

A young child with light brown hair is sitting on a colorful play mat. The child is wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and dark blue pants. They are reaching out with their right hand towards a colorful hanging play structure that has various toys attached, including a green fish-shaped toy and a yellow and pink ring. The play mat is blue with various cartoon characters and patterns. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

Bolton Together Early Years Delivery Report July - September 2025

Bolton Together

Working Together to Support Children, Young People and Families
Registered Charity in England and Wales (1163466)

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Bolton

Together

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1.0 Introduction

It has been an incredibly impactful two years since Bolton Together's Family Hub funded delivery began. The Programme has funded eleven organisations across five key strands: Infant Feeding, Parent and Perinatal Infant Mental Health, Stay and Play expansion, Parent and Carer Engagement, and the Solihull Approach Parenting Programme. Our Programme Management, and our Early Years Providers' delivery has achieved strong results, leading to funding being extended for a third year and increased to enable further Programme expansion - including Stay and Play outreach, a second Parent and Carer Panel, additional Diversity Worker hours, and funding a twelfth provider, Dad Matters, to offer support for dads with bonding and attachment. This report outlines the successes and challenges of the July to September Quarter and provides a snapshot of the achievements and growth we have seen from Year One of Family Hub funded delivery to now at the end of Year Two. It will also share the voices of those families who our providers work hard to support - demonstrating the ways their lives have been positively impacted by our joined up Early Years Programme, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Welcome to Bolton Together's Eighth Early Years Delivery Report.

2.0 Bolton Together Update

Notable achievements during this period include:

- Completion of the DFE Data submission alongside partners.
- Planned our Members Annual Event.
- Contributed to various strategic and operational meetings, including but not limited to - Oral Health Partnership, Parenting Strategy, the Parent Infant and Perinatal Mental Health Task Group, The Infant Feeding Group, the Start Well Partnership and, Family Hub Operational meetings.
- We attended the launch of Alfie's Squad, who support children, and their families, bereaved by suicide. They have teamed up with Bolton Lads and Girls Club to support Bolton families.
- We were successful in receiving the GM Nurture network Microgrant in return for our contribution to the GM Nurture network, which works to strengthen collaboration between VCFSE organisations who support children in GM, and the wider system.
- Coordinated Family Hub Providers attendance at two Family Hub Launches.

Programme Manager Update

This quarter, I continued to coordinate the Early Years programme, strengthening consistency and impact across all delivery strands. I attended key meetings, contributed to the borough's Parenting Strategy, and collated this report, which, as always, highlights our VCSE providers and their impactful work delivering professional, evidence based support for families. As ever, I am in awe of the work they do and feel privileged to bring it together here, demonstrating their collective impact in improving the lives of Bolton families.

Two Years of Bolton Together Early Years Delivery - A Comparison

Strand	Oct–Dec 2023 (Start of Delivery)	Oct–Dec 2024 (One Year Later)	2025
Infant Feeding Support	No drop-in support groups. Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) process identified as a need to gather personal data on the maternity ward.	Hospital ward peer support reaching over 300 new parents per quarter. 148 parents attending drop-in support groups. 16 new volunteers trained, with over 50 active peer supporters now in place. DPIA process underway.	Significant expansion of reach and volunteer capacity. Family Hub funding extended and increased (Aug 2025–Sep 2026). Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) Approved.
Parent and Perinatal Infant Mental Health (PIMH)	39 parents supported. One Diversity Worker in post. No formal outcomes framework in place.	218 parents supported (107 one-to-one and 111 through peer support). Goal Based Outcomes and MORS SF introduced and embedded to improve measurement of impact.	Major increase in reach and data quality. More inclusive and targeted delivery.
Parent Engagement	First Parent and Carer Panel established by Bolton Toy Library. Early stages of parent feedback collection.	Over 500 parents and carers engaged in feedback, co-design and consultation across Family Hubs.	Rapid expansion of parent voice and co-design. Two Parent and Carer Panels established.
Stay and Play Provision	572 families reached across two funding streams.	584 families reached under expanded Family Hub provision and delivered across multiple Family Hubs.	Sustained growth in engagement with consistent delivery. Speech and Language tools embedded.
Solihull Parenting	Programme in planning stage, due to begin January 2024.	Delivered across Family Hubs and community venues. MORS SF tool to measure bonding and parental stress.	Programme fully established. Course, exit groups and catch up sessions so no parent misses out.
Inclusion and Representation	Early representation work through diverse providers. LGBT+ parents and carers engagement and stay and play session.	Male parents and Carers Initiative and LGBT+ parents and carers stay and play group, volunteers and Parent Panels now reflecting Bolton's diverse demographics.	Strengthened equity, diversity and inclusion across delivery. Representative of our Bolton Demographic.

Key Achievements 2025

£1,000 provider uplift to support meeting attendance and training	Dad Matters commissioned to lead male parent/carer support	28 Solihull 10 week courses delivered; plus an average of 5 catch-up sessions per course improving retention	Worked with SALT Lead to embed Speech and Language into our QA framework
Quality Assurance processes embedded across Bolton Together members	Two active multilingual Diversity Workers supporting families	MORS-SF tool evidences improved parent-child bonding (lower invasion, higher warmth)	Ongoing DfE data monitoring completion, and Family Hub Workforce Newsletter contributions
Funding stability enabling continued workforce development	"You Said, We Did" posters created to be displayed across Family Hubs and online	100% satisfaction scores for Infant Feeding support	Active representation at strategic and operational Family Hub meetings
Walking groups funding ended but due to success of project Bolton together extended these to support breastfeeding confidence and reduce isolation.	Stay and Play outreach extended to seldom - heard communities	Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) training completed by most providers and volunteers	Consistent communication of key messages across programme delivery
Representation at a GM level	Representation strengthened across fathers, and ethnic minority parents	Increase in referrals from health professionals	Family Hub Guide contributions ongoing

This two year comparison and key achievements illustrates the tangible progress and system growth achieved across Bolton Together's Early Years programme since delivery began in late 2023. By tracking development from the first implementation to the end of 2024, and now 2025, we can clearly evidence growth in reach, quality, partnership working and inclusion from new strands such as Dad Matters and expanded Diversity Worker roles, to established Infant Feeding work and strengthened data, referrals, workforce training and quality assurance.



Progress during the Quarter

Bolton

Together

3.0 Progress During the Quarter: Introduction

In this section the quantitative and qualitative data collected from each of the strands of delivery over the quarter is presented.

3.1 Progress During the Quarter: Infant Feeding

Between July to September 2025, Breastfeeding Together have supported World Sepsis Day, ICON Week, NICU Awareness Day, International Day of Charity and Black maternal mental health week helping to raise awareness and provide key information to families. They have had an incredibly productive quarter ensuring many more parents and families are receiving the right information and being supported through their services both face to face and online. In September, they attended the Family Fun Day at Oldhams Family Hub contributing to the launch of the Hub and promoting the wide ranging and comprehensive support they offer.



Breastfeeding Together

Moreover, the walking groups continue to be well received by mothers and families due to Breastfeeding Together's reflective approach and flexibility. For example, staff and volunteers received feedback that the walking group at Moss Bank Park runs at the same time as an Oldhams Group, and some mums wanted to attend both groups. As a result they adjusted so that from January, the group will walk on a Friday morning instead, demonstrating best practice and active listening to our Bolton families.

"I really appreciate the breastfeeding support, it has helped me feel less alone during a difficult time. The team was kind, patient, and encouraging, which gave me more confidence to continue breastfeeding even when I was struggling. In my culture, there can be a lot of pressure from family members about how to feed the baby. Sometimes elders insist on formula or early weaning, and it's hard to go against their advice. It was good they could also learn when the team came out to see me at home and to remind them that things change. Thank you again for offering this service. I will be telling all my friends about it."

(Parent attending Breastfeeding Together sessions)

3.1.1 Quantitative Data

Total No of home visits	66
Number of Parents accessing Plan and Prepare for Parenting sessions	27
Number of parents accessing One to One Infant Feeding Support	121
% reporting improved outcome measures	100%
Number of Preparing to Breastfeed sessions delivered	6
% of parents reporting improved outcomes (Breastfeeding)	100%
Number of Plan and Prepare for Parenting sessions	6
% of parents reporting improved outcomes (Parenting)	100%
Number of Infant feeding peer support drop-in groups offered	77
Number of Walking Groups offered	24
Number of parents attending Walking Groups	36
% of parents reporting improved outcomes (Peer support)	100%
No of parents/carers at Infant Feeding Drop in Groups	108

