

IThrive Report - Oct - Dec '25
0-19 Years Subcontract



Bolton

Together

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1.0 Introduction

This report covers the period of October to December 2025. It has been a busy and impactful period for emotional wellbeing support for children aged 2–11 across Bolton. Despite growing demand and a challenging funding context, providers have continued to deliver high-quality, child-centred support, reaching children and families with compassion, creativity, and consistency.

Common themes this quarter included supporting emotional regulation, managing anxiety, responding to family change and adversity, and helping children develop confidence and coping strategies through trusted relationships. Across all services, there is clear evidence of strong engagement from children and parents, with feedback highlighting how safe, listened to, and supported families have felt.

Providers have demonstrated flexibility and innovation, using play, sports, sensory spaces, and group and one-to-one approaches to meet children where they are. Partnership working has remained a key strength, with schools, health visitors, community organisations, and families working together to achieve positive outcomes for younger children.

As this quarter concludes, it also marks the end of the ICB extension funding. As a result, we are now moving forward with a reduced offer for children aged 2–11 years. While this brings understandable pressures, the work delivered this quarter clearly shows the value, impact, and commitment of our providers, who continue to support children and families with professionalism and care.

126

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
SUPPORTED THROUGH 2-11
PROGRAMME**

2.0 Bolton Together Update

In November 2025, we welcomed Emma Griffiths and Lauren Gregory into the team as our IThrive Navigators for Neurodiversity. Since starting, they met with key partners, including Breaking Barriers, Urban Outreach, Fortalice, Bolton IAS, Woodbridge, CAHMS, MHIST, Bolton Council, and Bolton Toy Library. This preparation has ensured they are ready to support families effectively, helping them navigate the challenges of raising neurodiverse children and connecting them to the right services. This offer is funded through the GM NHS ICB and will can be accessed via the existing IThrive Referral online referral form.

In November we held the Bolton Together Annual Celebration, which showcased the achievements of our partners over the year and reinforced the value of collaboration across the borough. The event provided an opportunity for the team, members, and stakeholders to deepen their understanding of the collective impact of Bolton Together's work.

Professional development this quarter included APT Training on the Effective Treatment of Anxiety in Children and Adolescents, providing partners with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of evidence-based approaches to supporting anxiety and to apply practical strategies directly in their work with young people. In addition, the IThrive Hub team undertook training on Responding to Civil Unrest through ConnectFutures, allowing staff to consider the potential impact of civil unrest on our community and reflect on how the service and its messaging can be adapted to better support children, young people, and families during times of disruption or heightened community tension.



**A Season of Warmth
winter wellbeing workbook**



**Stronger This Winter
wellbeing workbook**

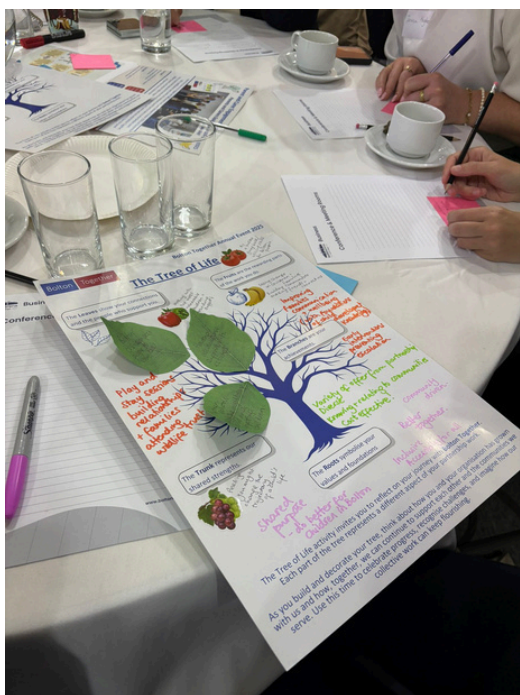


**Bolton Toy Library
Christmas Gift Appeal**

Over the Christmas period, our providers worked to support families facing financial and emotional challenges by distributing gifts, food hampers, and self-care packs. Thanks to partnerships with the Great Lever Rotary Club, local businesses, and community events like the Bolton Together Christmas Jumper day, families received toys, games, cosy blankets, and festive meals. These initiatives offered practical support, helped reduce isolation, and brought joy to children who might otherwise have gone without presents. Families reported feeling cared for and valued.

