



Published April 2025



Wakefield District Annual Report 2025: Children (0-17 years)

Introduction

This is a summary of the health and wellbeing needs of the children’s population (aged under 18 years) in the Wakefield District.

The purpose is to point local partners to where further investigation may be needed in terms of population health needs. There is a focus on inequalities, highlighting areas with particular groups of the population whose needs are greatest. Data can be explored further at:

www.wakefieldjsna.co.uk

There is a separate Annual Report for adults, which can be found on the Wakefield JSNA website. We welcome feedback, challenge or insight. Please contact: phi@wakefield.gov.uk

When you see these dots...

-  Worse than comparator
-  In line with comparator
-  Better than comparator

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Population

There are **75,000 children** under the age of 18 in Wakefield District, accounting for just over **one in five (21%)** of the population. The number of children is expected to **remain stable over the next ten years.**

[MORE INFO](#)

3,507 births to Wakefield resident mothers in 2023. [MORE INFO](#)



The **number of births** in Wakefield has been **decreasing steadily since 2016** following national and regional trends.

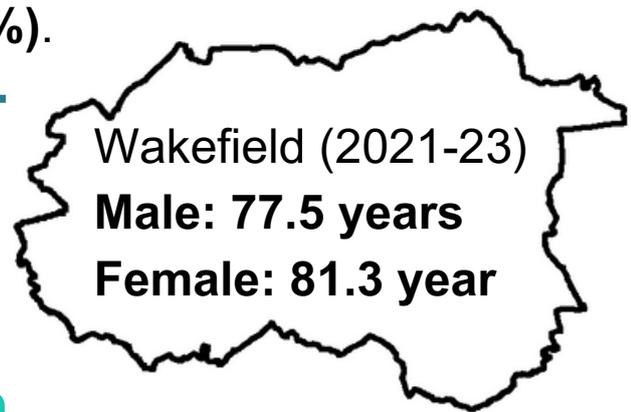
79% of children in Wakefield are of **White British ethnicity (2023/24)**. **Ethnic diversity is increasing.** The proportion of those with **non 'White British' ethnicity** (all other ethnicities) **increased from 13% in 2015/16 to 19% in 2023/24**, a trend also seen nationally and regionally.

61% nationally

In Wakefield, the **largest ethnic minority groups of children** are **Any Other White background (5.5%), Asian Pakistani (3.4%)** and **Black African (2.5%)**.

[MORE INFO](#)

Children born in Wakefield District are not expected to live for as long as children born in other parts of the country; life expectancy at birth is significantly lower than the England level for both males and females.



England (2021-23) ●
Male: 79.1 years
Female: 83.1 years

Life expectancy at birth for people who live in the most deprived areas is lower than for those who live in the least deprived areas.

District characteristics

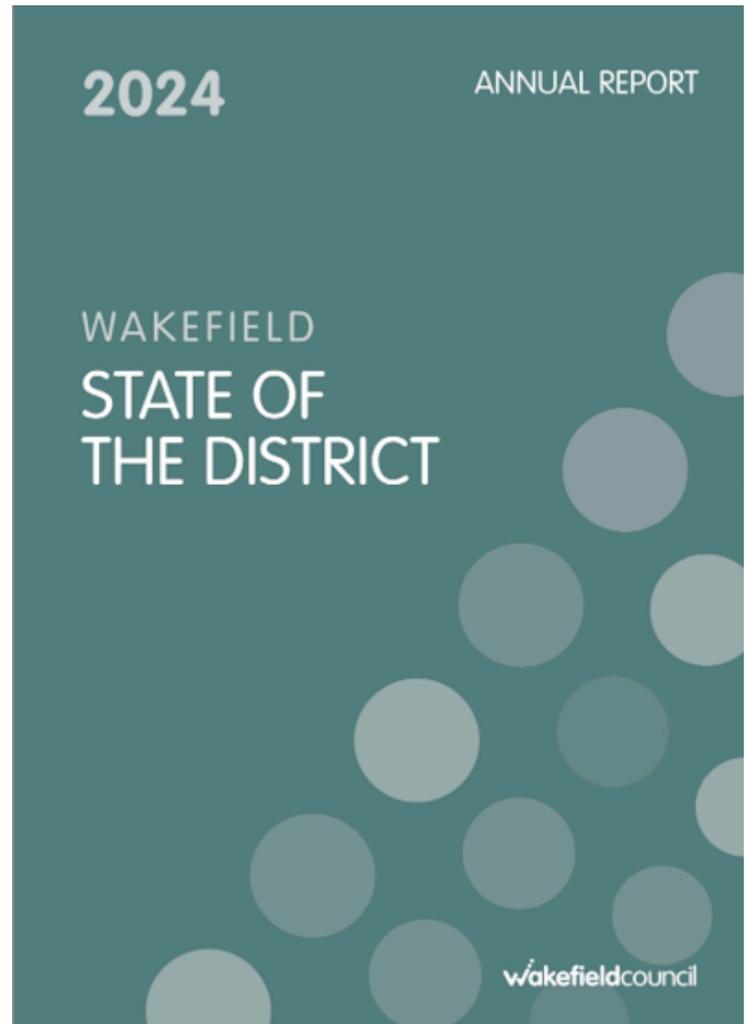
Wakefield District is a diverse and changing place and there are a wide range of factors impacting the lives of local people and neighbourhoods.