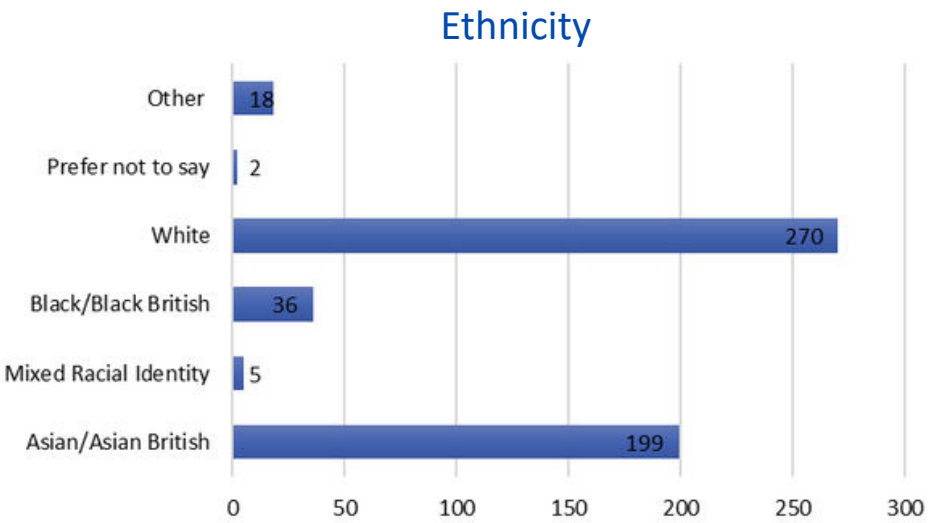
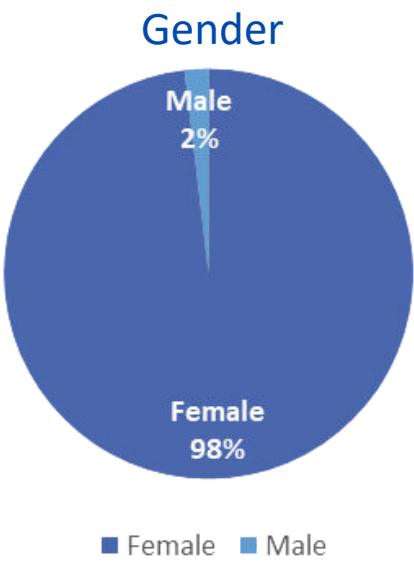
Number of parents supported at Bolton Foundation Trust Hospital	640
Infant Feeding Peer Support Offer at Bolton Foundation Trust Hospital	90 Days
Number of Equipment Hires	30
Number of parents accessing Live Web Chat service Available 7-10 pm, 7 days/week	59
No. of calls/messages providing support to families	2574

The data shows some reductions in numbers when compared to last quarter. This is likely due to the summer holiday period where families with school age children often cannot attend group sessions, this will see a rise again in the next quarter as older children have returned to school. In some areas there have been significant increases. Parents accessing one to one support increased by 30, while the number of walking group sessions increased from 9 to 24 with attendance more than doubling. There was also an increase in calls and messages from 2308 to 2574. It’s possible these increases could also be due to the nature of the summer holidays as parents can bring older children along to walking groups, and may need more one to one support when they’re unable to attend group sessions.



Breastfeeding Together

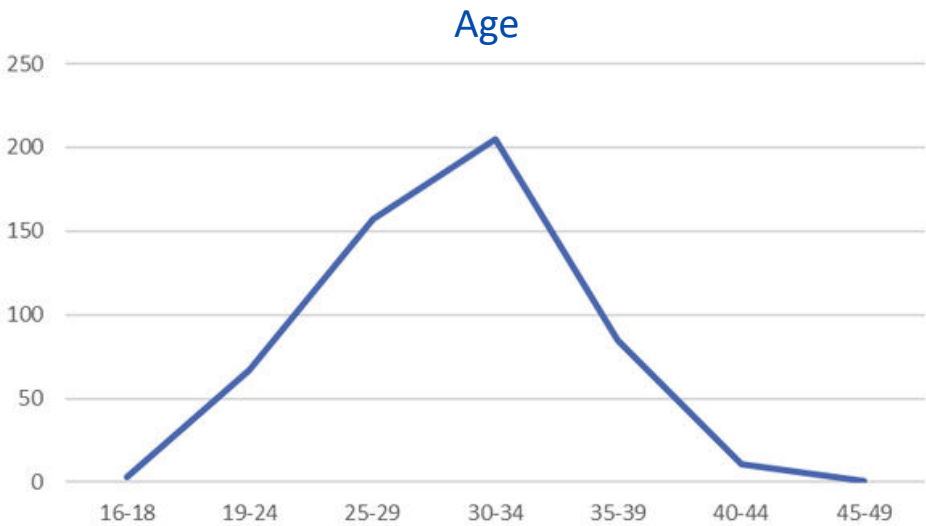
3..1.2 Parent Demographics



Engagement by Postcode Area

The highest levels of engagement are seen in BL3, and BL1 followed closely by BL2. In contrast, the areas with the lowest engagement are BL5 and BL7.

- BL6 has good uptake, and includes Blackrod, Horwich, Lostock, and Rivington. Breastfeeding Together run a drop in group in Horwich Library as well as offering Home Visits across the Borough.
- BL5 includes Over Hulton and Westhoughton. Breastfeeding Together will be offering a Drop in Group at Westhoughton Library beginning in November.



- BL7 is also low, and includes Bromley Cross, Bradshaw, Edgworth, Turton, Chapeltown, Egerton, Belmont, and Harwood which are more rural.
- In BL4, which covers Farnworth and Kearsley, there is currently lower uptake at the Infant Feeding Group despite promotion efforts but Home Visits remain strong here.
- Both BL6 and BL7 have some provision available via the Horwich Wellbeing Hub, but neither area has a dedicated Family Hub or Children's Centre. These are largely semi-rural or suburban areas and would benefit from more targeted outreach and locally based support.

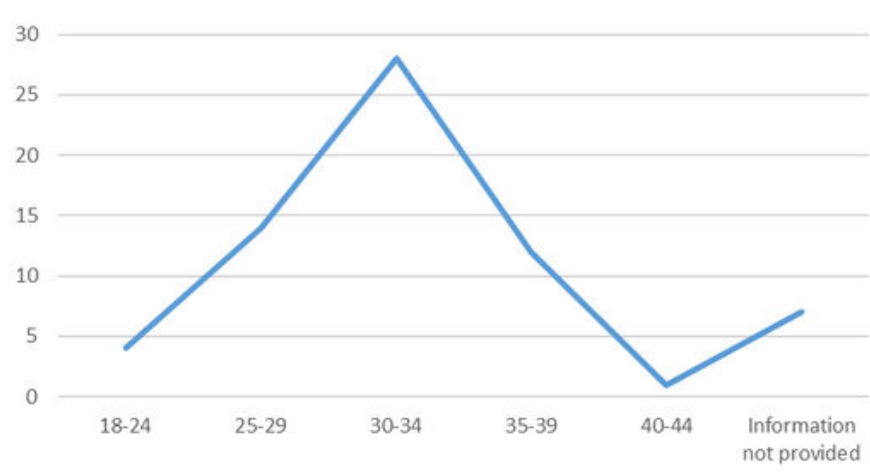
3.2 Progress During the Quarter: Parent and Perinatal Infant Mental Health Support

3.2.1 NHS GM Integrated Care Funded PIMH Delivery Quantitative Data

Number of parents receiving one-to-one support	14
Number of parents accessing peer support groups	56
Average % of parents feeling more confident	100%
% of parents felt helped to build a better relationship with baby	96%
% of parents reporting they felt listened to	100%

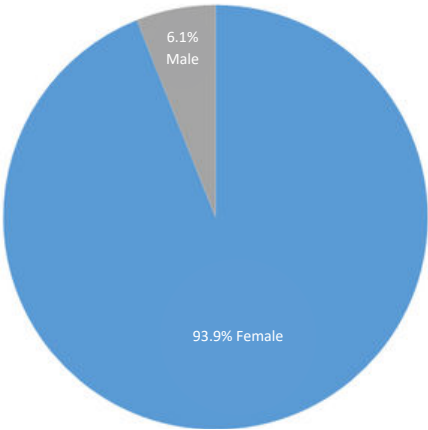
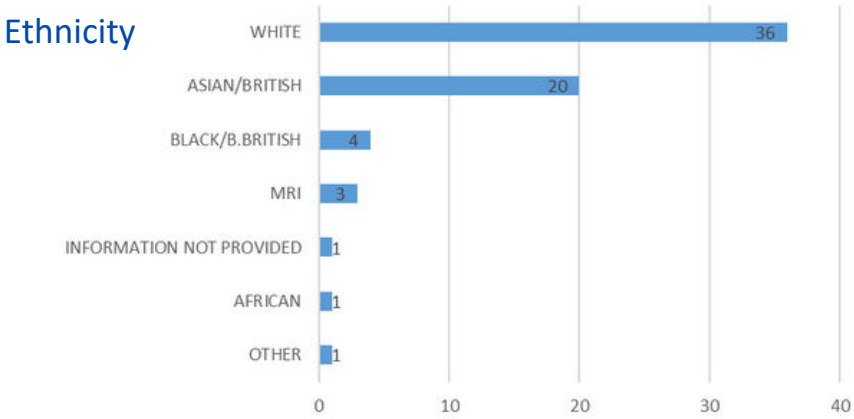
3.2.2 Parent Demographics NHS GM Integrated Care Funded PIMH Delivery

Age



ACTUAL SUPPORTED	66
AGE YOUNGEST CHILD	2 months
AVERAGE NUMBER STAFF ON SESSION	2
VOLUNTEER/S ON SESSION	1
Sessions attended	192

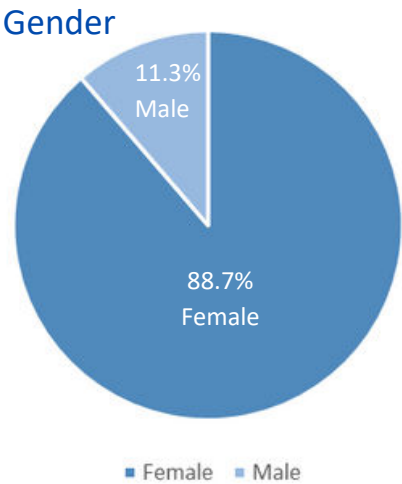
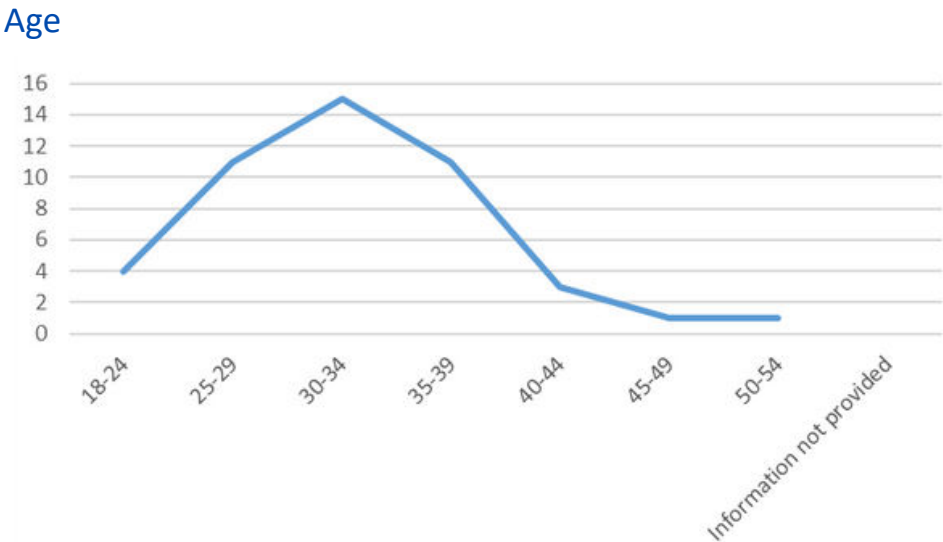
Ethnicity