This quarter, we have worked closely with the Bolton CYP Neurodiversity Group to shape an Expression of Interest brief for Bolton Together members through ICB funding. This enables applications for up to £44,000 of funding to support families of children aged 5–10 years where there are neurodiversity concerns. This application is now open to members with the aim for support to begin on or shortly after April 2026.

Finally, we produced and distributed our Winter Wellbeing Workbooks, offering guidance and strategies for families to maintain positive emotional health over the holiday period. The workbooks provided clear information on local support services, coping strategies for children and young people, and practical tools to promote resilience and wellbeing within the home.



Bolton Together’s Annual Event



Bolton Together’s Instagram page sharing key messages for families

3. Progress this quarter

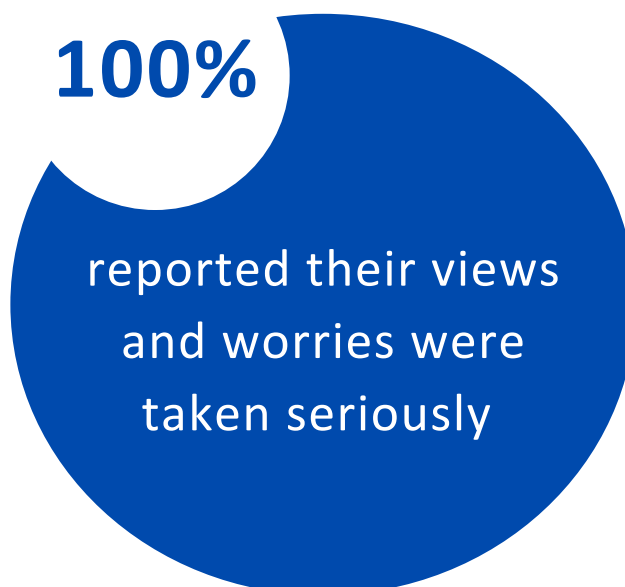
A total of 126 children and 96 parents engaged with partners under the 2–11 years programme. During the reporting period, waiting times for support ranged between 14 and 20 weeks, reflecting ongoing demand across services.

In response to this demand, our partners have continued to deliver a broad and responsive package of provision, including:

- Urban Outreach – RISE Programme: Supported 40 children through a combination of 1:1 and group emotional health interventions, including cooking clubs, wellbeing groups, and school transition support, helping children build resilience, emotional regulation, and positive coping strategies.
- Bolton Wanderers in the Community: Supported 28 children through 1:1 mentoring and confidence-building activities, with 100% of children who completed feedback showing improved outcomes and reporting 100% satisfaction.
- Bolton Toy Library: Engaged 55 children and 53 parents, delivering early years support through play-based emotional wellbeing activities, sensory sessions, and enhanced communication and language resources to promote emotional regulation and developmental progress. In addition, support was provided to Bolton Toy Library to assist with exit strategy planning following the end of the ICB extension funding.
- Fortalice CYP: Delivered 102 sessions to 17 children aged 5–7 affected by domestic abuse, providing both 1:1 and group support, including football-based emotional regulation activities and personalised safety planning to help children feel safe, understood, and empowered.

Alongside service delivery, audits of the programme database have been completed to assess compliance with reporting requirements and the completion of outcome measures, supporting data quality and consistency across partners.

Promotional materials have also been updated to reflect changes to the offer and the revised age range being supported from March, with information refined following feedback to ensure clarity for families and professionals.



This quarter's data highlights the impact and reach of the 2–11 services, with children and families consistently engaging in personalised emotional wellbeing support. Across all partners, children demonstrated improvements in emotional regulation, confidence, and coping skills, while parents reported feeling supported and reassured. Feedback continues to show that interventions provide safe, nurturing environments where children feel listened to, understood, and empowered. Services have remained flexible and responsive, using a blend of 1:1 mentoring, group sessions, play-based activities, sensory support, and creative interventions to meet individual needs.

Despite increasing demand and reduced funding, partners have maintained strong engagement, positive outcomes, and meaningful relationships with families, reflecting the commitment, skill, and creativity of staff across the programme.

