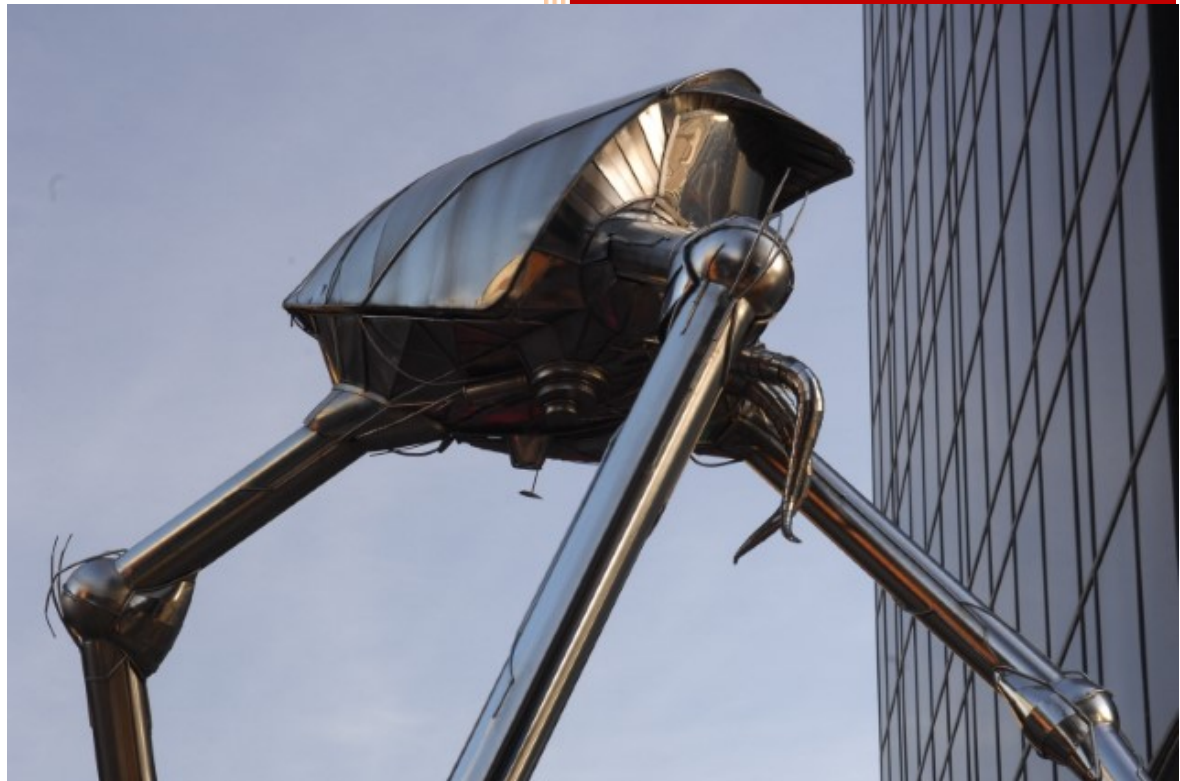


2021

# Appendix 1: Picture of Woking



Woking Borough Council

7/15/2021

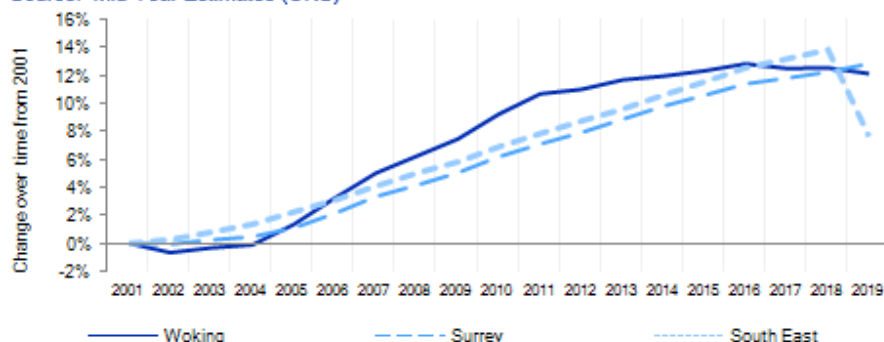
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## 1.0 A picture of Woking

Woking is one of 11 districts and boroughs in the county of Surrey<sup>1</sup>. It has a population of 100,793 across ten wards, which has plateaued in recent years following an above average increase from 2006 – 2015. Of the total population, 50.0% are male and 50.0% are female.

Figure: % change in total population from 2001-2019  
Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS)



Woking has a slightly younger population profile than both England and the South East region. Of the Woking population, 21.6% are aged 0 to 15 (South East: 19.2%, England: 19.2%), 61.1% are aged 16 to 64 (South East: 61.3%, England 62.4%) and 17.3% are aged 65 and over (South East: 19.5%, England: 18.4%).

However, in common with the rest of the country, Woking has an ageing population and the over 65 population is expected to increase by 3,900, more than 20%, in the next ten years.

Woking is the most ethnically diverse borough in Surrey, with a large Pakistani community (5.7% - the highest proportion in Surrey). In 2011, 83.6% of Woking's population identified themselves as white, 11.6% as Asian or Asian British, 1.4% as black or black British, 2.4% as mixed and 1.1% as other ethnic group.

Woking has the biggest Syrian Refugee Resettlement programme in the South East region. 50 Syrian families have been resettled in Woking over the last five years through the Home Office Vulnerable Person's Relocation Scheme. The council provides housing and intensive support for resettlement including health needs, benefits, employment, language training and social integration.

In March 2021 it was announced that Woking was top of the Lambert Smith Hampton UK Vitality Index 2021<sup>2</sup> which assesses locations outside London to identify the best places to live, work and do business, in addition to those with the highest growth potential. The index incorporates a range of indicators including economy, business, health outcomes and the environment. Woking had particularly strong performance in the pillars of:

- Economy and Business (10<sup>th</sup>) - inclusive of a top score for wage growth and commercial property investment, and
- Health and Environment (2<sup>nd</sup>) – Low levels of cardiovascular mortality and high score for life satisfaction and recycling

Other things to note in the index that are relevant to Woking are:

- Strong performance of medium sized centres related to their ability to offer more to their residents in certain key respects, including education, health outcomes and life satisfaction.
- Strong performance of the South of England making up 8 of the top 10 places

Further to the UK Vitality Index the Legatum Institute produced a 2021 Prosperity Index. The Legatum Institute is a London based think tank focussing on the pathways from poverty to prosperity and the transformation of society

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document 'Woking' is used to refer to the borough of Woking (as opposed to the town of Woking).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lsh.co.uk/explore/research-and-views/research/2021/feb/vitality-index-2021>

The prosperity index tracks prosperity across all 379 Local Authorities in the UK and allows the assessment of development, growth and extent of prosperity across all areas of the UK.

For 2021, Woking is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> of all 379 Local Authorities using 3 high level domains of Inclusive Societies; Open Economics and Empowered People to make this assessment. Woking is ranked particularly strongly in the Empowered People domain which covers Living Conditions; Health; Education and Natural Environment.

Other things to note in the Index that are relevant to Woking are:

- Strong overall correlation with the assessments in both the Lambert Smith Hampton Vitality Index and the Legatum Institute Prosperity Index
- Strong overall assessment of the South East region and the County of Surrey with 10 of the 12 Surrey District and Boroughs in the top 20 local authorities

Woking has also scored highly in other rankings, earning a spot among the happiest places in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics, while the most recent Halifax Quality of Life Survey named Woking among the 20 best places to live in Britain.

## **2.0 People: A Healthy, Inclusive and Engaged Community**

### **2.1 The health of Woking**

The health of people in Woking is generally better than the English average. The life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the average for England – in Woking, life expectancy at birth for males is 82.7 years (compared to 80.8 for the South East region and 79.8 for England) and for females is 84.9 years (compared to 84.3 for the South East region and 83.4 for England).

However, there are health inequalities – differences between the health status of different groups of people – in Woking. In the most deprived areas of Woking, life expectancy is 5.7 years lower for men and 4.6 years lower for women than in the least deprived areas. This is, however, less pronounced than in the South East region generally (7.9 and 6.0 years respectively) and England as a whole (9.5 and 7.5 years respectively).

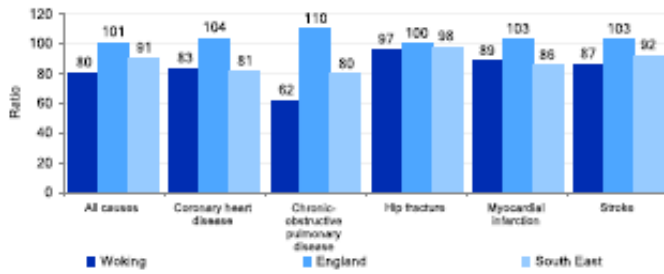
The Covid-19 pandemic has brought health inequalities into sharp focus. A Public Health England report<sup>3</sup> published in June 2020 found that the impact of Covid-19 has replicated existing health inequalities, and in some cases has increased them. Nationally, the mortality rates from Covid-19 in the most deprived areas were more than double those in the least deprived areas for both males and females. This is greater than the inequality seen in mortality rates in previous years.

Woking performs well for most other measures of physical health - the infant mortality rate of 3.7 is in line with the South East region (3.7) and lower than England (3.9) and the under 75 mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases (46.8) is better than the averages for the South East region (57.1) and England (70.4), as is the under 75 mortality rate from cancer (110.6 in Woking compared to 121.6 in South East region and 129.2 in England). As the chart below shows, Woking had a lower emergency admission rate to hospital than other areas in England and the South East from 2013 – 2018.

Figure: Emergency hospital admissions: Standardised ratio (select causes)

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics, Information Centre for Health and Social Care, Office for National Statistics (2013/14 – 2017/18)

If an area is above 100, there is a higher proportion of admissions than had been expected. If it's below 100, there is a lower proportion of admissions than expected.



However, the estimated prevalence of diabetes in Woking is 5.7%, higher than the Surrey average of 5.4% and broadly in line with the national average of 6.8%. As highlighted in the Government’s White Paper **Working Together To Improve Health and Social Care For All** published in February 2021, diabetes is on the rise. The rate of diabetes in England is expected to increase by more than 15% by 2030.

There are over 14 million disabled people in the UK. Into this group fall 19% of working age adults, 44% of pensioners and 8% of children. Woking is the district/borough in Surrey with the highest percentage of adults claiming Disability Living Allowance (1.7% compared to 1.5% Surrey average). The top three wards for disability benefit claims are Hoe Valley, Goldsworth Park and Knaphill. The council’s Homelink service has seen an increase in the number of clients with mobility issues as a result of the pandemic.

