

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, sitting on the floor and playing with a dollhouse. The boy is on the left, wearing a yellow shirt and blue jeans, with his back to the camera. The girl is on the right, wearing a grey patterned sweater and purple pants, also with her back to the camera. The dollhouse is a wooden structure with a yellow top shelf and a white base with pink accents. On the top shelf, there is a doll lying in a bed, a purple box, and a window. The background shows a blue wall and other toys.

Bolton Together Early Years Delivery Report October-December 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 EARLY YEARS REPORT OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2025

1.0 Introduction

Following the strong momentum reported in July to September, this quarter focused on embedding recent programme expansions, strengthening delivery consistency across providers, and responding to emerging learning from both families and frontline services. The programme continued to deliver across the five strands; Infant Feeding, Parent and Perinatal Infant Mental Health, Stay and Play, Parent and Carer Engagement, and the Solihull Approach Parenting Programme while further integrating the additional capacity introduced earlier in the year. This included the ongoing development of Stay and Play outreach, the second Parent and Carer Panel becoming established, and the continued delivery of Dad Matters supporting fathers with bonding, attachment, and wellbeing. These developments supported increasing our reach with seldom heard families. This report outlines delivery, performance, and learning from the October to December quarter, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and areas where the programme has adapted in response to family need, system pressures, and partner feedback.

2.0 Bolton Together Update

Notable achievements during this period include:

- We continued attending the Start for Life partnership and Bolton Oral Health meetings, ensuring collaborative engagement and gathering feedback for our Parent Carer Panel.
- We coordinated a meeting with Dad Matters and Infant Feeding partners, co-designing a new resource to support dads.
- We secured funding to expand Dad Matters, Breastfeeding Together, and launch a new Learning Languages Together fund.
- The Programme Manager, completed BFI Manager Training.
- We held our annual Bolton Together event and organised a Christmas Jumper Day meet up with Family Hub staff and partners.
- Our BFI Audited providers passed their audits.
- We aligned our social media with Family Hub campaigns, including Sugar Awareness Week.
- We conducted quality visits across stay-and-plays and infant feeding sessions.
- We collaborated on the Solihull rebrand, now called “Togetherness.”
- We gathered LGBTQ+ Parent Carer engagement feedback and published the report on our website.
- Finally, we coordinated a Christmas meal in partnership with Bolton Toy Library and Lancashire Wildlife Trust, providing a festive event with Santa and gifts for 35 families at Queens Park Café.

‘All of the support has been good and helpful with everything, everyone has been so nice and supportive, and no one has judged me, I understand my children now and react to them better. I can plan things better now and feel more motivated to go out and do things with the boys. I really enjoyed the parenting group it has helped me a lot. Knowing someone is coming every week to talk to who won’t judge me, makes me feel better’. (Home-Start HOST Parent)



Progress during the Quarter

Bolton

Together

3.0 Progress During the Quarter: Introduction

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

3.1 Progress During the Quarter: Infant Feeding

Between October to December 2025, Breastfeeding Together supported Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Baby Loss Awareness Week, World Mental Health Day, Diwali, World Sustainability Day, International Day of Care and Support, Trustees week, Med Safety Week, World Kindness Day, World Prematurity Day, World Children's Day, International Volunteer Day and Unicef Day, helping to raise awareness and provide key information to families.



**394 Unique
people
supported across
Bolton this Qtr**

In October, they supported the Family Hub Fun Day at Harvey Family Hub. They have worked hard with dedicated partners supporting the Certificate of Commitment of Bolton Family Hubs to become Baby Friendly Stage 1 Accredited supporting breastfeeding and parent infant relationships. All relevant staff have attended BFI Training and the BFI Audits have been passed successfully. Robust supervision is in place for Infant Feeding staff and volunteers who meet and attend in depth in house training on a regular basis.

“I contacted Breastfeeding Together after attending their online sessions and when my baby was born I wasn't sure if my baby was latching and feeding well, so I needed support and reassurance. They quickly came to see me at my home. Before accessing the support, I felt worried and unsure about whether my baby was feeding properly. With the help from Breastfeeding Together, I became much more confident and my baby fed well. The support meant I felt more confident with breastfeeding. The team were friendly and I didn't feel silly asking any questions. Their support felt personal. They were close, and guided me clearly on positioning and the best ways to breastfeed.”

(Parent)

3.1.1 Quantitative Data

Total No of new mums receiving home visits this quarter	41
Total No home visits this quarter	145
Number of Parents accessing Plan and Prepare for Parenting sessions	19
Number of parents accessing One to One Infant Feeding Support	183
% 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	85
Number of Walking Groups offered	25
Number of beneficiaries attending Walking Groups	74
% 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	608
Infant Feeding Peer Support Offer at Bolton Foundation Trust Hospital	81 Days
Number of Equipment Hires	24
Number of parents accessing Live Web Chat service Available 7-10 pm, 7 days/week	43
No. of calls/messages providing support to families	1615

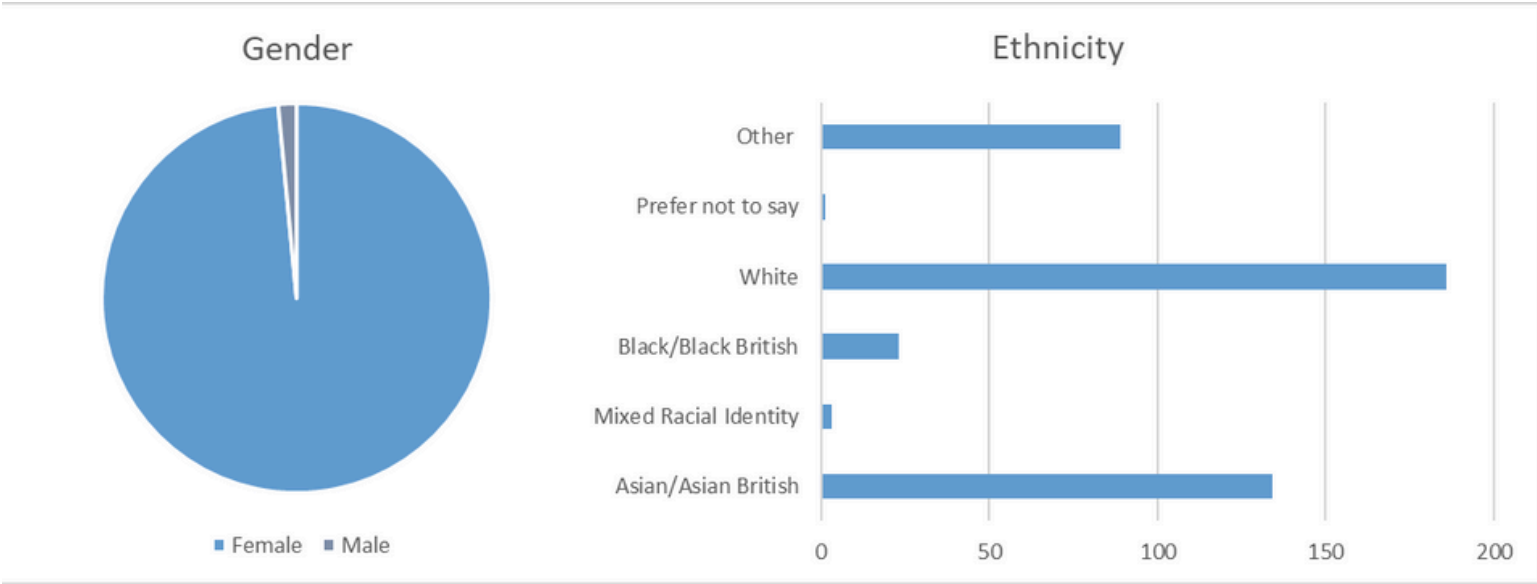
The data shows some reductions in some areas when compared to the previous quarter. This is most likely attributable to the Christmas period. However, in some areas there were notable increases. In particular, the number of parents accessing one-to-one support rose by 62 during this quarter. A total of 394 unique individuals were supported across services, while 608 parents were supported on the maternity ward. The difference between these figures reflects variations in data collection processes across delivery settings. On the maternity ward, support is offered universally and does not require the collection of personal details. Some parents supported on the ward may later access other elements of the programme, such as drop-in sessions or home visits, at which point their details are recorded. However, not all parents and carers choose to share their information. This explains the discrepancy between the number of unique individuals recorded and the higher volume support that is not counted in the final unique number.