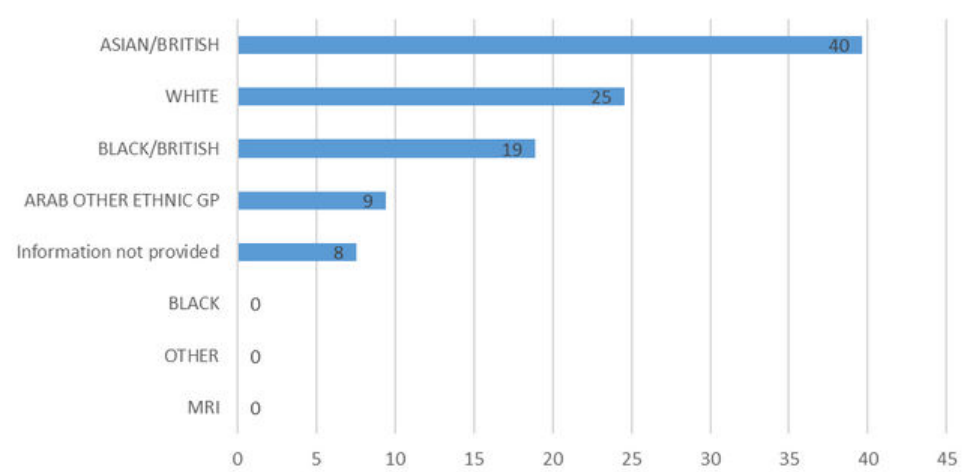
3.2.3 Family Hub Funded PIMH Delivery Quantitative Data

Number of parents receiving one-to-one support	31
Number of parents attending peer support groups	12
Average % of parents feeling more confident	100%
% of parents felt helped to build a better relationship with baby	94%

3.2.4 Parent Demographics Family Hub Funded PIMH Delivery



Ethnicity



ACTUAL SUPPORTED	43
AGE YOUNGEST CHILD	3 months
AVERAGE NUMBER STAFF ON SESSION	1
VOLUNTEER/S ON SESSION	2
Sessions attended	166

Home-Start HOST Diversity Coordinator

This quarter, the Diversity Worker has continued their culturally responsive, trauma-informed family support. Through partnership with BRASS, families seeking asylum have been linked to ESOL classes and practical guidance, helping to reduce isolation and build independence. The use of the BBC Tiny Happy People resources, has developed early communication and bonding with parents and carers, with families supported to use play as a tool for connection and emotional regulation. A focus on volunteer recruitment and training has ensured families receive consistent support that complements staff visits.

Good practice has been evident in the use of containment and early intervention, addressing practical stressors with families (such as healthcare access and navigating systems) to stabilise families before progressing to developmental and wellbeing work. There have been some challenges with some language barriers but these have been approached with creativity, using simple language, visual tools and body language, to build understanding and trust. By combining practical assistance with emotional support, the worker has helped families feel calmer, bond with and support baby, feel more confident, and more connected to local networks. This integrated, supportive approach models effective engagement with families facing multiple challenges.

“I feel calmer when you call, because I don’t know the words.”

(Parent attending HSH sessions)



Breastfeeding Together

Dad Matters Coordinator

The new Bolton Together funded Dad Matters Initiative began in September. The newly recruited Dad Matters Coordinator has completed a comprehensive induction and a full suite of mandatory EHFL training alongside Home-Start HOST PIMHS and multi-agency safeguarding training. They have actively networked with key partners such as Bolton’s Start Well teams, Bolton Hospital staff, and the Dad Matters UK team.

Practical learning has included shadowing outreach and training sessions, and gaining first-hand experience of delivery within maternity and early years settings. They have also reviewed Home-Start policies, the Dad Matters Impact Evaluation, and relevant mental health guidance.

Looking ahead, priorities for their Bolton Delivery include completing Baby Friendly Initiative Level 2, developing resources to support dads with the home learning environment and infant feeding, delivering Walk ‘n’ Talks, expanding outreach at Bolton Hospital, and ensuring Bolton’s Dad Matters offer is visible and accessible through Family Hubs, across partner communications and on the Dad Matters Website.

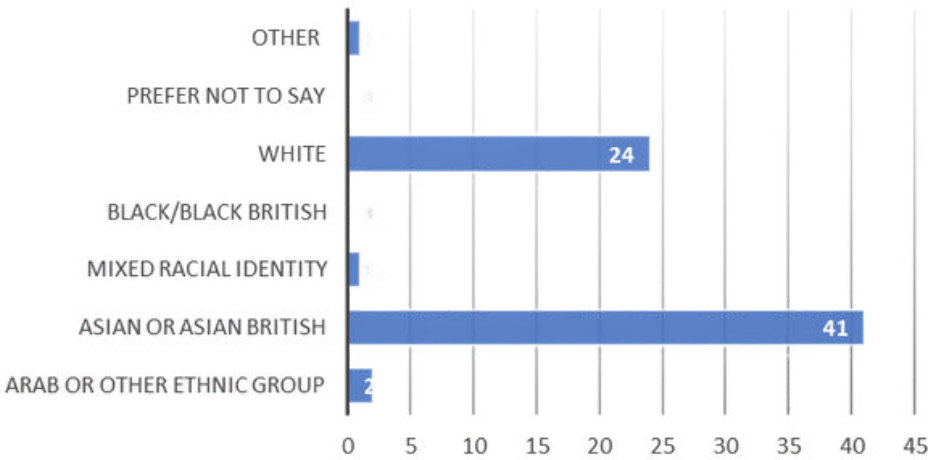
3.3 Progress During the Quarter: Parent Engagement in Co-design

3.3.1 Quantitative Data

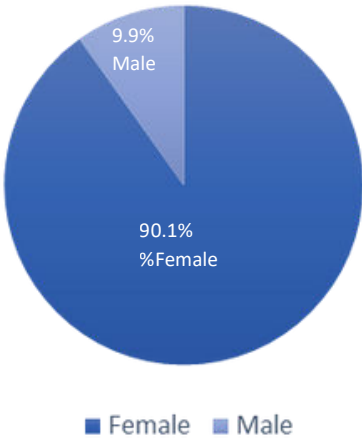
Number of parents and carers attending Harvey Parent and Carer Panel	8
Number parents and carers attending Bright Meadows Parent and Carer Panel	2
Number of Panels held	3

3.3.2 Parent Demographics

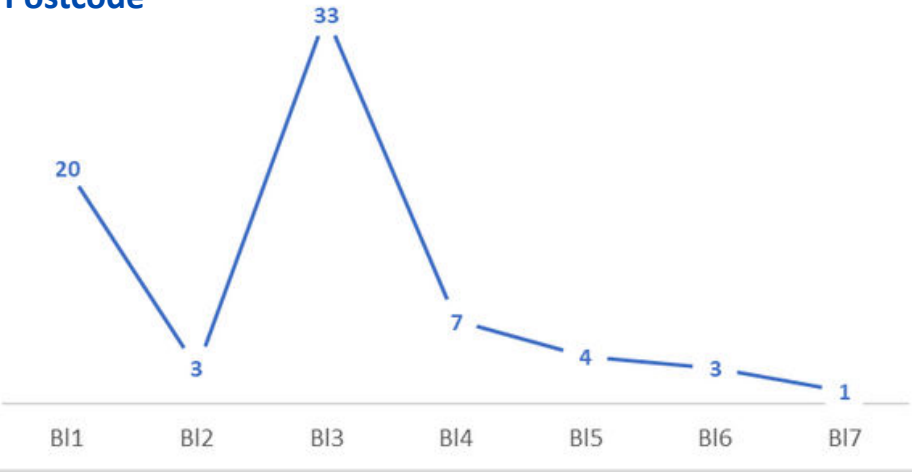
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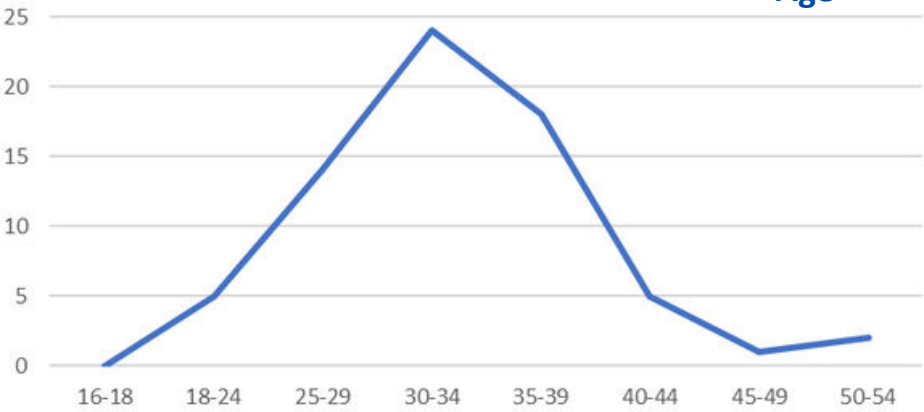
Gender



Postcode



Age



3.3.3 Parent and Carer Engagement Feedback Update

This quarter, parents and carers have completed 68 questionnaires. Bolton Toy Library have engaged parents and carers across the Family Hub Centres. Bolton Toy Library have found that using paper questionnaires encourages more meaningful engagement, as parents and carers have the opportunity to ask questions about the Family Hubs. Additionally, this approach has resulted in a higher response rate compared to using QR codes.