4.0 Quantitative Data

4.1 Qualitative Data - REFERRAL DATA

Age Group of Child at Point of Referral

Age group at point of referral	Number of referrals
2 to 5 years old	17.16%
5 to 8 years old	28.36%
8 to 11 years old	54.48%
Total	100%

The IThrive Hub received 134 referrals between October to December for those aged 2 to 11 years old. This represents 48% of all referrals received during this time directly through Bolton Together's online referral.

80% of those referrals made by public health nurses and health visitors were accepted and allocated to a provider. The remaining who were not accepted include:

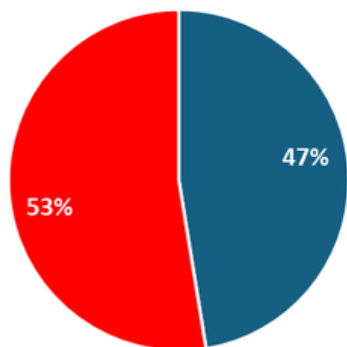
- closed due to no engagement from family
- directed to alternative support for specific needs such as bereavement.

Age Group at Point of Referral



■ 2 to 5 years old ■ 5 to 8 years old ■ 8 to 11 years old

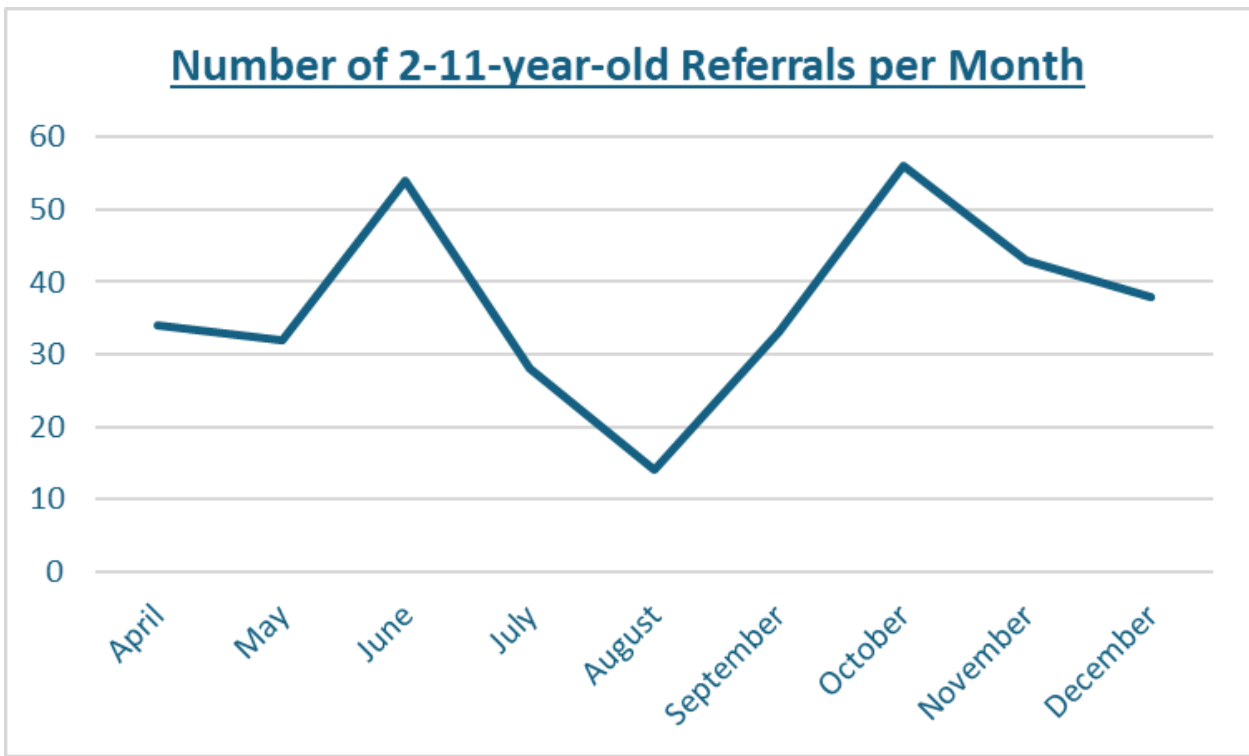
Gender



■ Female ■ Male



Image provided by Urban Outreach



The IThrive Hub received a total of 134 referrals for children aged 2 to 11 years between October and December. This reflects a continued high level of demand following the increase seen in September, after a dip during the summer months. The rise in referrals during October represents the peak of the year, with numbers gradually reducing through November and December, which aligns with typical seasonal patterns.

