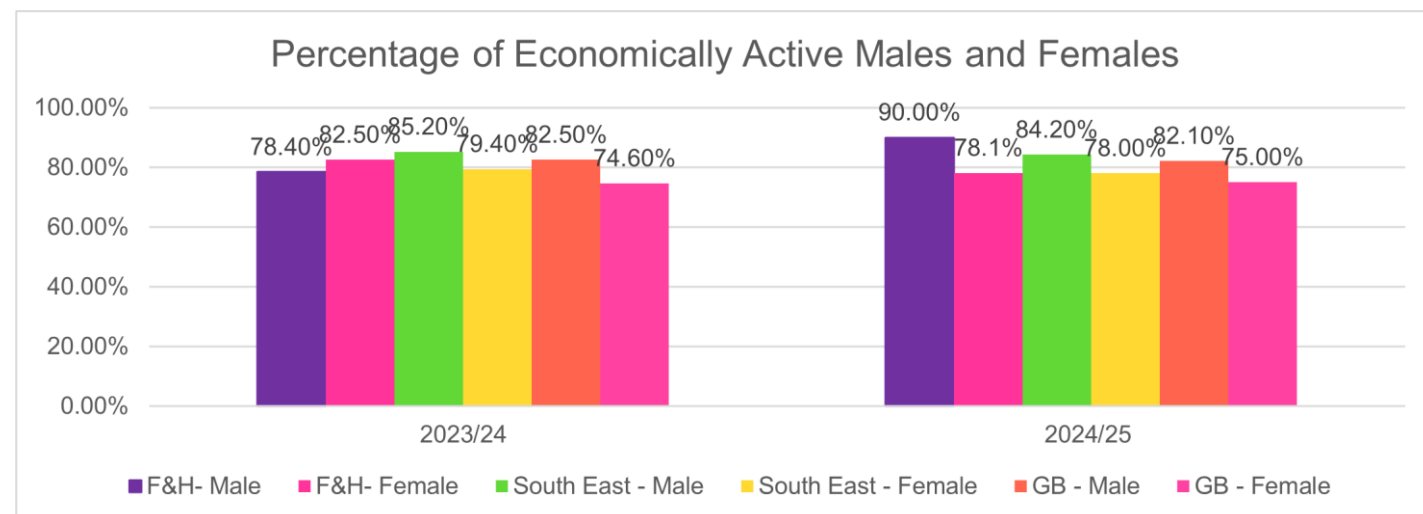
Labour Supply & Economic Activity

In 2024-25, 84.2% 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 80.1% in 2023-24.



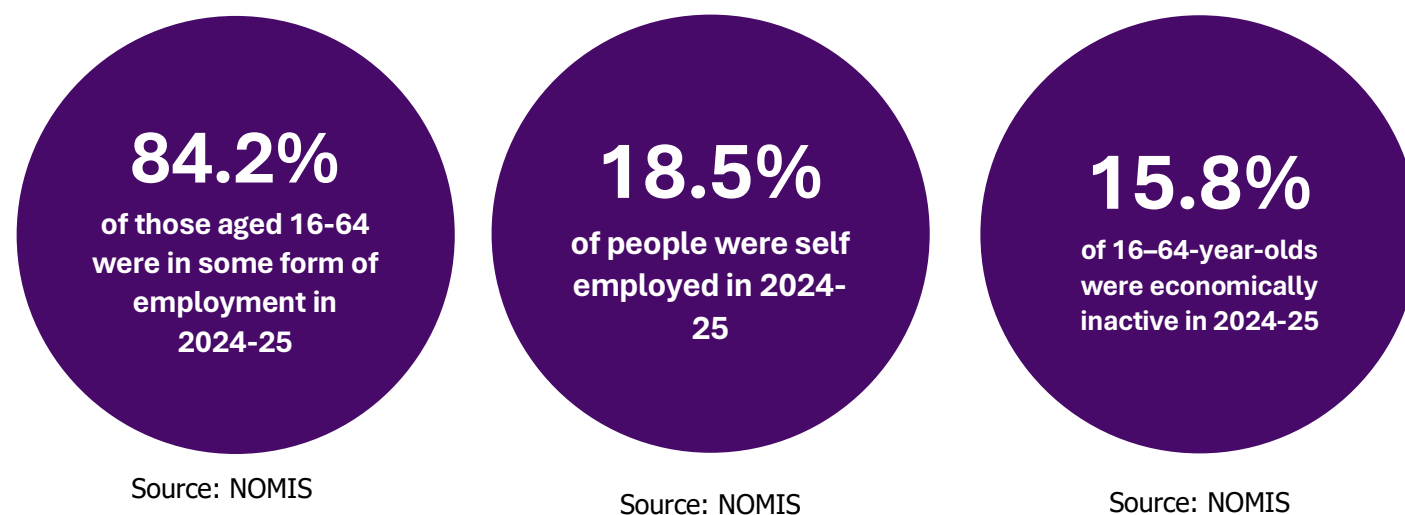
There has historically been some differential between the proportion of economically active men and women. In 2016/17 for example, 85.9% of males were economically active in comparison to 74.8% of females. In 2024-25, the proportion of economically active females stands at 78.1% and the proportion of economically active males stands at 90%. The graph on the following page shows a comparison with the year before.