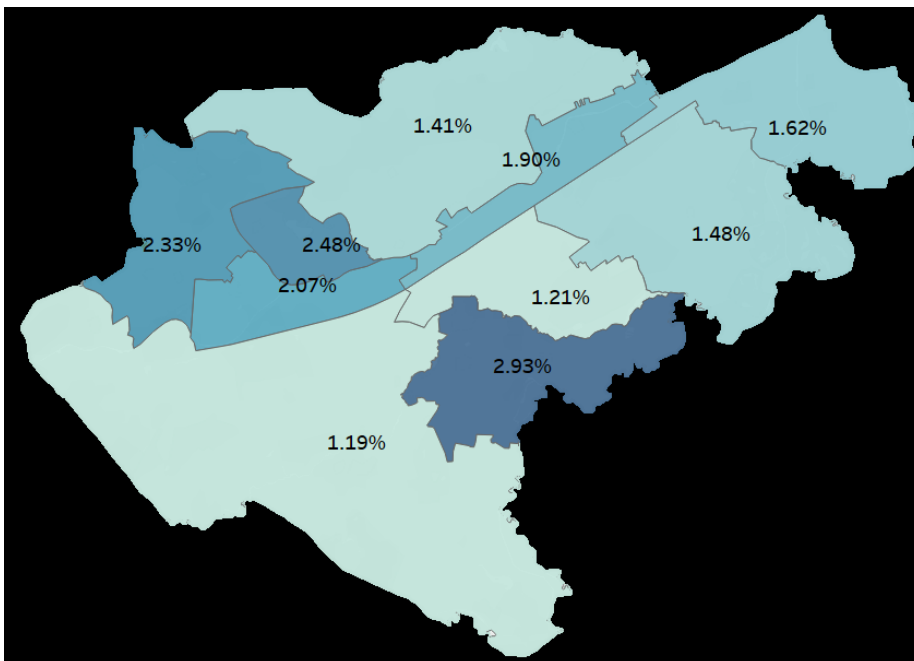


Figure 2: Shows proportion of people who are disabled and receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA)  
Source: Department for Work and Pensions – February 2021

Woking has the second highest rate in Surrey for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Year R (aged 4-5 years) at 79.1 per 1,000 compared to the Surrey average of 55.3. At Year 6 (aged 10-11 years) the rate in Woking of 108.1 is slightly below the Surrey average of 109.6.

Surrey County Council's Graduated Response<sup>4</sup>, also known as 'SEND Support', provides an approach for early identification and intervention to support children who experience barriers in making progress. This 'staged' approach follows a four-part cycle - assess, plan, do and review – and sets out how services in Surrey work together with parents/carers, schools and settings to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

In terms of mental health, the rate for self-harm related hospital admissions in Woking is 106.4 (representing 100 admissions per year), lower than the average for both the South East region (199.7) and England (193.4). Similarly, Woking's suicide rate of 8.0 per 100,000 people is lower than that of the South East region (9.6) and England (10.1). Males account for around 75% of suicide deaths, with 45-60 being the highest risk age group. The Surrey Suicide Prevention Strategy 2019-22 aims to reduce levels of suicide by 10% by 2021.

Mental health problems are distributed according to a gradient of economic disadvantage i.e. the poorer and more disadvantaged are more likely to be affected by a mental illness.

Nationally, one in six adults experiences a common mental health problem such as anxiety or depression. The estimated prevalence of common mental disorders in Woking is lower compared to the South East region and England for both the population aged 16 and over (England: 16.9%, South East region: 14.8%, Woking: 13.1%) and the population aged 65 and over (England: 10.2%, South East region: 9.2%, Woking: 7.9%).

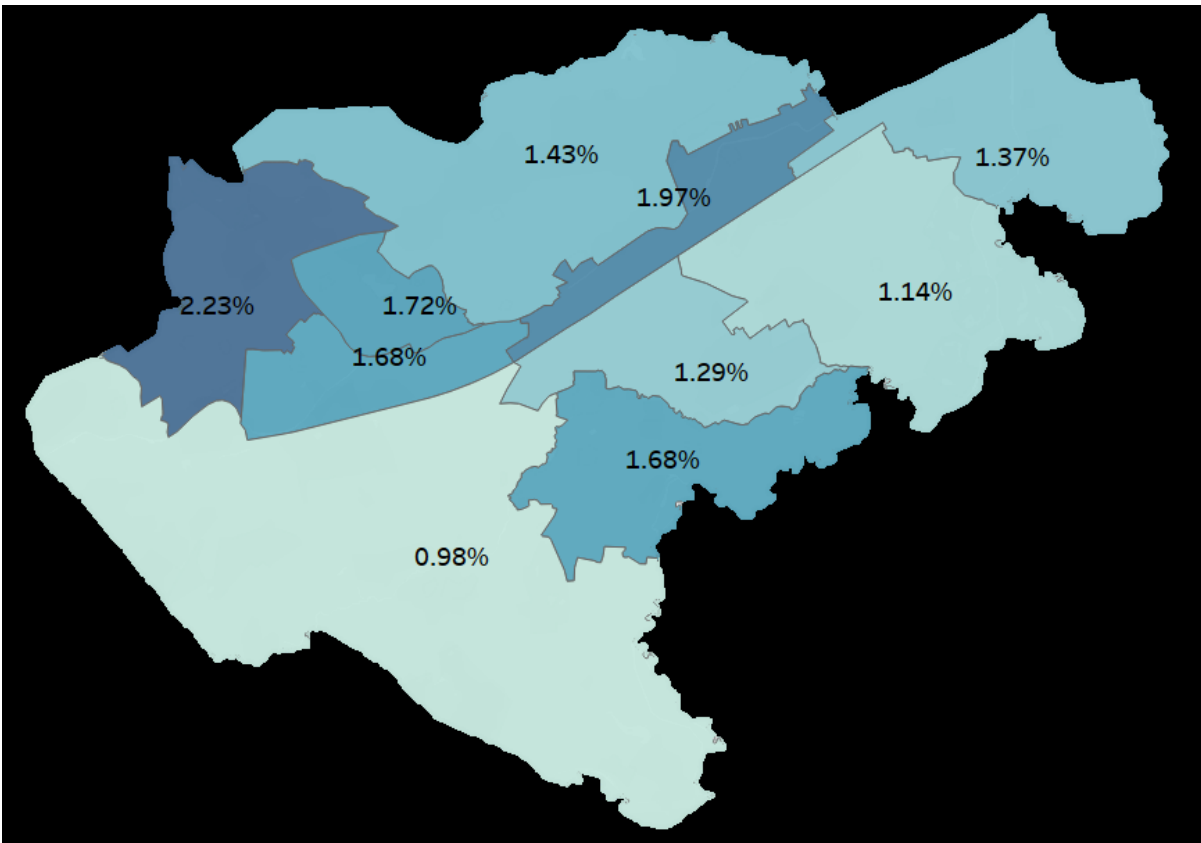
However, Woking has a slightly higher percentage of adults claiming incapacity benefit for mental health issues (1.6% of all incapacity benefit claimants) compared to the rest of Surrey (1.5%), ranking joint second out of the 11 borough and districts in Surrey. It should be noted that this is lower than the England average of 2.3% and no Woking wards fall above this national average. The top three wards for mental health incapacity benefit are Knaphill<sup>5</sup> (2.2%), Canalside (2.0%) and Goldsworth Park (1.7%), as show in the map below.

Figure 3: Claimants of Incapacity Benefit who are claiming due to mental health related conditions Source: Department for Work and Pensions – May 2020

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.surreylocaloffer.org.uk/kb5/surrey/localoffer/site.page?id=6soPrqlr3vA>

<sup>5</sup> Brookwood Asylum in Knaphill was the leading mental hospital in West Surrey until its closure in 1994. Many former residents chose to stay in the area.



The trend for those claiming Incapacity Benefit due to mental health has remained largely flat across the last 10 years.

Mental health has been identified as a particular issue in young people. In 2020, Redeeming Our Communities undertook a survey of more than 150 young people in Woking. When asked what the biggest issue was in Woking, the main response was mental health, followed by a lack of things to do / being bored and bullying in school, online and through phone and text messages. During the past year, 73% of young people surveyed had experienced anxiety, 40% had felt isolation, 37% had periods of sustained mental health illness and depression, 24% had suffered from self-harm, and 8% said their long-term mental health had been affected by a disability.

The lockdowns as a result of the pandemic have had a significant impact on mental health and social isolation. The UCL COVID-19 Social Study published in February 2021 found that anxiety and depression levels are consistently higher than pre-pandemic averages. The ONS report **Coronavirus and the Social Impacts on Great Britain**, published in November 2020, found that restrictions on socialising have had an impact on people's wellbeing and mental health with nearly half of adults (49%) reporting boredom, loneliness, anxiety or stress arising due to the pandemic. In November 2020 Surrey County Council published a Covid-19 Community Impact Assessment<sup>6</sup> which found that 58% of Woking residents were concerned about their mental health and wellbeing for the following six months. This figure is 11% higher than the Surrey average and the highest of the districts and boroughs in Surrey.

A social prescribing survey of 29 link workers and wellbeing advisers across Surrey in January 2021 found that the most common issues being experienced by clients were mental health and emotional support, and social interaction or loneliness. An ONS survey<sup>7</sup> between October 2020 and February 2021 found that 6.58% of people in Woking often or always felt lonely, compared to 6.17% in Surrey and 7.26% in England.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.surreyi.gov.uk/covid-impacts/>

<sup>7</sup>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/lonelinessratesandwellbeingindicatorsbylocalauthority>



The mental health impact of the pandemic on children and young people has been widely reported. In July 2020 NHS Digital undertook a survey<sup>8</sup> of the mental health of children and young people across England, a follow-up to a 2017 survey. This latest survey found that rates of probable mental disorder in children aged 5 - 16 years have increased from one in nine (10.8%) in 2017 to one in six (16.0%) in 2020. The likelihood of a probable mental disorder increased with age, and there was a noticeable difference in gender for the older age group (17 - 22 years); 27.2% of young women and 13.3% of young men were identified as having a probable mental disorder in 2020.

Dementia is now the leading cause of death in the UK. 1.29% of the Woking population (which equates to 1,370 people)<sup>9</sup> is living with dementia. This is broadly in line with the UK average of 1.29%. The number of people with dementia is predicted to rise by up to 35% by 2025 and 146% by 2050.

## 2.2 Clinical care

Physical and mental health and care services are provided by a range of organisations including NHS providers, Surrey County Council and the voluntary and community sector.

Although the Council has limited influence over the quality of clinical care, it can and does influence access to clinical care, for example through the provision of space for health services in the local community and ensuring transport provides easy access to health services.

- In November 2020 outpatient physiotherapy services were relocated from Ashford and St Peter's Hospital to five new physio rooms at Woking Leisure Centre to improve access, provide the opportunity to link recovery programmes with exercise at the gym and encourage local residents to access facilities and activities they may never have done before.

In addition, the stigma in relation to mental health issues can prevent people from seeking help and the Council can play a role in reducing this.

- In 2019, Woking was recognised by the Alzheimer's Society as the first Dementia Friendly Community in Surrey.

## 2.3 Smoking

The smoking rate in Woking has more than halved in the last ten years. 7.6% of adults in Woking smoke, this is lower than both the South East region (12.2%) and England (13.9%). Smoking prevalence in pregnant women is also lower (7.4%) than both the South East region (9.7%) and England (10.4%).

