



IThrive Navigator Report

April - June 2026



Bolton Together

Registered Charity in England and Wales (1163466)

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Introduction

Welcome to our report for the April - June 2026 quarter for the Bolton Together iThrive Navigator offer 2-19 (25 with SEND).

Following the previous quarter of the offer where our Navigators Emma and Lauren began to support families and establish the offer, this quarter has seen a positive response from the Bolton community, both from parents and professionals. Our Navigators have supported with a wide range of needs including support around school, advice and signposting, access to resources and information, and providing a space for parents to express their worries without fear of judgement.

During the quarter, our Navigators have remained flexible and adaptable, overcoming challenges such as non engagement and accessibility barriers, with a clear focus on effective communication with both the families and other professionals also involved.

Our Navigators have focused on establishing an active caseload, determining capacities, and improving the offer for their families. As part of improving the Navigator offer to increase access to support for families, our Navigators have established monthly outreach sessions, with their successful first session in June. The positive response received highlights the need and usefulness of these sessions, especially regarding early access to support.

Our Navigators were able to attend the Greater Manchester Autism event, meeting other professionals and agencies across Greater Manchester. This event also enabled our Navigators to meet the Navigator for the Manchester area, facilitating a discussion on key themes, gaps in support, and the possibility of linking with other Navigators.

The Navigators also attended a community event hosted by Horwich Parish Primary school.

Our Navigators have both continued to develop their professional skills and knowledge by accessing training opportunities, workshops and webinars.

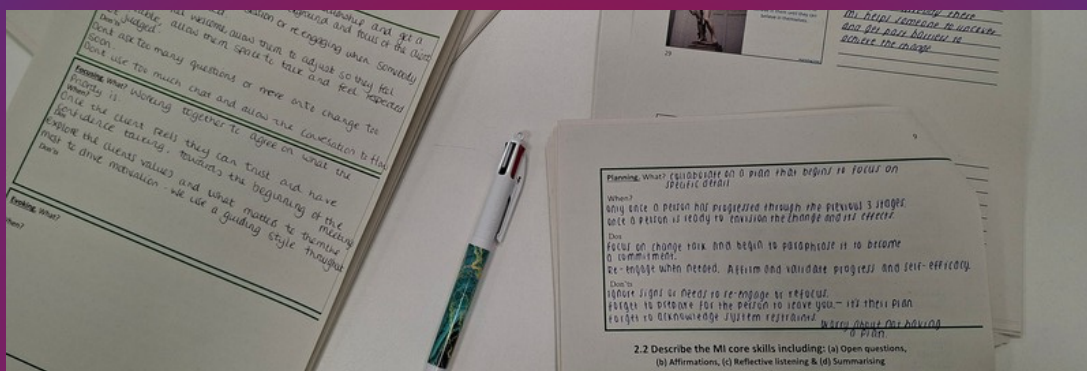


The Navigators



Events

The Navigators attended the Greater Manchester Neurodivergence Collective Event. Various organisations came together to highlight the work they are doing in the community. Connections were made with local CICs and the Neurodiversity Navigator for Manchester. It was great to hear about the opportunities available in Greater Manchester and the impact being made.



Training Opportunities

Motivational Interviewing - This training course highlighted the various ways to encourage and empower people to make a change. The Navigators have used this training to understand parent concerns on a deeper level, remaining non-judgemental and reassuring.

Sensory Toolkit workshop - The Navigators found this most useful for learning different ways to explain sensory preferences to parents, as well as suggest potential strategies for home, enabling the Navigators to provide additional advice and resources to their families.

Inclusive Mainstream Fund Webinar - It was interesting to have an insight into new school funding and how this can be used in mainstream schools to create a more inclusive environment.

Community Engagement

Horwich Parish Community Event - The Navigators were invited by the Sendco from Horwich Parish School, to attend their Community Hub. This was a great opportunity for networking for the Navigators, meeting agencies such as Bolton Behaviour Support.

Sharples School Support Week - This took place for year 11 pupils. The market stall themed event was the first to see the Navigators newly printed resources regarding understanding Autism and ADHD. These can also be found on the Bolton Together Website at <https://bolton-together.org.uk/ithrive-support/ithrive-for-neurodiversity/#resources>

CLICK HERE



What is an Outreach Session?