This quarter, parents and carers consistently expressed a desire for more of the current Family Hub activities, alongside additional opportunities for families to come together through longer Stay and Play sessions, Family Hub fun days, and targeted SEND and youth sessions. Mums asked for a mums mental health support group for parents with older children to support through parenting challenges. They also suggested running some 0-5 activities later in the day, around 3pm, to suit different family schedules, and promoting Family Hub services more widely in everyday community settings such as supermarkets and GP surgeries.

Injury Prevention Discussion - Parent and Carer Panel Partnership Work

We coordinated a Bolton Council staff member visit to the Parent and Carer Panel from the Injury Prevention Team. They attended the Panel to engage with parents and carers about everyday safety concerns and injury prevention, a key priority area for Bolton. The practitioner discussed everyday safety risks and explained that current data demonstrates children's accidents - burns, scalds, and poisonings in Bolton are above the national average.

- The Parent and Carer Panel raised concerns about Button batteries and toy design, inadequate childproofing at relatives' homes, choking risks and food sizes, hot drinks, cleaning tablets, craft items, medicines, vaping liquids, and water safety; they said that advice found online or from family is often inconsistent.
- The Panel recommended short video guides and sharing age appropriate guidance at the 6 week GP and 9 month Health Visitor checks, and the practitioner followed up with free, evidence based resources from the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT), including button battery leaflets and a Parents Information Pack. Bolton Together cascaded this resource to all Early Years Providers and added this to our Early Years Resources Padlet for all Bolton Together Members.



Bolton Toy Library

Outreach and Engagement: 'Toy Library on the Road'

The 'Toy Library on the Road' project commenced in September 2025 and has made strong initial progress. The plan is to deliver three play sessions in each of the six Bolton postcodes - BL1, BL2, BL3, BL4, BL5, and BL6.

- Bolton Toy Library's Parent and Carer Engagement Co-ordinator and Diversity Co-ordinator have been collaborating to identify suitable community venues. The aim is to locate sites that are already frequented by families who may be less likely to attend Family Hub centres.
- The team has been in contact with Bolton Central Library, which has agreed to host three sessions in the children's section on Thursday mornings. Dates are pending confirmation. This venue was chosen based on previous questionnaire data showing that many parents visiting the library were unaware of the Family Hubs; earlier outreach there successfully engaged new families.
- A Family Hub Practitioner alerted Bolton Together to an ask from families to have Stay and Play sessions at Halli' th' Wood Community Centre. We contacted Bolton Toy Library and they liaised with Chris Wood from Bolton at Home to organise a block of three sessions at the Halli' th' Wood Community Centre.
- Additional planned venues include Horwich Community Centre and the John Holt Centre in Westhoughton.



Bolton Toy Library



Bolton Toy Library

Listening to our Bolton Families

- We coordinated Bolton Council's visit to the Panel to consult with the Parent and Carer Panel to refine a Families Questionnaire. Their suggestions have now been incorporated to make the language clearer and more accessible for all families.
- Our providers adjusted session times for Stay and Play and Infant Feeding Support in line with when families told us they are most able to attend, resulting in increased participation across the week.
- Feedback from Bolton Toy Library's parent, carer consultations helped to highlight digital poverty and access needs. This helped to inform the Family Hubs improved digital access which is now provided through free computer use, on-site staff support, and the provision of free SIM cards, helping families develop confidence and independence online.

4.0 Progress During the Quarter:

Expansion of Stay and Play Provision for under Fives

Both the Start Well Commission and Family Hub commission currently deliver Stay and Play provision. The Start Well provision offers 12 sessions per week across Family Hubs, Start Well sites, and community centres. In addition, the Family Hub funded expansion supports the delivery of 15 sessions per week across those settings.



553 Families
stayed and
played with us!



4.1 Quantitative Data

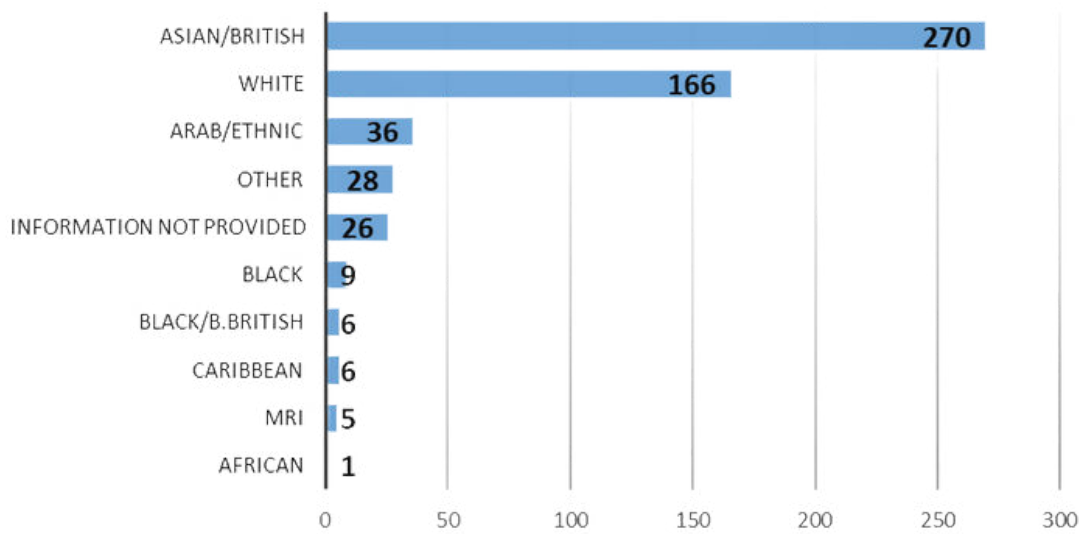
Programme	Families Reached
Family Hub Funded Stay and Plays	156
Start Well Commission	397

“It’s a good session for parents to learn about their kids more and it has an excellent impact on my kids through this session for their development.” (Parent attending Bolton Wanderers in the Community (BWITC) sessions)

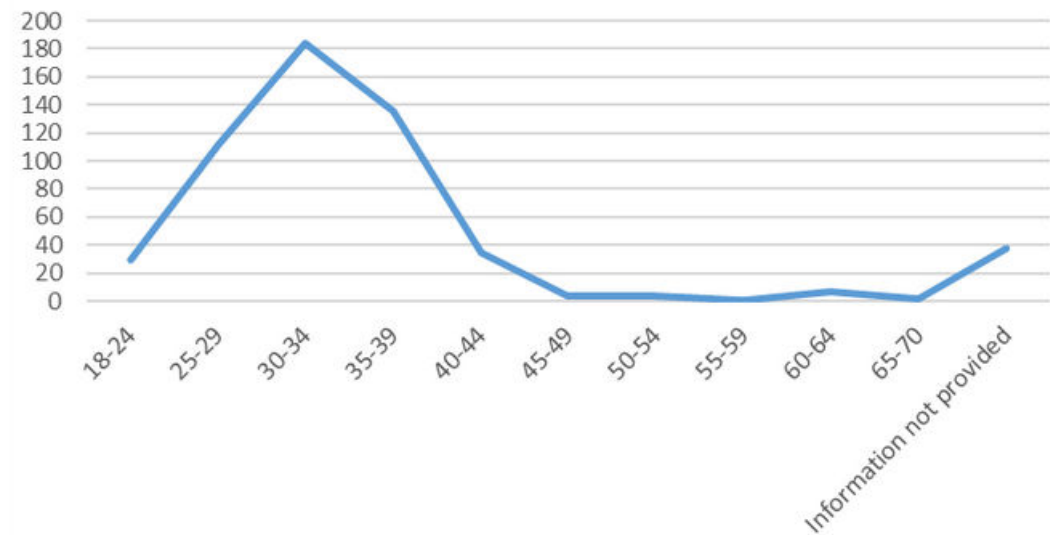
4.1.1 Stay and Play Parent Demographics

This data is representative of both Start Well and Family Hub Funded provision.