## 2.4 Diet

60.2% of adults in Woking are classified as overweight or obese compared to 62.3% in England and 57.6% in the South East region. 8.5% of adults (8,500 people) in Woking are registered by their GP with obesity as a health condition. Again, although this is lower than the national average of 9.8%, it is higher than the Surrey rate of 6% and Woking ranks highest of the 11 boroughs and districts in Surrey.

Obesity is the single greatest risk factor for developing Type 2 diabetes and adults who are overweight or living with obesity are at an increased risk of serious Covid-19 complications and death.

The map below shows that though prevalence of obesity is highest in the centre of the borough it is largely similar throughout.

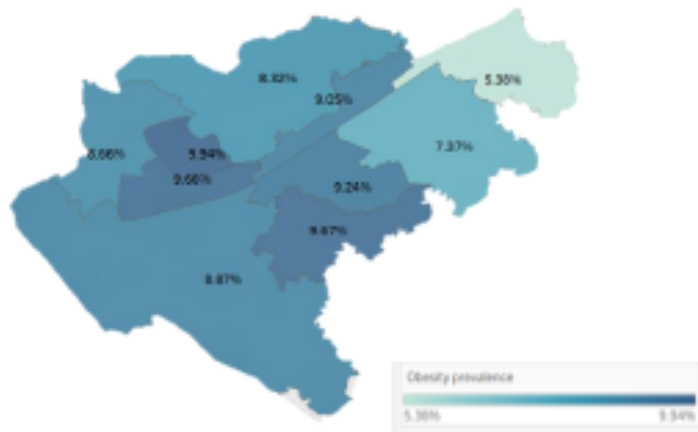
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<sup>8</sup> <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2020-wave-1-follow-up>

<sup>9</sup> [https://app.polimapper.co.uk/?dataSetKey=38d03a57d2f948c8b577839a1cf16543#\\_=&con\\_over=Woking](https://app.polimapper.co.uk/?dataSetKey=38d03a57d2f948c8b577839a1cf16543#_=&con_over=Woking)



Figure: Shows the estimated percentage of Obesity prevalence.  
 Source: GP registers In 2017/18, NHS Digital

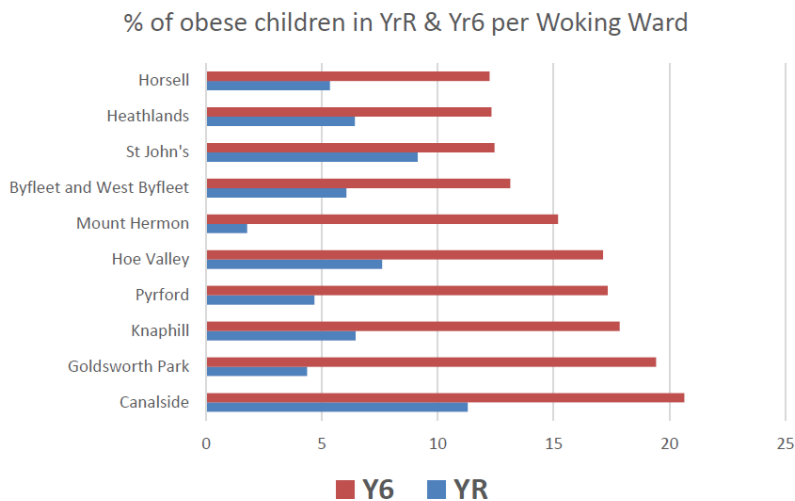


Goldsworth Park has the greatest obesity prevalence at 9.9%, followed by Hoe Valley and St. John's (both at 9.6%). These three wards are the highest ranked wards in Surrey. Six of the top ten wards in Surrey for obesity prevalence are in Woking. All Woking wards apart from Byfleet and West Byfleet are above the Surrey average.

Childhood obesity statistics present a similar picture. This is a particular concern as children who are overweight or living with obesity are much more likely to become adults who are overweight or living with obesity.

Childhood obesity rates in Year R (ages 4-5) and Year 6 (ages 10-11) in Woking are 6.4% and 15.9% respectively, lower than the averages for England (9.6% and 20% respectively) but higher than the Surrey averages (6.2% and 14% respectively).

Per Ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Canalside has the highest percentage of obesity in both Year R (11.2%) and Year 6 (20.6% - one in five children of this age) and is above the national average for both age groups.

## 2.5 Exercise

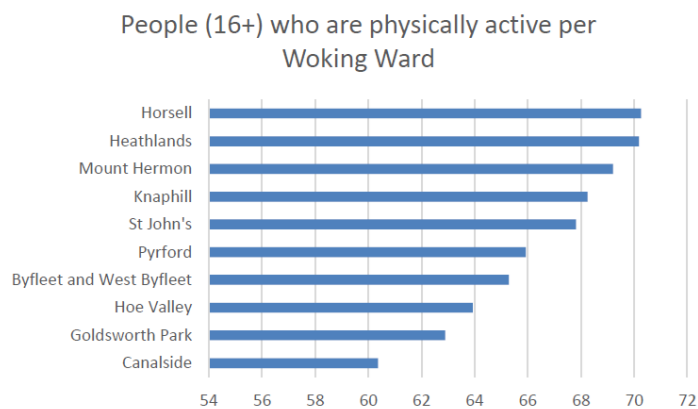
Just behind smoking, high blood pressure and obesity, the fourth biggest cause of disease in our population is lack of physical activity. As well as preventing physical ill health, exercise can also have a positive impact on mental wellbeing. In a recent survey undertaken by Active Surrey c. 75% of

Woking residents surveyed reported that sport and exercise made them most happy and c. 70% reported that they do sport or exercise to manage their worries.

28.0% of people (aged 16+) in Woking are classed as inactive which means they do less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week. This compares to 23.2% in Surrey and 27.1% in England<sup>10</sup> and Woking is the most inactive district or borough in Surrey. The figure for Woking has significantly increased over the past six months from 24.2%. 61.6% of people in Woking are classed as physically active, as they do at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week (Surrey: 65.4%, England: 61.4%).

This most recent data is not yet available at a ward level, but the breakdown by ward for the May 2019/20 data is as follows:

The breakdown by ward is as follows:



Canalside has the lowest percentage of physically active people (16+) at 63.5% and has the third highest percentage of inactive adults of all the wards in Surrey.

The most recent physical activity data<sup>11</sup> for children and young people at a borough level is from 2017/18 which showed that almost a third (28.8%) of children did less than 30 minutes of activity each day. This was the third lowest compared to other Surrey boroughs and districts and lower than the Surrey average (30.9%).

Sport England has reported on the impact of the pandemic on activity levels. The proportion of the adult population classed as inactive increased by 7.4% during the first few weeks of full lockdown between mid-March and mid-May 2020<sup>12</sup>. Sport England also found that the proportion of children and young people reporting they were active during mid-May to late-July 2020 fell by 2.3% compared to the same period 12 months earlier.<sup>13</sup> Sporting activities saw a large decrease in the numbers taking part, however, significant increases in walking, cycling and fitness activities limited the negative impact on overall activity levels.

The council recognises the importance of physical activity, as demonstrated by its endorsement of the Physical Activity Strategy for Surrey in 2019. The council provides leisure facilities (operated by Freedom Leisure) at Woking Leisure Centre, Woking Sportsbox and Pool in the Park. In 2019/20 Freedom Leisure provided almost 90,000 swimming lessons as part of a mixed programme of leisure, sport, recreation and competition activities, catering to a variety of groups and needs. The programme includes learning disability swimming lessons, walking football, dementia friendly swimming sessions,

<sup>10</sup> Source: <https://activelives.sportengland.org/Home/AdultData>

<sup>11</sup> Source: [https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables?section=children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_surveys](https://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/data/active-lives/active-lives-data-tables?section=children_and_young_people_surveys)

<sup>12</sup> [https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-10/Active%20Lives%20Adult%20May%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20Report.pdf?2L6TBVV5UvCGXb\\_VxZcWHcfFX0\\_wRaI7](https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2020-10/Active%20Lives%20Adult%20May%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20Report.pdf?2L6TBVV5UvCGXb_VxZcWHcfFX0_wRaI7)

<sup>13</sup> [https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/Active%20Lives%20Children%20Survey%20Academic%20Year%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20report.pdf?2yHCzeG\\_iDUxK.qegt1GQdOmLiQcgThJPowerPoint Presentation \(sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/Active%20Lives%20Children%20Survey%20Academic%20Year%2019-20%20Coronavirus%20report.pdf?2yHCzeG_iDUxK.qegt1GQdOmLiQcgThJPowerPoint Presentation (sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com))

ladies football, ladies youth boxing and disability badminton courses. The facilities offer tiered pricing on both a pay as you go and monthly/annual basis, including reduced rates for those in full time education, receiving means tested benefits, disabled users and carers.

The council also operates a large number of sports pitches (football, cricket and rugby) and pavilions over 18 local greenspaces. In addition, there are a number of private providers running facilities across the borough.

The council has a Sports Development Officer who liaises with the wide range of sports clubs (over 75 in total) to ensure best use is made of the available facilities. Some clubs boast over 500 members ranging from elite participants to grassroots level. The council has a range of tennis courts and a community membership package at the newly refurbished courts in Woking Park which is hugely popular (775 active members and 77% court utilisation in 2020) and very accessible at £39 a year for up to six hours of tennis a week. The council also participates in annual events such as Surrey Youth Games and hosts the Woking Sports Awards to encourage more residents to be active.

Physical activity can be a form of travel such as walking or cycling everyday journeys. In England, 56% of car journeys are under five miles<sup>14</sup> and transport accounts for a third (34%) of all carbon dioxide emissions<sup>15</sup>, the majority arising from road travel. Increasing active travel (walking and cycling) can therefore improve health through both reduced emissions and increased exercise as well as having a positive climate impact.

In 2008, Woking was awarded cycle demonstration town status and received £1.8m in government funding to develop a three-year infrastructure enhancement programme. Woking Borough Council delivered the Cycle Woking programme in partnership with Surrey County Council to help increase take up of walking and cycling, particularly for shorter journeys within the borough.

Just over 26km of new off-road cycle routes were constructed, 13km of which run along the Basingstoke Canal. The enhanced cycle network provided a 60% increase in dedicated cycle facilities and transformed the old fragmented network by improving connectivity to key places including the town centre and railway station.

The network was named the 'Planet Trails' giving a nod to local connections with HG Wells and the War of the Worlds, which was written and based in Woking.

Other infrastructure improvements have included new and improved signalised cycle crossings which allow safer access across busy roads, better signage and over a thousand new cycle parking spaces, including a dedicated secure Cycle Hub at Woking Railway Station. Since the improvements, Woking Town Centre has played host to Britain's leading televised cycle race, the Tour Series, five times.