(Flowhesion Foundation)



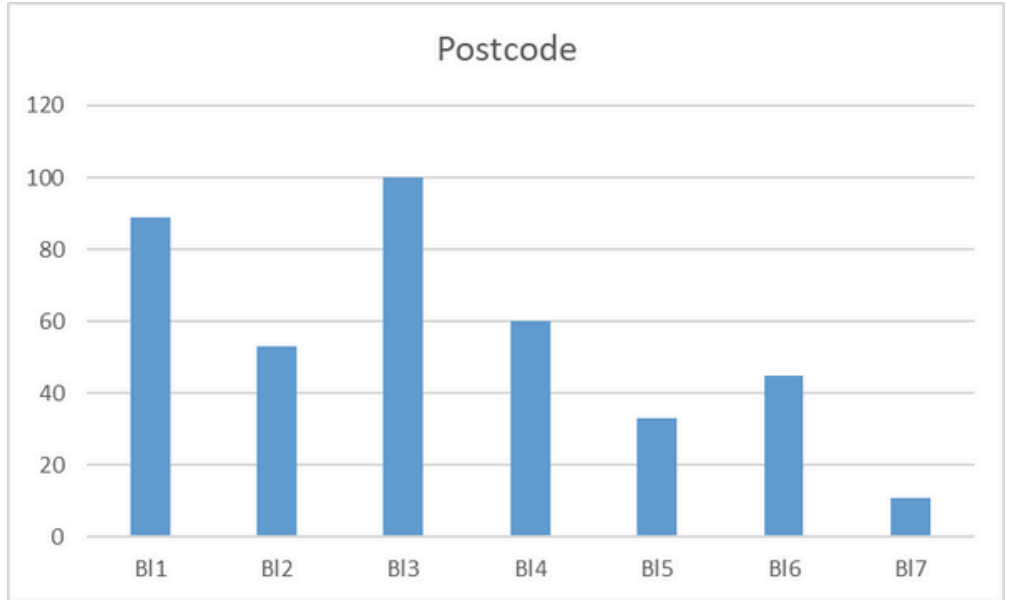
3..1.2 Parent Demographics



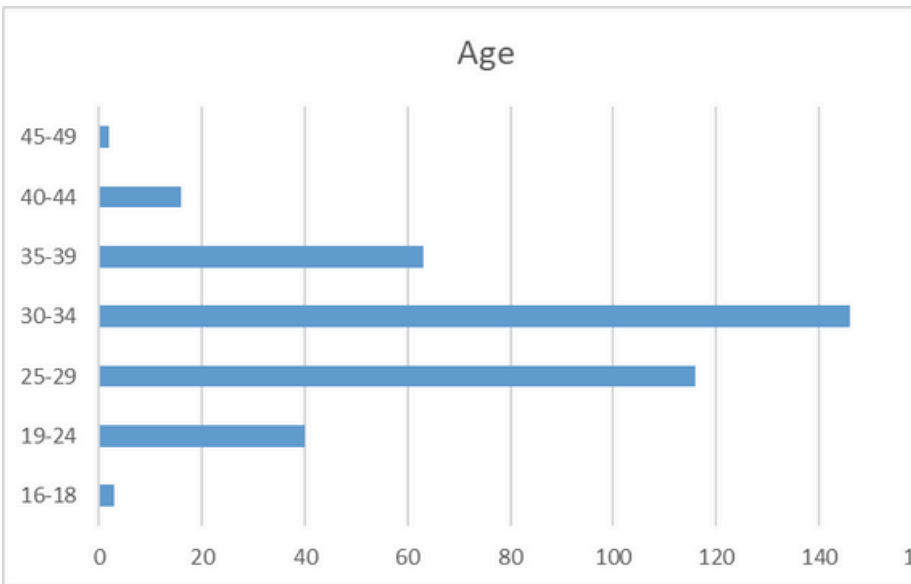
Engagement by Postcode Area

The highest levels of engagement are seen in BL3, and BL1 followed closely by BL4. 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, Chapelton, Egerton, Belmont, and Harwood which are more rural.
- In BL4, which covers Farnworth and Kearsley, there is a higher uptake than last quarter.
- 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.
- Our collection, review and analysis of this data enables us to adapt and plan services and support to address gaps and reach more families.



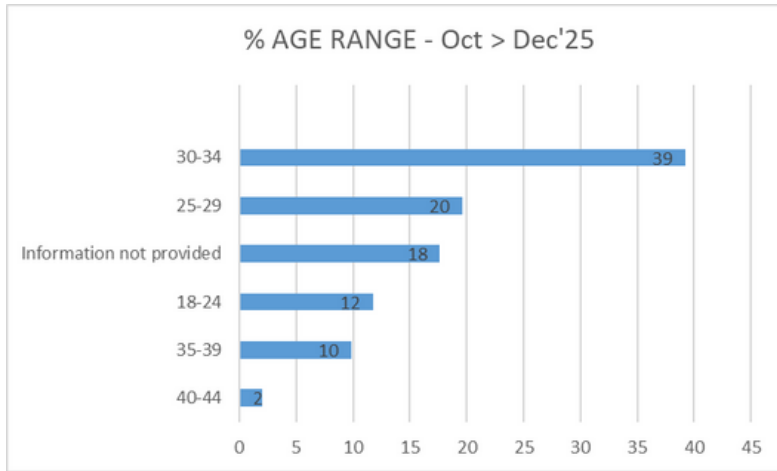
3.2 Progress During the Quarter: Parent and Perinatal Infant Mental Health Support including support for dads

3.2.1 NHS GM Integrated Care Funded PIMH Delivery Quantitative Data

Number of parents receiving one-to-one support	15
Number of parents accessing peer support groups	56
Average % of parents feeling more confident	79%
% of parents felt helped to build a better relationship with baby	100%
% of parents reporting they felt listened to	100%

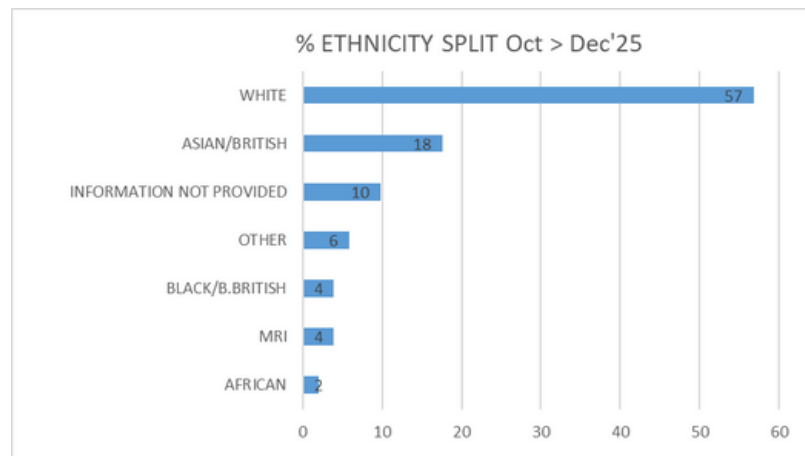
3.2.2 Parent Demographics NHS GM Integrated Care Funded PIMH Delivery

Age

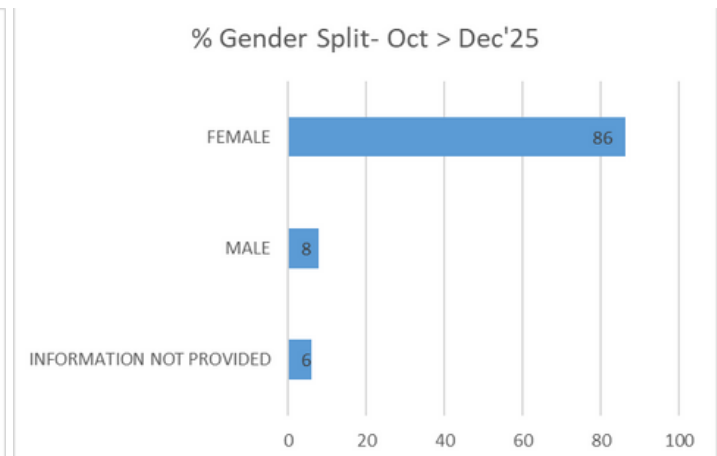


ACTUAL SUPPORTED	51
AGE YOUNGEST CHILD	5 weeks
AVERAGE NUMBER STAFF ON SESSION	2
VOLUNTEER/S ON SESSION	1
Sessions attended	202