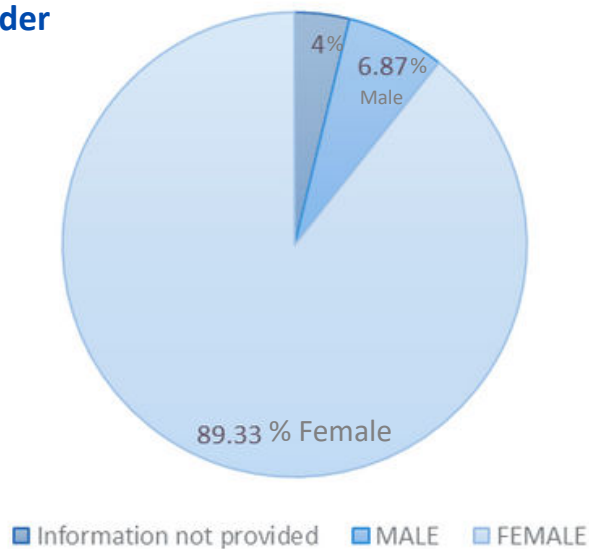
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Age



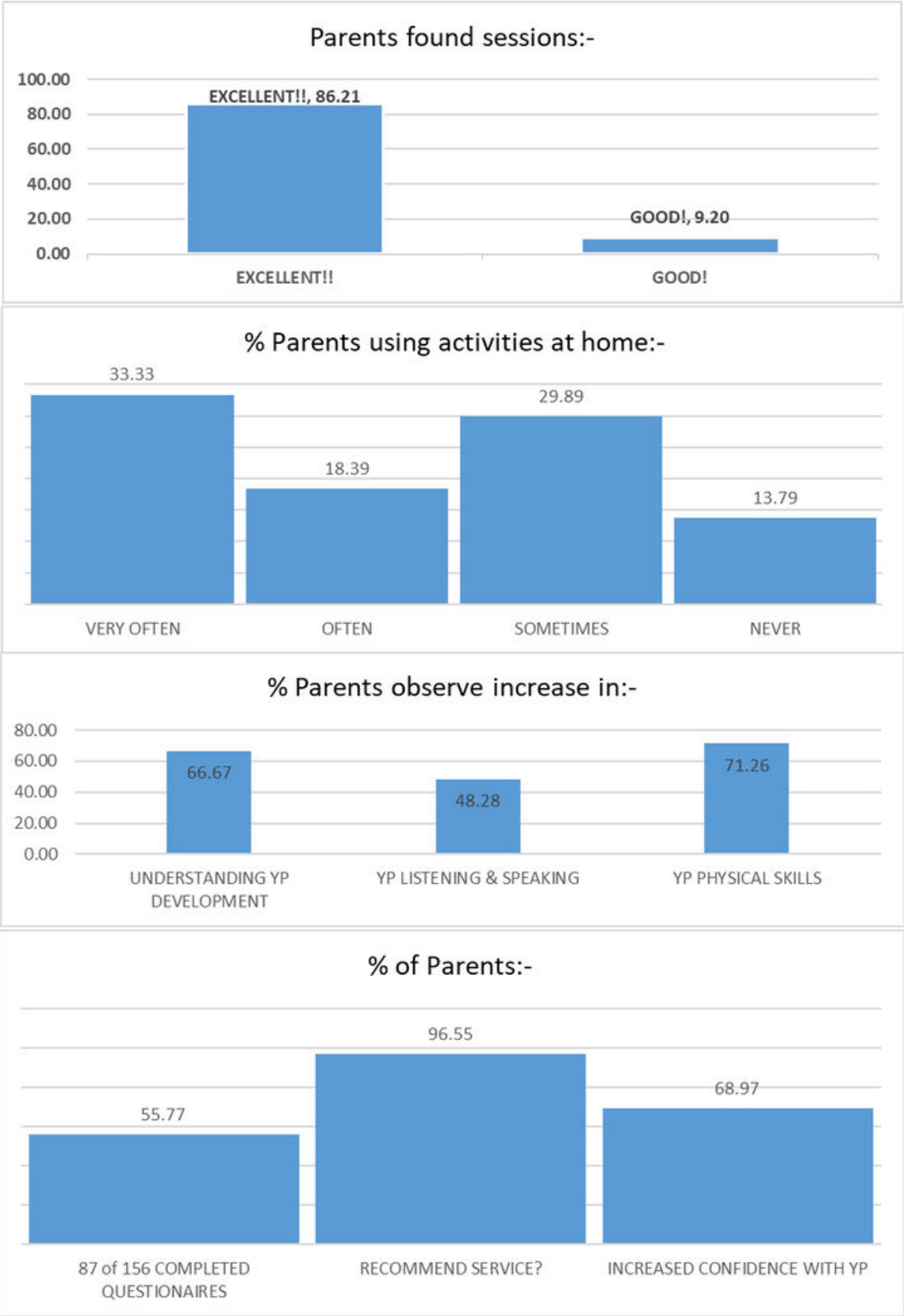
Gender



“Tailored services help me feel more comfortable as a family and give children the chance to be around more families like theirs.”

(Parent attending Proud2bParents’ LGBT+ Stay and Play session)

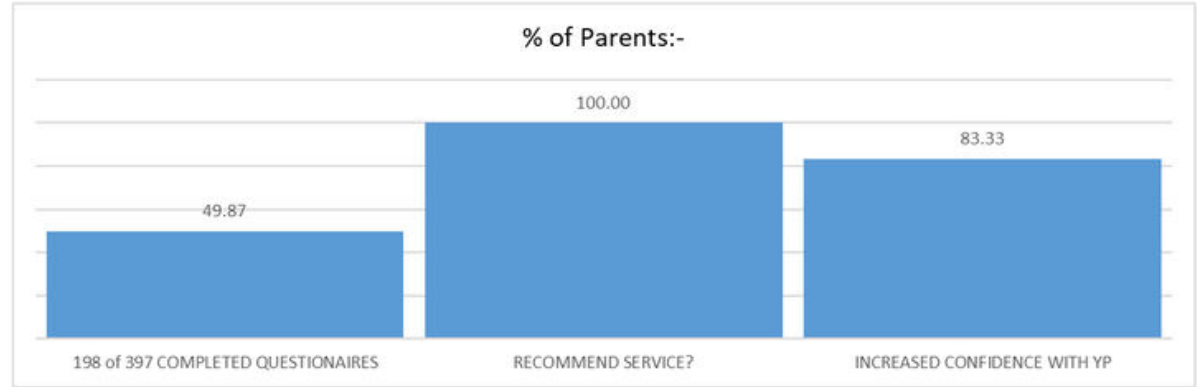
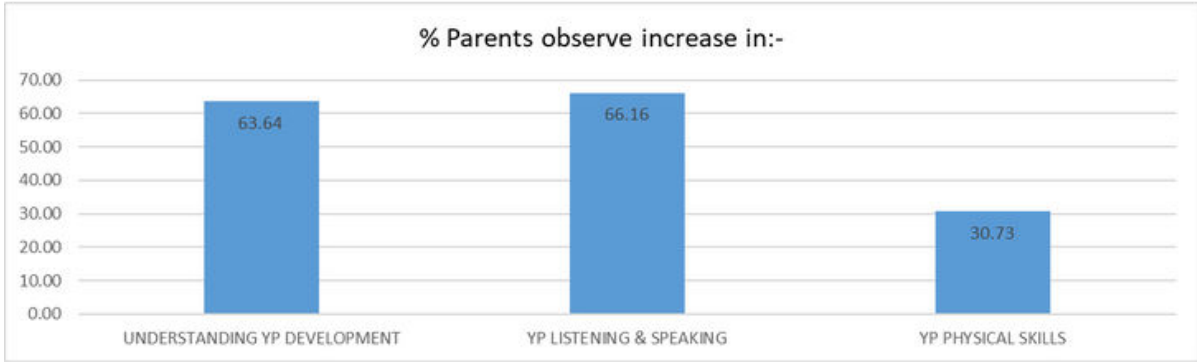
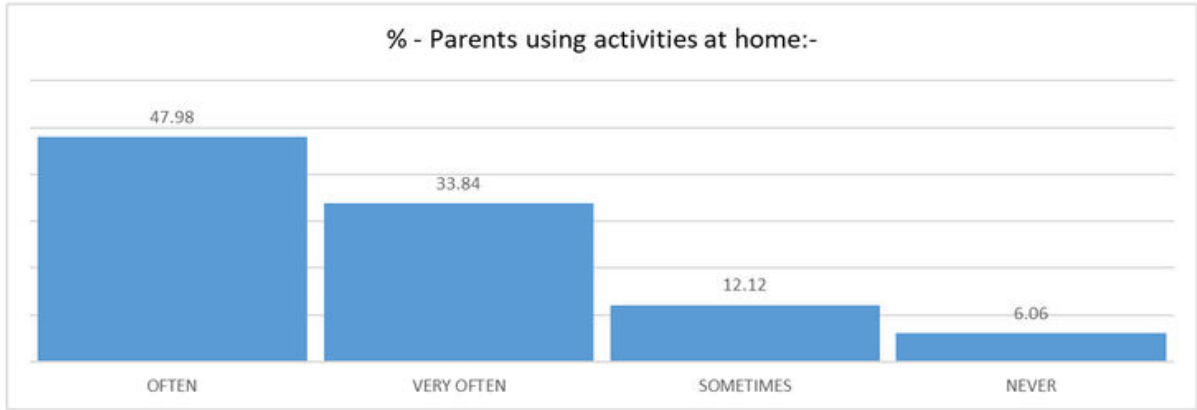
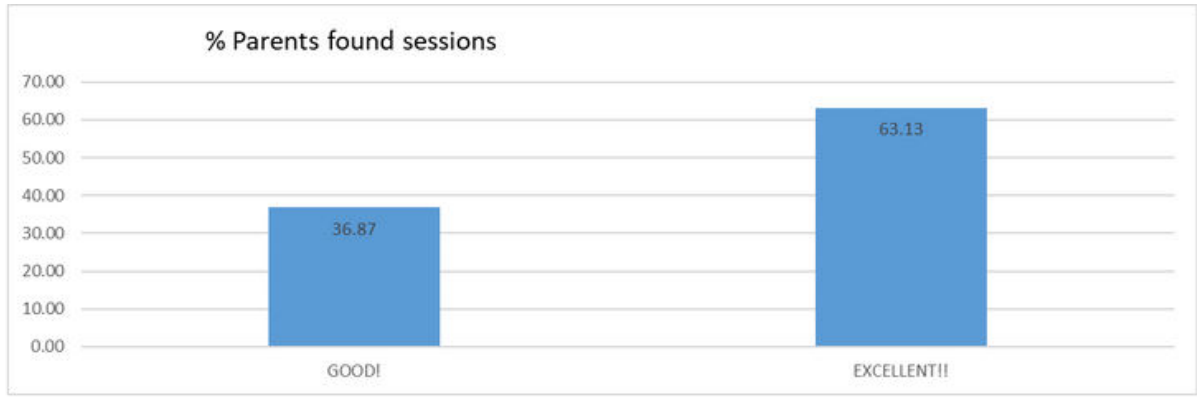
4.1.2 Questionnaire Feedback: Family Hub Funded Stay and Play Sessions



The Family Hubs funded Stay and Play parent feedback data shows high parental satisfaction, with most rating sessions excellent. Parents are actively applying learning at home, with 81.6% using suggested activities at least sometimes. Reported benefits include improved understanding of child development, listening and speaking, and physical skills. Nearly 69% of parents feel more confident with their child. These outcomes achieve the Best Start in Life priorities by empowering parents as their child’s first educators, promoting responsive play and communication, and supporting early development and school readiness through strong, nurturing relationships.