This quarter's referral trend comes in the context of the ICB extension funding ending in September, resulting in a reduced service offer for this age group. The current figures therefore represent a manageable referral rate that aligns with the level of support now available, ensuring that services can focus on providing timely and effective interventions. Overall, 47% of all referrals received via the IThrive Hub online form during this quarter were for children aged 2 to 11, highlighting the significant proportion of demand within this key age range. Despite funding changes, our providers have demonstrated great adaptability and dedication, continuing to meet the needs of children and families through innovative, flexible, and high-quality emotional wellbeing support.

Key Considerations:

- SENCOs continue to be the highest source of referrals for children aged 2–11, accounting for 24% of all referrals.
- Feedback from children and families remains consistently positive, highlighting the ongoing quality of the provision
- Support needs related to emotional dysregulation, anger, and behavioural concerns remain high.

Referral source	Number of referrals Q2	Number of referrals Q3
Behaviour Support	1	1
CAMHS	4	6
Designated safeguarding officer (school)	3	10
Early Help Hub	-	1
Family Support Officer	3	2
General Practitioner	1	3
Head of year	0	0
Headteacher	0	7
Health Visitors	3	7
Learning Mentor	4	9
Other	1	3
Parent	17	22
Pastoral Support	4	10
Provider	1	2
Public Health Nurses	17	18
SENCO	18	19
Social Services	3	2
Social Prescriber	0	1
Targeted Early Help	0	2
Teacher	1	7

Analysis:

Looking at referral sources for children aged under 11 over these two quarters:

- Parents remained the largest referral group, increasing from 22 in Q2 to 25 in Q3, showing that families continue to actively seek support for their children.
- Public Health Nurses and Health Visitors contributed steadily, with 18 in Q2 and 25 in Q3, reflecting strong engagement from health services in identifying children who need emotional wellbeing support.
- School-based referrals continued to play a key role: Designated Safeguarding Officers (10 → 15), Headteachers (7 → 9), Learning Mentors (9 → 12), and Pastoral Support (10 → 11). This highlights effective partnership working with schools and the important role educational settings play in recognising children's needs.
- SENCO referrals remained high and stable (19 → 20), showing ongoing identification of children with additional learning or developmental needs.
- Other health and community professionals, including CAMHS (6 → 7), General Practitioners (3 → 4), and Targeted Early Help (2 → 3), contributed smaller numbers but remained important sources of referrals.

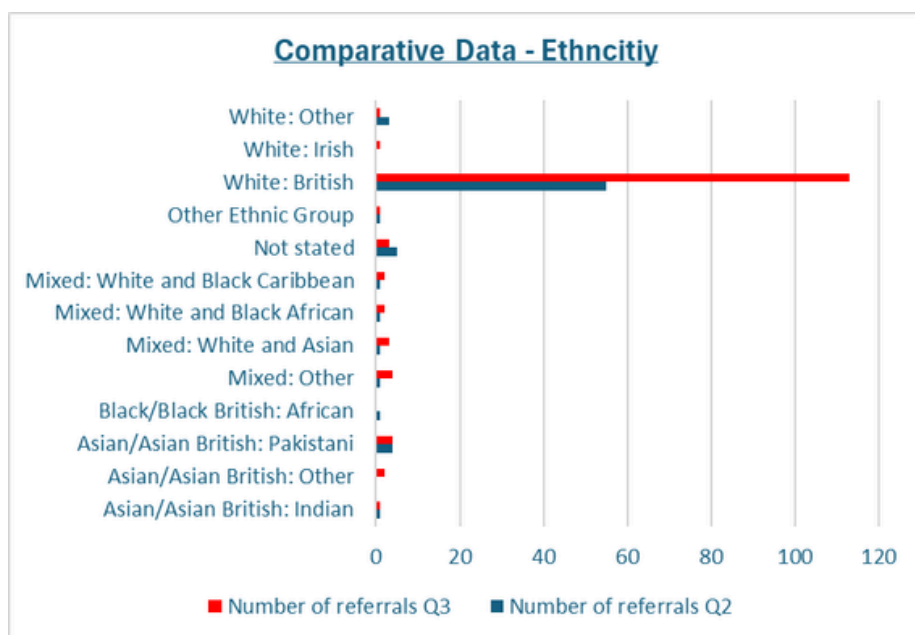
Ethnicity	Number of referrals Q2	Number of referrals Q3
Asian/Asian British: Indian	1	1
Asian/Asian British: Other	0	2
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	4	4
Black/Black British: African	1	0
Mixed: Other	1	4
Mixed: White and Asian	1	3
Mixed: White and Black African	1	2
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1	2
Not stated	5	3
Other Ethnic Group	1	1
White: British	55	113
White: Irish	0	1
White: Other	3	1