Economic Profile (continued)



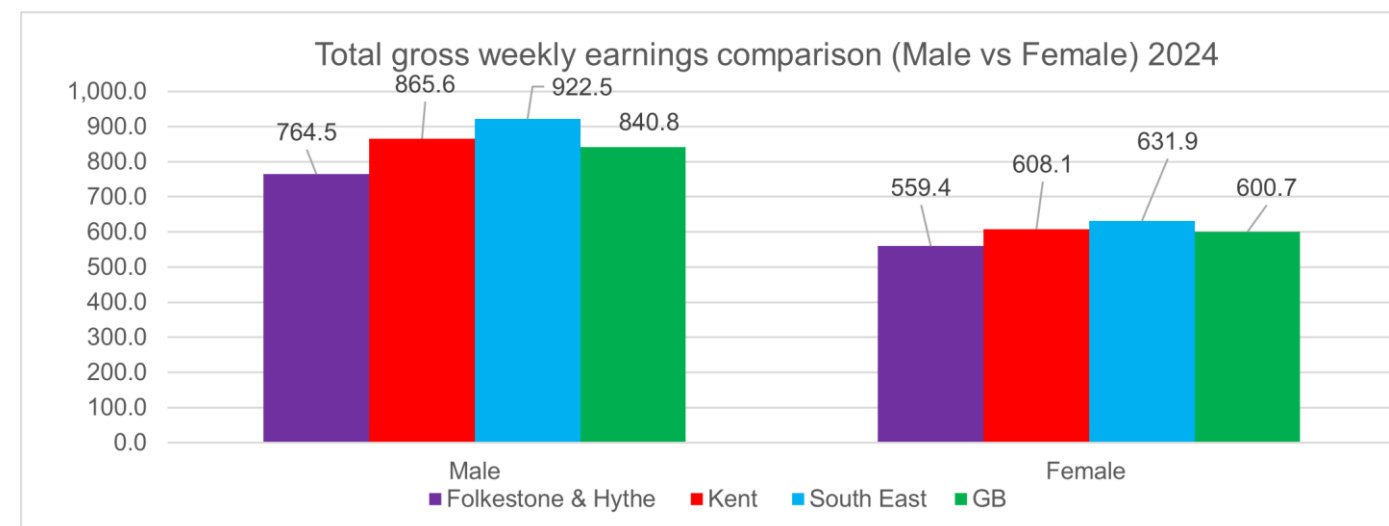
In 2024/25 84.2% of those aged 16-64 were in some form of employment. The majority of people aged 16-64 who were classed as employees has increased from 57.4% in 2023/24 to 60.7% in 2024/25. The number of those classed as self-employed has increased from 13.7% in 2023/24 to 18.5% in 2024/25.

The proportion of residents classed as 'economically inactive' has shown a decrease for the monitoring year - in 2023/24 19.9% of those aged 16-64 were unavailable to work in 2024/25 the figure has fallen again to 15.8% is now below the average when compared to the South East (18.9%) and Great Britain as whole (21.5%).



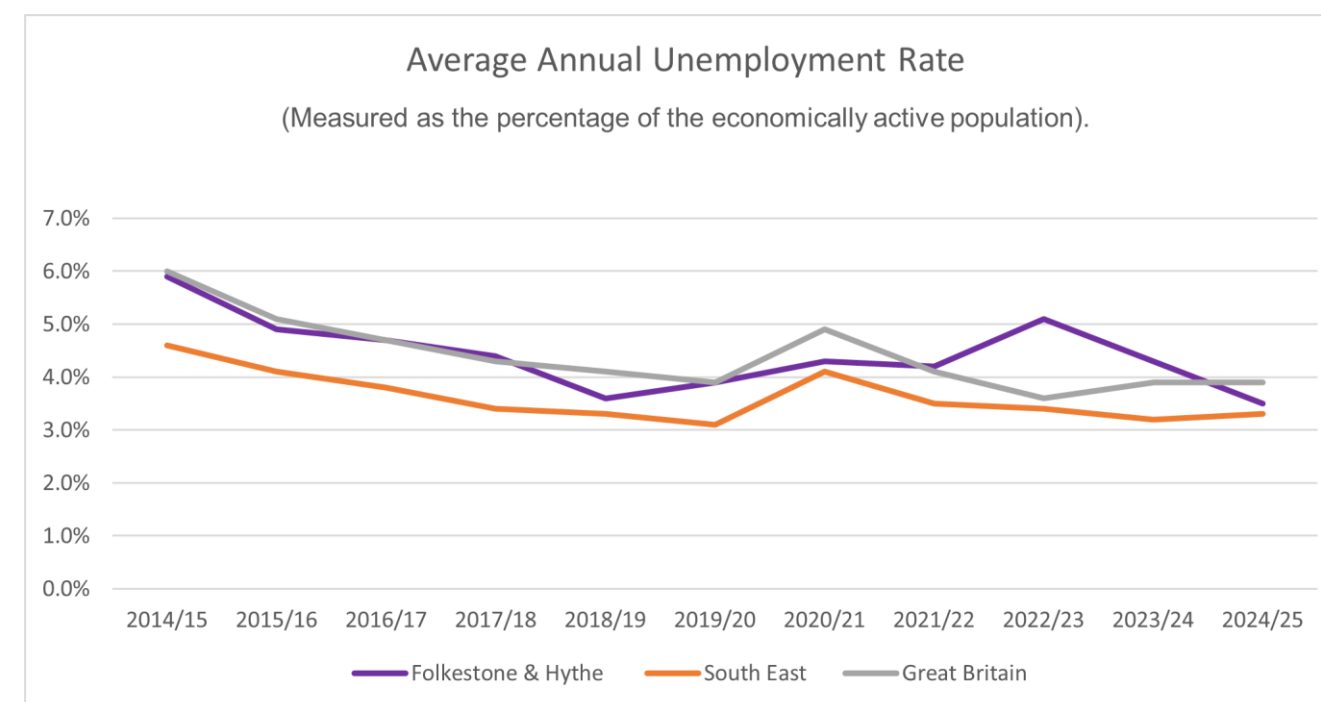
Earnings and Income

The average gross earnings for a Folkestone & Hythe resident in 2024/25 was £665.70 per week which is below than those for the average Kent resident (£733.30 per week), the South East (£775.1 per week) and Great Britain as a whole (£719.10 per week).