Ethnicity



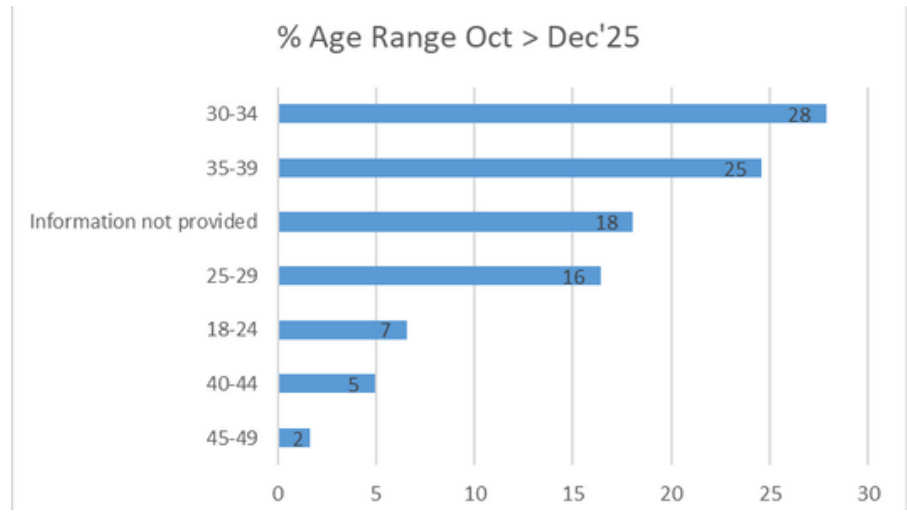
Gender



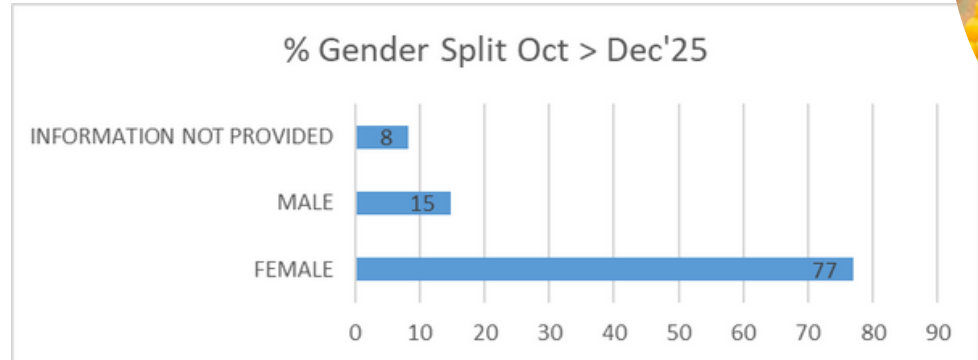
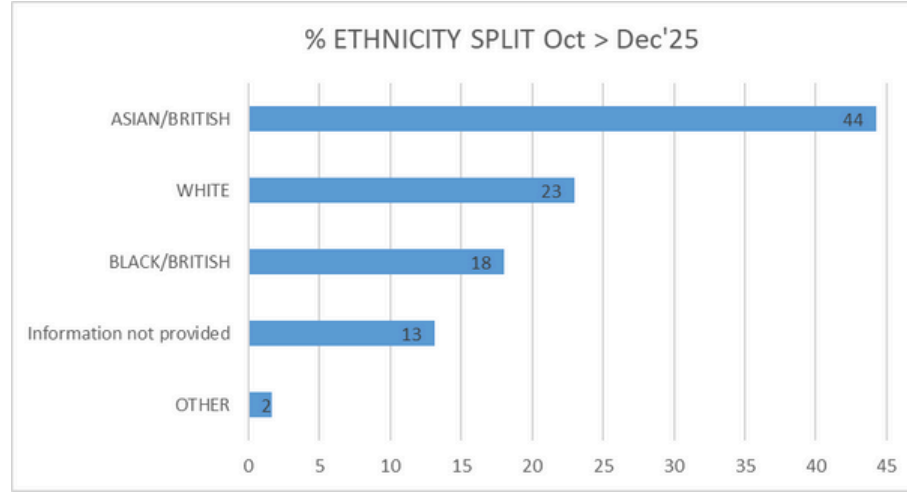
3.2.3 Family Hub Funded PIMH Delivery Quantitative Data

Number of parents receiving one-to-one support	37
Number of parents attending peer support groups	28
Average % of parents feeling more confident	100%
% of parents felt helped to build a better relationship with baby	100%

3.2.4 Parent Demographics Family Hub Funded PIMH Delivery



ACTUAL SUPPORTED	61
AGE YOUNGEST CHILD	6 weeks
AVERAGE NUMBER STAFF ON SESSION	2
VOLUNTEER/S ON SESSION	3
Sessions attended	155



(BWITC)

Home-Start HOST Diversity Coordinator

Over this period, the Diversity Coordinator has continued to strengthen partnerships with key organisations to support families effectively. This has included referrals to BRASS for immigration and documentation support, Baby Basics for essential items and clothing, and Christmas Dinner on Jesus for families needing additional festive support. They also contributed to volunteer recruitment efforts by attending events at Bolton College, Bolton University, and Deane and Derby College, promoting Home-Start and engaging potential volunteers. A significant piece of work involved helping families attend the Home-Start Christmas Party. Many mums were unfamiliar with bus routes, had limited confidence travelling alone, or felt anxious about navigating a new venue with young children. The Diversity Coordinator supported them by going through routes step-by-step, helping them plan their journey, and reassuring them about what to expect. The outcome was extremely positive. One mum shared her gratitude for the opportunity to meet other mums from her community. Overall the experience strengthened relationships, reduced isolation, and helped families feel valued and included. The feedback was overwhelmingly warm and appreciative, demonstrating the importance of accessible community events for new parents.

“Thank you for helping me come... this has made my baby’s first Christmas a memory I will never forget.”
(Parent supported by Home-Start HOST)



(Bolton Toy Library)

Dad Matters Coordinator

During this quarter, engagement with fathers was achieved through outreach at Bolton Hospital including scan clinics, antenatal and postnatal wards, and NICU resulting in 75 fathers being engaged (65 through universal outreach and 10 via NICU). This work is leading to engaging more fathers, a group identified as seldom heard. Group provision is planned monthly from January 2026 with the first Walk and Talk session planned at Moses Gate Country Park on 30 January, alongside Breastfeeding Together’s walking group, and a second session planned for 28 February. Integrated working began through attendance at With You In Mind sessions at Tonge Family Hub, and strengthened referral pathways with Health Visitors are being explored. Resource development progressed with the first draft of an infant feeding resource issued for review and a stimulating home environment resource on track for mid-January. Professional engagement and training included completion of BFI Infant Feeding Level 2, and SEND training, alongside active participation in partnership meetings. Consultation methods included stakeholder engagement within Bolton Family Hubs to shape the infant feeding resource and service user feedback gathered through Breastfeeding Together.

Perinatal MH support staff and volunteers attend supervision, and training to support them to deliver effective and timely support. They also offer support via calls and text where possible.

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

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	2

3.3.2 Parent Demographics

Ethnicity



■ Arab ■ Asian/AB ■ Black/BB ■ Mix ■ White

Gender



■ Male ■ Female

Postcode



■ BL1 ■ BL2 ■ BL3 ■ BL4 ■ BL5 ■ BL6

Parent/Carer Age Range



■ 18-24 ■ 25-29 ■ 30-34 ■ 35-39 ■ 40-44 ■ 45-49 ■ 50+



3.3.3 Parent and Carer Engagement Feedback Update - Bolton Toy Library

This quarter, Bolton Toy Library have completed 66 questionnaires, engaging parents and carers across the Family Hub Centres. They have also conducted a number of questionnaires during the Harvey Family Hub Open Day. Since 1/9/25 they have gathered feedback from 134 parents/carers.

The repeated suggestions given on the questionnaire to improve the Family Hub services are:

- ESOL Classes
- Support with travel to Hubs
- Outdoor Learning during summer
- Toy Library at Oxford Grove
- Phonics and early reading
- Weekend sessions
- More for Dad's
- Coffee mornings for Mum's
- Activities for 12-16 in the evening
- Basic care classes for new Mum's, informal
- Lego/Computer sessions
- What's app group for each session
- First aid classes – What to do when child is ill
- More family fun days
- More universal services during the school holidays, not just for those who get free school meals
- More after school activities
- SEND sessions for 5+
- Mum and child fitness classes
- Flexible opening

Communication Preference



■ Facebook ■ Text ■ Instagram ■ Email
■ Posters ■ App ■ Other

Outreach and Engagement: 'Toy Library on the Road'

Bolton Toy Library delivered their first block of sessions at Greenway Community Centre across October and November. The programme ran for five weeks and provided an opportunity to engage with several parents who were new to the service. These sessions acted as an introduction to the wider offer, for families who do not currently access Family Hubs and as a positive outcome, two parents have since begun attending Family Hub sessions. This demonstrates the value of community-based delivery in supporting parents to take the next step into ongoing support. The next block of sessions will take place at Bolton Library on Thursday mornings and will run for four weeks. During the Greenway Community Centre sessions, they worked in partnership with an artist, who brought a creative element to the sessions, helping to increase engagement and participation among parents and children.



(Bolton Toy Library)

Parent/Carer Panel – Harvey

Our panel member shared her personal experience of being part of the Parent Carer Panel. She volunteered to speak openly about her journey at Bolton Together's Annual Event, and her contribution was both insightful and impactful.

Feedback:

- Parents have asked for more sessions for ages 5+, the current after school session is too close to the end of school day and they want a minute and a snack.
- A parent also requested a specific home-schooling session for those who already do or are planning on home-schooling to speak about ideas and learn what is already happening in the area.
- The panel discussed the free child-care leaflet and the redesign and asked parents what extra information would encourage parents to take up the free childcare offer. They shared:
 1. More focus on child development in the leaflet, if parents were aware of exactly how it could benefit their child this would help.
 2. Easier ways to know exactly what funding you are/could be entitled to. If not yet entitled, setting up an email/text reminder so you know when to reply.

When asked if there is anything missing from the current free childcare leaflet the panel expressed a need for different languages, the benefits of attending nursery for child and parents and tips on settling in. They also included the need for information on SEN children's accessibility and support, and SEN nurseries available, in addition to Costs of snack and meal money. They shared parents would feel more encouraged to attend term-time jobs, flexi work, baby steps. They feel 15 hours is too many to access the free childcare, and if they could do more hours one week and less another. They believe a term time job would not allow access to free childcare.

Parent/Carer Panel – Bright Meadows

Bolton Toy Library are still recruiting new members for the panel at Bright Meadows, with 4 attendees the latest meeting discussing the funded childcare options. Engagement in Brightmet can be very low and there is great value in engaging with even a small number of parents who don't usually engage. Bolton Toy Library are moving the time of the well attended Stay and Play to bring those parents and carers into the Panel.

The views fed back included:

- Local helpline, too much information on the leaflets.
- Support from someone to go through the application process.
- Parents find it confusing as the different funding is applied for via different websites. Eg. 2 year is Bolton Council, 3 and 4 is government.
- Who is and who isn't eligible isn't very clear, especially for international students.
- Support for getting back into work specifically after having a baby.
- QR Code to see everything eligible for on front page.
- More information on local nurseries and grading local to me.
- Different languages option.
- Doesn't mention extra payments needed such as snacks and nappies.
- What to do when on maternity leave.