Analysis:

Those who identify as White: British consistently represent the largest proportion of referrals, increasing significantly from 55 in Quarter 2 to 113 in Quarter 3.

Despite the overall increase in referrals, several minority ethnic groups also saw stable or rising numbers between July–September and October–December:

- Asian/Asian British: Other saw new referrals in Quarter 3 (0 → 2).
- Mixed ethnicities showed growth, including Mixed: Other (1 → 4), Mixed: White and Asian (1 → 3), Mixed: White and Black African (1 → 2), and Mixed: White and Black Caribbean (1 → 2).
- Asian/Asian British: Pakistani referrals remained stable (4 → 4).



Bolton Together continues to be committed to supporting the diverse communities of Bolton through proactive engagement, including developing links with interpreter services, and implementing internal sign-off processes that enable funded providers to access interpretation support through Bolton Together resources, ensuring accessibility for all families and strengthening equality and diversity so that children and families from all backgrounds, including those whose first language is not English, can access the support they need.

Reason for referral	Number of referrals Q2	Number of referrals Q3
ACE	8	5
Anger issues	20	20
Anxiety	20	42
Attachment difficulties	2	11
Behavioural difficulties	17	13
Bereavement	6	9
Bullying	5	4
DAV	13	21
Eating difficulties	1	1
Emotional health (dysregulation)	39	69
Low mood (Depression)	7	10
Mental health	3	7
Neurodevelopmental (ASD, ADHD)	16	36
OCD behaviours	2	3
Parental Separation	3	12
SEND	7	3
School refusal	3	5
Self-esteem	6	12
Self-harm	6	3
Sexual Assault	1	2
Sexualised Behaviours	2	1
Sleeping Difficulties	3	7
Suicidal ideation	5	2
Systemic issues	5	4
Trauma	6	11

Analysis

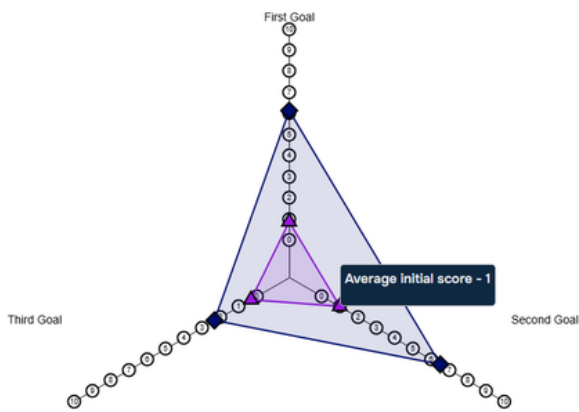
The data between July to December shows an increase in several more complex categories, including:

- Anxiety, which doubled from 20 in Quarter 2 to 42 in Quarter 3, indicating a growing need for support around emotional regulation and coping strategies.
- Emotional health/dysregulation, rising from 39 to 69, highlighting that more children are presenting with challenges in managing their feelings, behaviour, and day-to-day emotional wellbeing.
- Neurodevelopmental needs (ASD, ADHD) increased from 16 to 36, reflecting both ongoing assessment and identification of children requiring specialist support.
- Attachment difficulties and parental separation also saw notable increases (2 → 11 and 3 → 12 respectively), pointing to the impact of family circumstances on children's wellbeing.
- DAV-related issues (13 → 21) and bereavement (6 → 9) further underline the complex life experiences affecting children this quarter.