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/giving-every-child-the-best-start-in-life>)

Questionnaire Feedback: Start Well



The Start Well data shows similarly strong outcomes, with 63.13 % of parents rating sessions as excellent. 81% used the suggested activities at home and parents observed positive progress, particularly in listening and speaking (66.16 %) and understanding development (63.64 %). 30.73 % saw improvement in physical skills. Impressively, 83.33 % of parents reported increased confidence in engaging with their child. These outcomes highlight the vital role of responsive relationships, early communication, and play-based learning. By improving parents’ confidence and ability to support early language and interaction, the Start Well programme contributes to the national ambition for all children to be ready to thrive at school and beyond.

5.0 Progress During the Quarter: The Solihull Approach Parenting Programme

This quarter, the five Spring Solihull 10 week Groups finished in July 2025, with 31 people attending and 94% (29 people) completing the course. 310 sessions were delivered and 66 one to one catch up sessions to support the attendees through to the completion of the course. The Groups ran at Oldhams Family Hub, Washacre Primary School, Harvey Family Hub, Farnworth Family Hub and Oxford Grove Family Hub. The Solihull Approach groups will continue from September. Bolton Together have commissioned Families Together to deliver 10 further courses in total between September 2025 and August 2026.

July - September 2025 - Catch Up and Attendance Data

Start Date	End Date	Location	Catch Ups Delivered	Total Sessions	Attendance
01.5.25	10.7.25	Farnworth Family Hub	8	80	80%
02.5.25	11.7.25	Oxford Grove Family Hub	8	60	95%
06.5.25	15.7.25	Washacre School	11	50	84%
07.5.25	16.7.25	Harvey Family Hub	17	60	100%
12.5.25	21.7.25	Oldhams Family Hub	22	60	95%

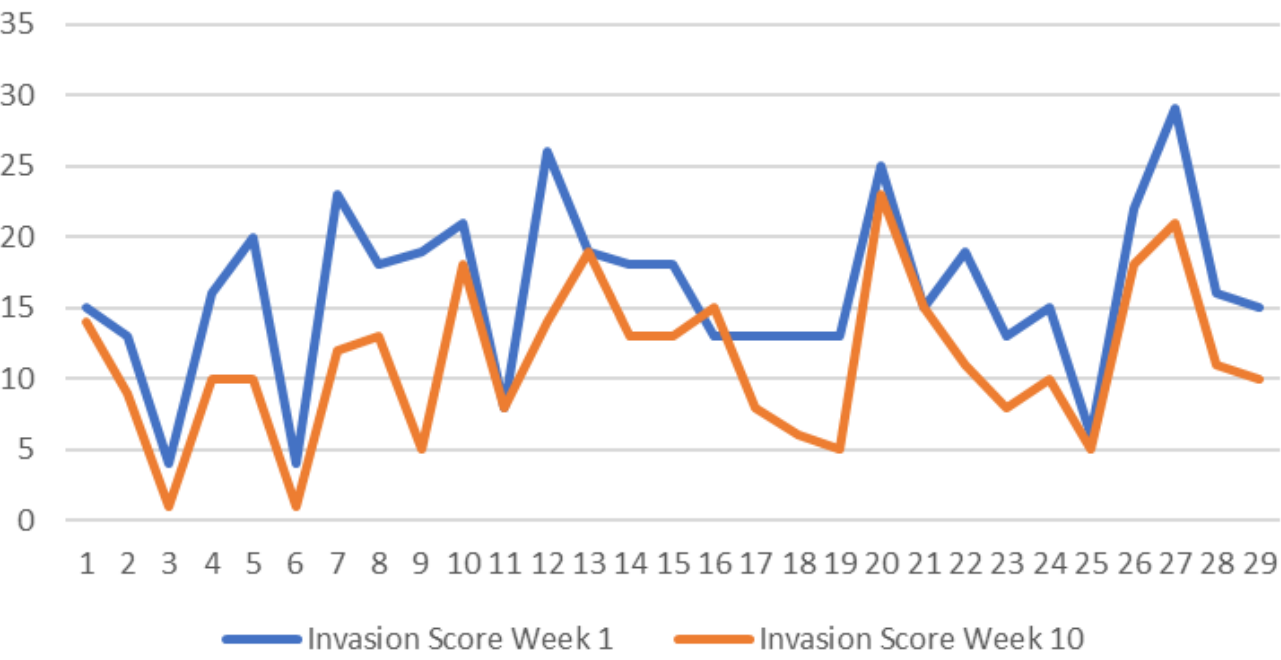
Between July to September 2025, 49 people either started or completed the Solihull Approach to Parenting Groups. The referrals came from Breastfeeding Together and Families Together clients, and:

- 0-19 Service
- Family Hub Practitioner
- Family Support Worker
- Locality Practitioner
- Public Health Nurse
- Self Referral
- Social Worker

310 sessions were delivered and 66 one to one catch up sessions!

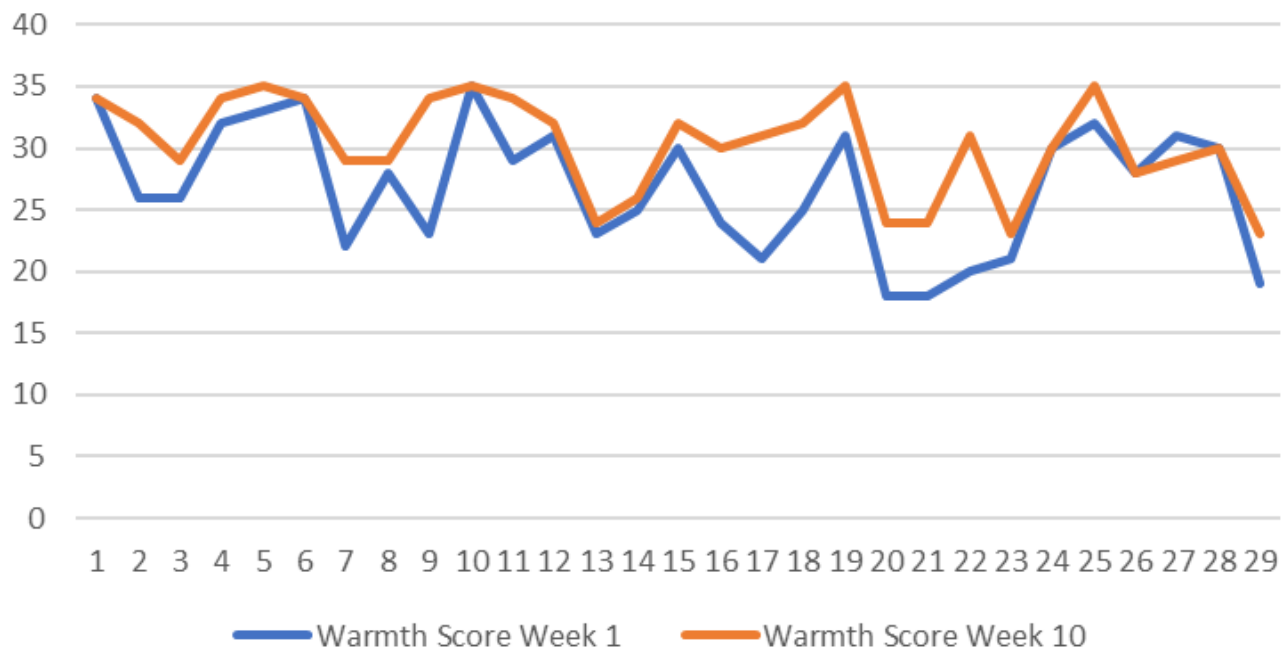
Attendees also heard about the Solihull Groups from; Schools, the Family Hub Guide, their Health Visitor, Home-Start HOST and Bolton at Home.

Invasion Scores



The chart shows a clear improvement in Invasion Scores between Week 1 and Week 10. While individual scores fluctuate across participants, the overall pattern indicates lower scores by Week 10. This score reflects the degree of perceived interference or intrusion by the baby in the parent's life. A decrease in this score suggests reduced feelings of invasion, indicating that parents feel more comfortable and less overwhelmed by their responsibilities.