In August 2020, a [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) (LCWIP) for Woking was published, one of the first in the UK. Development of the plan was funded by the Department of Transport, working with Surrey County Council and Woking Borough Council. This plan identifies cycling and walking infrastructure improvements for future investment to help further increase trips made on foot or by bicycle.

## 2.6 Alcohol use

Alcohol misuse is the biggest risk factor for death, ill health and disability among 15-49 year olds in the UK, and the fifth biggest risk factor across all ages. The rate for alcohol-related harm hospital

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<sup>14</sup>

Department for Transport, Walking & cycling statistics (2018). [https:// assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/674503/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674503/walking-and-cycling-statistics-england-2016.pdf)

<sup>15</sup>

2019 UK greenhouse gas emissions, provisional figures [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/875485/2019\\_UK\\_greenhouse\\_gas\\_emissions\\_provisional\\_figures\\_statistical\\_release.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875485/2019_UK_greenhouse_gas_emissions_provisional_figures_statistical_release.pdf)

admissions in Woking is 506 per 100,000, representing 479 admissions per year. The rate is lower than the averages for both the South East region (526) and England (664).

The rate for alcohol-specific hospital admissions among those under 18 in Woking is 21 per 100,000, representing 15 admissions per year. Again, this is lower than both the South East region (31.7) and England (31.6) rates.

The i-access drug and alcohol service, provided by Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, offers specialist advice, support and treatment to people in Surrey who want help with their drug and/or alcohol use. The council's Family Services team works in partnership with treatment providers where alcohol misuse is an issue for a family being supported and the Women's Support Centre actively supports women with substance misuse issues (including alcohol).

## 2.7 Sexual health

The rate of new sexually transmitted infections in Woking (529 per 100,000) is lower than the averages for the South East region (714) and England (900).

The Sexual Health Clinic at Woking Community Hospital is commissioned by Public Health and provides free confidential sexual health services, including contraception and genito-urinary medicine (GUM) screening, treatment and follow-up.

## 2.8 Education

A key measure of educational attainment is the 'average 8 attainment score'<sup>16</sup>. This is a measure of the average attainment of pupils in up to eight qualifications of GCSE and equivalent. Woking has an average 8 attainment score of 50.2, which is broadly in line with the Surrey average (50.3) and above England's (46.9). In addition, 81.9% of those aged 16-64 in Woking are qualified to Level 2 or higher, which is greater than the average for the South East (79.2%).

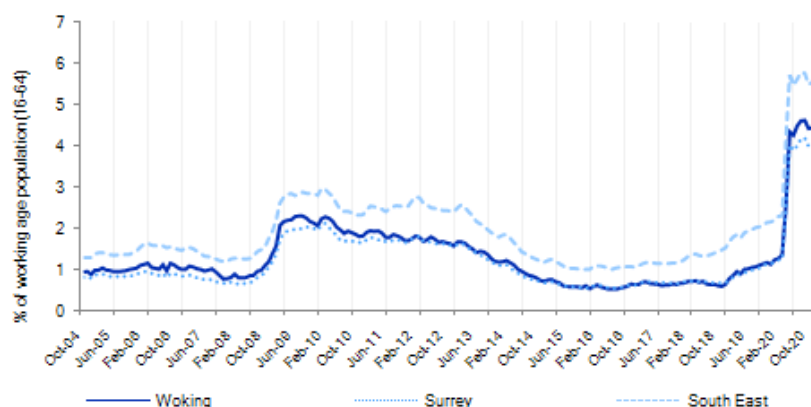
Surrey County Council is responsible for education. There are more than 30 primary schools in Woking, including five independent schools and two special schools (Freemantles, a school for children and young people with complex social communication needs, and Knowl Hill, a school for children with dyslexia and associated learning needs). There are ten secondary schools in Woking, including two independent schools and three special schools (Freemantles, Knowl Hill and Park School). There are four further education institutions in Woking for students aged 16 to 18 – Woking College, St John the Baptist Catholic Comprehensive School, Freemantles School and Hoe Valley School. All these institutions are rated outstanding by Ofsted apart from Woking College which is rated good.

## 2.9 Employment

In Woking, 51% of workers are in managerial, professional and technical occupations which is 10% above the average for the UK. The rate of employment (for those aged 16-64) is better in Woking (78.9%) than the England average (76.2%) but lower than the South East average (79.6%). However, this data is from 2019/20 and the economic impacts of the pandemic are now starting to be felt.

The chart below shows the month on month changes in the percentage of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit (UC) across Woking and comparator areas. A clear and large spike can be seen in spring 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

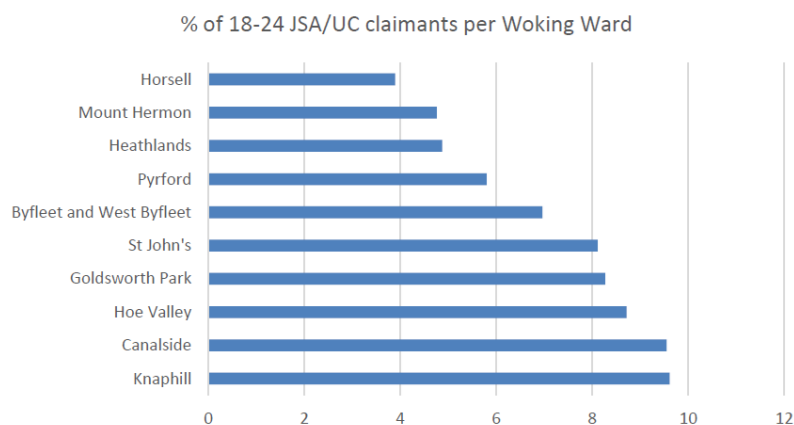
Figure: Unemployment benefit (Jobseekers Allowance/Universal Credit) claimants  
 Source: Department for Work and Pensions



In summer 2020 Surrey County Council undertook analysis of furlough data to identify at risk employees and Woking ranked seventh (out of eleven districts and boroughs) in Surrey for quantity of at risk employees. This analysis also looked at unemployment rates and identified that communities with the highest existing unemployment may also be hit hardest by future redundancies. Canalside and Hoe Valley appeared in the top two for both indicators.

Youth unemployment is a particular concern. 7.7% of 18-24 year olds in Woking claimed JSA or UC in March 2021 (South East: 7.9%, Great Britain: 9.1%)<sup>17</sup>. The number of claimants in this category in Woking has more than tripled in the year since March 2020.

Per Ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Hoe Valley (9.7%) and St Johns (9.2%) have the highest figures which are above the national (9.2%), countywide (6.1%) and local average (7.9%). All Woking wards apart from Horsell are above the Surrey average.

Youth unemployment has also been significantly impacted by the pandemic. In December 2020 there were 882 Woking residents aged 18-24 in receipt of UC. Prior to the pandemic there were approximately 250 recipients at any one time.

The council's [Economic Development Strategy](#) 2017-2022 has five themes:

- Economic Dynamism;
- Economic Strength;
- People Skills and Workforce;
- Transport and Infrastructure; and
- Place Making.

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157338/subreports/cca\\_time\\_series/report.aspx?](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157338/subreports/cca_time_series/report.aspx?)

The priorities for action in the strategy include several designed to positively affect employment (and income) in Woking, including encouraging local recruitment.

The council has recently commissioned Surrey Care Trust to deliver a Youth Hub project to support 18-24 year olds in receipt of UC. This project launched in April 2021 based in Moorcroft Centre for the Community (which is in Westfield, Hoe Valley ward which has the highest level of UC/JSA claimants aged 18-24 in Woking) and also utilising centres in Byfleet and Knaphill. The project provides targeted support to help young people in Woking into employment through holistic support, links to business opportunities and the [Kickstart Scheme](#). In addition, within the community campus as part of the Sheerwater development (see case study on page [57]), the council will seek to incorporate support for young people in training and skills development.

## 2.10 Family and social support

Family and social support are key determinants of health. They are particularly important for families (including single parent families) and people at risk of social isolation. There are over 14,000 single person households in Woking<sup>18</sup> and this is projected to continue increasing. There are over 1,800 lone parents with dependent families in Woking.

Woking's planning strategy includes community facilities to support community cohesion and prevent isolation. The council seeks developer contributions to enable the provision of facilities or allocates land to enable the building of facilities.

The council also provides the following family and social support:

- Family Centres and Family Support Programme - these teams work with families and coordinate support across a range of areas including parenting, employment, education, physical and mental health, finances, healthy relationships, crime and anti-social behaviour. In the year to 9 March 2021, Family Centres received 168 referrals and supported a total of 297 children up to the age of 11. The main reasons for referrals were domestic abuse (32%), SEND (27%), and adult mental health including substance misuse (24%);
- Targeted youth work – the council runs targeted support jointly with Surrey County Council for; girls at risk of child exploitation, LGBT+ young people, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and young carers and looked after children. Approximately 50 young people are currently accessing services including mental health and wellbeing support, face-to-face sessions with youth workers, bereavement support, support with homework and Duke of Edinburgh Award programmes. Following a Surrey-wide consultation, the two Youth Centres in Woking (Sheerwater and WYAC) will be leased to local voluntary organisations during 2021. The council is also using feedback from looked after children and care leavers to shape the services available in the Centres for the Community;
- Centres for the Community - four centres across the borough (Moorcroft, Parkview, St Mary's and The Vyne) provide meals and activities for older and vulnerable residents. The centres are also used by health visitors for baby clinics and parenting support and for hairdressing, chiropody, reflexology and assisted bathing services. Before the pandemic the centres received over 20,000 visits each month and in 2019/20 more than 13,000 meals were provided. The majority of services at these centres have been closed during the most recent lockdown but the council has plans to reopen them in line with government guidance;
- Volunteer management and charity support – the council supports volunteers to register for placements and charities to recruit volunteers. There are currently 1,000 volunteers registered and seeking placements. Many of these charities support families and people who are socially isolated, and volunteering can help volunteers to stay physically and mentally active while also reducing their own social isolation. Volunteer Woking also provides a range of other services



including funding support, training, governance advice and information and knowledge sharing, to more than 450 charities and community groups in Woking;

- Social Prescribing– this service links people with social, emotional and practical needs to a range of local non-medical support provided in the community. This is one of the six components of the comprehensive model of personalised care described in the NHS Long Term Plan, and is designed to help improve an individual’s health, wellbeing and resilience. Social prescribing looks at all aspects of the wider determinants of health and recognises that if an individual is able to improve one area of their life, it can have a positive impact on other factors. The team receives referrals from a range of sources including GP surgeries, district nurses, and social care workers. They signpost people to local services and activities, and attend sessions with individuals who do not feel comfortable doing so on their own. The service is being further developed by extending referrers to include the ambulance service, mental health trust and the Job Centre. There has been an increase in referrals from an average of 31 referrals per month in 2019/20 to an average of more than 50 per month in the first ten months of 2020/21 with a noticeable increase in referrals of males living alone (81 referrals from this demographic in 2019/20 increased to 133 in 2020/21 as at 19 March 2021); and
- Arts – Woking has a cinema, two theatres and a drama studio (Ypod). A new small theatre and studio, which will be used by the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts, is being built as part of the Victoria Place town centre development. The council’s Arts Officer liaises with a wide range of community drama, singing, dance and arts groups throughout the borough and sits on the Surrey Arts Partnership Board. Activities including the community choir have been run virtually during the pandemic.