Emotional health and anxiety were particularly prominent in Quarter 3, reflecting increased need and greater awareness. Providers have responded flexibly, delivering tailored, high-quality support across emotional, behavioural, and developmental needs.

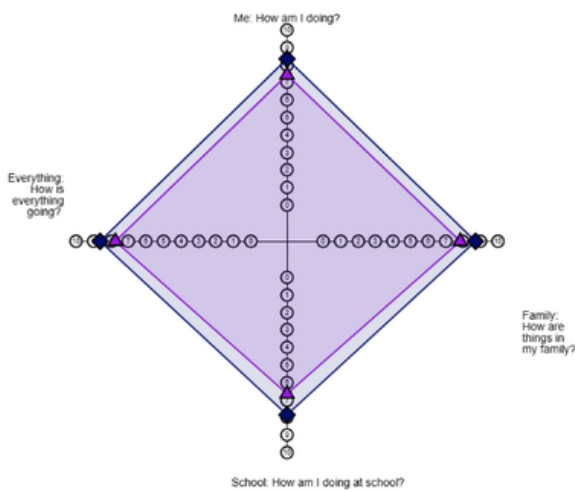
4.3 Quantitative Data - OUTCOME DATA

Goal Based Outcomes

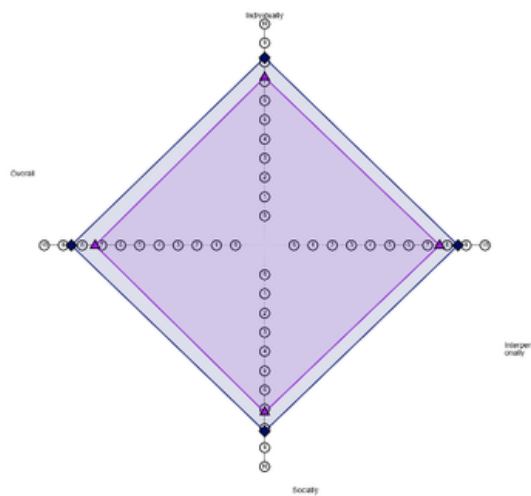


63%
SAW INCREASED OVERALL
ORS SCORES

CORS



ORS



The data demonstrates clear positive changes in children's emotional, social, and behavioural wellbeing over the quarter. Across measures such as RCAD, ORS, and Goal-Based Outcomes, the majority of children showed improvements in anxiety, emotional regulation, and coping skills. Notably, 63% of children had increased overall ORS scores, while 100% achieved their first or second goal, reflecting the impact of tailored, one-to-one and group support. Improvements were seen in areas including worry, sleep, confidence, and social engagement, highlighting the effectiveness of interventions despite reduced service capacity.

These scores are very promising as CAMHS recognise a 40% increase in scores is positive and significant.

The graphs in this report show the average initial scores of young people receiving support (represented by the purple triangle) and the average final scores after support has been completed (represented by the dark blue diamond).

4.4 Safeguarding

During the period of July to September, 1 safeguarding concern was recorded in relation to those aged between 2–11 years old. This case was identified and addressed in line with robust safeguarding protocols. The incident was reported to the child’s social worker, and no further action was required. The family is now closed to social services. All incidents are managed with sensitivity and in the best interest of the young people involved.

Several areas have been identified among providers during this period. These include:

- School attendance and engagement: Some children struggle to attend or arrive on time; this impacts emotional development and learning.
- Family and home challenges: Parental difficulties, family changes, and household routines affect wellbeing and behaviour.
- Emotional regulation and behaviour: Anger, outbursts, and difficulty managing emotions are common; some benefit from 1:1 support or check-ins.
- Anxiety and social skills: Anxiety, difficulty with change, and challenges understanding or responding to peers affect confidence and social interactions.
- Wellbeing and coping strategies: Children are learning relaxation, reflection, and self-esteem strategies, though ongoing support is needed.
- Positive outcomes: Several children show improved wellbeing, confidence, and engagement, with no ongoing concerns.

Safeguarding issues are shared with the relevant Social Worker, Safeguarding or the Integrated Front Door as appropriate. Practitioners are involved, if necessary, in attending Child Action Meetings, Child in Need meetings, Child Protection Meetings and Reviews and Strategy meetings. Accurate and timely information sharing is a key part of practice and essential in the safeguarding of children.