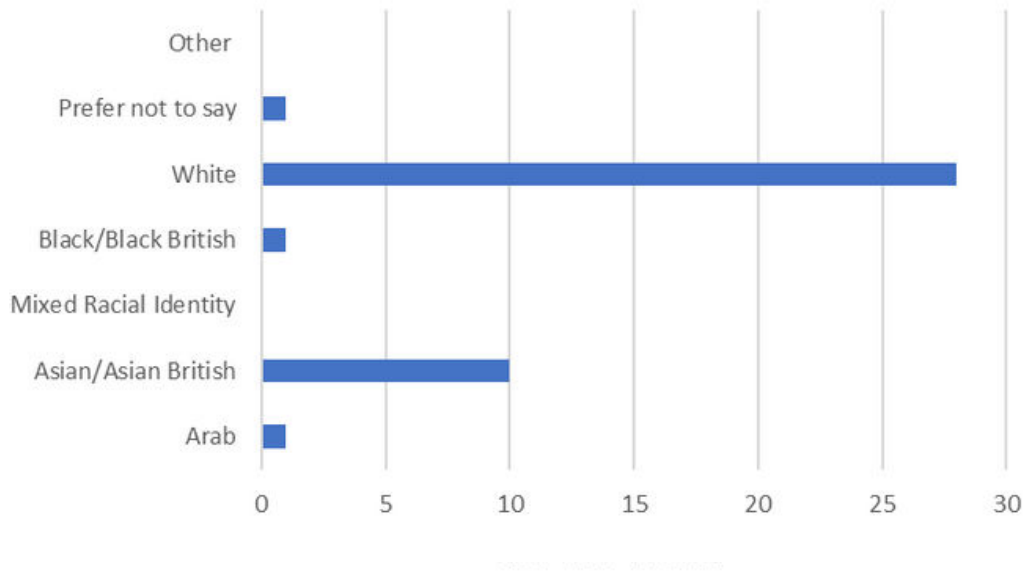
Warmth Scores



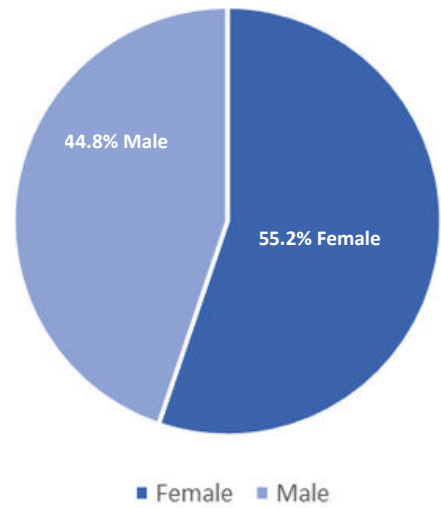
The chart shows an increase in Warmth Scores from Week 1 to Week 10, with the Week 10 line consistently higher across most participants. This indicates positive development in emotional expression, empathy, and connectedness over the intervention period. This score measures the degree of positive, nurturing feelings expressed towards baby. An increase in this score indicates improved bonding over time.

5.1.1 The Solihull Approach Parenting Programme Parent Demographics

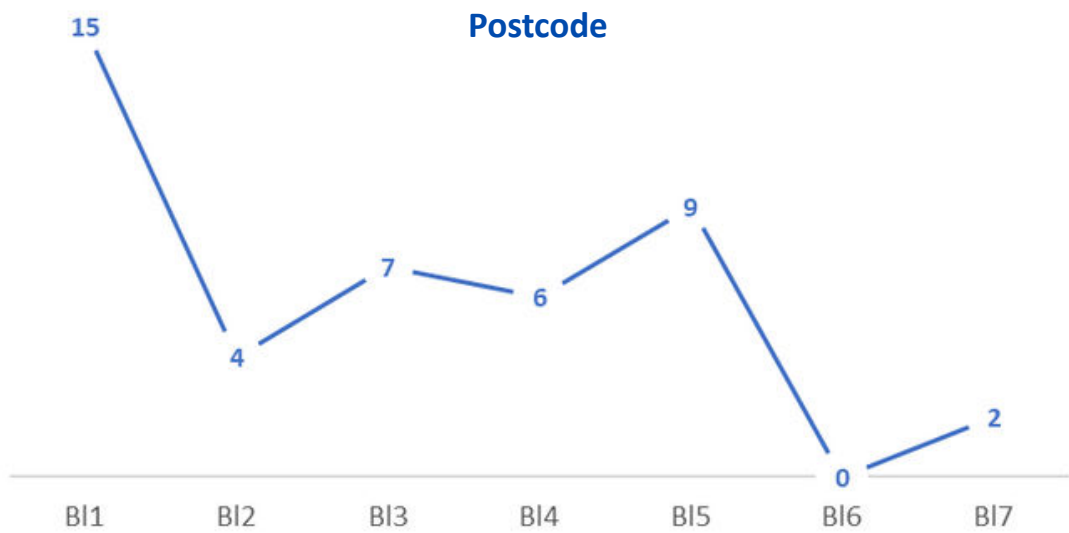
Ethnicity



Gender



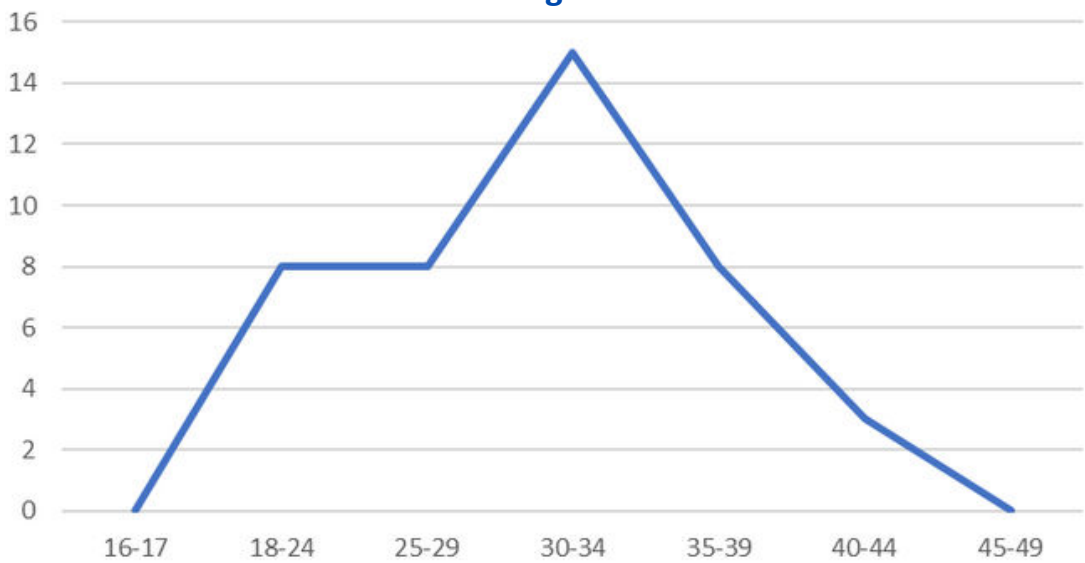
Postcode



Postcode data shrinks and expands dependant on where courses are delivered in the relevant quarter.

The Age of parents and carers undertaking the Solihull Approach peaks in the 30-34 age range, with some uptake among those aged 18-29. This pattern highlights the programme’s success in reaching a range of parents.

Age



By supporting parents earlier in their journey, the Solihull Approach helps strengthen attachment, parental containment, and responsive caregiving, aligning with the Best Start in Life framework’s commitment to improving early relationships.



Case Studies and Testimonials

Bolton

Together

From cautious to confident!

"When we first started attending, both children were very shy and very hesitant to play with toys and interact with other children. However, over the last couple of weeks my children have made huge improvements and have started to play in different areas and with other children which is a huge thing for me as the parent."



Adam is learning something new

Adam (name changed), a lively and curious three year old, brought lots of energy to our weekly sessions, but struggled when it came time to shift from free play to group singing.

Our goal was simple: help Adam feel more comfortable staying in the singing area and responding positively to his mum's guidance during that focused time. Rather than pushing participation, we introduced a calm, low-pressure approach that ran across six sessions. Adam's mum began using a consistent, soothing phrase like *"the toys are asleep now, it's singing time"*. By the final two sessions, Adam was able to sit beside his mum. To build on this progress, we'll introduce a simple visual cue like a *"singing time photo"* to go alongside the verbal routine.



Someone to talk to who knows

During this quarter a new family through adoption has started coming to Bolton Stay and Play. In their first session another family through adoption was there with a child of a similar age. The children loved playing together - and the parents could chat about things unique to their family structure such as how they got on with their child's previous foster carers and whether they can or will stay in touch with them going forwards. Having someone to talk to who understood was extremely helpful and valuable for the family.



Support when you need it

Mum entered the service on 15th July 2025 when she received support on the postnatal ward from one of our Volunteers. We supported mum with hand expressing and set up a breast pump for her and supported her to use it. Mum contacted us on 30th July to arrange some breastfeeding support at home. Mum was combination feeding using 4 bottles of formula a day but wanted to exclusively breastfeed and was finding breastfeeding painful. Mum didn't have access to a breast pump, so we organised and dropped a pump to her the following day. During the visits, we observed a breastfeed and made some adjustments to enable a deeper latch and provided lots of emotional support around parenting. We visited again on 5th August, and mum was giving all breastmilk to her baby and hadn't used any formula for the last 24 hours. She was finding the feeds less painful and some adjustments to the positioning allowed a more comfortable feed. We visited mum twice more in August and supported her with latching her baby in different positions to find one that was comfortable for her. We extended the pump loan as mum continued to pump twice daily to use in her bottle feeds. Mum loaned the pump for a total of 4 weeks. We visited mum on 2 more occasions in September and mum was finding breastfeeding much more comfortable now. Mum said she was grateful for the support she'd received and breastfeeding was going well. Throughout the 7 weeks of support, we gave her, mum had a total of 7 home visits, and 31 texts/calls for additional support.



Finding their voice

‘A’, has always been concerned and worried about her child’s physical, social and communication development and has asked staff what she can do to help her. Staff encouraged role playing, playing games, taking turns, reading stories and singing songs. Staff modelled how to encourage language development through games such as matching shapes and colours and naming animals and foods. Staff encouraged and modelled how to play with other children, share toys and take turns. ‘A’, has also been signposted to other services that she can access for support namely; Parent Support Coffee Mornings, the Solihull Group ‘Understanding your child’, Chat, Play, Read sessions and has been advised to contact her Public Health Nurse for concerns about her child’s development. Over the last few months, it has been clear to see that her child’s physical, social and language development is improving. ‘A’, has sought support from her Health Care Provider and is attending a variety of play sessions at the Hubs each week. It has been identified that her child’s speech and language is delayed, and she is due to start Speech and Language Therapy soon. Mum is much happier that they have some support in place now and is happy to see the developments in her child. Her child is speaking more and plays in a variety of ways during the sessions. She doesn’t always need mum at her side and will make her own way around the room choosing what she wants to play with. She will happily engage in play with staff and now says hi, goodbye and thank you with a smile.