The health and wellbeing of the population can be greatly affected by the people and places that we interact with.

Many of these factors are covered in more detail in the Wakefield State of the District report.

You can read the most recent publication here:

[State of the District 2024](#)



Living Environment



Economy and Employment



Housing and Transport



Education and Skills



All these things have an impact on people's health and wellbeing



Health

Obesity in early pregnancy in the Wakefield District is high at 32% (2023-24) compared to national and regional levels and each year is increasing, potentially leading to increased risk of complications.



Although still significantly higher than the national level, there have been **big improvements** in the percentage of **those smoking at time of delivery in Wakefield** over time, the 2023-24 figure being 10%, down from 24% in 2010-11.

[MORE INFO](#)



Breastfeeding can save lives, protecting the health of babies and mothers immediately and over time.



62% of Wakefield babies received breastmilk for their first feed in 2023-24. **Just over a third (37%) of infants at the 6-8 week check were totally or partially breastfed**, compared to the national level of 53% (2023-24).

Overweight & obesity

The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) is a Government scheme established to improve understanding of obesity prevalence and trends in children. It collects annual data on the height and weight of school children in Reception Year (aged 4-5) and Year 6 (aged 10-11).

Reception (aged 4-5)

A quarter (25%) of children in Reception were living with overweight (including obesity) in 2023-24, which is **significantly higher** than the **national level** of 22%.



Children are **less likely** to be living with overweight or obesity in Year 6 in the **least deprived areas** of the district.

More children in year 6 are living with overweight or obesity (37%) than in Reception (25%).

Year 6 (aged 10-11)

Just under four in ten (37%) children in Year 6 were living with overweight (including obesity) in 2023-24, which is **similar** to the **national level** of 36%.



Children living with overweight and obesity are more likely to live with overweight and obesity in adulthood. Childhood obesity may result in serious medical problems, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure and pre-diabetes.

Most children of a healthy weight in Reception (74%) stayed a healthy weight in Year 6.

Just under half (45%) living with overweight in Reception were living with obesity in Year 6.

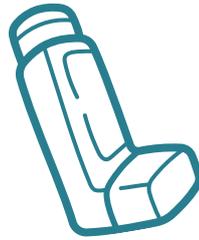
Most children (82%) living with obesity in Reception were still living with obesity in Year 6.

[MORE INFO](#)

Asthma

Asthma is the most common long-term medical condition in children in the UK. Outcomes are worse for children and young people living in the most deprived areas.

Hospital admissions per 100,000 for asthma (aged 0-18) were in line with regional and national levels in 2022-23.



Yorkshire & Humber region: 112.9

England national: 122.2

Children who are **exposed to smoking and environmental tobacco smoke** at a young age are at **increased risk of respiratory problems like asthma and chest infections.**



The **Wakefield District School Health Survey 2024** found that:

16% of pupils in Years 5, 7 and 9 reported that **someone smokes in the home.**



For pupils who live in the **most deprived areas** of Wakefield, **28%** reported that **someone smokes in the home**, compared to **10%** in the **least deprived areas** of Wakefield.