5.0 Qualitative Data

5.1 Qualitative Data - CASE STUDIES

Building Emotional Confidence in a Child Experiencing Family Change - support delivered by Bolton Toy Library

Emily (aged 6) experienced emotional difficulties linked to parental separation and restricted contact with Dad, including night terrors and challenges managing her feelings. Emily attended one-to-one play-based sessions focused on emotional expression and regulation. Her paternal grandmother joined some sessions to promote consistency and understanding across family settings. Emily engaged well, showing increased confidence in expressing emotions. Mum reported the sessions were very helpful in supporting her daughter to understand and manage feelings, feel more settled, and look forward to attending, while strengthening shared understanding within the family.



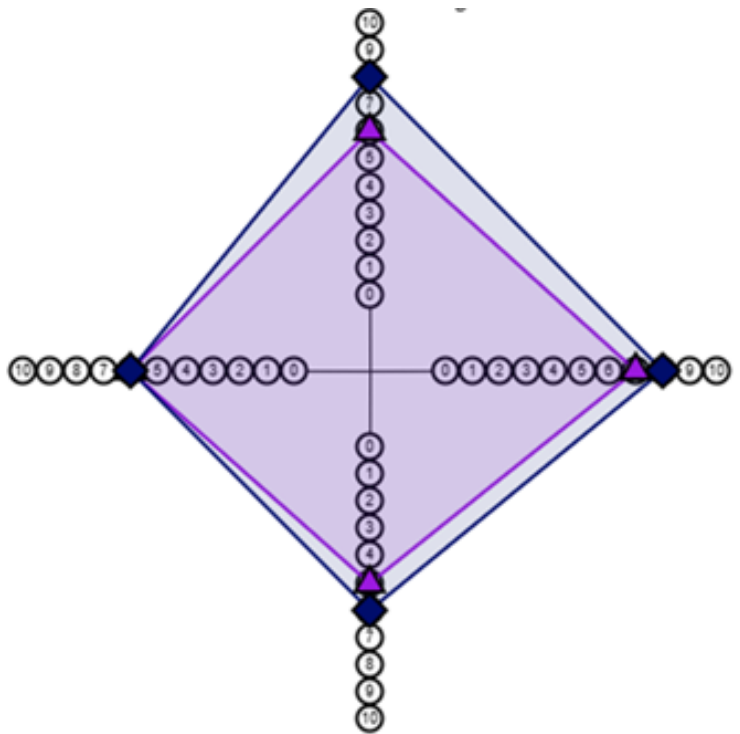
Helping a Child Manage Anger and Build Confidence by Urban Outreach

Chris (aged 10) presented with angry outbursts, both at school and at home. His separated parents have struggled to manage his behaviour. Chris received 1-1 support sessions in school. Initially ensuring his understanding of emotions in general, before moving on to focus on anger directly and helping him understand what makes him angry and how he can deal with situations differently. During our sessions it became apparent that Chris struggles with his situation of living between two homes, so we were able to devote some time to unpack this, as well as time to build his confidence and self-esteem. Chris loved having the 1-1 sessions and a place where he could talk, this appeared to be very impactful for him. Dad is very positive that Chris has turned a corner with his behaviour. His outbursts have been reduced to a bare minimum, and he is much calmer and abiding by rules set.

MY POSITIVE THOUGHTS & AFFIRMATIONS

List some positive thoughts and affirmations you can say to yourself.

#1	All problems have solutions
#2	My mistakes help me learn and grow
#3	I matter
#4	I believe in my goals and dreams
#5	I give myself permission to make mistakes
#6	I can take deep breaths
#7	I am control my emotions
#8	No matter how hard it is I can do it
#9	every thing will be ok
#10	Today I choose to be confident



This graph shows increases in the young person's Outcome Rating Scale (ORS)

Images provided by Urban Outreach



Riley was experiencing difficulties managing his emotions both in and out of school. He was getting involved in arguments and physical fights, sometimes with boys who were threatening him, and struggling with aspects of schoolwork. Home life was generally positive, but he faced challenges linked to his mother's health and occasional behaviour issues. Riley attended one-to-one sessions focused on emotional regulation, accountability, and understanding the impact of behaviour on himself and others. Strategies included discussing consequences, making positive choices, managing anger, and improving peer relationships. Practical activities, such as gardening with a friend, reinforced positive behaviour and provided motivation. Riley developed stronger emotional control, learnt to avoid unnecessary conflicts, and began taking responsibility for his actions. He improved relationships at school, including making friends with previous peers involved in conflicts, and expressed a renewed interest in schoolwork. Riley engaged well in sessions, built trust, and now demonstrates increased confidence and understanding of how to make better choices for his future.