Unemployment and Working Age Benefits

The unemployment rate in the district has decreased from 4.3% in 2023/24 to 3.5% in 2024/25, however it is above the South East (3.3%) and Great Britain (3.9%) averages. The graph below shows the average unemployment rate from 2004/05 to 2024/25:



Employment by Occupation: Proportion of those in Employment in 2025

	Folkestone & Hythe	South East	Great Britain
Soc 2010 major group 1-3	46.9%	55.6%	53.3%
1 Managers, directors and senior officials	10.6%	12.5%	11.2%
2 Professional occupations	21.1%	27.6%	26.9%
3 Associate professional & technical	15.2%	15.3%	15.0%
Soc 2010 major group 4-5	18.9%	18.2%	17.7%
4 Administrative & secretarial	#	9.5%	9.2%
5 Skilled trades occupations	#	8.7%	8.5%
Soc 2010 major group 6-7	23.7%	13.8%	14.3%
6 Caring, leisure and Other Service occupations	13.1%	8.3%	8.5%
7 Sales and customer service occs	#	5.5%	5.8%
Soc 2010 major group 8-9	#	12.4%	14.3%
8 Process plant & machine operatives	#	4.5%	5.6%
9 Elementary occupations	#	7.8%	9.0%

Sample size too small for reliable estimate

Source: NOMIS

04 Understanding our Communities

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 2024/25 the claimant count recorded a minor decrease within the district from 4.2% in March 2024 to 4.1% in April 2025. The current count is still higher in comparison to the South East (3.2%), but in line with the national average (4.1%). 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+	4.1%	3.2%	4.1%
16-17	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%
18-24	7.1%	4.3%	5.5%
(of which 18-21)	8.5%	4.6%	5.9%
25-49	4.4%	3.6%	4.6%
50+	3.0%	2.5%	3.0%

Source: NOMIS 2025

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

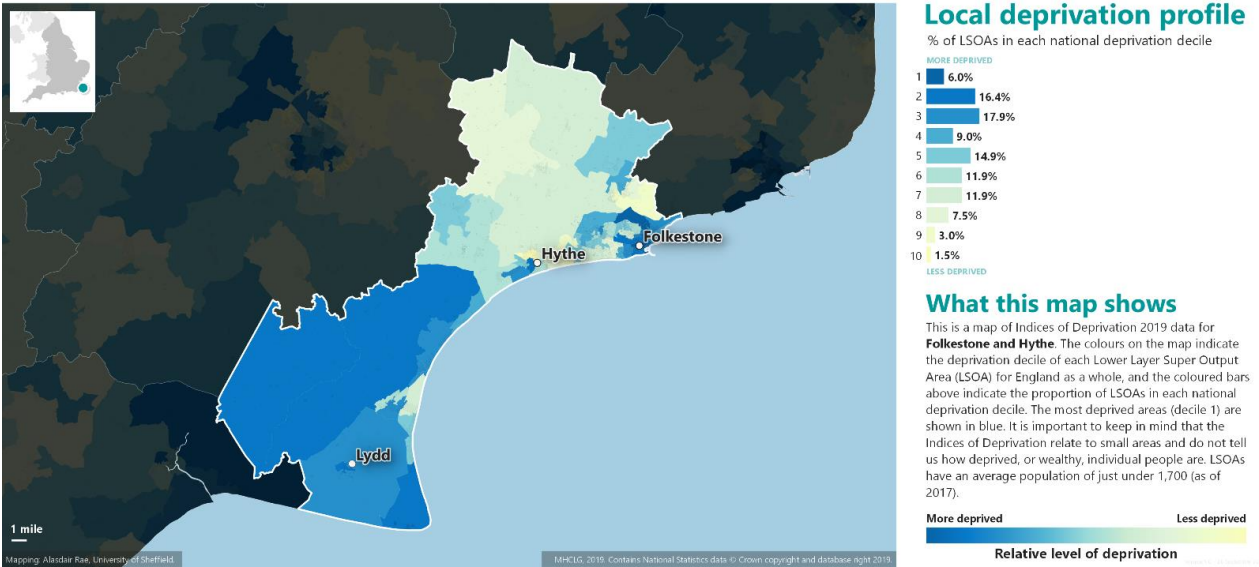
The map below shows the latest indices of multiple deprivation (2019) based on combined data from income, employment, education, skills and training, health deprivation and disability, crime, barriers to housing and services as well as living environment deprivation. The darkest blue areas show the worst 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

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.

Thanet is the
most
deprived area
in Kent

Source: MHCLG 2019

Folkestone &
Hythe is third
most deprived
area in Kent

Source: MHCLG 2019

Tunbridge
Wells is the
least deprived
area in Kent

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):

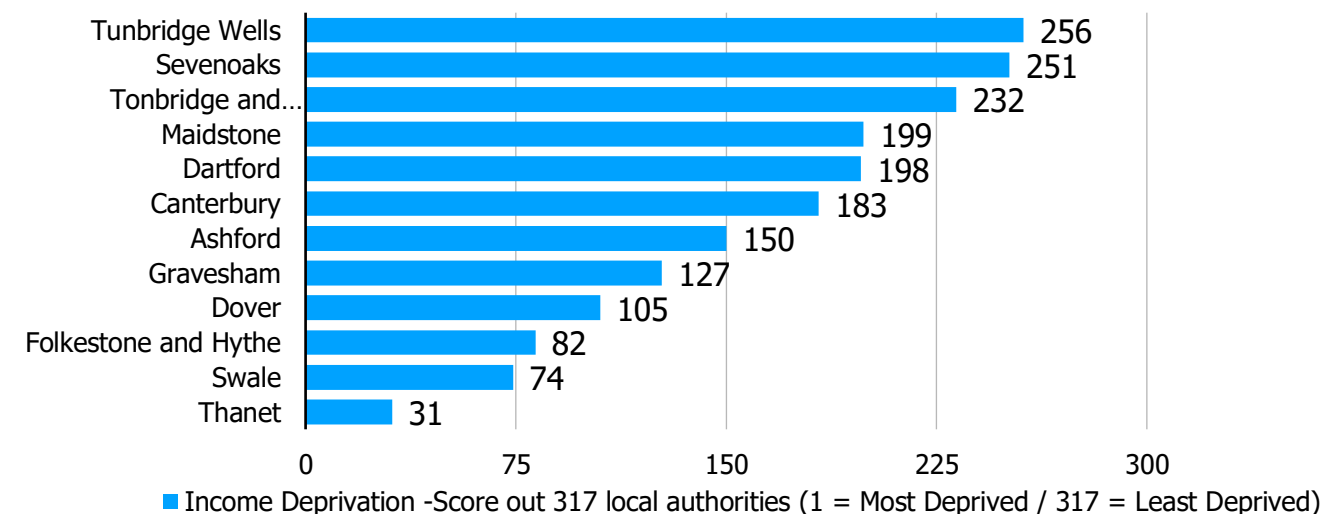
1. Income
2. Employment
3. Education
4. Health
5. Crime
6. Barriers to housing and services
7. Living environment