In addition, Surrey County Council runs a number of participation groups for care leavers that are open to Woking residents. ‘Care Council’ exists for 13-25 year olds who are in care or have left care, ‘Care Council Juniors’ for 8-13 year olds in care, fostering or under special arrangements and ‘Surrey Care Leavers’ Forum’ for care leavers aged 18+. There are currently approximately 41 care leavers in Woking who are supported by an allocated worker.

Carers provide vital, unpaid support to many people. A carer is anyone (child or adult) who cares, unpaid, for a family member, partner or friend who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. There are almost 7,000 carers in Woking of which more than 2,000 are over the age of 65, and this figure is likely to be an under representation. Carers are twice as likely to suffer from ill health as non-carers and the council recognises the importance of supporting this group to enable them to continue in their caring roles.

Responding to the Carers UK’s State of Caring 2018 survey, 72% of carers said they had suffered mental ill health and 61% said they had suffered physical ill health as a result of caring. 80% of people caring for loved ones said they had felt lonely or socially isolated. In March 2021, Public Health England published a report<sup>19</sup> stating that as there is evidence that carers experience worse health than non-carers, unpaid caring responsibilities should be considered a social determinant of health.

It is estimated that an additional 4.5 million people in the UK have taken on caring responsibilities during the pandemic and it has been widely reported that the pandemic has increased pressure on carers. For example, the Carers Trust found that 40% of young carers and 59% of young adult carers reported worsening mental health since Covid-19. They also reported that 70% of young carers are providing more care during the outbreak - 11% of young carers and 20% of young adult carers reported an increase of 30 hours or more in the amount of time they spend caring per week.<sup>20</sup>

Woking Council was the first district and borough in Surrey to sign up to the Together for Carers principles in March 2017, and the first to train staff to complete a carer’s prescription which helps ensure that carers are provided with all available support. The council also signed up to the Young Carers Pledge in January 2020 to identify and support young carers living in the borough.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/caring-as-a-social-determinant-of-health-review-of-evidence>

<sup>20</sup> <https://carers.org/downloads/what-we-do-section/my-future-my-feelings-my-family.pdf>



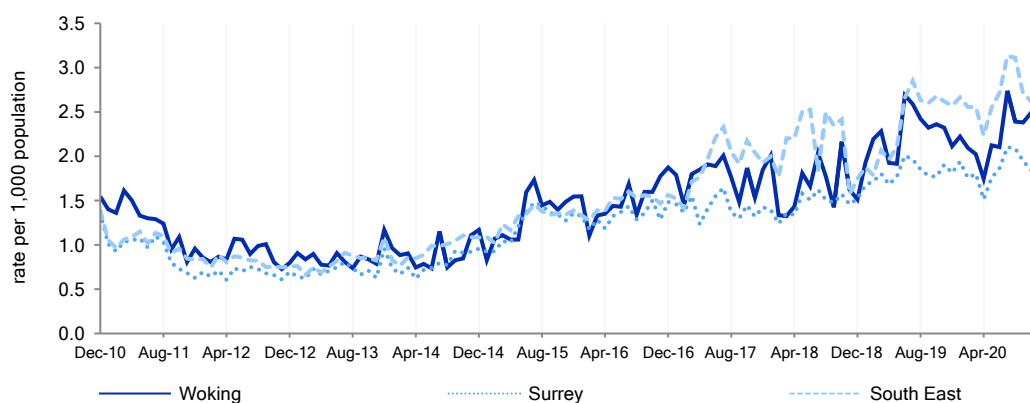
Over 1,400 adult carers in Woking are registered with Action for Carers Surrey, and approximately 1,100 of those are actively engaged, for example by attending social events or support events (currently provided virtually due to the pandemic). Action for Carers also supports over 300 young carers (aged 5-17) and 15 young adult carers (aged 18-24) in Woking. The council runs a Young Carers weekly club at Lakeview Centre for the Community and prior to the pandemic ran a Carers Choir and 'creative lunches' for people with dementia and their carers. In February 2021 Surrey Heartlands launched an end of life care website for carers - [Caring to the end](#). The council is promoting the website, which was co-produced with carers, to its residents.

## 2.11 Community safety

Overall Woking is a safe place to live. However, the rate of violent crime (hospital admissions for violence) in Woking (34.9) is higher than the rate for the South East region (31.2) and is rising, as shown in the chart below, although it is lower than the England average (44.9).

Figure 5: Violent crime offences

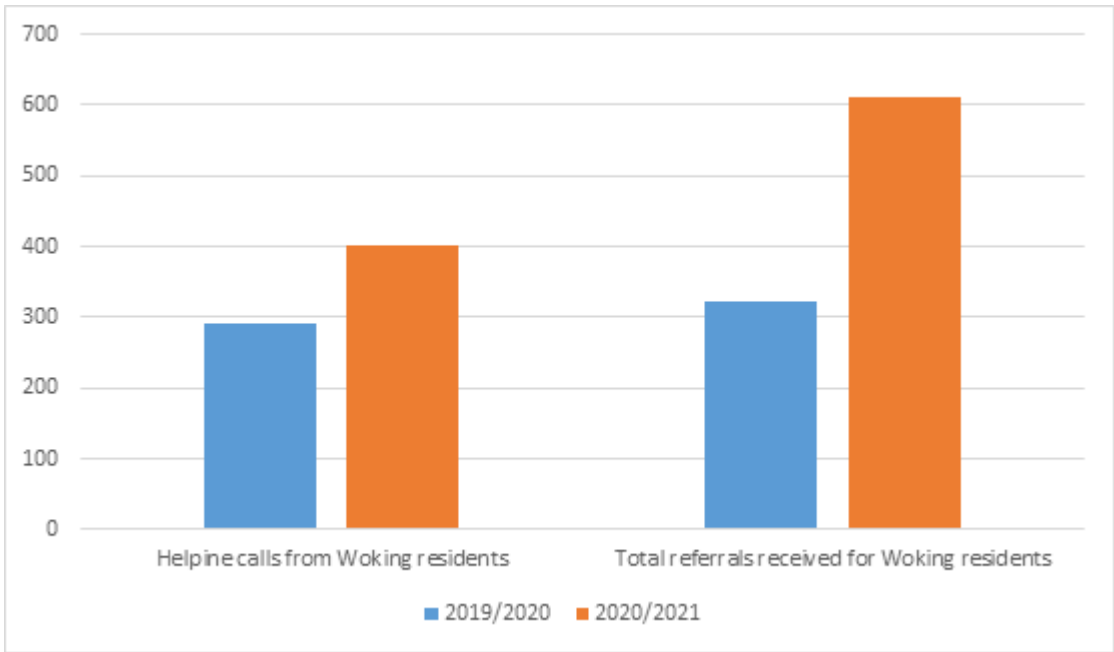
Source: <https://data.police.uk/>



Nationally one in three women and one in six men will experience an abusive relationship in their lifetime. Domestic abuse is considerably underreported but nevertheless there has been a year on year increase in the number of cases reported to Surrey Police now receiving an average of 1,000 reports each month across Surrey. There has been an 89% increase in Woking referrals to Your Sanctuary<sup>21</sup> in 2020/21 compared to the previous year, in line with the national picture. Your Sanctuary has heard from survivors that the lockdowns due to the pandemic have enabled perpetrators to increase levels of control and abuse (they do not believe that the lockdowns have made previously non-abusive people into perpetrators).

Your Sanctuary Domestic Violence Statistics 2019/20 and 2020/21

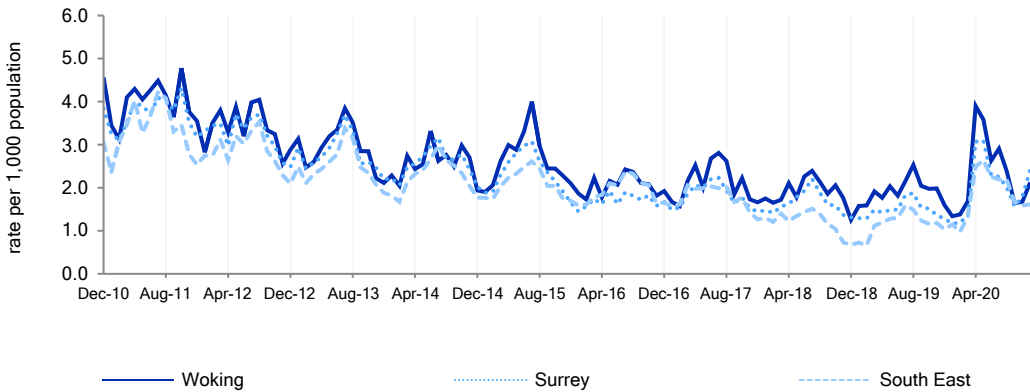
<sup>21</sup> Your Sanctuary provides specialist support services for survivors of domestic abuse, as well as their concerned families and friends, for further detail see page [54].



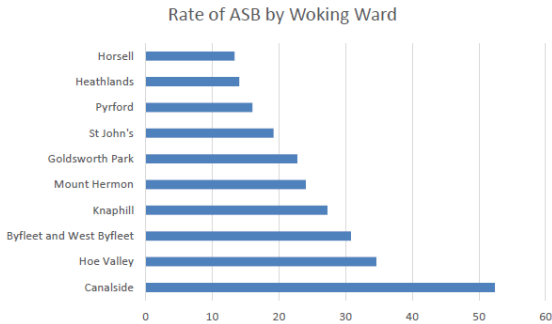
Woking's rate of anti-social behaviour (ASB) (29.3) is higher than the Surrey rate (27.1) but slightly lower than England (29.6). Woking's rate is the fourth highest in Surrey although it has been exhibiting a downward trend since 2010.

Figure 6: Anti-social behaviour offences

Source: <https://data.police.uk/>



Per ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Canalside has a significantly higher incidence of ASB than any other Woking ward, and with a rate of 52.8 it is ranked tenth compared to all wards in Surrey. It should be acknowledged that town centres are commonly the highest-ranking wards for this indicator. However, the Hoe Valley, Byfleet and West Byfleet, Goldsworth Park and Knaphill wards are all higher than the national, countywide and local

rates for this indicator. It should be noted that this national dataset for ASB is based on police data and does not include ASB that has only been reported to the council.

Other types of crime, such as vehicle crime, criminal damage and burglary offences have remained reasonably static.

The Safer Woking Partnership was set up to help reduce crime in the area by promoting crime prevention initiatives and protecting the most vulnerable people in the community. As well as the council it includes representatives from Surrey County Council, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, the NHS, Surrey Police and Kent Surrey and Sussex Community Rehabilitation Company. The [Safer Woking Partnership Plan](#) sets out the priorities, which include ASB. Due to the pandemic, the action plan for 2020/21 was not finalised as many of the planned engagement activities were not possible. The Partnership is in the process of developing its action plan for 2021/22.