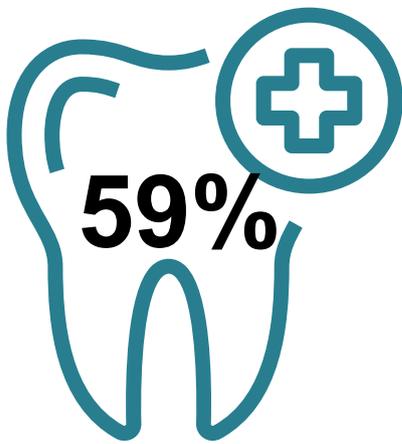
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Oral health

Poor oral health can significantly impact children's overall wellbeing. Tooth decay and infections can cause pain and discomfort. This can affect their ability to eat, sleep, and concentrate in school.



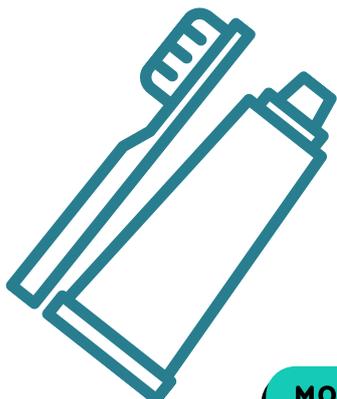
The number of hospital admissions (2020/21-22/23) due to tooth decay in children aged 0-5 in Wakefield is falling, but is still higher than the national level of 178.8. ●



Access to a dentist has become more of an issue nationally over the last few years. In West Yorkshire, just under six in ten (59%) children were seen by an NHS dentist in the last 12 months (as at Nov 2024), higher than the national level but still a relatively low percentage.



According to the Wakefield School Health Survey 2024, nearly three quarters (73%) of pupils reported visiting a dentist in the last 12 months. Younger children were less likely to have visited.

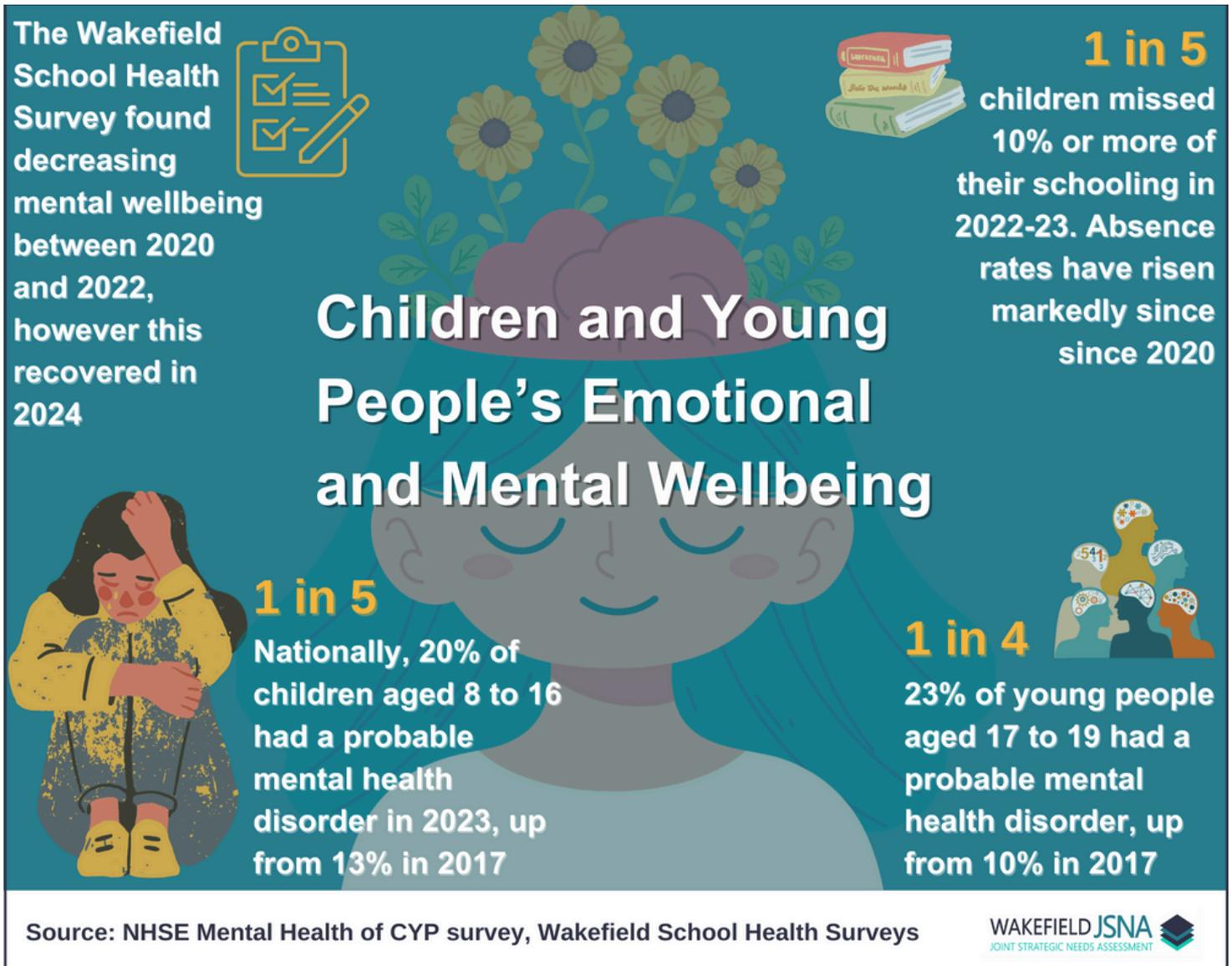


Four in five (80%) pupils reported brushing their teeth at least twice a day.



[MORE INFO](#)

Mental health is as important to a child's wellbeing as their physical health. It can impact on all aspects of their life, including their educational attainment, relationships and physical wellbeing. Mental health can also change over time, to varying degrees of seriousness, and for different reasons.



The Wakefield School Health Survey found decreasing mental wellbeing between 2020 and 2022, however this recovered in 2024

1 in 5 children missed 10% or more of their schooling in 2022-23. Absence rates have risen markedly since 2020

Children and Young People's Emotional and Mental Wellbeing

1 in 5 Nationally, 20% of children aged 8 to 16 had a probable mental health disorder in 2023, up from 13% in 2017

1 in 4 23% of young people aged 17 to 19 had a probable mental health disorder, up from 10% in 2017

Source: NHSE Mental Health of CYP survey, Wakefield School Health Surveys

WAKEFIELD JSNA
JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1 in 20

pupils (5%) in Year 7, 9 and 12 in Wakefield had a **low mental wellbeing score** in the Wakefield School Health Survey 2024, an improvement on 2022 levels (10%).

Female pupils were more likely than male pupils to have low levels of mental wellbeing. Young carers were more likely than non-carers to have low levels of mental wellbeing.

[MORE INFO](#)



Risk factors

Smoking & vaping

MORE INFO

The Wakefield District School Health Survey 2024 found that, in line with national trends, the percentage of pupils who have never smoked has increased since previous surveys.

Never tried
smoking

Year 7 - 99%
Year 9 - 93%
Year 12 - 70%



The percentage of pupils who have never tried smoking a cigarette is higher in younger age groups but decreases in Year 12 pupils.

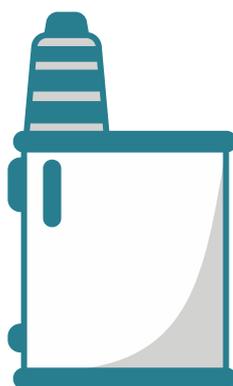
It is a similar story when looking at vaping, however the percentage of pupils who have **never tried vaping** is lower than the percentage who have never tried smoking across all year groups.

Never tried
vaping

Year 7 - 90%
Year 9 - 75%
Year 12 - 47%



Pupils were more likely to think it was ok for others their age to vape than it was to smoke cigarettes.



As age increases, a higher percentage of young people are regular users of vapes.

4% of Year 9 pupils report using vapes every day increasing to 21% in Year 12, compared to less than 1% and 2% respectively for smoking cigarettes.

1 in 5
Year 12 students
said they use a
vape every day

Alcohol & drugs

MORE INFO

The Wakefield District School Health Survey 2024 found that:

There is an upward trend in the proportion of pupils who have never tried alcohol. This is similar to national trends.



The percentage of respondents who had never consumed alcohol decreased with age with 71% of Year 7, 48% of Year 9 and 20% of Year 12s having never drunk alcohol.



Year 9 pupils who said they have never drunk alcohol has doubled since 2013



Year 12 students who said they had never drunk alcohol has nearly doubled since 2017

Year 9 and Year 12 pupils were asked questions relating to drug use including whether they had been offered or used drugs.

Using drugs is not common among Year 9 pupils.

Among Year 12 students: **4 in 5** had never taken drugs (78%)
2% took drugs regularly or most days

Among Year 12 students who had used or taken drugs in the past, **cannabis** was the most common drug used.



Protective characteristics

48% Although in line with regional and national levels, **less than half of children (48%) aged 5-18 met government recommendations for physical activity** in 2023-24. 

The Wakefield District School Health Survey 2024 provides insight into children's thoughts and perceptions of fitness, physical activity & diet.

MORE INFO

Less than half (42%) of Year 5, 7 and 9 pupils walked to school

Nearly 80% of Year 5 pupils enjoy physical activity a lot or quite a lot

12% of Year 5 and 7 pupils consumed energy drinks once a week

50% of Year 5 pupils cycle once a week or more dropping to 11% in Year 12 pupils

Activity levels decrease with age and just 47% of Year 12 do 150 minutes or more activity per week

65% of pupils (Years 5, 7 and 9) eat fruit and vegetables most days.

Around **one-in-four (25%)** of Years 5, 7 and 9 pupils had **not eaten breakfast** that morning. Older pupils were less likely to eat breakfast than younger pupils.

Only **1-in-10 (10%)** Year 12 pupils eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day

45% of Year 5 pupils said they were active enough, reducing to 27% among Year 12 students.



The most common barriers to exercise amongst those who didn't feel they did enough were:

- Not having time
- Not feeling motivated or bothered to exercise
- Worries about looking silly



Top 3 preferred sports

Year 5, 7 and 9:
Running, football and swimming

Year 12:
Going to the gym, running and dancing

Safety & wellbeing

MORE INFO

Fostering a sense of security and well-being is important for children. When children feel safe, they can explore and learn with confidence, developing essential skills for their future.

The Wakefield District School Health Survey 2024 was carried out with Year 5, Year 7, Year 9 and Year 12 pupils who attend schools across the district. The survey, run every two years, collects robust information about young people's health, wellbeing and lifestyles.

62%



Of pupils said they were **quite or very happy with their lives at the moment**. The percentage is highest in Year 5 and decreases as children get older.

49%

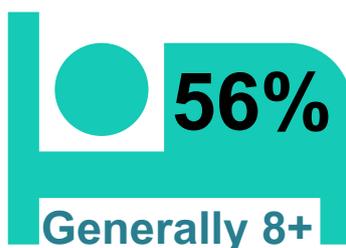
of pupils feel lonely some or most of the time



Levels of **happiness** and **loneliness** for pupils in Year 7, Year 9 and Year 12 have **improved** since 2022 but are still slightly below levels seen in 2020 and earlier.

Just over half of pupils in Years 5, 7, and 9 generally have 8 hours or more sleep per school night.

The recommended amount for teenagers is 8-10 hours.



Generally 8+

hours sleep:

Year 5: 62%

Year 7: 62%

Year 9: 44%

Younger pupils generally get more hours sleep on a school night than older pupils. with just under half in Year 9 getting 8 hours or more sleep.

Overall, three-quarters (76%) of pupils said they felt safe in the area where they lived.



Education

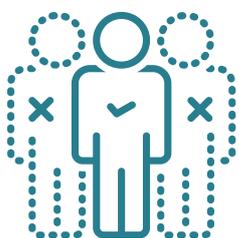
Ready for school (aged 4-5).
Over two thirds (69%) of Wakefield's reception aged pupils achieved a good level of development (GLD) in 2023-24; higher than the regional and in line with the national level.



Attainment 8 at Key Stage 4 (aged 15-16).
Attainment 8 measures the achievement of a pupil across eight qualifications, including Maths, English and Science, producing an average score (higher is better).

Wakefield's average Attainment 8 score stood at 45 for 2023-24, in line with regional (44) and national levels (46).

16-17 year olds not in education
4.5% of Wakefield's 16 to 17 year olds were not in education, employment or training (NEET) or their activity was not known in 2023-24. Regional and national levels stood at 5.8% and 5.4% respectively.



In 2023-24, just under 11,000 pupils (around 1 in 5) in Wakefield missed 10% or more of their schooling during the year. Rates increased a lot during and after the COVID-19 pandemic; a pattern seen nationally.



Population groups

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Just under 2 in 10 school pupils in Wakefield have **SEN**.



11,359

school age pupils in Wakefield identify as having **special educational needs (SEN)** in 2023-24.



8,360

receive **SEN Support** (extra support usually within mainstream school).



2,999

have an **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** - a formal plan of help for those with more complex needs).

Speech, language and communication is the **most common primary reason for receiving SEN Support** in Wakefield (**24%**).

Autism is the **most common primary need of children in Wakefield who have an EHCP** (**33%**).



There is a trend of increasing numbers of children identified with **SEN** in Wakefield, as well as nationally.



Nine in ten (92%) children in Wakefield with SEN attend mainstream schools or nursery.



[MORE INFO](#)

Children in need of services

(As at March 2023)

2,384

children in need being supported by social workers and other professionals in Wakefield.



[MORE INFO](#)

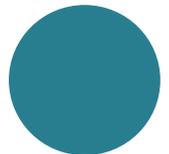
The Wakefield 'Child in need' rate (per 10,000 children) was lower than similar local authorities.



475

children across Wakefield who were the subject of a **Child Protection Plan**.

The Wakefield Child Protection Plan rate was lower than other similar local authorities.



636

children in care in Wakefield for whom the Local Authority provides care and accommodation



The Wakefield children in care rate was lower than other similar local authorities.



Children requiring a higher level of safeguarding intervention generally have poorer outcomes in terms of health, education and overall wellbeing.



LGBTQ+ population

LGBTQ+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace.

[MORE INFO](#)

Responses from the Wakefield District School Health Survey 2024 (for Year 12 pupils) were analysed to compare health outcomes for LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ populations in Wakefield. **17% of respondents identified as LGBTQ+, compared to 6% of the overall adult population and 22% of 18-24 year olds.**

According to the School Health Survey 2024, LGBTQ+ students were:

Significantly more likely to feel unsafe in the area they live, at school or at home

More likely to want to lose weight and consider cosmetic surgery

Significantly more likely to have experienced period poverty



More likely to say they had been bullied

More at risk of suffering from an eating disorder

More likely to have lower mental wellbeing and feel lonely, with less life satisfaction and optimism about the future

[MORE INFO](#)

A Young Carer is a person under the age of 18 who regularly provides emotional and/or practical support and assistance to a family member or friend who has a chronic illness, mental health problem, disability, frailty or an addiction.

According to the 2021 Census, there are 415 young carers (aged 5-15) and 1,576 young adult carers (aged 16-24) in the Wakefield District.

[MORE INFO](#)

According to the School Health Survey 2024, young carers were:

Less likely to:



Brush their teeth twice a day or visited the dentist in the last 6 months



Be happy with life at the moment



Feel safe in the area where they live

More likely to:



Be exposed to other people's smoke inside their home.



Feel lonely some or most of the time



Have taken part in gambling



Have a possible eating disorder



Have poor quality sleep



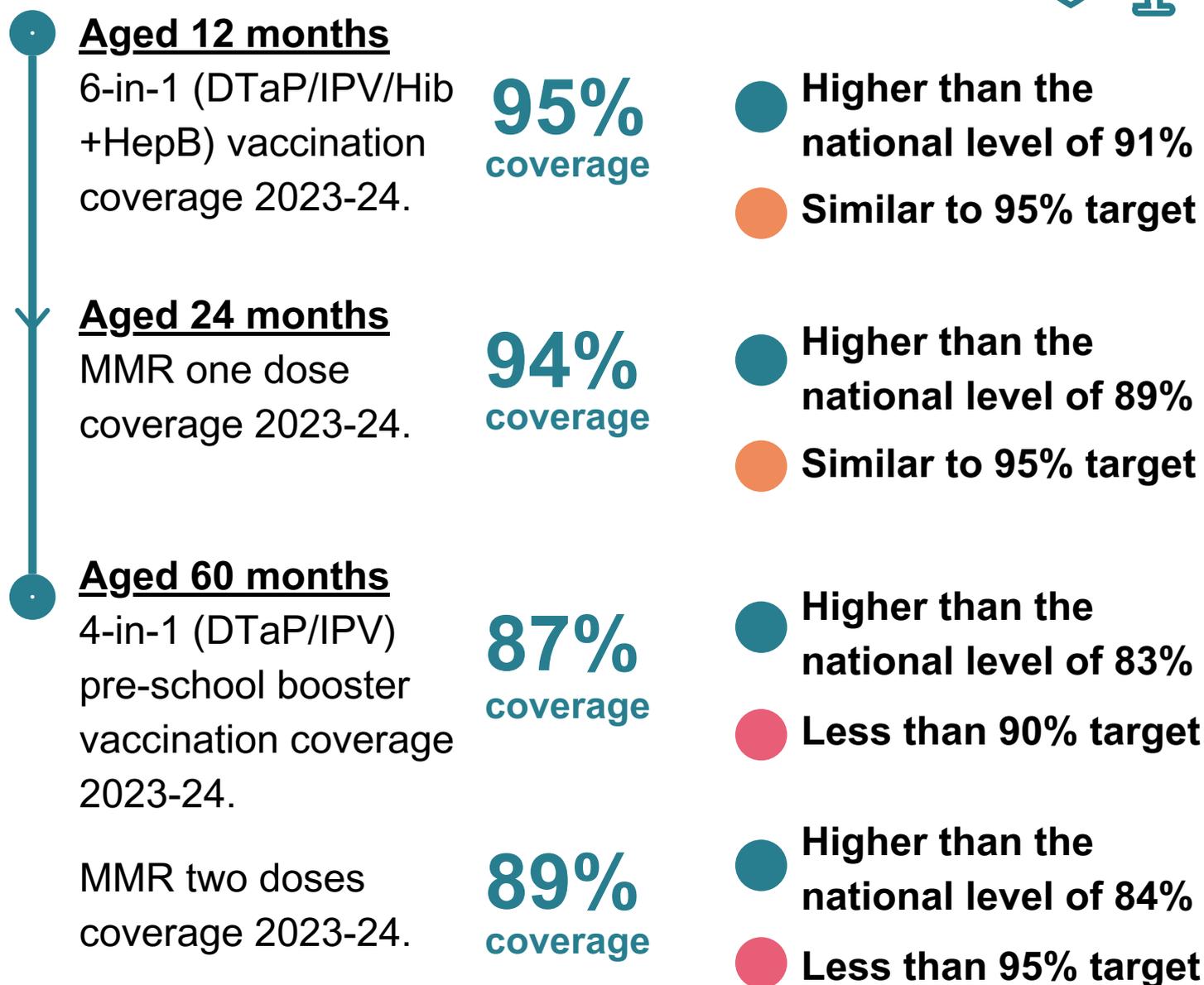
Health protection

Vaccination coverage

Vaccinations are critical to help protect against potentially life threatening diseases. Having a high percentage of the population vaccinated is essential to stop disease spreading.

Coverage across Wakefield District is generally high and above the England level for all childhood vaccinations, however some population groups have lower coverage levels than others.

The overall percentage of children who are vaccinated has seen a drop in recent years.



DTaP: Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough)
IPV: Polio
Hib: Haemophilus influenzae type b

HepB: Hepatitis B
MMR: Measles, mumps, rubella