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:

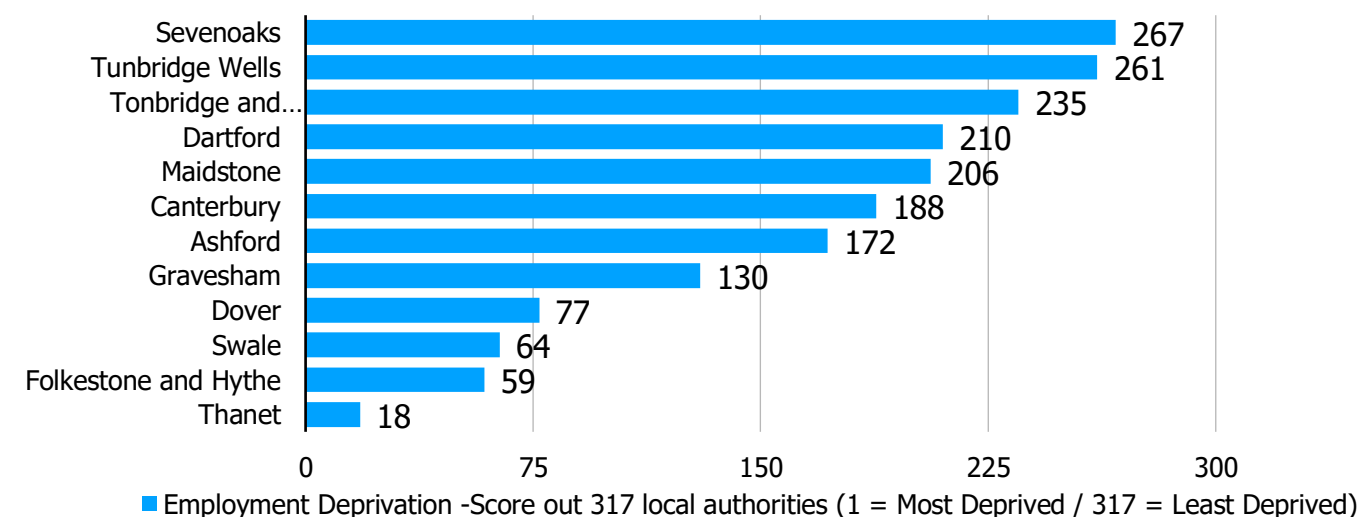
Income Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



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:

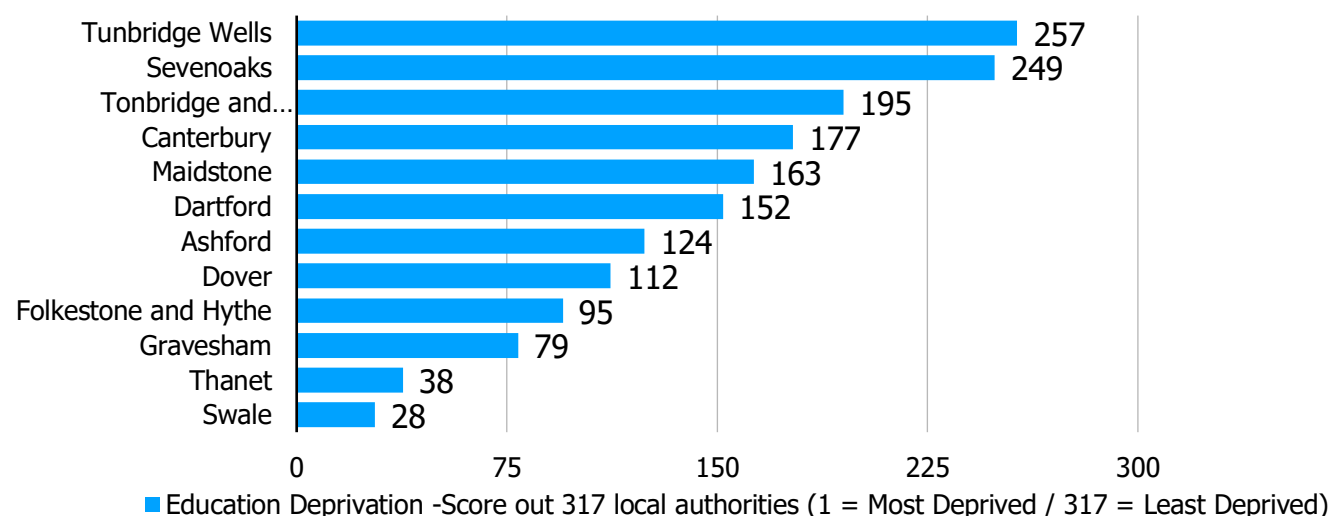
Employment Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



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.