A space to speak to one of the Navigators, sharing concerns and queries regarding neurodiverity.

The sessions focus on early support, especially for those who are on the Navigator waitlist. However, an existing referral to Navigation is not required.

How do they work?

Anyone can book onto a 30 minute timeslot using the booking form on the flyer, or by contacting one of the Navigators.

They will attend their appointment on the arranged date with the Navigator to discuss their concerns.

The Navigator will determine the next steps with the person, whether this is basic signposting, giving access to resources and information, or whether further work on a Navigator caseload is needed.

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<https://bolton-together.org.uk/>

IThrive Navigators for Neurodiversity OUTREACH SESSIONS

Upcoming dates:

- When?** 25th June 9:30 - 12:00
Where? Harvey Best Start Family Hub
- When?** 30th July 9:30 - 12:30
Where? Farnworth Best Start Family hub
- When?** 13th August 9:30 - 12:30
Where? Harvey Best Start Family Hub

What is Navigation?
The purpose of our IThrive Navigators is to support families as they explore neurodiversity, including Autism and ADHD. We work closely with parents to explain next steps, help families understand the pathways available, share information and resources, and connect families to services and support. We work with children aged 5-19 (25 with SEND).

What can I expect?
30-minute slots are available with one of the Navigators to discuss your concerns and provide the opportunity to ask questions, and consider possible next steps for your family. This is an informal conversation to find out more about your family's and your child's needs and strengths. We will provide information and resources and agree whether further support from a Navigator would be useful to help you to achieve your goals.

For more information on how to book:

Booking Form
CLICK HERE

✉ Emma.Griffiths@boltontogether.org.uk
✉ Lauren.Gregory@boltontogether.org.uk

Outcome:

The Navigators had 6 bookings onto their 1st session on 25th June.

All 6 families turned up for their appointment.

Out of the 6 sessions, 2 became referrals through to the Navigator caseloads. The other 4 sessions consisted of signposting to external agencies and enabling access to information and resources.

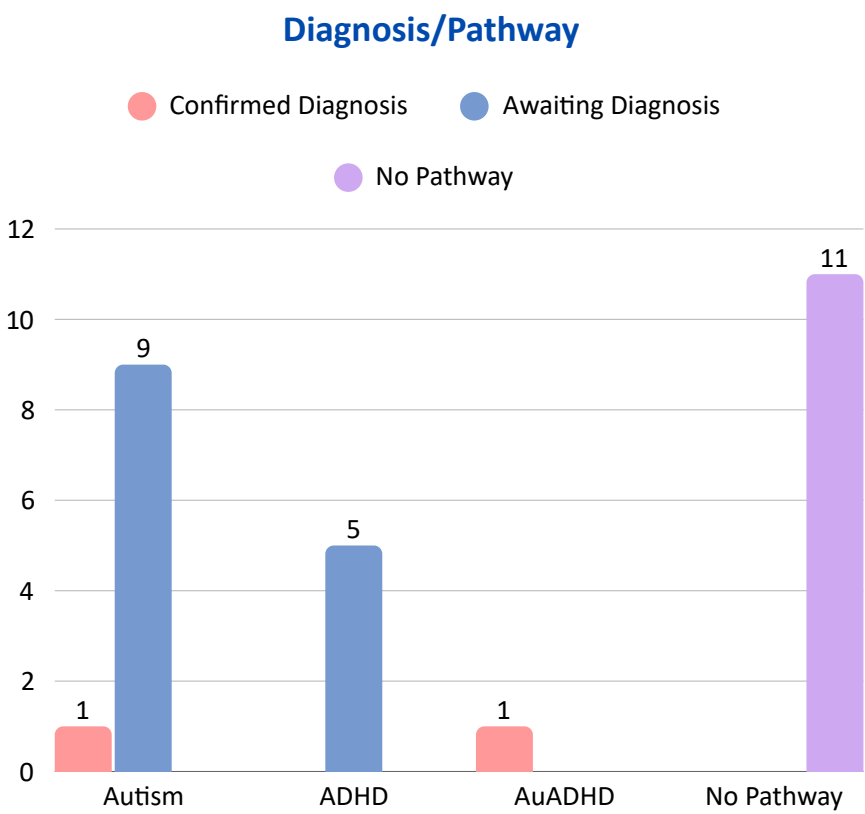
What worked well? What can be improved?

