



## *Synplex Case Study - Knowsley Targeted Youth Support Pathfinder*

### The Client

Knowsley MBC (Metropolitan Borough Council) covers a thirty-three square mile area of Merseyside including the urban areas of Huyton, Halewood, Kirkby and Prescott. Awarded Beacon status for a variety of initiatives, the integration of children's services is a key issue for the council in addressing a number of challenges including higher than average unemployment, four out of every ten children living in homes with no earned income and 79% of residents living in the most deprived 10% of wards in England. Knowsley LEA has 59 primary schools, 11 secondary schools, seven special schools and one pupil referral unit. The total school population is just over 28,000 and one third of children live in one-parent households.

### The Challenge

Shortly after the introduction of the Children Act 2004, Knowsley MBC was selected as one of fourteen targeted youth support (TYS) Pathfinders – a selection of areas asked to redesign their targeted support services for children and young people, as envisaged by Youth Matters, and to discover, record and feedback what was working, what barriers there were and how these might be overcome. Knowsley MBC also adopted a specifically wider remit, looking at how the council could better support and intervene early with 'at risk' young people and their families, in order to help prevent a range of possible poor outcomes.

Complexity Solutions was commissioned to assist the TYS Pathfinder, as part of an ambitious programme of change to address all the requirements of the Children Act 2004, the Change for Children programme, particularly with respect to the integration of multiple services and stakeholders involved in the provision of services for children and young people in the Knowsley area.

## The Process

In the context of the Change for Children (C4C) programme, Complexity Solutions held a series of two three-day workshops attended by multiple stakeholders including social services, crime and disorder strategy unit, education, health, Connexions, the youth and play service, voluntary organisations and change management.

The key issues that needed to be addressed in the Pathfinder were identified as very early intervention, root causes of long-term problems, discovering what makes some families resilient whilst others succumb to risk factors, and asking what causes a “tipping point” at some times and in some places, and how these can be anticipated. The goals are improved outcomes for young people, improved service experience, and improved efficiency of service provision.



Complexity Solutions’ Synplex process is designed to take complex problems with multiple stakeholders and provide deep and shared understanding of issues and commitment to the implementation of solutions. Following the Planning Meeting, in which the participants are selected, there are two three-day workshops. The first focuses on the issues, and results in an Influence Map, which shows how the key issues interrelate

with each other. The final workshop builds on that to develop plans to make the necessary breakthroughs.

A senior participant said: “The Synplex process provides a place where a very broad range of views and perspectives come together and all opinions count. During the workshops we generated a list of 160 issues and prioritised it to 30. We then focused on 11 key issues, which were translated into key objectives. These key objectives have now been incorporated into projects within the Change for Children programme.

“The process is extremely detailed and there is a lot of learning required of participants to come to a shared understanding of the issues. Some participants were sceptical at the beginning, but by the end, the group agreed that they had identified the key issues to take forward. I think this process could be adapted and applied to help simplify other complex issues in the public sector.”