3. Education:

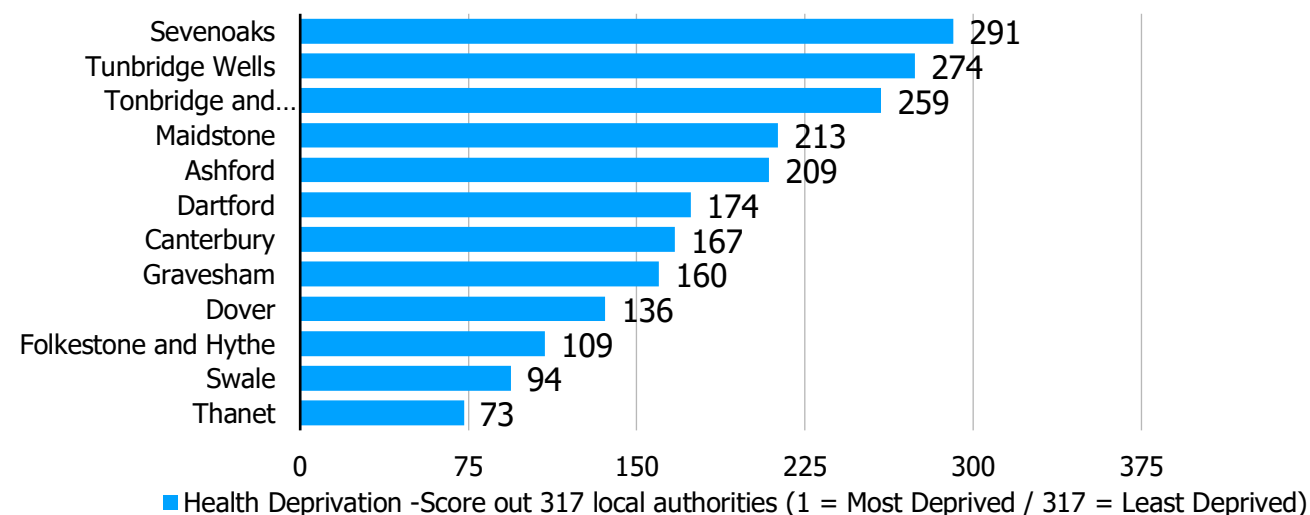
Education Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



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:

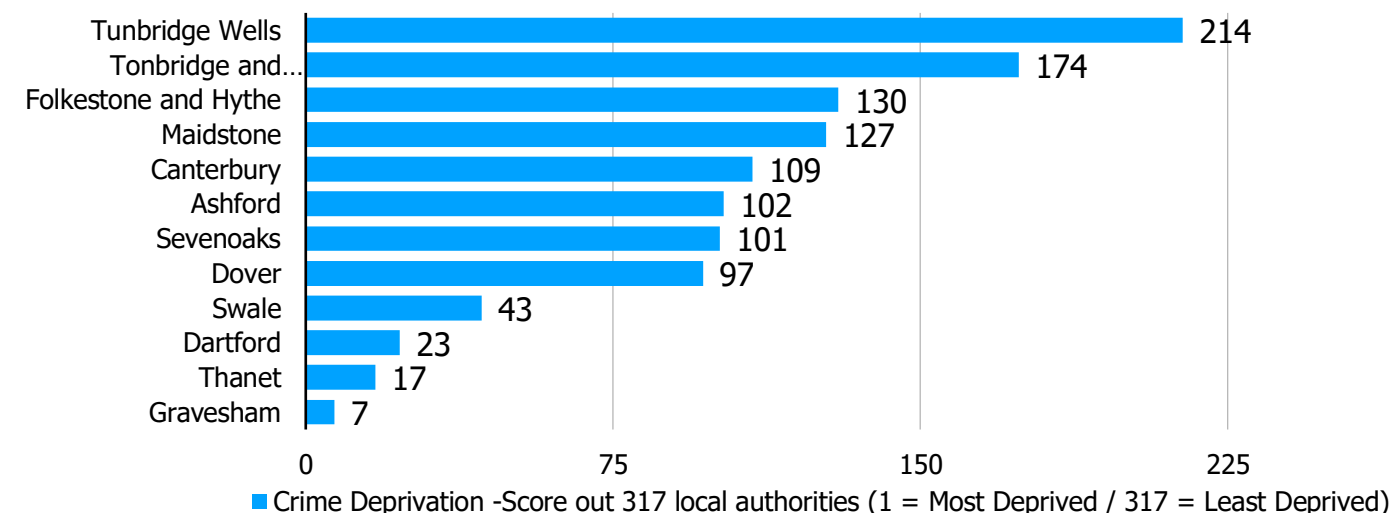
Health Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



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:

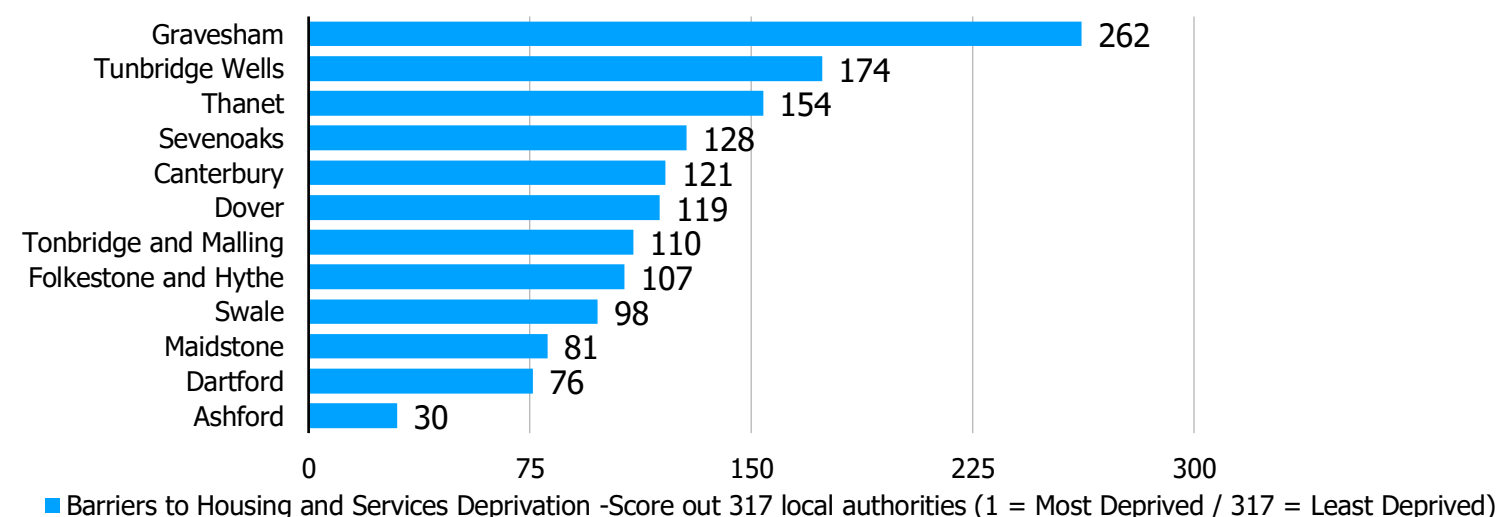
Crime Deprivation -Score out of 317 local authorities (1 = Most Deprived / 317 = Least Deprived)