Positives: Using different family hubs around Bolton ensure the service is accessible, specifically for those who cannot travel. The 30 minute slots proved to be an adequate amount of time for parents to express their concerns.

Improvements: The Navigators will dedicate an hour to telephone and Teams appointments which will reduce barriers for people who may not be able to attend in person. This will be implemented from the next Outreach Session. The booking form has also been improved to include an option to select a remote meeting.

Total Number of Referrals Accepted this Quarter	27
Total Number of Families Met for Initial Meeting	23
Total number cases open	48
Total number cases closed	19
Total number waiting for support to begin	0
Total number supported at Outreach Sessions	6

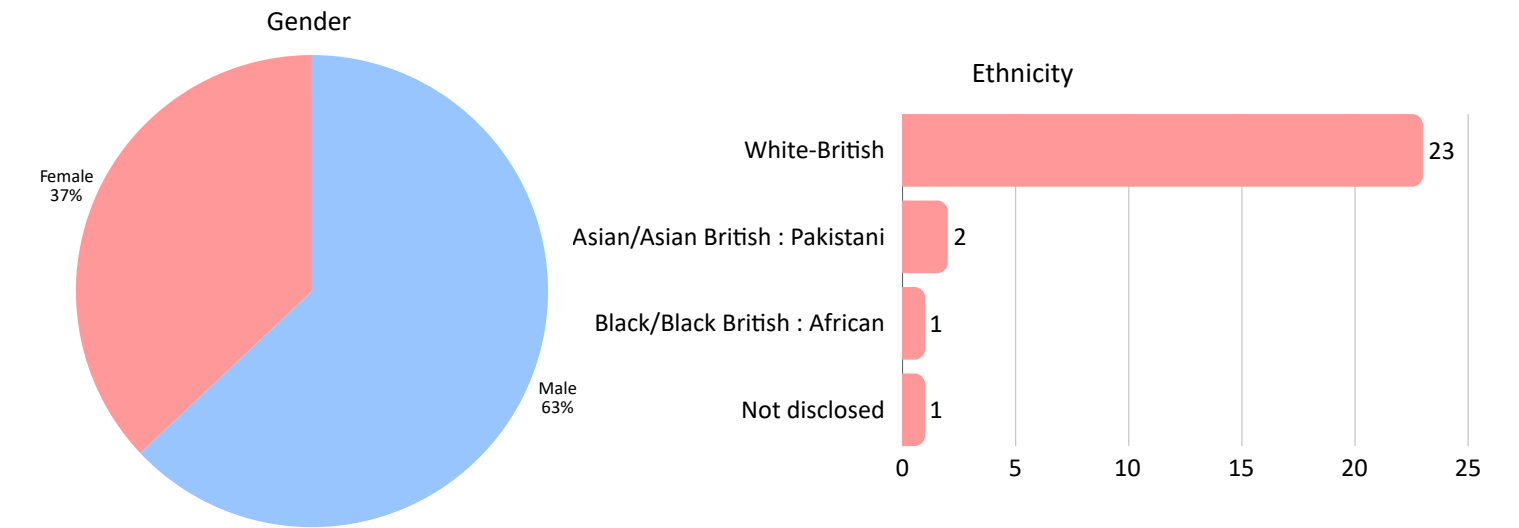
From the data above we see an increase in the total number of cases the Navigators have open. After assessing capacity and demand, the decision was made to increase capacity to reduce waiting list build up. This change has proven to be successful as our Navigators have been able to operate with no waiting list this quarter. We can also see that 19 cases have been closed this quarter, which is an increase to last quarter’s 5 cases. Of those 19 cases, 4 of the cases were closed due to inactivity, with the remaining cases being closed due to the achievement of goals/support.



This quarter we have seen an increase in young people waiting on a pathway for a diagnosis, with very little or no young people with an existing diagnosis.