We work with the Family Hub Teams, and attend strategic and operational meetings, sharing the feedback from the panels and following up on actions taken. Any actions implemented are shared with the Panel and added to our 'You Said, We Did' Posters which are displayed in Family hub buildings.



(Bolton Toy Library)

Parent and Carer Engagement Feedback Update - Proud2bparents

Proud2bparents completed their LGBT+ parents and carer consultation activity in Bolton and have provided valuable insight into what supports engagement, where barriers remain, and what inclusive practice looks like in Family Hub settings. This bespoke piece of work demonstrates an increased reach and an opportunity to hear the views of LGBT+ parents who are seldom heard.

- Overall findings are encouraging, with 93% of respondents reporting that they feel comfortable or very comfortable accessing their local Family Hub or Children's Centre, and over 85% feeling comfortable speaking with their Health Visitor. Positive experiences were most strongly associated with services where Proud2bParents' LGBT+ specific expertise was embedded within mainstream Family Hub provision, highlighting the effectiveness of integrated partnership models in building trust, confidence, and a sense of safety.
- Families consistently reported that inclusive practice is driven by non-assumptive language, accurate pronoun use, staff confidence in engaging with diverse family structures, and being treated as the norm rather than an exception. Where these factors were present, families felt respected and at ease.
- However, participants also identified ongoing systemic barriers, including administrative systems that presume 'mother and father', repeated requests to explain family structures, and experiences of misgendering or incorrect assumptions. These challenges were described as organisational rather than individual, pointing to the need for changes to systems, forms, and processes alongside workforce development.
- Visibility and representation emerged as critical factors influencing engagement. Lower participation in some activities was attributed not to lack of need, but to limited visibility of LGBT+ families in publicity, fear of judgement, and poor marketing. Families emphasised the importance of visible signals of inclusion, such as inclusive language, imagery, staff training, and recognised standards or accreditation. Respondents valued having access to both targeted LGBT+ specific provision, particularly for peer connection and shared lived experience, and inclusive general services where inclusion is explicit and authentic.



4.0 Progress During the Quarter:

Parenting Support: Expansion of Stay and Play Provision for under Fives

In both the Start Well Commission and Family Hub commission of Stay and Plays we are exceeding our targets. We currently deliver Stay and Play provision 12 Start Well funded 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.



**557 Adults and
669 Children
Stayed and
Played with us!**



(Bolton Toy Library)

4.1 Quantitative Data

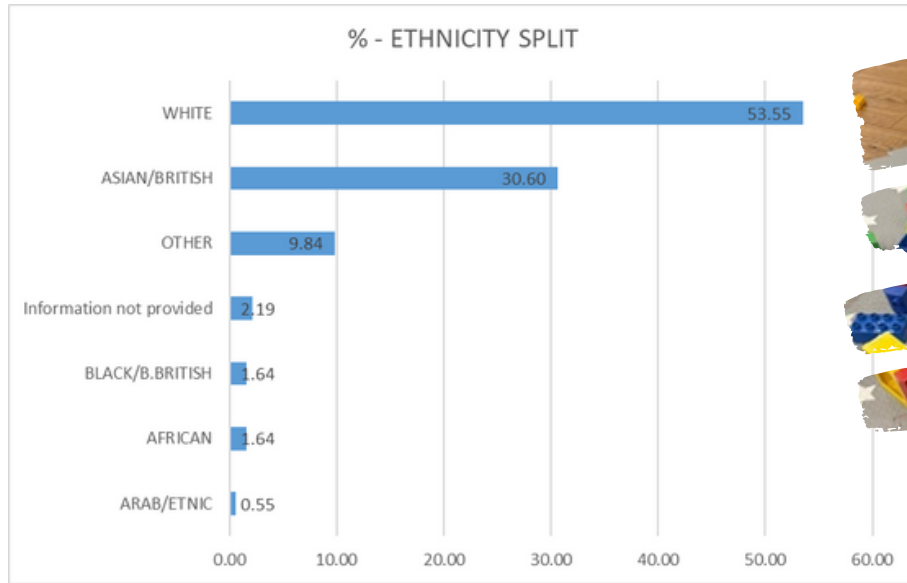
Programme	Families Reached
Family Hub Funded Stay and Plays	Total Unique Adult 183 Total Unique Child 216
Start Well Commission	Total Unique Adult 374 Total Unique Child 453

“Attending the sessions has helped me better understand my child’s development, particularly around confidence, independence, and physical skills. I’ve noticed increased curiosity, willingness to explore new environments, and improved balance and coordination during outdoor play. My child is also more comfortable engaging with natural materials and trying new activities at their own pace. The sessions have helped me recognise how valuable outdoor play is in supporting their overall development and how small everyday experiences can have a big impact.” (Parent attending Little Bats Learning Forest School)

4.1.1 Stay and Play Parent Demographics

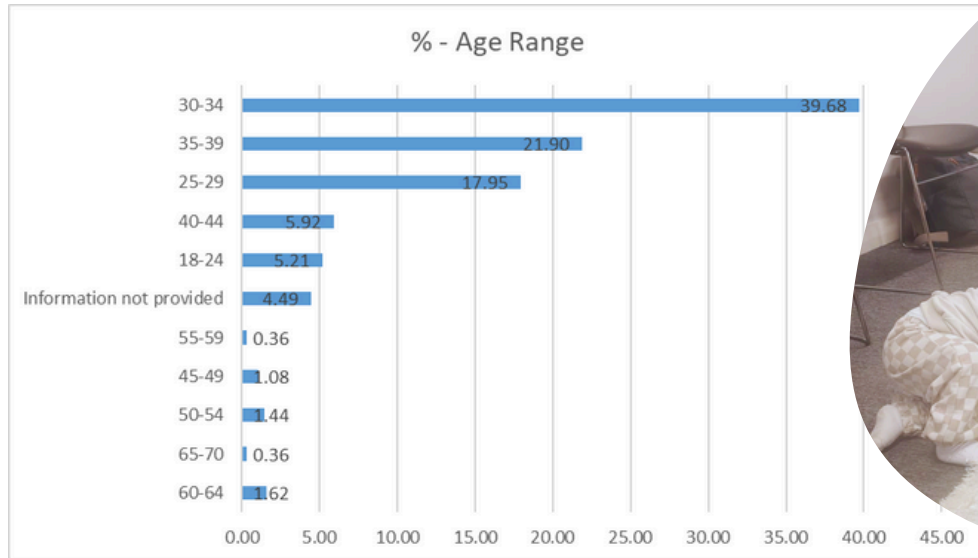
This data is representative of both Start Well and Family Hub Funded provision.

Ethnicity



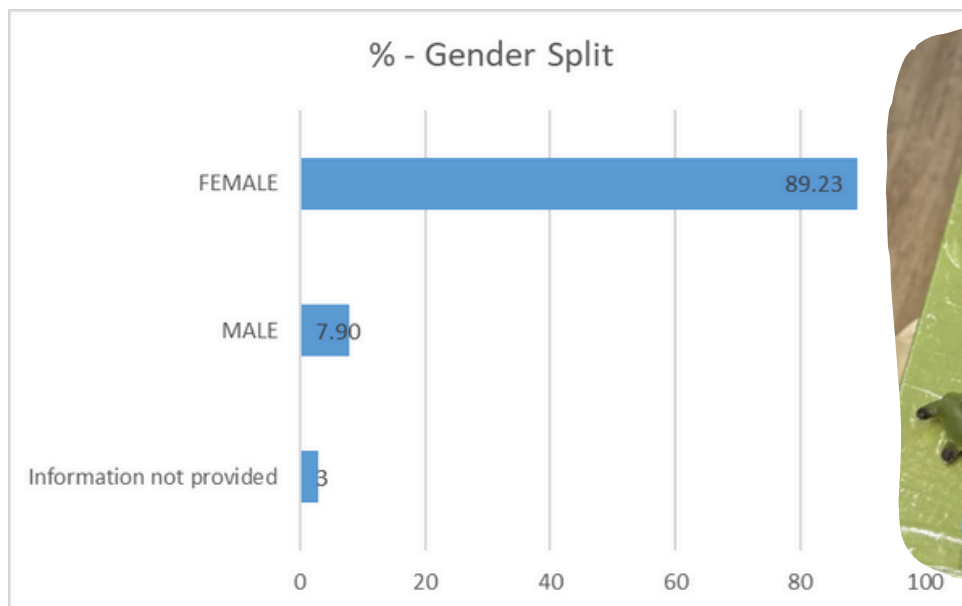
(BWITC)

Age



(Proud2bparents)

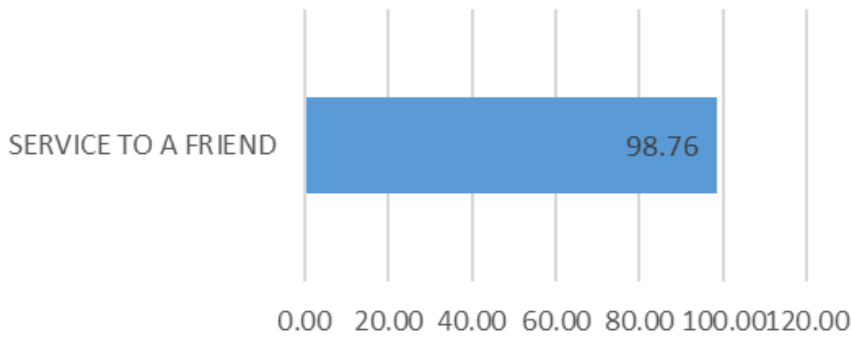
Gender



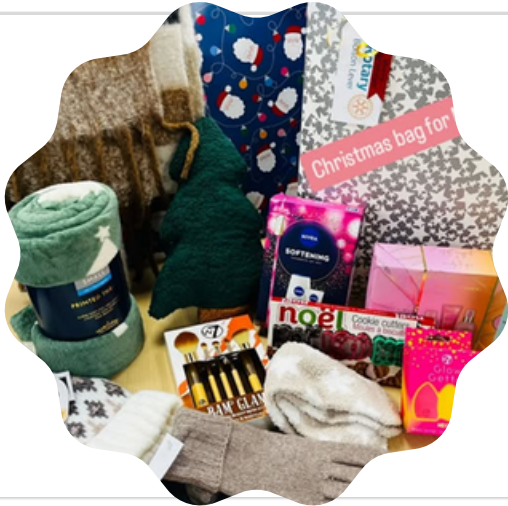
(BWITC)