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)

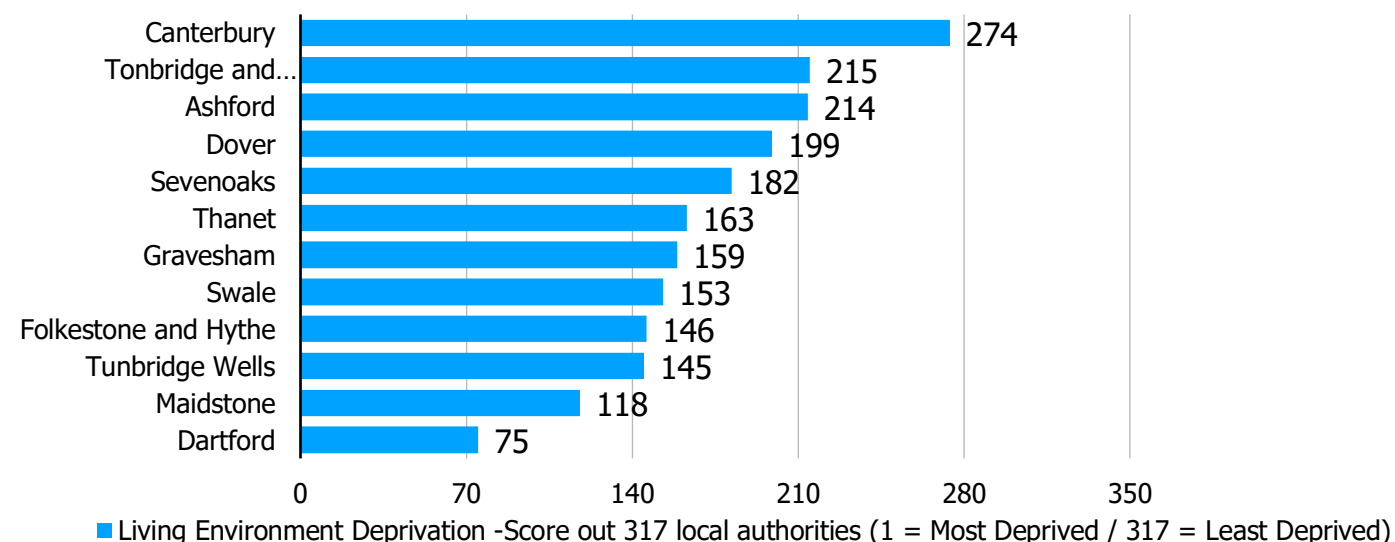


The above graph shows Gravesham to be the least deprived in relation to barriers to housing and services and Ashford to be the most deprived in this area. Folkestone & Hythe is ranked as the fifth most deprived for barriers to housing and services out of the twelve Kent local authority areas.

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.

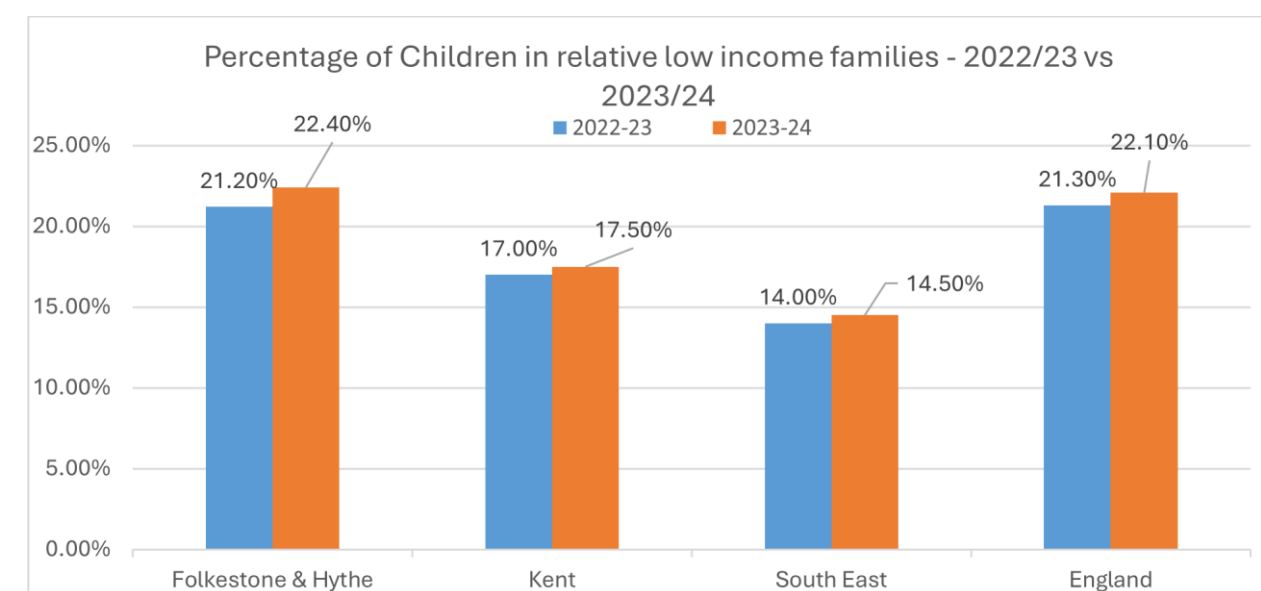
Child Poverty:

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 2023/24 shows that 22.4% of children are in relative low-income families in Folkestone & Hythe and this is worse than the average across Kent and the South East.