[Woking Street Angels](#) are trained volunteers who, for the past ten years, have walked the streets of Woking town centre every Friday and Saturday night, from 10pm till 4am, to help night-time visitors have a safe experience in the town. Typically, they help those who are intoxicated, lonely, sick, vulnerable, troubled or sleeping rough, working with police, door staff, CCTV, the council and medical services. The council has supported Woking Street Angels with grant funding.

[Your Sanctuary](#) provides specialist support services for survivors of domestic abuse, as well as their concerned families and friends, and is a source of advice for local professionals. The council provides an annual grant to Your Sanctuary and has collaborated with Your Sanctuary on campaigns to raise awareness.

## 2.12 The voluntary sector

Woking's Voluntary Sector includes not for profit independent, voluntary, and community groups. Also organisations formed by local people, and those with a local interest, to improve the quality of life for themselves and/or others in Woking. These include a range of registered charities; voluntary organisations; community groups; faith groups involved in social action; community interest companies, mutual and co-operatives, social enterprises, and citizen-led organisations.

The diversity and wide range of Voluntary Sector organisations in Woking have a highly significant role in helping to improve the quality of life of people who live and work in the borough, particularly vulnerable adults and children. Volunteer Woking supports 477 organisations and currently has over 1350 active volunteers.

Charities in Woking are currently going through uncertainty and change. The loss of income and/or donations resulting from Covid is putting a great deal of pressure on charities within the borough. Charities are now looking to change their service to adapt to the current climate. The Council is looking at ways to help support both charities and clients; we need to make sure they are aware of the different networks who can help and support them, which needs to include partnership working.

Volunteering in Woking has changed over the last 18 months. There has been a fantastic response from people in Woking wishing to volunteer with over 500 people signing up to Volunteer Woking in the first 3 months of lockdown. This does not take into account the five Mutual Aid groups with their volunteers who helped and supported their local community with collecting medication, shopping and providing food. We have seen a change in the age range of people signing up to volunteer with an increase in younger people (24-49) being on furlough or being made redundant wishing to volunteer. We have also seen a change with the older volunteers being a little more reluctant, mainly due to shielding or government guidelines not allowing them to safely volunteer. A lot more graduates are volunteering as they are unable to currently find placements. We need to capture all volunteers - this means keeping them engaged with the Woking community and the different opportunities available to them.

## 3.0 PLACE: An enterprising, vibrant and sustainable borough

### 3.1 Environment

The built and natural environment refers to the physical environment. This includes: schools, workplaces, homes, communities, parks and recreation areas, green spaces (visible grass, trees and other vegetation) and blue spaces (visible water). The environment is a key factor which influences the health and wellbeing of local populations. For example, green infrastructure<sup>22</sup> can improve health through providing opportunities for physical exercise and boosting mental health by being in nature (termed 'biophilia') and the design of neighbourhoods can influence patterns of travel and social connectivity.

### 3.2 Green Infrastructure Network

15.9% of Woking is green space<sup>23</sup> which is higher than the averages for both Surrey (6.2%) and England (2.2%). However, public parks and gardens green space coverage is only 0.9% which is broadly in line with the average for England (0.8%) and lower than the Surrey average (1.8%).

Woking Borough's green infrastructure network is made up of a wide range of green assets. These range from landscapes which are statutorily designated or protected to some degree to individual trees and vegetation.

Approximately 60% of the Borough is designated Green Belt and it is largely undeveloped greenfield land. Essentially, the built up area sits within a large island in the centre of a green sea. Although green land and elements are more evident on the outskirts than the central urban core, the main built up areas are not absent of green assets. The River Wey and Basingstoke Canal run through the urban area, injecting green/blue seams through the grey island. There are also pockets of open space, recreation areas, verges, tree lined streets/avenues, private gardens that all contribute to the green infrastructure network and biodiversity in Woking Borough. The following identifies the green assets within the Borough:

**Local Nature reserves (LNR), Local Geological Sites:** Local nature reserves (LNR) are statutory designations made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by Schedule 11 of the NERC Act 2006. They are identified for their nature or wildlife value. There are two LNRs in Woking Borough:

- White Rose Lane
- Mayford Meadows

**Trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Trees (no formal protection):** There are over 2000 TPOs within the Borough. These comprise of single trees and groups of trees. They are afforded protection under the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012 for their amenity value to the surrounding area.

There are many trees and hedges in the Borough that do not have any formal protection. However local policies seek to protect any trees and hedgerows of significant amenity or environmental value.

**Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):** There are six Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) all or part of which are found within the Borough:

- Horsell Common (status: favourable/recovering condition)
- Ash to Brookwood Heaths (favourable/recovering)
- Smarts and Prey Heaths (recovering)
- Colony Bog & Bagshot Heaths (favourable/recovering)
- Basingstoke Canal (unfavourable/no change)
- Smart's and Prey Heaths (unfavourable/recovering), and

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<sup>22</sup> Green infrastructure includes parks, green spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems and soils. It also includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'.

<sup>23</sup> Ordnance Survey data which includes allotments or community growing spaces, bowling greens, cemeteries, religious grounds, golf courses, other sports facilities, play spaces, playing fields, public parks or gardens and tennis courts.

- Whitmoor Common (largely unfavourable/recovering) (fragment only - Whitmoor Common is located in Guildford Borough but adjoins the Woking Borough boundary).

These are sites of national importance for wildlife and/or geology (some are also of international significance). SSSIs contain the most unique and varied habitats which are maintained through active management and conservation. They contain plants and wildlife that would find it difficult to survive elsewhere. SSSIs are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, amended by the CRoW Act 2000 and the NERC Act 2006.

**Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG):** As part of the Council's Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy 2010-2015, the Council has the following operational SANG sites:

- Brookwood Country Park
- Horsell Common, Monument Road
- White Rose Lane
- Heather Farm wetland, Chobham Road.

These are identified to mitigate against potential harm to the SPA as a result of residential development. The designation of greenspace as SANG requires it to meet certain design standards set out by Natural England.

**Special Protection Area (SPA):** The Thames Basin Heaths SPA comprises a network of 13 sites across 11 Local Authorities in Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire. These are protected under European Directive 79/409/EEC Birds Directive. Sites in Woking Borough include, Horsell Common SSSI, Brookwood Heath (part of Ash to Brookwood Heath SSSI), and Sheets Heath (part of Colony Bog and Bagshot Heath SSSI). Chobham Common SSSI, Ockham and Wisley SSSI and Whitmoor Common SSSI are also within 5km of the Borough.

**Common Land:** Common Land and town/village greens are protected under the Commons Act 2006. There are a number of areas of Common Land within the Borough:

- Bisley Common
- Brookwood Heath Common
- Castle Green
- Horsell Common
- Horsell Moor
- Kingfield Green
- Mayford Green
- Mill Moor
- Prey/Pray Heath
- Sheets Heath Common
- Smart's Heath
- St John's Lye
- Westfield Common

In addition there are areas such as Pyrford Common, a common in name not designation, but which is in part designated a village green.

**Registered Historic Parks and Gardens:** There are three registered historic parks and gardens within the Borough:

- Brookwood Cemetery
- Pyrford Court
- Sutton Place

RHS Garden Wisley is located south east, just outside of the Borough. These spaces of historic importance are part of the country's heritage assets. They are identified for their special character and heritage.

**River/water features:** The main water corridors and their tributaries in the Borough are the River Wey, Hoe Stream, the Basingstoke Canal, the River Bourne and The Wey Navigation. Development near water corridors should avoid impacts on the watercourse itself and the wildlife, for example by creating or maintaining natural buffer zones of an appropriate size.

**Ancient Woodlands and Woodland:** Surrey is the most wooded County in England and there are numerous ancient woodlands within Woking Borough. Surrey Wildlife Trust completed an inventory of Surrey's Ancient Woodland in 2011. These are ancient as they are known to be in existence since 1600. These are important for biodiversity.

**Parks and gardens:** The last comprehensive review of open spaces by the Council was undertaken as part of The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Audit (2008) in the Borough. It found there are 11 parks and gardens in the Borough, these are listed in the audit and includes urban parks, country parks and formal gardens. Examples include Woking Park and Goldsworth Park. The Muslim Burial Ground Peace Garden (opened November 2015) provides a beautiful and calm place of contemplation. Since the audit was carried out there has been the creation of a new park Hoe Valley Park and various SANGS (see above).

**Amenity green space:** The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Audit 2008 calculated 82 areas of amenity green space (which is informal recreation space in and around housing).

**Children play areas and Teenage provision:** The 2008 audit listed 36 play areas. Since then there have been a few new sites, with a total of 41 recorded. A number of sites have also been refurbished.

**Outdoor sports and recreation:** The Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Audit 2008 calculated 39 outdoor sports facilities in the Borough, including golf courses, bowling greens and sports grounds. Since then new facilities have been created.

**Allotments:** There are 10 allotments in the Borough:

- Albert Drive, Sheerwater, Woking
- Derry's Field, Coniston Road, Old Woking
- Eden Grove Road, Byfleet
- Horsell Allotments, Bulbeggars Lane, Woking
- Knaphill Allotments, Creston Avenue, Woking
- Leisure Lane, off Camphill Road, West Byfleet
- Maybury Gardens, Alpha Road, Woking
- Sheets Heath Lane, Brookwood
- Winern Glebe, Rectory Lane, Byfleet
- Littlewick Allotments, Carthouse Lane

**Cemeteries and churchyards:** One cemetery (Brookwood Cemetery) and 5 churchyards. Multiple spaces available for burial and also serve a recreational function as places for walking, quiet contemplation and wildlife interest.

**Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI):** There are over 44 SNCIs in Woking Borough. These are non-statutory local designations, identified for their local nature conservation and geological value. These were identified in the early 1990s with an update in 2003. Sites were identified through joint working between Surrey County Council, Surrey Wildlife Trust, Natural England (then called English Nature), Environment Agency and Woking Borough Council. There are a number of regionally important wildlife sites which have been designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). Pyrford Common, Roundbridge Farm, Grayshott Fields, Wheelers Meadow (South), Warren Farm Meadows, Pyrford Place Lake, the Hoe Stream and River Wey were designated as SNCI's to protect the important meadow, marsh, pasture, heathland and water course habitats.

**Special Areas of Conservation (SAC):** There is one area of SAC to the West of the Borough. SACs are designated for their international importance. This is an area afforded special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. The site is also an SSSI. The additional designation as a SAC is recognition that some or all of the wildlife habitats and species are particularly valued in a European context.

### 3.3 Environmental quality

The level of air pollutants (nitrogen dioxide, benzene, sulphur dioxide and particulates) in Woking is in line with the levels in Surrey and England. Levels for each of these pollutants do not exceed national standards for clean air.<sup>24</sup>

Woking 2050<sup>25</sup> is the council's current climate change strategy, adopted in 2015. It sets out a vision to create a sustainable borough by reducing our environmental impact. In 2019, the council declared a climate emergency and pledged to become zero carbon across its own estate and operations by 2030. A Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) was put in place, building on ongoing work to deliver the objectives of Woking 2050.