4.1.2 Questionnaire Feedback: Family Hub Funded Stay and Play Sessions

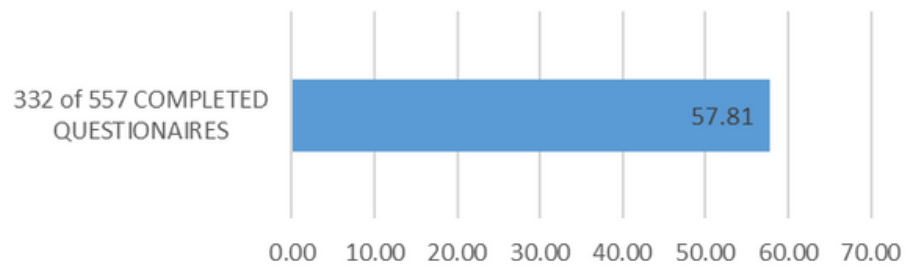
% Parents recommend:



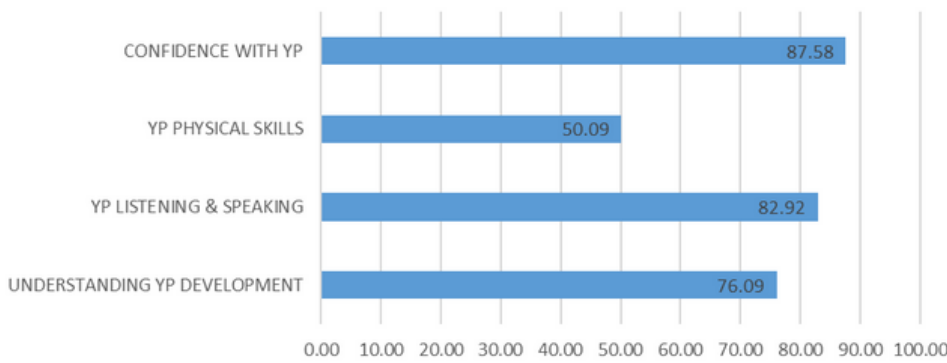
100% of Parents and carers found sessions good or excellent!



% Parents completed questionnaires

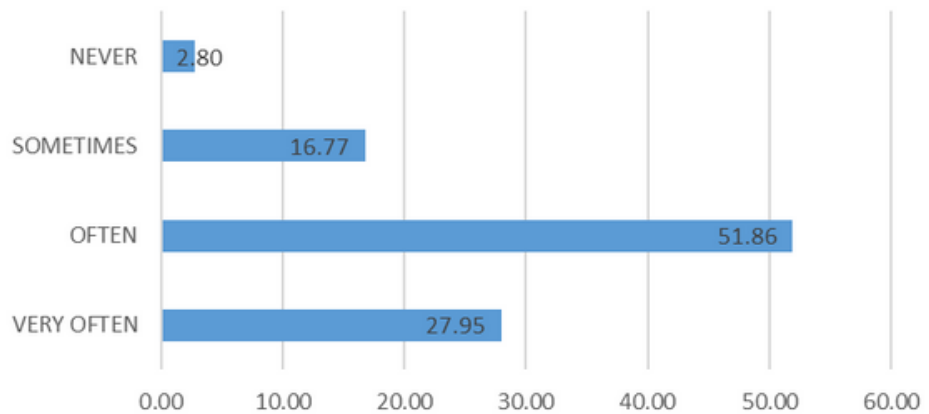


% Parents observe increase in:



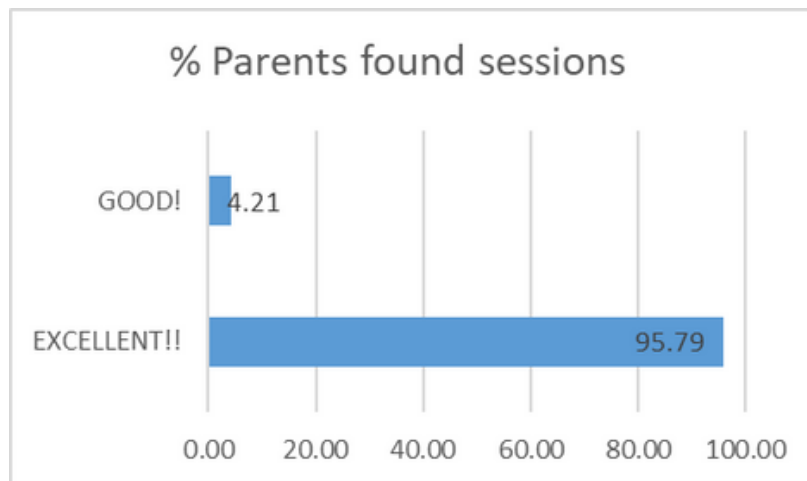
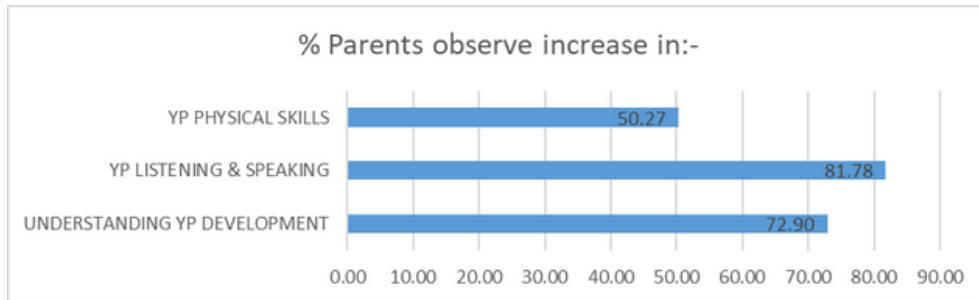
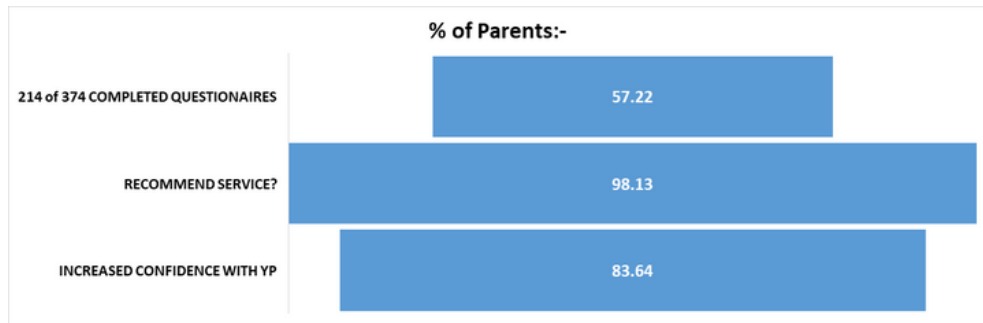
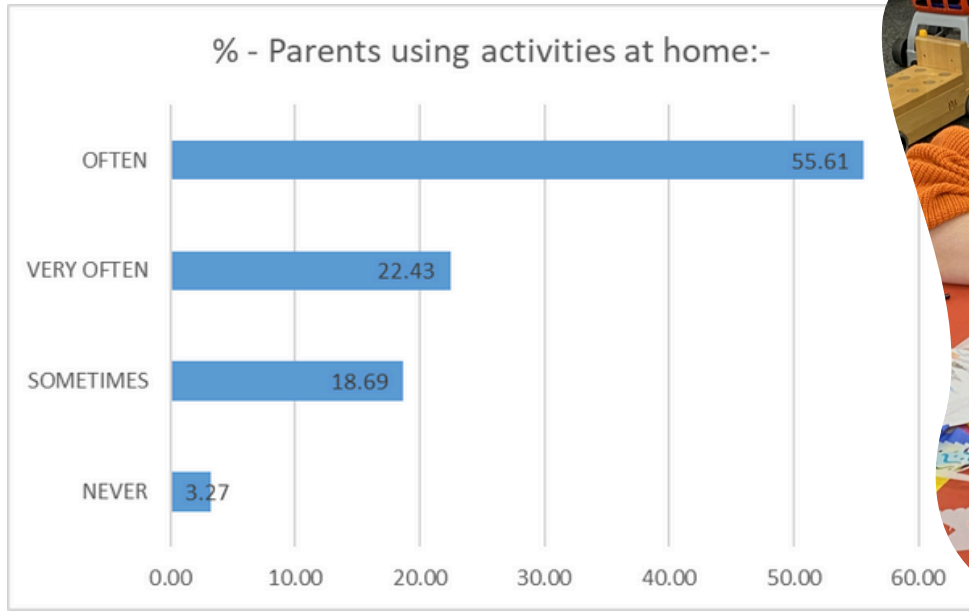
(Bolton Toy Library)

% of Parents using activities at home:-



The Family Hubs funded Stay and Play parent feedback data shows high parental satisfaction, with most rating sessions excellent. Parents are applying learning at home.