Helping a Child Develop Coping Skills After Early Trauma support delivered by Fortalice



Lucas experienced emotional difficulties linked to early instability, including living with his grandmother due to concerns about his mother's care, past exposure to domestic abuse, and allegations of harm. Key challenges included emotional regulation, anger management, and anxiety, with past contact with his mother triggering heightened anxiety and behavioural outbursts. Lucas attended one-to-one sessions focused on understanding and managing emotions. He learned to identify feelings, explore healthy versus unhealthy behaviours, and develop coping strategies for anger, anxiety, and frustration. Sessions provided a safe environment to build confidence and practice emotional regulation, with ongoing support planned for four more sessions. Lucas has shown significant progress in recognising and expressing emotions, improved sleep, and increased self-awareness. He applies coping strategies effectively, demonstrates healthier behaviours at home, and communicates openly with his grandmother about his sessions. This engagement reflects growing confidence, resilience, and the ability to integrate therapeutic strategies into daily life, supporting ongoing emotional development.

5.2 What Parents and Young People Tell Us

*“Very personable and the support given to our child has been excellent.”
(Parent of a child supported by Urban Outreach)*

*“We LOVE it here, it is the only place my son actually plays nicely. The staff listen well and offer good suggestions and tips. I wouldn't be where I am now without them.”
(Parent supported by Bolton Toy Library)*

“Just a big thank you to Helen for all her help with Zach.” (Parent - Urban Outreach)

“ I loved the support and looked forward to the sessions every week” (Child supported by Fortalice)

*"I liked playing Uno with you and you listened to me" "I can talk to you and you about worries and things that happen and you help me" "I feel comfortable with you"
(Bolton Wanderers in the Community)*



6.0 Key Progress and Next Steps

Over the last quarter, the Bolton Together element of the 0–19 programme has continued to prioritise early intervention and emotional wellbeing support for children and families across the borough, despite increasing demand and the conclusion of ICB extension funding. Between October and December, services remained responsive during a traditionally challenging period, supporting families experiencing heightened pressures linked to anxiety, emotional regulation, neurodevelopmental needs, and family change.

During this period, 126 children and 96 parents received personalised emotional wellbeing support. Feedback from children and families has remained consistently positive, with families reporting that they felt listened to, supported, and reassured. Outcome data demonstrates clear progress, with the majority of children showing improvements in emotional wellbeing, emotional regulation, and coping skills, reinforcing the value of early, relational, and child-centred interventions.

Key highlights include:

- 126 children and 96 parents supported through tailored emotional wellbeing interventions.
- We welcomed our 2 new Navigators for Neurodiversity.
- Positive outcomes across providers, including improvements in anxiety, emotional regulation, confidence, and coping skills.
- 100% of children achieved progress towards at least one identified goal.
- High levels of engagement and satisfaction, with children reporting that they felt listened to and taken seriously.
- Effective response to increased referral demand, particularly in October following the return to school.
- Strong partnership working with schools, health services, and community organisations.
- Practical and emotional support provided to families during the winter and festive period, helping to reduce isolation and stress.

Next Quarter:

- Launching an Expression of Interest to Bolton Together members regarding the development of a programme focusing on families of children aged 5–10 with neurodevelopmental concerns. ***This is being funded by the ICB.***
- Developing an early support neurodevelopmental offer to help families navigate needs while awaiting assessment or diagnosis. ***This is being funded by the ICB.***
- Continuing to prioritise early intervention for anxiety and emotional regulation.
- Strengthening engagement with under-represented communities to improve equitable access.
- Refining referral pathways to ensure support remains timely, proportionate, and sustainable.
- Launching access to interpreters to improve access for those with English as a second language



We extend our thanks to our providers, commissioners and partners for their support and collaboration in working towards our shared goal to improve mental health for children and young people in Bolton.

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