A key tool the council is using to deliver the CEAP is Planet Woking. This aims to engage local residents, schools and businesses and enable them to play their part in enhancing the sustainability of the borough, and ultimately in achieving our aim of carbon neutrality. The website provides useful resources on what the council has been doing to tackle climate change locally as well as ideas and inspiration for what residents can do at home or work to help lighten their environmental footprint. It also has a dedicated section for younger audiences, titled *Little Planet Woking*.

Natural Woking, the council's biodiversity and green infrastructure strategy, was adopted in 2016 and runs to 2050. It aims to promote and celebrate the borough's diverse countryside and urban environments, while enhancing accessibility to our natural habitats and wildlife. The Natural Woking strategy highlights the benefits that enjoying green spaces can bring including to health and wellbeing.

The council is a member of the Surrey Air Alliance, and works in partnership with Surrey District and Boroughs and Surrey County Council's Public Health and Highways Teams to improve air quality across the county. The council offers a free airAlert service which provides advance warning (by email, text message or voicemail) of high pollution levels to local residents who have respiratory problems such as asthma, COPD and emphysema. The council also participated in the School Air Quality programme which aimed to improve air quality by changing behaviours and encouraging more active travel. This involved raising awareness via theatre workshops for pupils, school travel planning and provision of cycle proficiency training.

### 3.4 Income

Woking is one of the 20% least deprived districts/unitary authorities in England<sup>26</sup>.

The chart below shows the estimated average annual household income (equivalised to consider variations in household size) across Woking and comparator areas before and after housing costs. It shows that Woking is more prosperous than the South East on average.

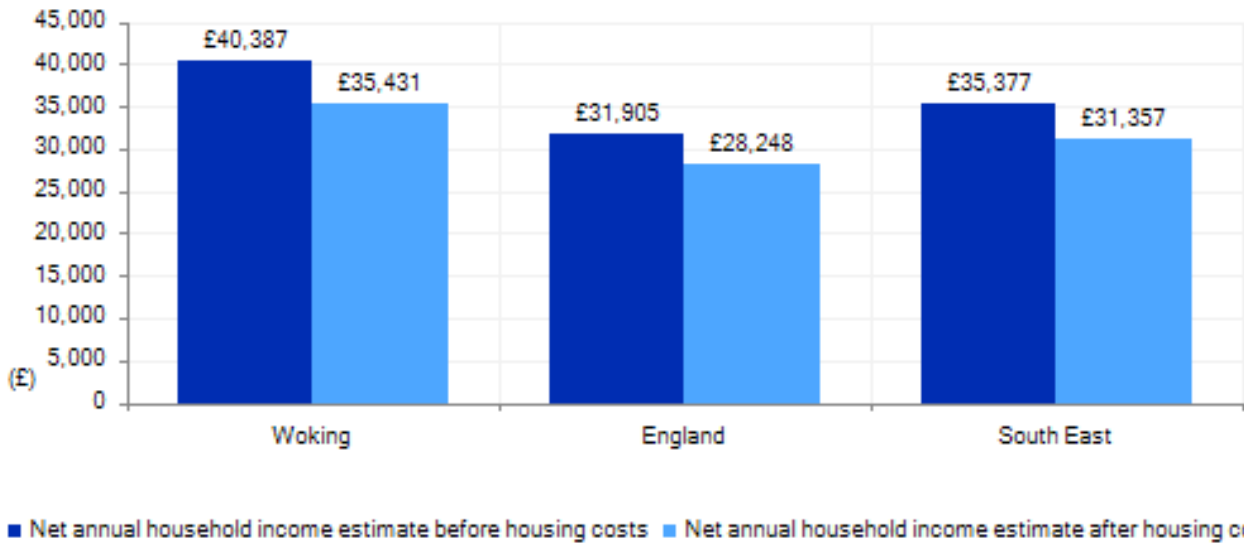
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<sup>24</sup> The council monitors air quality across the borough by monitoring nitrogen dioxide levels via diffusion tubes. Each year the data from this monitoring is analysed and forms the Annual Status Report which is submitted to DEFRA for approval. These reports can be found at <https://www.woking.gov.uk/environmental-services/pollution/air-quality>

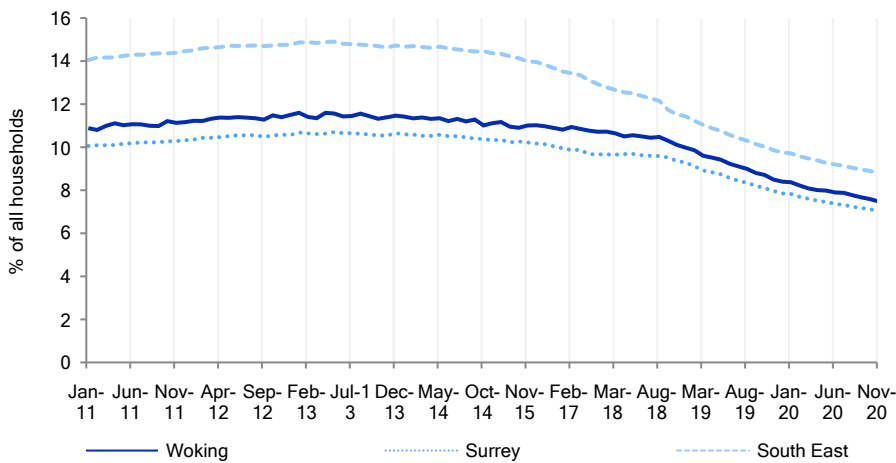
<sup>25</sup> <https://www.woking.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Nature/woking2050.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Woking's Index of Deprivation score is 11.9 compared to an average for England of 21.9 (the more deprived an area, the higher the IMD score). None of Woking's lower super output areas fall among the most deprived 10% of small areas in England.



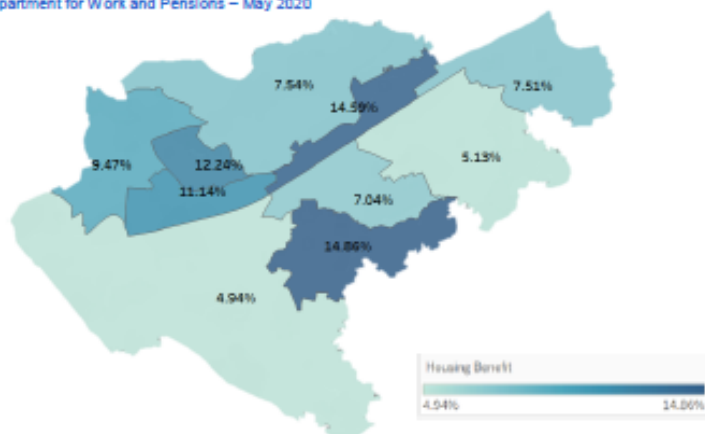


The chart below shows the trend for those claiming housing benefit. Woking ranks second highest in Surrey for housing benefit claimants, although Woking's housing benefit claimant numbers have been decreasing along with the national figures.



The map below shows the breakdown of housing benefit claimants by ward. Canalside and Hoe Valley have the largest numbers of claimants.

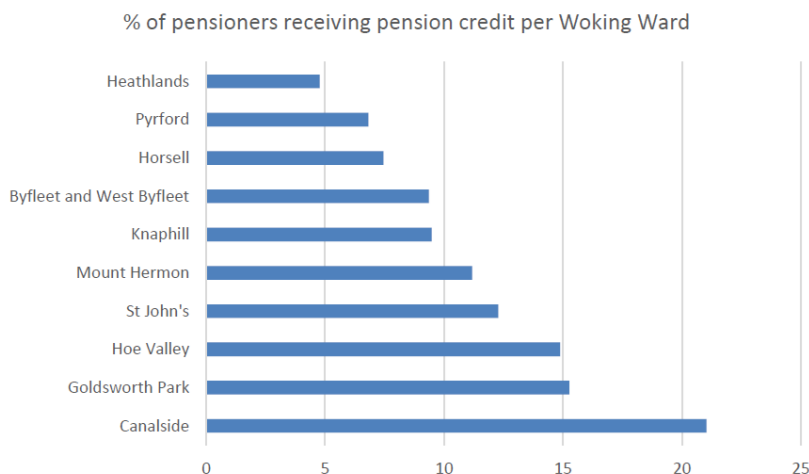
Figure: Shows the proportion of households receiving Housing Benefit (HB)  
Source: Department for Work and Pensions – May 2020



9.7% of children (under 16s) in Woking live in low income families, compared to 12.9% in the South East and 17.0% England.

Income is a particular issue for pensioners in Woking. 7.8% of pensioners in Woking receive pension credit, which equates to 1,345 pensioners. This is higher than the average across Surrey (6.8%) but lower than England (12.9%).

Per ward, the breakdown is as follows:



Of Woking wards, Canalside has the highest percentage (21%) of pensioners receiving pension credit and it is the second highest ward across the whole of Surrey. The percentage there is more than three times higher than the county average.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic can be measured by looking at the increase in claimants between March and April 2020, as well as estimates of the number of people furloughed. This impact is relatively evenly spread, though the centre of the borough has been affected less. Areas such as West Byfleet & Pyrford North, Old Woking & Westfield, and Sheerwater have been the most affected.

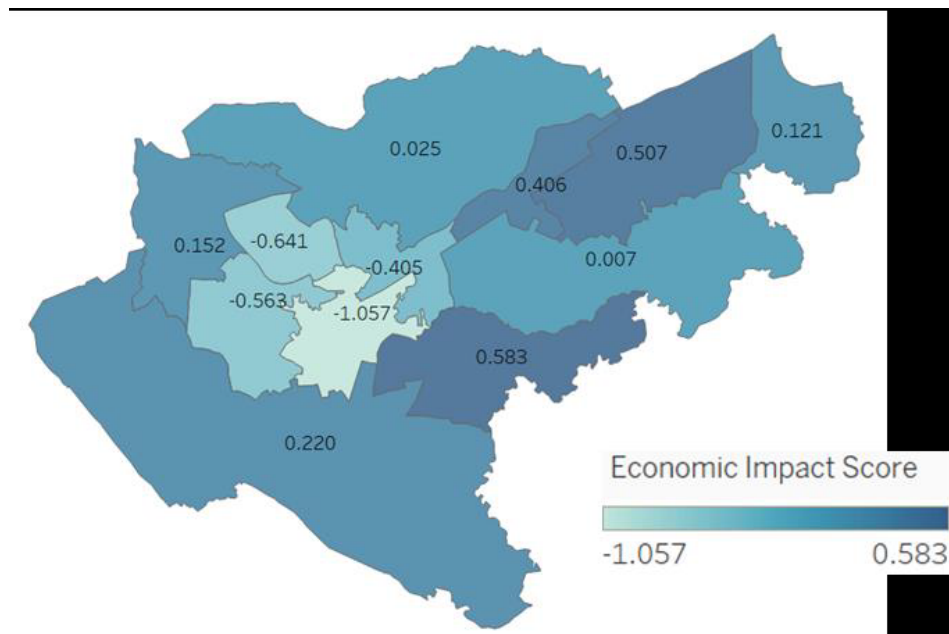


Figure 4: Shows the distribution of Covid-19 Economic Impact across MSOAs<sup>27</sup> in Woking (unemployment increases and people furloughed)

<sup>27</sup> Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales.