Questionnaire Feedback: Start Well



Start Well data continues to demonstrate strong outcomes this quarter, with 95.79% of parents rating sessions as excellent, an increase from 63% in the previous quarter. Engagement beyond sessions also remained high, with 97% of parents reporting that they used the activities at home. In addition, 81% of parents observed improvements in their child’s listening and speaking skills. These outcomes underline the importance of responsive relationships, early communication, and play-based learning.

5.0 Progress During the Quarter: Togetherness (The Solihull Approach)

This quarter, there has seen a change with the Solihull Approach Branding, it is now known as Togetherness - this means that all Solihull training programmes, online learning, and resources will now use the name Togetherness as the platform through which the Solihull Approach model is delivered. The model itself has not changed or been replaced. As part of this change Families Together have updated all the information/images/leaflets to match the new branding.

Four Solihull Groups started and finished in this quarter, including groups at Bright Meadows, Harvey, Farnworth and Oxford Grove Family Hubs. 31 people attended the four groups with 78% (24 people) completing the course. 310 sessions were delivered and 59 one to one catch up sessions to support attendees through to the completion of the course.

October-December 2025 - Catch Up and Attendance Data

Start Date	End Date	Location	Catch Ups Delivered	Attendance
2.10.25	11.12.25	Farnworth Family Hub	9	78%
10.10.25	19.11.25	Oxford Grove Family Hub	17	78%

In addition to the Group Sessions, we delivered the Togetherness - Solihull Approach to Parenting sessions to 10 people. The attendees had children ranging from 6 months to 20 years of age. 14 people started the Solihull Parenting Groups as 1:1 Sessions and 10 out of 10 people completed this quarter (the other 4 are ongoing).

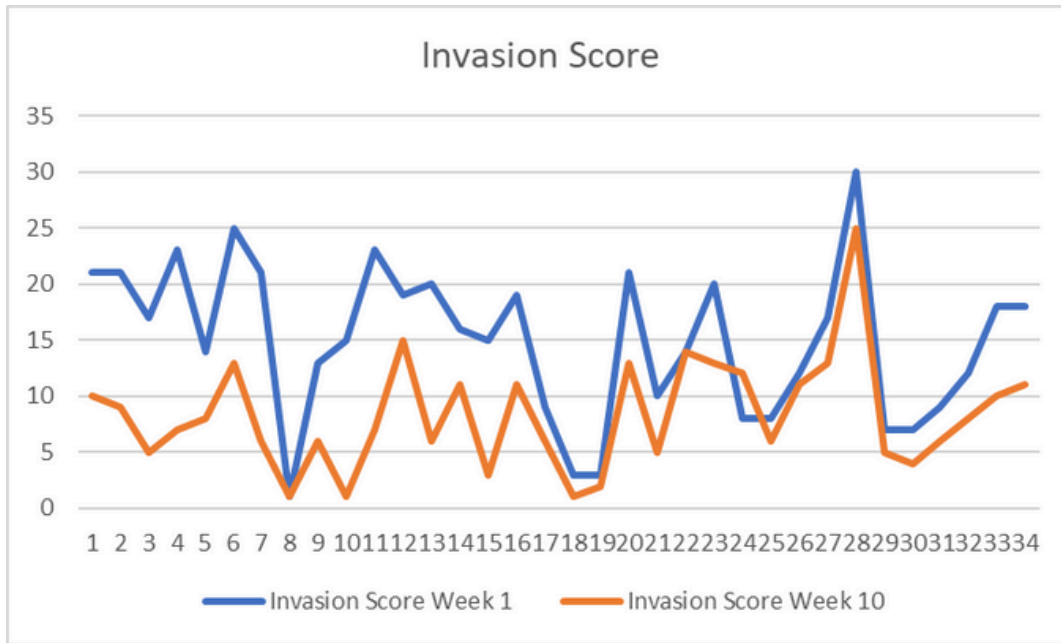
Between October to December 2025, 45 people either started or completed the Solihull Approach to Parenting Groups. Their referrals came from:

- 0-19 Service
- Breastfeeding Together
- Families Together
- Family Hub Practitioner
- Flowhesion Foundation
- Self Referral
- Social Worker

310 sessions were delivered and 59 one to one catch up sessions!

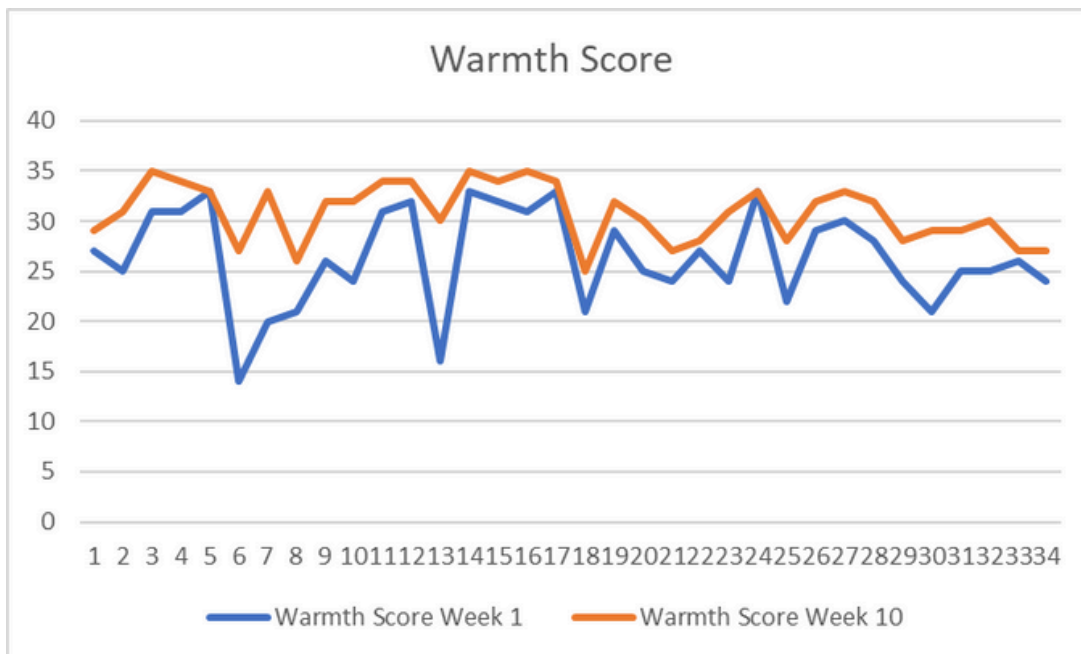
MORS SF My Baby Outcomes

Invasion Scores



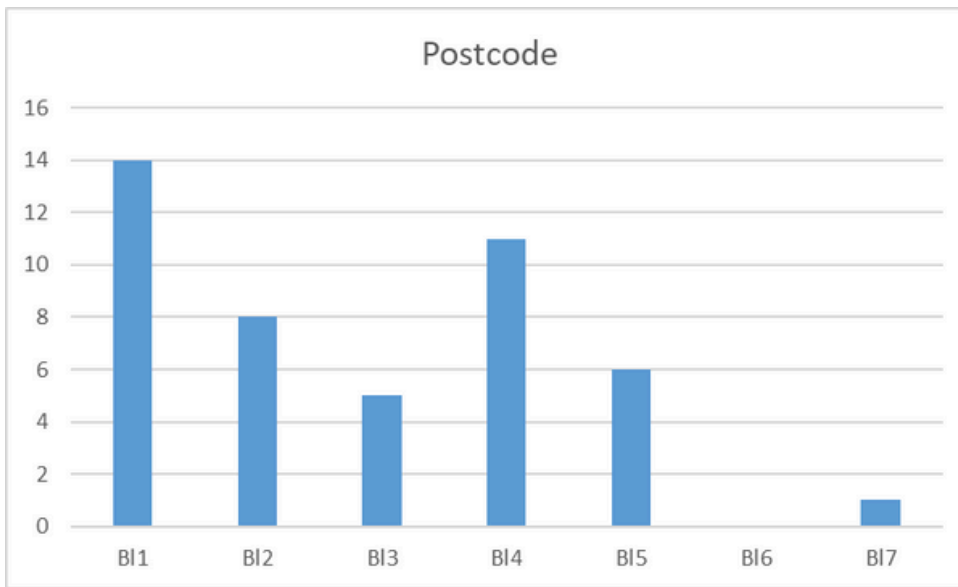
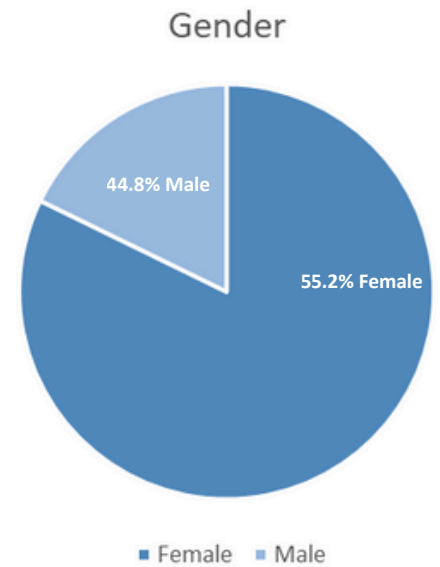
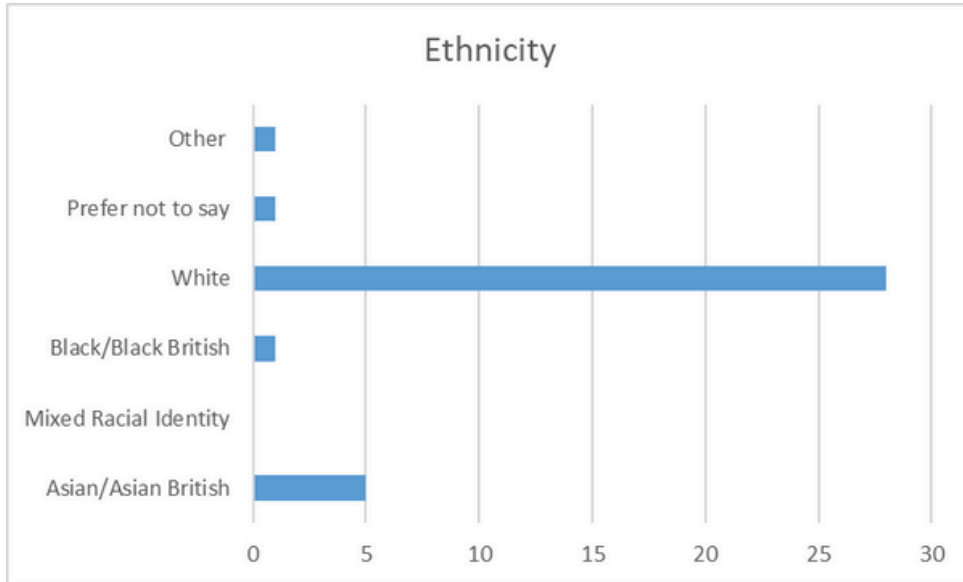
The Invasion Score chart shows a clear overall reduction from Week 1 to Week 10 across most participants, indicating a decrease in intrusive or overwhelming feelings over time. While there is some variability week to week, Week 10 scores are generally lower and more consistent than at baseline, suggesting improved awareness and adjustment. A small number of spikes remain, reflecting individual differences and contextual factors, but the overall points towards positive behavioural change.