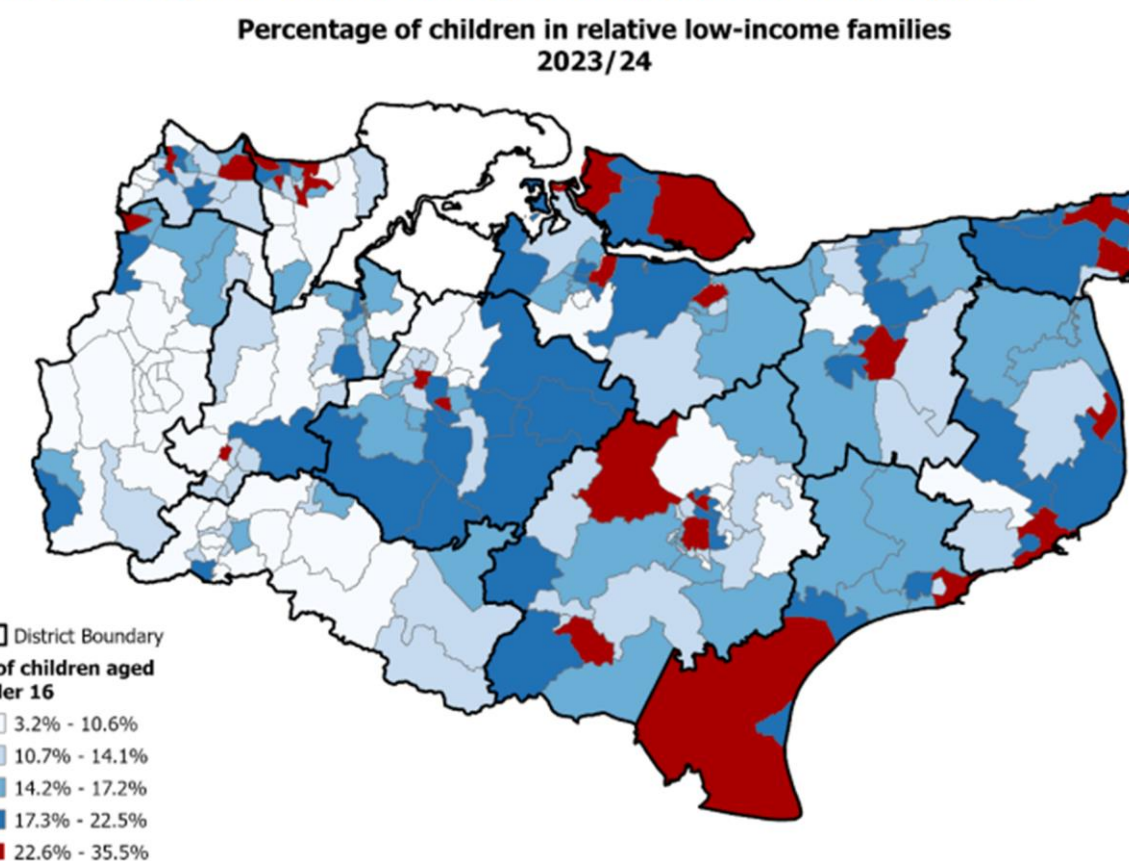
The following graph provides a comparison between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 years.



Source: Table 12b KCC Strategic Commissioning Statistical Bulletin 2025– Children in Poverty

The heat map below shows the percentage of children living in relative low-income families across Kent wards in 2023/24. 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 2: Percentage of children living in relative low-income families



Source: DWP
Map produced by Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

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 2004:

https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/excel_doc/0012/211620/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: birth registrations 2024:

[Births in England and Wales: birth registrations - Office for National Statistics](#)

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

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

ONS: Conception Statistics – England and Wales (2021)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/datasets/conceptionstatisticsenglandandwalesreferencetables>

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 2021 to 2023: [Life expectancy for local areas of Great Britain - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Old age dependency ratios and projections of State Pension and working age populations for local authorities - Office for National Statistics \(2025\)](#)

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 2025 - [Children in Poverty](#)

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

[Quality and Outcomes Framework, 2024-25 - 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 2024-25:

During 2024-25 the council received 175 complaints and 84 compliments. Of the 175 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 175 complaints received, 1 was related to equality and diversity issues. The nature of the complaint related to:



Stage 1 Complaint: Discriminatory impact of height restriction barriers installed at coastal car parks between Folkestone and Greatstone and insufficient provisions for wheelchair users.

A total of 7 complaints during the year were progressed to the Ombudsman (6 to *Local Government Ombudsman* of which: 4 were not upheld and 2 resulted in no further action) and (1 to *Housing Ombudsman* of which 1 was upheld). 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 (2025-29) has an associated action plan. The final section provides an update on these actions.

	Action	Lead Function	Deadline	Progress Update
1.	Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs): - Review guidance and development of training for staff on undertaking EIAs to raise awareness of the importance of conducting these assessments when a council service introduces a new policy, revises existing policy or introduces new projects/initiatives. - Ensuring Equality Impact Assessments are included and published with committee reports to demonstrate due consideration has been given to equality and diversity when decisions are being made around policy, projects and initiatives.	Senior Performance Officer	December 2025	Guidance on completing Equality Impact Assessments has been reviewed and a briefing will take place at the Operational Management Team (OMT) meeting in mid-November 2025 to raise awareness of the importance of undertaking these assessments and signposting to guidance and resources.
		Senior Performance Officer	December 2025	Continued reminders have been sent to all managers throughout the year to complete Equality Impact Assessments and publish these with committee reports when a council service introduces a new policy, revises existing policy or introduces new projects/initiatives.
2.	Community Engagement through consultation: - Engagement with service users, local communities and other local stakeholders in council consultations and events. Associated information and results made available in different formats to ensure inclusivity of feedback. - Publishing the results of consultation exercises and engagement events on the council website.	All Service Leads/Organisational Development/ Communications and Engagement Communications and Engagement	As required As required	Surveys and consultations are offered in written format as well as online and this option is included in any publicity. A request for a large print format was made and responded to for the Princes Parade survey. Summaries of responses received e.g. Corporate Plan, and future use of Princes Parade are included on the council website. Responses by the council to consultations carried out by other organisations for example, the future of Grace Hill library building by Kent County Council are also reported.