### 3.5 Built environment

Housing is a key component of the built environment which impacts the health and wellbeing of residents. The predominant housing tenure in Woking is owner occupation (71%), in line with the national figure. Woking is a very expensive housing market area and house prices have increased significantly over the last five years. The latest Land Registry data shows that the average house price of all property types in Woking borough was £425,728 in November 2020. This is a 10.3% (+ £39,687) increase since November 2015. The average house price in Woking remains significantly higher than the national average of £249,633.

The private rental sector accounts for 14.6% and social housing for 10.9% of all housing locally. The average private rent in Woking (£1,863 per calendar month) is lower than across Surrey as a whole (£2,074 pcm). However, rents are significantly above the Local Housing Allowance (Housing Benefit) for the area, which creates challenges for many residents to secure good quality affordable private rental accommodation. The latest HomeLet Rental Index<sup>28</sup> shows that average rental values in the South East have increased by 2.8% when compared to September last year. The table below gives a breakdown of asking rents for privately rented homes as of February 2021, together with the applicable Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the potential shortfall between these figures.

	<b>LHA month (pcm)</b>	<b>Average Asking Rent (pcm) February 2021</b>	<b>Potential Shortfall (pcm)</b>
1 Bed flat	£847.68	£976.00	£128.32
2 Bed flat	£1,096.98	£1,291.00	£194.02
2 Bed house	£1,096.98	£1,261.00	£164.02
3 Bed house	£1,371.24	£1,542.00	£170.76
4 Bed house	£1,795.08	£2,042.00	£246.92

The council operates a range of private sector access schemes to assist residents in securing private rented accommodation.

The Let's Rent service procures and supports tenancy sustainment for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The service provides advice and support to tenants and landlords, and incentives for landlords. 365 tenancies were secured by the Let's Rent service between 1 April 2020 and 28 October 2020.

The council owns 3,361 properties (including temporary accommodation and shared ownership) in the borough. In addition, the council's housing provider partners (including ThamesWey Housing Limited<sup>29</sup> and housing associations) own approximately 2,200 in the borough (including shared ownership properties). In January 2021, there were 1,108 active households on the housing register.

The majority of housing register applicants need one and two bedroom properties (41% and 31% respectively), with three or more bedroom properties comprising the remaining 28% of current need.

The council's Core Strategy set a reasonable target of providing an additional 1,737 affordable dwellings for the period of the plan (2013 to 2027), equating to an annual target of 102 new affordable

<sup>28</sup> <https://homelet.co.uk/homelet-rental-index/south-east>

<sup>29</sup> ThamesWey Housing Limited (THL) is an independent limited company wholly owned by the council. THL was established to support the Woking Borough Council Housing and Economic Development Strategies through the provision of additional residential accommodation of all types.

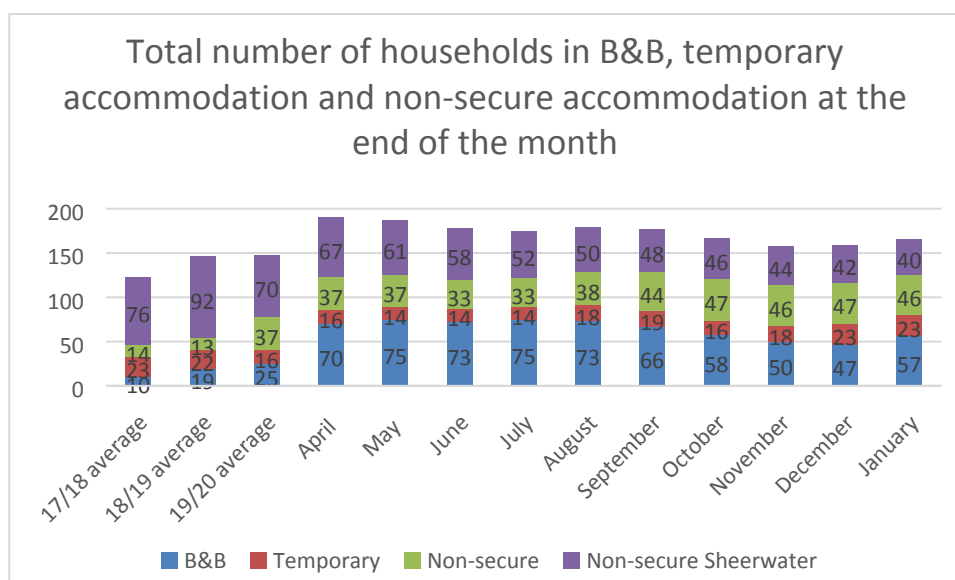
dwellings per annum. Of these, 70% of new affordable dwellings should be in the rented tenure (social and affordable) and 30% at intermediate level (including shared ownership). The council is committed to continuing to work with Registered Providers, Thamesway Housing Limited and private developers to facilitate the provision of 102 new affordable homes each year, as well as, identifying new-build opportunities on council-owned land. 581 affordable dwellings have been delivered to date comprising 316 affordable/social rent dwellings and 261 intermediate dwellings. There are a further 436 affordable homes planned for delivery by 2023/24, including 74 as part of the Sheerwater Regeneration programme.

Overcrowding is an issue affecting 4.79% of households in Woking. This is the highest level in Surrey (which has an average of 3.43%) and only slightly lower than the average for England (4.81%). There are links between overcrowding and both homelessness and mental health issues. Repeated lockdowns due to the pandemic have exacerbated the mental health consequences of overcrowding as people have spent more time at home.

The council is in the process of developing a housing strategy to cover the period 2021-2026 with the following priorities:

- Providing well designed high-quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs;
- Preventing homelessness and helping those in housing need;
- Helping people to achieve independence and wellbeing;
- Delivering an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders; and
- Enhancing choice, standards and quality within the private rental sector.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of households who are homeless in Woking. This includes families, single people, young people and people who are sleeping rough. This trend is also reflected nationally, and the increase has been accelerated by the roll out of Universal Credit and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. At the end of October 2020, the council was accommodating 167 homeless households in some form of emergency accommodation. Typically, over the last 2 years, this number has been around 130 – 150. This increase reflects the additional numbers accommodated in hotels through the Covid-19 pandemic and the ‘Everyone In’ government initiative.



In the [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy](#) 2020-2024, the council sets out how it will work with partners to address homelessness in Woking and support residents in housing crisis. Actions will be targeted at delivering on the following four strategic priorities:

- Preventing homelessness and offering early help;
- Providing a range of accommodation options;
- Supporting vulnerable residents through partnership working; and
- Reducing rough sleeping.

Planning policy and guidance at a local and national level shapes the built environment. Surrey County Council has developed specific guidance, **Creating Healthier Built Environments**, to support and enable health and planning colleagues to share planning policy which addresses public health issues and embeds health and wellbeing into planning decisions.

Within Woking, the council undertakes a sustainability appraisal approach to any planning activity. This ensures that health and wellbeing are appropriately considered. The council's planning strategy includes the integration of open spaces into development, securing spaces for recreation and ensuring sustainable alternative natural spaces.

### 3.6 Local business

Businesses in Woking continue to face unprecedented challenges in keeping their businesses solvent. Following the initial lockdown, the Government gradually eased the restrictions on retail businesses and allowed them to reopen from June 16 onwards. Over the subsequent six weeks, most businesses were allowed to re-open. During lockdown, online sales increased due to the restriction of movement faced by consumers. However, there was support for local shops - mostly food and drink outlets - and an increase in take-away meal sales. The subsequent lockdowns have seen these businesses adapt again in order to remain trading, adapting their services to meet local needs.

Woking Town Centre relies heavily on office workers to frequent the restaurants and cafes, as well as the local shops. Before lockdown, there were nearly 50,000 office workers in the borough. We estimate that in the period to September only 10% were occupying space, as the Government continued to encourage people to work from home if they could. With such a large drop in footfall, pavement-facing businesses will struggle to survive much longer if people do not come back to their offices or leave their homes to shop.

We have seen a small amount of businesses shut down but with the Government's Furlough Scheme extended until summer 2021, and orders not picking up in some areas, Woking is likely to witness more firms going out of businesses.

### 3.7 Business start-up and migration

According to the latest report by the [Inform Direct Review of Company Formations](#), using data from Companies House and the Office for National Statistics, SURREY registered 11,997 new businesses last year, an 8.7% increase on the 11,032 formed in 2019. Woking is seventh in the table of 11 Surrey districts covered by the research, with **1,034 new companies formed in 2020**.

In terms of business migration, key statistics from the 20/21 financial year highlight that 26 businesses moved into the Borough, 28 businesses relocated within the Borough, 6 businesses left the Borough and 30 businesses closed.

### 3.8 Kickstart Scheme

Approximately 60 new jobs have been created in the Borough through local businesses using the Kickstart Scheme. The Scheme provides funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment.

### 3.9 Town Centre

With the usual office population in the town centre down, as office staff were advised by the Government to work from home or operate with limited numbers in offices, the Town Centre is quiet. The knock-on effect is the reduced spend in associated shops and services. Many of these retail and hospitality businesses, like others across the Borough, have adjusted their opening hours.

The increase in footfall over the summer, as non-essential retail and hospitality reopened, has now levelled off with the message from central Government returning for people to work from home if they can.

### 3.10 Shopping Centres

As non-essential retail and hospitality reopened over the summer, there was an increase in footfall within the centres. Aside from chain restaurants closures, most retail and hospitality units have opened back up, with a few new operators in Woking Market. Social distancing measures are in place across the centres and within individual units but with the lower than usual footfall it feels quiet, and the stock levels in some stores reflects this.

The largest increase in visitor footfall to Woking Shopping was during w/c 15 June, when non-essential retailers were allowed to reopen.

The numbers are down compared to the same period last year. In June 2020, the footfall stood at about 19% of the 2019 figures – c. 50,000 per week. Following non-essential retailers reopening, footfall increased but only to around 30% of 2019 levels – c. 80,000 per week.

Shops reopened after lockdown to between half and two thirds of their normal footfall. They have still not returned to 100% of pre-lockdown levels.

Woking Shopping's Springboard system to record footfall at the shopping centres was not installed until early 2020 so a full year's stats is not available. Nationally, they reported that UK footfall is down 73.8% year on year.

The footfall of short term tickets across the Council car parks, (Shoppers, Brewery Road and Victoria Way) is a good indication of visitor numbers across the town centre. Due to the forced closure of many shops, and number of additional restrictions imposed because of Covid, the footfall of short term car park tickets was on average 71% down from July to January 19/20, compared to the same period in 20/21.