Warmth Scores



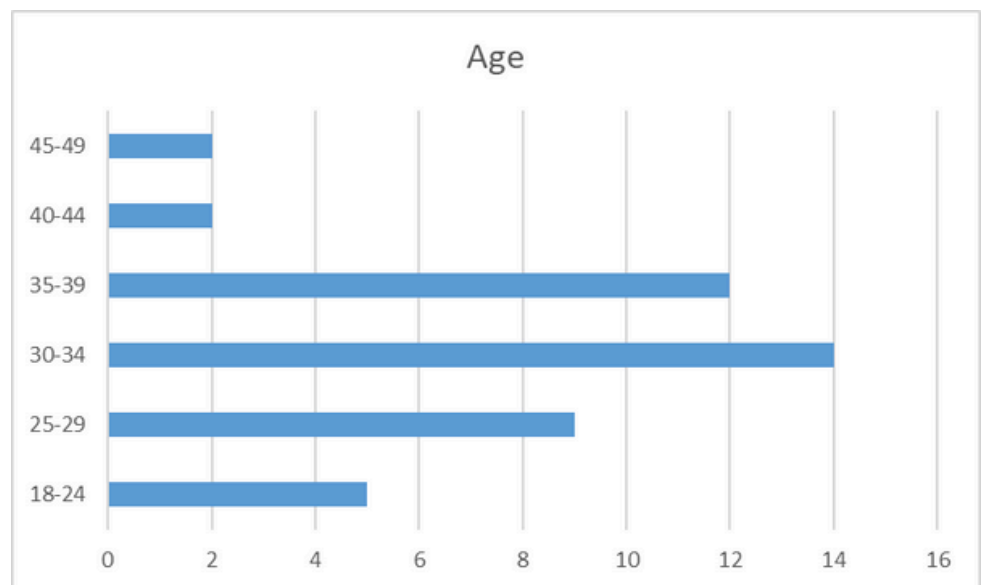
The Warmth Score chart demonstrates a general increase from Week 1 to Week 10, with Week 10 scores consistently higher across the majority of participants. This suggests improvements in responsive, emotionally attuned interactions over the course of the programme. Although some natural variation remains, Week 10 scores appear more stable and clustered at the higher end of the scale, indicating strengthened warmth and confidence in caregiving.

5.1.1 The Solihull Approach Parenting Programme Parent Demographics



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.



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

6.0 Case Studies and Testimonials

Friyay!

"Friday mornings used to be dull, so now she's always excited to know she's going to a class. Socially, this has benefitted myself and my child as there's always a good few kids here that she can interact with, and it means I can interact with other parents too and have nice calming chats in a good environment. The classes have a lot to offer, including outside play which is good for both mental and physical wellbeing"



Learning and growing all the time

Over several Stay and Play sessions, I worked alongside Aisha and her mum to help build her fine motor skills. Over time, Aisha became more confident and persistent. She began using a spoon with greater control, and threading shapes became easier and more enjoyable. Her mum gained confidence too, seeing how simple, playful activities at home could help Aisha learn and grow.



Something for me

"I'm really glad I found you guys because without you, there would have just been nothing."



From Supported to Supporting

I've had support from Breastfeeding Together in various ways, from my baby being 8 days old and even now at nearly 10 months. At Horwich group, on day 8, I met Steph and Chloe who helped me from that moment on, every week. I couldn't have done it without that support and group. Having the support of the other mums there too, along my journey, celebrating the big and little wins was really special. Between weekly Horwich groups, I would have a lingering question from time to time yet never hesitated to reach out because I knew no question was silly and that BFT were there to reassure me. I used the Live Chat for this and sometimes the WhatsApp. The girls were always really helpful and kind, even if repeating the answer to a question I had probably asked multiple times! The home visits I had were also critical to my journey, where BFT peer supporters were able to observe feeds in the home setting, therefore truly able to understand the problem I was needing help with. Having access to this as a new mum, for free, is truly amazing, and helped me so much. I did the volunteer training because I appreciate BFT so much and couldn't have continued my journey without their help. By becoming a volunteer, I help them, and I help other mums out there, in the position I was in! I'm really looking forward to getting started, attending group and being that friendly face welcoming a new mum, providing her that support. I knew that I'd gained a lot of knowledge about breastfeeding, through my access to support on multiple occasions, and my curiosity asking questions a lot. It wasn't until I did the peer support training that I realised just how much of the content I knew. Being educated on various aspects of breastfeeding along my journey was a key part of being able to continue! It empowered me and gave me the confidence to push back against those around me suggesting I stop. I have BFT to thank for that. "



It feels good to meet new people

'It is very lovely for all kids and mums too, meeting and playing all kinds of activities having more opportunities to explore different toys and space'.



The whole family

This family found our sessions in September, with a new born (baby around 6 weeks old), after the mum moved to Bolton. She announced when enquiring that “she didn’t have any mental health issues, but that she was new to the area.” It was decided that attending the sessions would be beneficial for her, as a preventative, to ensure she did not become isolated as a new mum. In subsequent weeks, she did confide that her husband was struggling with adjusting to becoming a parent. I advised her that HomeStart-Host ran Dads Matters, which had some direct support for men experiencing perinatal mental health challenges, and advised I would seek details to refer her husband. We carried on conversing over WhatsApp, even when there weren’t sessions running, and checked in with them. We will refer dad to Dad Matters services.



Ready for anything so we can achieve anything - together

Lucy*, is a young mother living with epilepsy. She felt anxious about attending group sessions due to the unpredictability of her condition and concerns about having a seizure in a public setting. Lucy requested reassurance and support to help her feel safe attending sessions, as well as understanding from staff about her health needs. Her anxiety had previously prevented her from engaging with other parents, contributing to feelings of isolation and a lack of confidence in social settings.

Staff worked closely with Lucy to reassure her and discuss her concerns in advance of attending sessions. Emergency measures were put in place, including recording her mother’s contact details and agreeing clear steps to follow should Lucy feel unwell or experience a seizure. Staff remained aware and supportive during sessions, creating a calm and understanding environment. Lucy was encouraged to attend at her own pace, with regular check-ins to ensure she felt comfortable. This support was provided during group sessions at the Family Hub over the course of the quarter. As a result of the support provided, Lucy’s confidence has grown significantly. She now attends sessions more comfortably and has begun engaging with other parents, forming positive social connections. Knowing that staff understand her condition and that clear measures are in place has helped reduce her anxiety. Lucy has also shared positive feedback about her son, noting a visible increase in his confidence since attending sessions, particularly in his willingness to explore activities and interact with other children. Moving forward, Lucy plans to continue attending sessions regularly and building relationships with other parents. The supportive environment has helped her feel safer, more confident, and better connected, benefiting both her wellbeing and her child’s development.



Home-Start HOST Diversity Coordinator

“Thank you... you’ve helped me so much. You helped me find friends here.” She then laughed at the other Tigrinya-speaking mum beside her and added: “Thank you for bringing this trouble into my life.”