	Action	Lead Function	Deadline	Progress Update
3.	Working with Partners to celebrate diversity: Working with voluntary organisations to bring people together, celebrate our diversity and enable residents to play an active role in their communities.	Community Partnerships Manager	Ongoing (through 2025/26 year)	Work takes place across teams such as community safety where we have run wellbeing events to support all sectors of the community. There has been activity at the Folkestone Nepalese Community Centre and support is given to many community spaces to enable communities to participate in activities. The Hub on the beach ran extra exercise classes and Age UKSKC introduced walking tennis with our support. The Excellence in volunteering Awards Scheme is the best example of this, bringing all sectors of the community together to celebrate the active role that residents play and can continue to play in their communities. This event was held during volunteers week in June 2024 at the Quarterhouse. A series of wellbeing and community engagement events have been held during the year including: 20th May 2024 – Folkestone Talks – Turner Schools 23rd May 2024 – Spring well Event – Folkestone Harbour Church 24th May – OP Sceptre Knife Stand in collaboration with Violence Reduction Unit – Bouverie Place. 6th June 2024 -Folkestone Talks Event – Turner Schools 16th July 2024 -Summer Well Event – Cheriton Baptist Church 2nd August 2024 – Environmental Agency Flood Awareness Collaboration Stand - Bouverie Place 27TH November 2024 – Winter Well – South Kent Community Church 5th December 2024 – Community Safety Networking Event – Council Chambers 25TH February 2025 Community Safety Artwork launch Lees Sandgate Road underground car park.
4.	Using Equality and Diversity information to shape Housing services: Collate additional data to understand the diverse needs of our tenants, including their protected characteristics, any support needs and/or language barriers, and use this data to tailor our housing services to meet tenants' needs.	Tenant Engagement & Independent Living Manager	April 2026	We have obtained EDI data for 575 of our existing tenants through the 2025 tenant satisfaction survey, and we are currently working with the ICT team to establish how best to add this data to their tenancies. We are also now routinely adding EDI data for tenants to their tenancies at the point they are created.

	Action	Lead Function	Deadline	Progress Update
5.	Establish a Housing Fair Access Policy: Introduce a Housing Fair Access Policy to ensure we deliver fair and equitable outcomes for all tenants.	Tenant Engagement & Independent Living Manager	July 2025	The Housing Fair Access Policy was approved by Cabinet in July 2025. It has been published on our website and will be communicated to tenants via the October 2025 tenant bulletin and on social media.
6.	Folkestone & Hythe Youth Forum District wide youth forum to meet in person twice a year for young people to share views on areas including housing, climate change, safety and health.	Organisational Development	September 2025	The first cohort of the Youth Forum met on 26th February 2025 and are due to meet again on 25 th September 2025. The second cohort will be meeting in December 2025 and March 2026. The Youth Forum enables c40 young people aged 14-19 to share their views on local issues directly with local councillors.
7.	Identifying Barriers to Council Services 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 (through 2025/26 year)	We have included QR codes on some document types for electoral registration enquiries. Electors can now scan a code on a letter that links to a webpage, which asks for information and documentary evidence to complete an electoral registration application or to present evidence as part of a name change. The Council continues to promote Digital Kent at wellbeing events and a number of digital champions as well as work from community locations that the Council works with to support customers with digital literacy.

Equality Objectives

	Action	Lead Function	Deadline	Progress Update
8.	Implement Customer Access Strategy, that will: - Ensure that all of our services are accessible to people with disabilities; consideration to be given to screen reader compatibility, hearing loop systems - Review our language support services. - Ensure staff are equipped with the necessary digital skills to effectively assist customers. - Development of a feedback mechanism for any suggested changes and improvements to services.	Digital and ICT Manager Customer Support Manager Digital ICT Manager/ Service Leads Customer Support Manager	Ongoing October 2025 Ongoing December 2025	The council website is monitored on a weekly basis to improve accessibility and WCAG compliance. Equality Impact Assessments are carried out for new initiatives and strategies. Discussions undertaken with other Kent local authorities as to what services they use. In the process of contacting other companies to compare their offerings with the current one used by the Council. Decision will then be made. Survey was sent to all staff in October 2024 to gauge their digital skills. Follow up survey due October 2025. CoPilot overview training has given. Working ongoing with the Organisational Development team on training programme
9.	Build the districts Climate Resilience: - Identify climate vulnerable groups/minorities - Ensure language and communication is clear and inclusive to best spread and raise awareness of climate change across the district. - Identify innovative ways to include all communities and ensure their voices are heard/considered.	Climate Change Specialist	Ongoing	Council’s forthcoming revised District Wide Carbon Plan stresses the disproportionate affected by extreme weather, health risks, and economic disruption caused by climate change, and includes several actions to ensure vulnerable groups are identified and included in climate resilience decision making. One example action states: “Actively identify and support vulnerable and low incomes homes by signposting available funding options for home energy improvement.” The Council’s <u>Climate Change Website</u> has been extensively updated to include accessible information on a broad range of climate related topics and activities. The website now has over 30 sections of climate change action but is designed to be easy to understand and informative. The Council is continuing to rollout a series of events and workshops as part of the <u>Sustainable Futures Forum</u>. Three to four events per year have been outline to 2027, including a “Volunteer & Green Skills Fair” to harness people power and support local environmental and sustainable project and initiatives (October 1st 2025). The aim of the forum events are to raise the voice and give centre stage to the community, spot light their efforts and raise awareness and inclusion in sustainable initiatives. Additionally, the <u>Green Grant Programme</u> was rolled out in early 2025, with a wider criteria of eligible local charities and organisations able to apply. 38 projects from 60 applications received funding, with numerous projects aimed at improving community resilience, equality and inclusion in climate related projects and initiatives.

	Action	Lead Function	Deadline	Progress Update
10.	Supporting Equality and Diversity in our workforce: We will continue to evaluate our people related strategies, policies and initiatives, maximise accessible development opportunities, and promote flexible working approaches to support equality and diversity in our workforce.	Human Resources	Ongoing (through 2025/26 year)	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. The continual review and development of our recruitment and retention strategies is also a theme within our People Strategy. 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. Specific management training on recruitment and selection took place in December 2024, and sessions on absence management and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in October 2024. In 2024/25 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.



www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY