



Isle of Wight Council

Healthy Lives

Lifestyle risk factors for children

July 2025

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1 Introduction

Our behaviours, personal circumstances and illnesses hugely affect our life expectancy and health. Influences on our health are particularly important before birth and during early childhood. These influences and risk factors continue to accumulate, and their effects build as we move into adulthood. Preventing exposure to these risk factors and reducing inequalities in how these risk factors are distributed among our population, can have a positive impact on our health.

Local public health teams work to both prevent and reduce people's exposures to risk factors across all stages of life. We commission services which help people reduce their risk factors (for example, smoking). We also work alongside other organisations to provide people with the support they need to make healthy decisions and prevent exposure to negative risk factors in the first place.

This chapter focuses on:

- the risk factors, causes and protective factors which influence our health
- the health inequalities which are evident and
- the potential impact COVID-19 has had.

Data in this written summary is correct as of July 2025. The data in this report can be explored further by smaller geographies in the JSNA Healthy Lives data report¹. The data report will be updated continuously, as new data becomes available.

The health outcomes of our population, and how these impact different population groups, are discussed in more detail in the accompanying JSNA reports².

¹ [JSNA Healthy Lives data report](#)

² [JSNA reports](#)

2 Risk factors for children

Protective factors that promote the health and well-being of children and families are vital, such as:

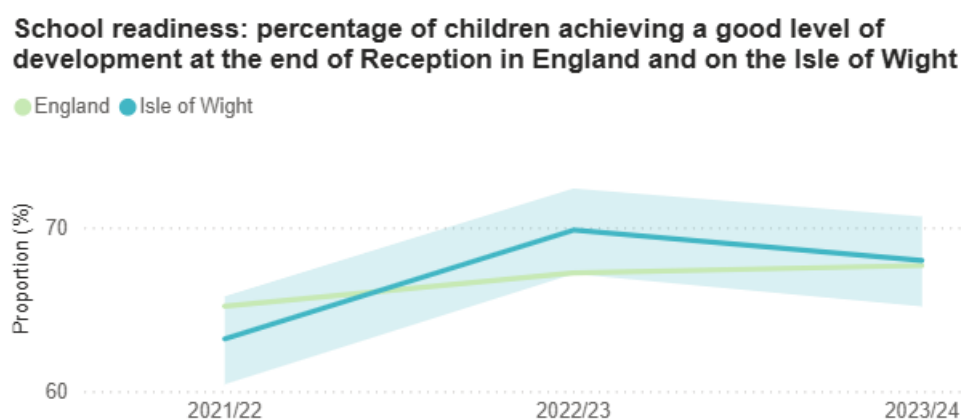
- good early years development
- good educational outcomes
- having a economically stable and supportive home and family.

They are hugely influential to the development of children and young people and the life opportunities and health that they will have later in life.

2.1 Early years development

Achievement in Early Years is a good predictor of achievement later in childhood. On the Isle of Wight, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception is similar to the England percentage, at 68% compared to 67.7% nationally.

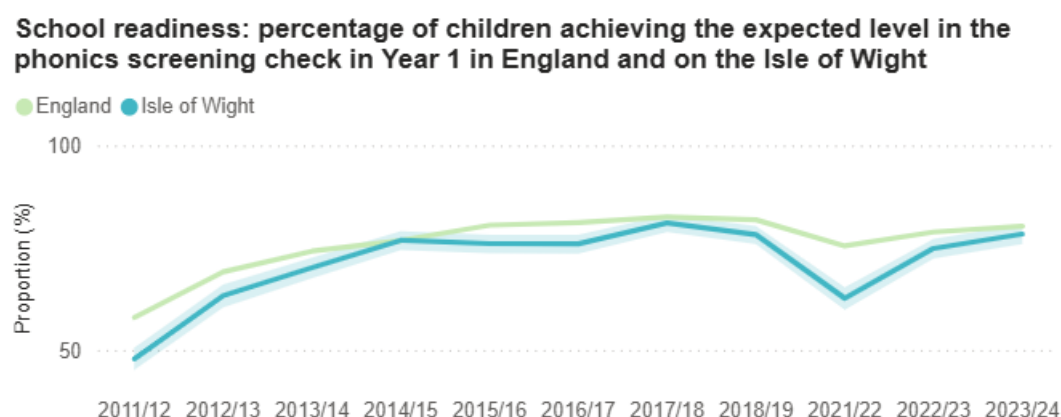
Figure 1: Children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception, 2021/22 to 2023/24



However, this proportion is lower in children eligible for free school meals (a marker of low family income) both locally (58.4%) and nationally (51.5%), and the gap in achievement on the Island is smaller than the gap nationally, at 9.6% compared to 16.2% in England.

The percentage of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected level in phonics on the Isle of Wight (78.3%) is similar to the percentage nationally (80.2%). The same pattern is evident in children eligible for free school meals, with 66.2% locally and 68.1% nationally achieving the expected level in phonics.

Figure 2: Children achieving the expected level in the phonics screening check in Year 1, 2011/12 to 2023/24



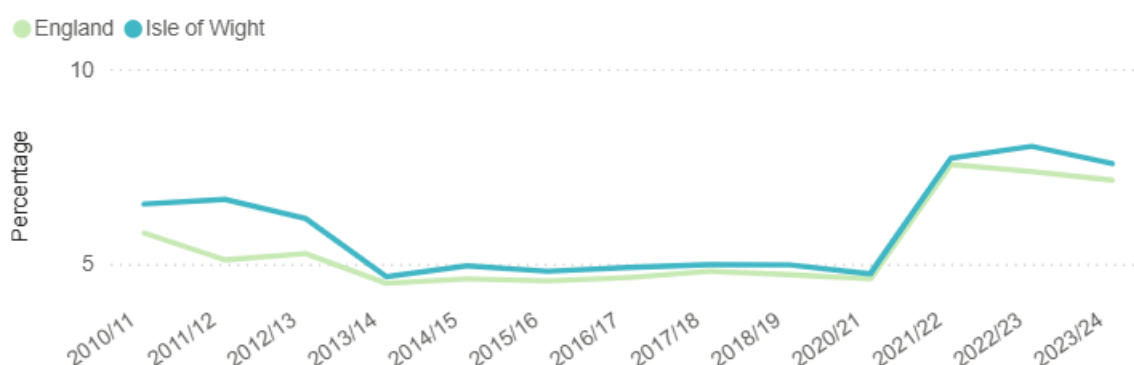
2.2 School attendance and educational attainment

There are clear links between school engagement, educational attainment and both current and future health outcomes for children and young people. Good educational attainment and skills are key to breaking the intergenerational cycle of inequalities in income and employment opportunities which impact on health. Authorised and unauthorised absences from school can negatively impact student achievement, and this impact is larger for children from low-income households. Overall absence combines both authorised and unauthorised absence.

Figure 3 shows that for both England and the Isle of Wight there was a significant rise in pupil absences (5-15 years) following COVID. In 2023/24, there was an absent rate of 7.6% of pupils on the Isle of Wight, significantly worse than England at 7.1%.

Figure 3: Overall pupil absence, 2010/11 to 2023/24

Pupil absence in England and on the Isle of Wight (5-15 yrs)

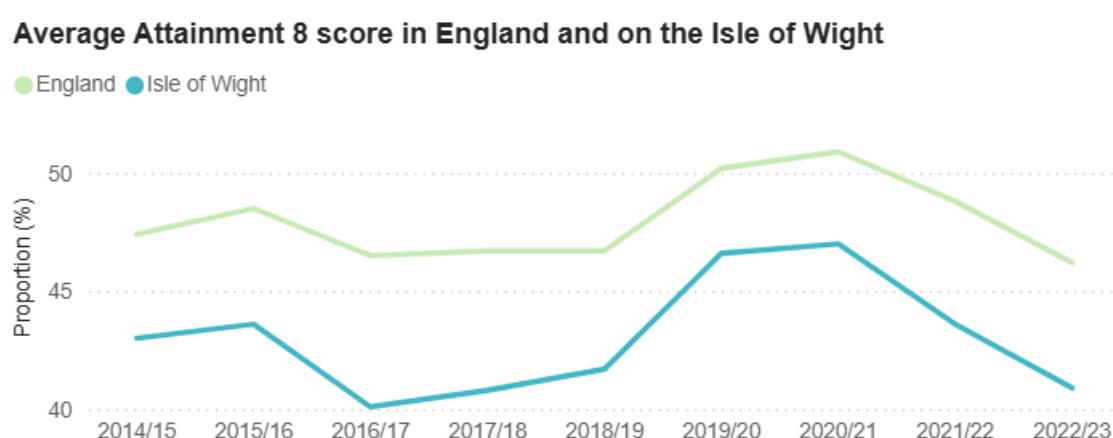


Persistent absence is when a pupil misses 10% or more of possible sessions at school; this is highest in secondary school age pupils. On the Isle of Wight, in both age groups the percentage of persistent absentees is higher than England. In primary school children, 17.9% of primary school enrolments were classified as persistent absentees compared to 16.2% nationally. In secondary school aged children, 30.8% were persistent absentees, higher than the national percentage of 26.5%.

Educational qualifications are a key determinant of future employment and income, and there are clear links between attainment and both current and future health outcomes for children and young people. Average 'Attainment 8' (A8) score: measures the average achievement of pupils in up to five qualifications including Maths and English (which are counted twice) plus three further qualifications from either GCSEs, the English Baccalaureate or other qualifications approved by the Department for Education.

Average Attainment 8 score had increased each year from 2016/7 to 2020/21, before declining until 2022/23. The Isle of Wight's average Attainment 8 score per pupil (40.9) is lower than England (46.2). National data shows that Attainment 8 tends to be lower in those living in areas of higher deprivation and for children in care.

Figure 4: Average Attainment 8 score, 2014/15 to 2021/23



Another factor which can influence school attainment is the first language of the pupil. If English is limited at home this may mean that children need to learn English when first attending school and subsequently may not be able to access help at home with homework and projects.

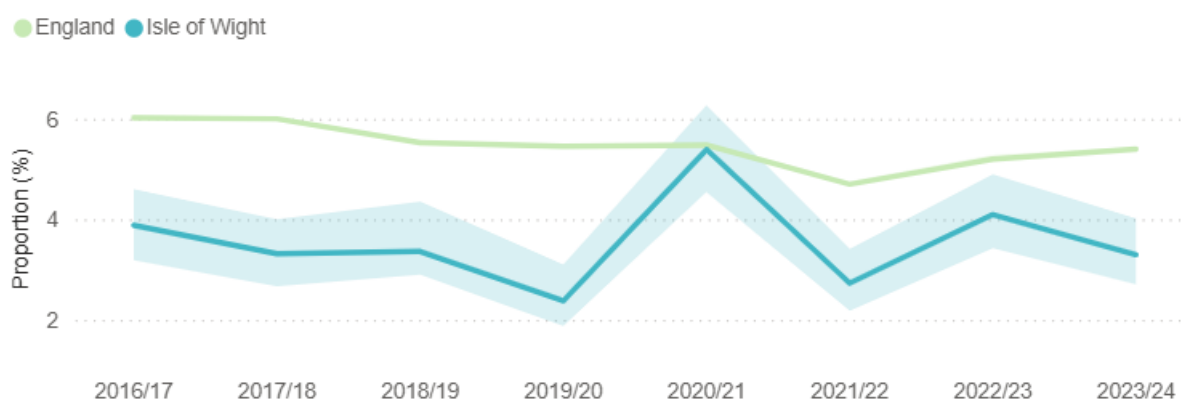
2.3 Not in education, employment or training (NEETs)

Young people are legally required to remain in education, employment or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. A lack of further education and training can

lead to poor basic skills and limited academic and vocational qualifications. Those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) have poorer health outcomes, and people who are unemployed for more than 12 months find it increasingly difficult to find permanent employment. Nationally and locally, males and certain ethnic groups are less likely to be in education, employment or training. Within the Isle of Wight, there is a significantly lower (better) proportion of young people not in education, employment and training than nationally³.

Figure 5: Proportion of 16- and 17-year-olds classified as NEET, 2016/17 to 2023/24

Proportion of NEET in England and on the Isle of Wight

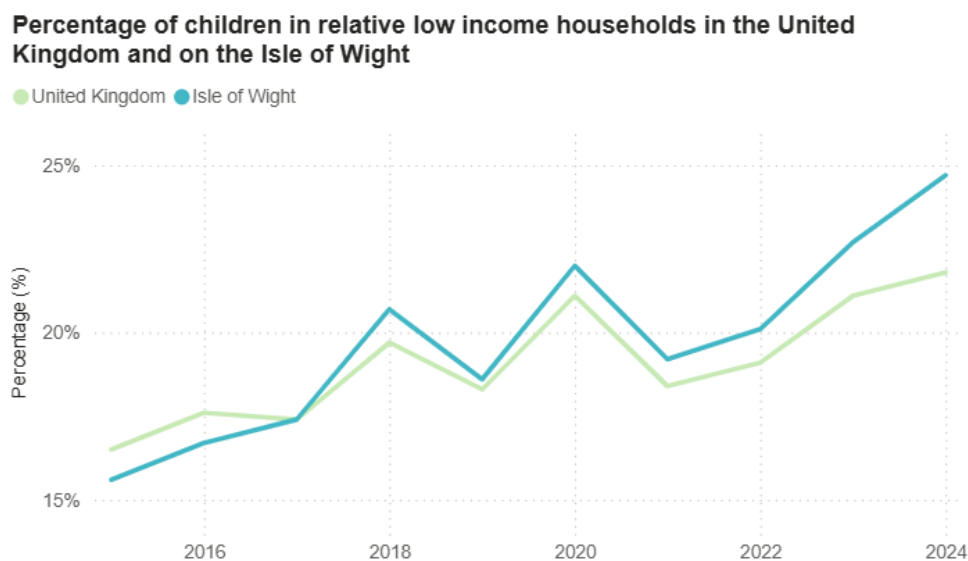


2.4 Child poverty

Childhood poverty leads to poorer mental health, lower educational attainment and poor health outcomes and premature mortality in adulthood. The Isle of Wight has a larger proportion of children living in relative low-income households at 24.7% than the England percentage, at 21.8% in 2024.

³ [Public health profiles - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://publichealthprofiles.org.uk/)

Figure 6: Children living in relative low-income households, 2015-2024



2.5 Free School Meals

The Education Act 1996 requires maintained schools and academies (including free schools) to provide free school meals to disadvantaged pupils who are aged between 5- and 16-years-old.

On the Isle of Wight 24.7% of pupils are eligible for free school meals in 2023/24, similar to England at 24.6%. However, the percentage of pupils eligible has been increasing at the same rate since 2017/18.

2.6 Children involved in the criminal justice system

A wide range of factors influence whether a child is involved with the criminal justice system including their family, their local community and neighbourhood and their engagement in school. Children in contact with the criminal justice system have high levels of mental health needs and a higher risk of suicide than other young people. The Isle of Wight has statistically significantly higher rates of first-time entrants to the youth justice system than England, at 340 per 100,000 compared to 143.4 per 100,000 in England in 2023. National data shows that areas of greater deprivation have significantly higher rates of first-time entrants to the youth justice system.

Figure 7: First time entrants to youth justice system (aged 10 to 17) per 100,000, 2012 to 2023

First time entrants to the youth (10-17 years) justice system in England and on the Isle of Wight

● England ● Isle of Wight