Moving forward

This family joined our sessions in the Spring. They were a young mum, two year old boy, and baby sister. Mum had been committed to attending the sessions regularly and had been often. Staff supported her and provided a safe space for her to share about her personal situation, as and when she needed. In early September, she approached us, asking for a reference in support of her attendance at the family court, to secure a child arrangements order and court orders to safeguard her and her children from abusive behaviours from her ex-partner. With our additional expertise in supporting those in situations of domestic abuse, we could confidently supply a reference which supported her application, which was approved. Her ex moved out, and she has been able to move on with her life.



A sense of community

A young mum, who has experienced domestic violence and suffers from anxiety, attends our sessions regularly. She feels most comfortable coming to the sessions run by Toy Library staff, as she is familiar with them and finds reassurance in the consistent faces and supportive environment. With no family support, these sessions have become an important source of stability, routine, and social connection for her. The mum recently discovered she is expecting another baby and recognises that she is in a vulnerable position. She has openly shared that her mental health tends to decline after having a new-born. Despite these challenges, she continues to engage well in sessions and is steadily growing in confidence. She is now more comfortable speaking with other parents and is increasingly at ease allowing her toddler daughter to explore and interact with others during the sessions. Her toddler has shown noticeable progress in her social and emotional development since attending. She is more confident in exploring new activities, interacting with other children, and responding positively to guidance from staff. She has built familiarity with routines and developed early communication and social skills in a safe, nurturing environment.



Home-Start HOST Diversity Coordinator

Mum and Dad were referred to Home-Start HOST after reporting increased stress and low mood while caring for two children under the age of two. As asylum seekers with no access to public funds and no family support in the UK, both parents described feeling isolated and overwhelmed. They shared the difficulties of managing everyday parenting while also coping with the trauma of leaving their home country and navigating unfamiliar health, nursery, and community systems. Mum said she often felt *“overwhelmed when dealing with everything”*, while Dad reflected that the family felt *“lost”* trying to access support. Early intervention focused on containment and reducing stress around practical issues. This included booking GP and dental appointments with interpreters, following up on hospital referrals, and supporting Mum with medication access. Parents reported feeling calmer knowing that help was available. Mum reflected, *“I feel calmer when you call, because I don’t know the words.”*. At the same time, support was given around parenting and the children’s development. Parents were encouraged to notice their children’s cues, respond with comfort when unsettled, and engage in play. Dad shared, *“He looks at me more when I feed him now”*, showing increased reciprocity with Child 2. Child 1 was supported into nursery, with help completing forms and liaising with the Family Hub and school. Mum expressed relief: *“Now she can play with children and learn.”* The family also attended groups, library sessions, and a zoo trip, which reduced isolation and gave the children positive experiences. Mum was linked to ESOL classes, building her independence for the future.



PIMH Coordinator: Goal Based Outcomes - More than an outcomes tool

“Having someone to talk to and the knowledge that you have around ages and stages for children and what is normal behaviour. It made me feel more confident as a parent. You are all so warm and friendly and I felt like I was talking to a friend. Having someone support me with my goals and dreams of getting back to work was great and I am now in a job after being at home for some time.”



Reflecting on my parenting style

“I heard about the Solihull group from my son’s school (Washacre). I was nervous about doing the sessions as I had to bring my youngest son with me, I wasn’t sure if it would work with me doing the session at the same time as he has additional needs, but the first session went well and put me at ease. I felt really positive as the sessions progressed as I felt I was doing a lot of the same things we were discussing to the best of my abilities. The course allowed me to reflect on my parenting style and focus on areas I want to improve on, especially in areas like remaining positive and I am determined to be consistent with my parenting. I really enjoyed the sessions and feel they have helped me become more patient with my children and myself.”





Key Progress and Next Steps

Bolton

Together

6.0 Key Progress and Next Steps

6.1 Key Progress

In the last quarter we planned to:

- Finalise and distribute Parent Engagement ‘You Said, We Did’ posters across Hubs and online.
- Finalise plans for the November Annual Event.
- Continue quality visits and capturing spontaneous peer-to-peer recommendations (e.g. Solihull cross-promotion).
- Assess young parent and carer attendance at Stay and Plays.
- Work with providers to investigate why BL3 residents engagement is so prevalent in comparison to other postcode areas.

Ensure new providers are:

- Onboarded and aligned with agreed delivery expectations.
- Supported to embed Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) standards and parent-centred practice.
- Given support to collect demographic and impact data, particularly around fathers and ethnic minority parents.

Dad Matters have successfully began their work in Bolton. Parent Engagement ‘You Said, We Did’ posters have been finalised and are ready to be distributed across all Family Hubs and online, while plans for our November Annual Event have been completed. Quality visits continued, capturing peer-to-peer recommendations such as parents accessing Infant Feeding Support from a recommendation from another parent at a stay and play. Attendance data for young parents and carers at Stay and Plays was reviewed and we found there’s a good presence across our programme of delivery of parents aged 18-29. Analysis with providers explored why engagement is particularly strong among BL3 residents, with initial contributions suggesting the area has closer access to Family Hubs and community centres. Our new provider, Dad Matters, was onboarded and we aligned on delivery expectations. We supported all providers to attend BFI training and embed parent-centred practice, alongside sharing and embedding school readiness resources.

The Wider Impact

The work of Bolton Together’s Early Years providers continues to demonstrate impactful outcomes each quarter. From Goal Based Outcomes to MORS SF My Baby measures, with **100%** satisfaction scores and a **94%** Solihull Approach completion rate this quarter, the results speak for themselves. Yet there are also wider benefits we don’t always measure, like the impact on secondary beneficiaries such as older children, partners, extended family members, and the wider community. These outcomes also extend to social value; job creation, volunteering and the benefits of volunteering, the positive impact on volunteers’ wellbeing, confidence, and future career pathways. We’ve also seen this influence reflected in our approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion. By increasing visibility and supporting families of every kind, our providers build environments where all children and families feel welcomed, included, and engaged.

The following tables offer a brief snapshot of these often unseen outcomes, highlighting the continued, far-reaching positive impact of our Programme delivery and that of our Early Years VCSE Providers.

Social Value Table

Social Value Theme	Indicator	Evidence / Outcome	Wider Impact
Health and Wellbeing	Parents reporting improved confidence	69 -100% across programmes	Stronger family relationships, improved mental health
Education	Parents using activities at home	81%	Improved early learning and school readiness
Community Cohesion	Peer to peer referrals	Recorded across Stay and Plays	Builds local social capital and resilience
Economic Value	Volunteering and training (Infant Feeding, Dad Matters, BRASS, etc.)	Ongoing recruitment and training	Pathways to work, reduced isolation
Environmental Value	Walking groups and local venues	24+ walks	Promotes outdoor confidence, wellbeing, and use of green spaces,

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Table

Area	Focus / Target Group	Action Taken	Outcome / Learning
Gender	Fathers	Dad Matters launched; early engagement	Increased visibility, representation and inclusion of male caregivers
Ethnicity	Families from ethnic minority backgrounds	Infant Feeding delivering culturally sensitive tailored support	Improved trust, reduced isolation, stronger community links. Better Feeding outcomes
Language	Families with limited English	Visual tools and body language used; BRASS referrals	Enhanced participation and understanding
LGBT+	LGBT+ Parents and Carers	An LGBT+ provider, offering stay and plays, engagement and support	Strengthened understanding of LGBT+ family experiences. Families feel seen, supported, and represented
Accessibility	Families asking for session time changes	Sessions moved to later start times, or a different day	Increased trust in services, feeling welcome, reduced isolation, community building

7.0 Summary

The July to September Quarter reflects a period of strong delivery, collaboration, and impact. Bolton Together and our Early Years providers continue to maintain quality and consistency across all five delivery strands. Quantitative outcomes remain excellent, with high satisfaction and completion rates, while qualitative data and parent, carer feedback reveal increased confidence, positive bonding and attachment results, and improved infant feeding outcomes. This quarter's work builds on the continual measurable results and highlights the wider social value brought by the Bolton Together Early Years Programme, through volunteering, peer support, and stronger community networks - building connection, trust, and resilience. The launch of new initiatives, including, Dad Matters, 'Toy Library on the Road' outreach stay and play, and the extension and expansion of our programme signals a promising future for Bolton families.

Next Quarter:

Next quarter marks an important phase of growth for the Bolton Together's Early Years programme, as we move from beginning our new initiatives into embedding them across the borough. We'll continue developing inclusive, evidence-informed support for families, including working with Dad Matters to complete their BFI Level 2 accreditation and support their development of tailored resources for fathers focused on attachment, home learning, and infant feeding. This work is essential to ensuring fathers feel confident and connected in their parenting role, contributing to improved outcomes for children and family wellbeing overall. We'll also see Bolton Toy Library, 'Toy Library on the Road' sessions begin in Halli' th' Wood, extending access to play and learning opportunities for families who may face barriers to attending Family Hub buildings.

Broader programme collaboration will continue through our involvement in the GM Nurture Network and Bolton's Oral Health Partnership Group. Governance development remains a focus, with plans to bring Young Trustees onto our board and establish a Youth Advisory Board, strengthening young people's voice and leadership within our organisation. In addition, we'll coordinate key events such as the Bolton Together Early Years Partnership Meeting and support the development of the borough's parenting strategy. We'll host our Annual Members Event in November which is a key opportunity to celebrate achievements, our members and partnerships. Finally, we will work with Lancashire Wildlife Trust to coordinate a festive community event bringing families together for a Christmas meal and visit from Santa.

Please click any logo to visit our Early Years Programme Providers' websites.



We extend our thanks to our providers, commissioners and partners for their continued collaboration to improve outcomes for families in Bolton, ensuring every child has the best start in life.

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