PIMH Coordinator:

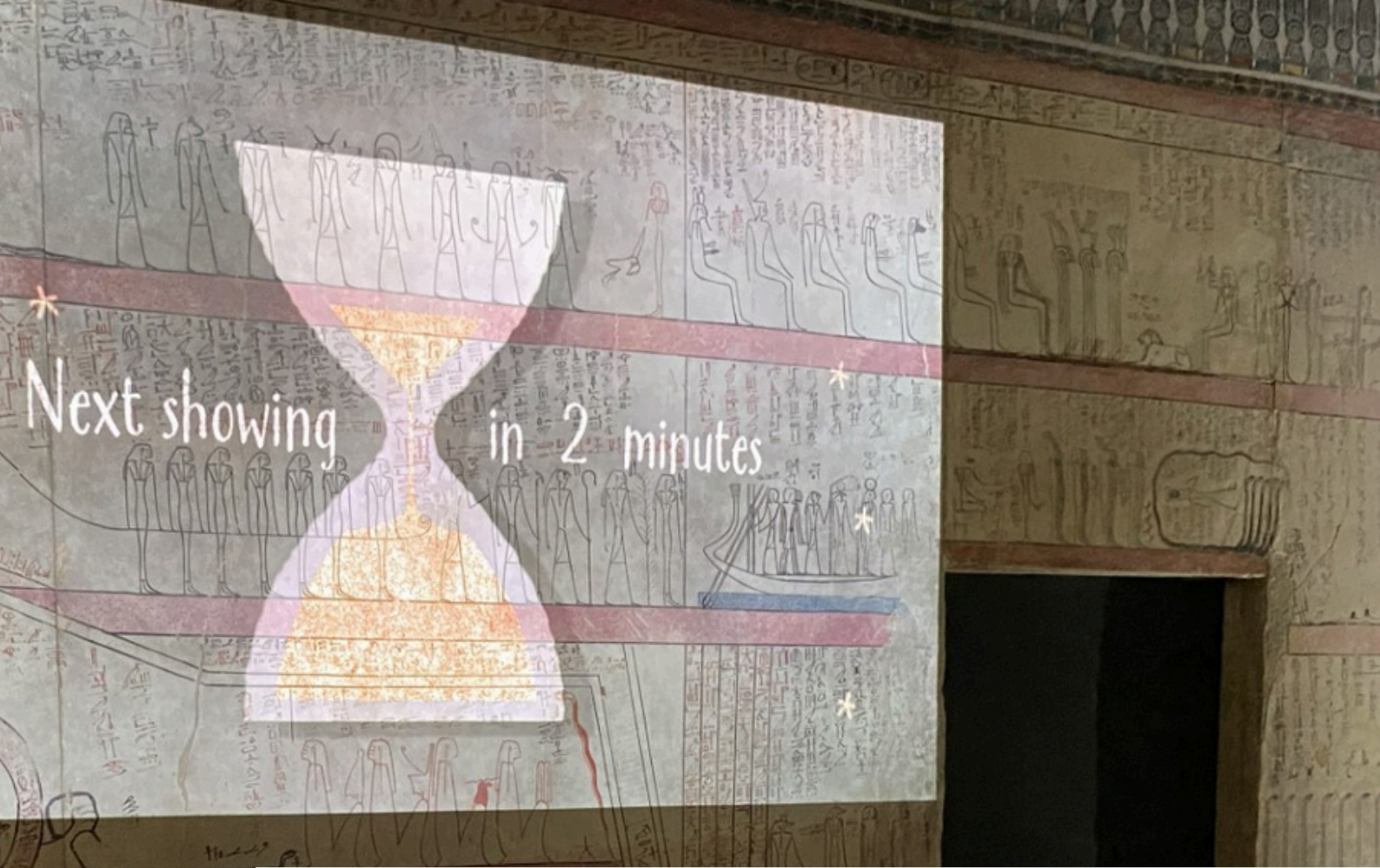
Mum suffered with anxiety and depression; she had physical and mental health issues that restricted her in keeping on top of the housework and managing family life. She lacked motivation due to her mental and physical health, this led to her feeling unorganised and overwhelmed, leaving her at times emotionally unavailable for the children. Mum reported that she often struggled managing the boy’s behaviour and sometimes responded negatively to them. Mum felt isolated and wanted to find free activities in the community that she could attend with the children. Weekly visits have been provided by trained staff and volunteers. Early intervention focussed on containment; through our conversations I encouraged and motivated Mum to become more organised. We spent time thinking about babies’ thoughts and feelings and I was able to model and involve Mum and baby in some reciprocal interactions. We spent time reflecting on Mums parenting style and I signposted her to the 10-week Solihull parenting course. With Mum reporting isolation we found some groups in the family hubs and the volunteer accompanied them. The family were invited to our Christmas party. I directed Mum to Bolton Lads and Girls club to access free activities for the older boys. Mum and baby have been contained, leaving Mum with increased mental capacity to engage with baby. Babies voice has been heard, and his thoughts, feelings and desires have been considered. Mum has learned the benefits of the reciprocal interactions with her baby; this has improved their relationship and will impact babies brain development. The family are less isolated and have been accessing the local community where baby has been able to experience new environments and interact with his peers. The home is less cluttered and there is more room for the children to play. Mum is now more organised, they family have created a meal plan together, including the children’s choices, Mum is less overwhelmed with family management, and the children are having a healthier diet. Mum now understands her children and reacts more sensitively and gently to their behaviours, creating better communication and a calmer home environment.



Patience in my toolkit

“Since completing the Solihull sessions, I have become more patient and try to understand my child’s feelings before reacting. My daughter is now expressing her emotions more clearly and is more willing to listen. These sessions have been really valuable in helping me understand both my child and myself better”.





Next showing in 2 minutes

Key Progress and Next Steps



Bolton

Together

7.0 Key Progress and Next Steps

7.1 Key Progress

In the last quarter we planned to:

- Embed newly introduced Early Years initiatives across the borough, moving from implementation into sustained delivery.
- Continue to develop inclusive, evidence-informed support for families.
- Work with Dad Matters to complete BFI Level 2 accreditation, develop tailored resources for fathers focused on attachment, home learning, and infant feeding, strengthen support for fathers to increase confidence, connection, and positive parenting outcomes.
- Launch Bolton Toy Library “Toy Library on the Road” sessions in Halli’ th’ Wood, improving access to play and learning for families facing barriers to attending Family Hub buildings.
- Maintain active collaboration through the GM Nurture Network and Bolton Oral Health Partnership Group.
- Recruiting Young Trustees to the Board.
- The Bolton Together Early Years Partnership Meeting.
- Support for the development of the borough’s parenting strategy.
- Deliver the Annual Members Event in November to celebrate achievements, members, and partnerships.
- Work with Lancashire Wildlife Trust to coordinate a festive community event, bringing families together for a Christmas meal and visit from Santa.

Over the quarter, Bolton Together’s Early Years programme successfully moved from the introduction of new initiatives into a phase of embedded delivery across the borough. Dad Matters completed BFI Level 2 accreditation and developed tailored resources for fathers focused on infant feeding support. Access to play and learning opportunities was extended through the launch of Bolton Toy Library’s “Toy Library on the Road” sessions in Halli’th’ Wood, reducing barriers for families less able to attend Family Hub buildings. Collaboration continued at a system level through active involvement in the GM Nurture Network and Bolton Oral Health Partnership Group. Governance and participation were strengthened through the recruitment of a Young Trustee embedding young people’s voice and leadership within the organisation. Key strategic activity was delivered, including the Bolton Together Early Years Partnership Meeting and support for the development of the borough’s parenting strategy. The Annual Members Event provided an opportunity to celebrate achievements, members, and partnerships, while the quarter concluded with a free Christmas event for a selection of families, delivered in partnership with Lancashire Wildlife Trust, bringing families together for a shared Christmas meal and visit from Santa.

Next Steps

- To attend and contribute to the Steering Group and Workshops on the New Balance System coming in to place in Bolton.
- To support providers and partners to move toward the next stage of the BFI accreditation.
- To embed Dad Matters delivery, promoting with partners and increasing referrals to the service.
- Begin delivery and management of the new Learning Languages Together project.
- To contribute to the design and implementation of the Family Hub Website.



(Proud2bparents)

8.0 Summary

Between October and December 2025, Bolton Together’s Early Years programme continued to demonstrate strong, sustained impact across all five delivery strands, supporting families through a coordinated, place-based approach. Despite seasonal fluctuations associated with the Christmas period, outcomes remained consistently positive, with high levels of parental satisfaction, increased confidence, and measurable improvements in parent child relationships, communication, and attachment. Delivery across Infant Feeding, Parent and Perinatal Infant Mental Health, Stay and Play, Parent and Carer Engagement, and the Togetherness (Solihull Approach) programme showed both breadth and depth of offer and quantitative data and rich qualitative feedback. Engagement with fathers, inclusive outreach, co-design through Parent and Carer Panels, and the community-based delivery model such as Toy Library on the Road strengthened access for families facing barriers. System collaboration, governance development, and alignment with borough and GM priorities further reinforced programme sustainability. Overall, the quarter reflects sustained strength in delivery, embedding expansions while continuing to maintain the offer and adapt responsively to family need, and making a meaningful contribution to improving early relationships, school readiness, and family wellbeing across Bolton.

“I’ve noticed a real growth in my child’s confidence and independence, especially when exploring outdoor environments. Their physical skills such as balance, climbing, and coordination have improved, and they are more willing to try new activities and challenges. My child is also becoming more curious and observant, often stopping to look closely at natural objects and showing interest in their surroundings. Overall, the sessions have supported both their physical and emotional development in a calm, positive way.”

(Little Bats Learning)

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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Bolton Together

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

Commissioned by:

Bolton Council