

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

Knowsley Council

Knowsley Better Together in action: COVID-19 Recovery

By putting its well-established Knowsley Better Together principles into action, Knowsley Council has worked hand-in-hand with local communities and strategic partner agencies throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure support for the most vulnerable communities. Building further on this approach, the Council is investing more than £8m to ensure that local communities have the support needed to recover from the pandemic, as we look towards Knowsley's future together.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant and disproportionately greater impact on communities across Knowsley. Yet, despite at times having some of the highest case rates in the country, the Borough's "Better Together" ethos has enabled Knowsley Council and its strategic partner agencies to work alongside local residents, businesses, schools, and community groups to support people when they most needed help.

The Knowsley Better Together principles bring people, groups, and organisations together for the benefit of Knowsley and its communities. This longstanding approach in addressing challenges and capitalising on opportunities in the Borough was at the heart of the local response to the pandemic and enabled the Council and partner agencies to work alongside communities to put in place a wide range of practical interventions "on the ground", including:-

- establishing the Knowsley Volunteer and Support Hub;
- providing thousands of emergency food parcels and prescription collections;
- sourcing and distributing millions of items of personal protective equipment; and,
- establishing a local "check-in and chat" phone service for socially isolated residents.

The same principles have been vital in the co-design and investment of the Council's £2.5m Knowsley Better Together Hardship Fund, which supports residents by ensuring that they get the right help at the right time. By working closely with community groups, local charities, and other Knowsley Better Together partners to support residents whose income has been severely impacted over the last 18 months due to the impact of the pandemic, the Council has been able to provide direct support to households who had previously sourced additional money to pay for such essential items by using routes such as loan sharks.

The Fund has paid for:-

- support with housing costs;
- packed lunches to support children's activities over the school summer holidays;
- emergency boiler and central heating repairs; and,
- fuel vouchers.

Alongside this, the Council and partner agencies have continued to harness the community spirit and partnership working across the Borough to establish:-

- **The COVID-19 Support Fund** - £615,000 made available by the Council, Knowsley Chamber of Commerce, One Knowsley, and the Community Foundation for Merseyside to help community groups and organisations in supporting the health and wellbeing of residents; and,
- **The Knowsley Working Well Workplace Grant** - £300,000 made available to assist local businesses and employees in returning to the workplace.

As the Knowsley Better Together partners look towards the Borough's longer-term recovery from the pandemic, the local commitment to co-producing practical solutions will remain vital - ensuring that all residents can benefit from the ambitious plans set out in the Knowsley 2030 Strategy.

Despite the challenges faced over the last 18 months, the Council's long-term ambitions for the Borough provide the foundations for a strong recovery – with its robust financial management and decisive decision-making in recent years putting it in a uniquely strong position to invest in Knowsley's future. Indeed, the Council has established a £8.3m "Knowsley Better Together Recovery Fund" to further support the Borough's recovery – again, underpinned by the Knowsley Better Together principles and focussing on key issues which will have the biggest impact on the lives of people in local communities. These include:-

- **Supporting Knowsley Residents and Protecting Vulnerable People** -through specialist support for adults with complex needs, families with children with disabilities, and those in crisis;
- **Supporting Education, Training, and Jobs** - helping to mitigate the impact of "lost learning" by setting up a "World of Work" team to support 14-18 year olds to prepare for the transition into employment, providing social care provision in school settings, and establishing extra support for young people who are at risk of not being in education, employment, or training;
- **Supporting Businesses and Delivering Vibrant Town Centres** – delivering an exciting events programme across the Borough to help to attract visitors to local high streets and maintaining free parking for shoppers – at the same time as continuing to drive forward and deliver the ambitious regeneration plans which are already under way across all of the Borough's town centres; and,
- **Environmental Improvements** – delivering environmental improvements and maintenance in parks and greens spaces so that communities can continue to make use of the Borough's much-loved outdoor assets.

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