Consistent with last quarter, we see a large proportion of families are on no pathway at all. This supports the notion that a young person does not need to have accessed a diagnostic pathway to be eligible for support.

Demographics

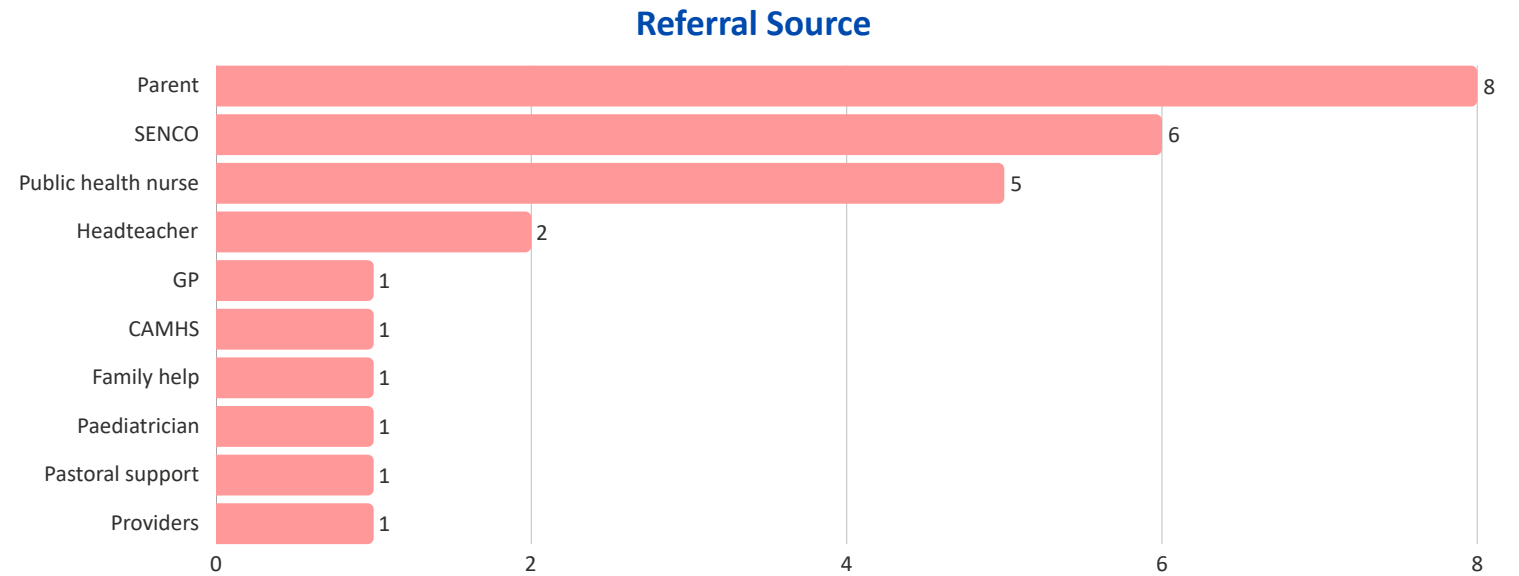


Consistent with our previous report, referrals received for Navigator support have been predominantly White: British males.

Other ethnic groups such as Pakistani, and Black ethnic groups demonstrate a low level of referrals, despite a slight increase as compared with last quarter. 1 referral was recorded as not disclosed.

This data continues to suggest a potential cultural barrier or lack of awareness of Neurodiversity within other cultures. The difference in gender seen here continues to suggest girls are less likely to be recognised as Neurodivergent as compared with boys.

To combat this, the Navigators plan to attend some Holiday and Activity Fund (HAF) events within more diverse community settings to answer questions specific to the Navigation offer.



The data above demonstrates the wide range of sources that refer into the offer. Referrals from parents and SENCOs remain the most common referrers, which supports the data from the previous quarter. Additionally, parents are also being signposted to Navigation via Paediatrics and CAMHS, suggesting these agencies are allowing parents to decide to pursue pathways, like Navigation, that focus on supporting their child’s needs rather than diagnosis. Public Health Nurse referrals have increased significantly this quarter, potentially due to more professionals becoming aware of the offer.

This highlights the importance education and community professionals have on early identification of needs.

Age Group at Point of Referral

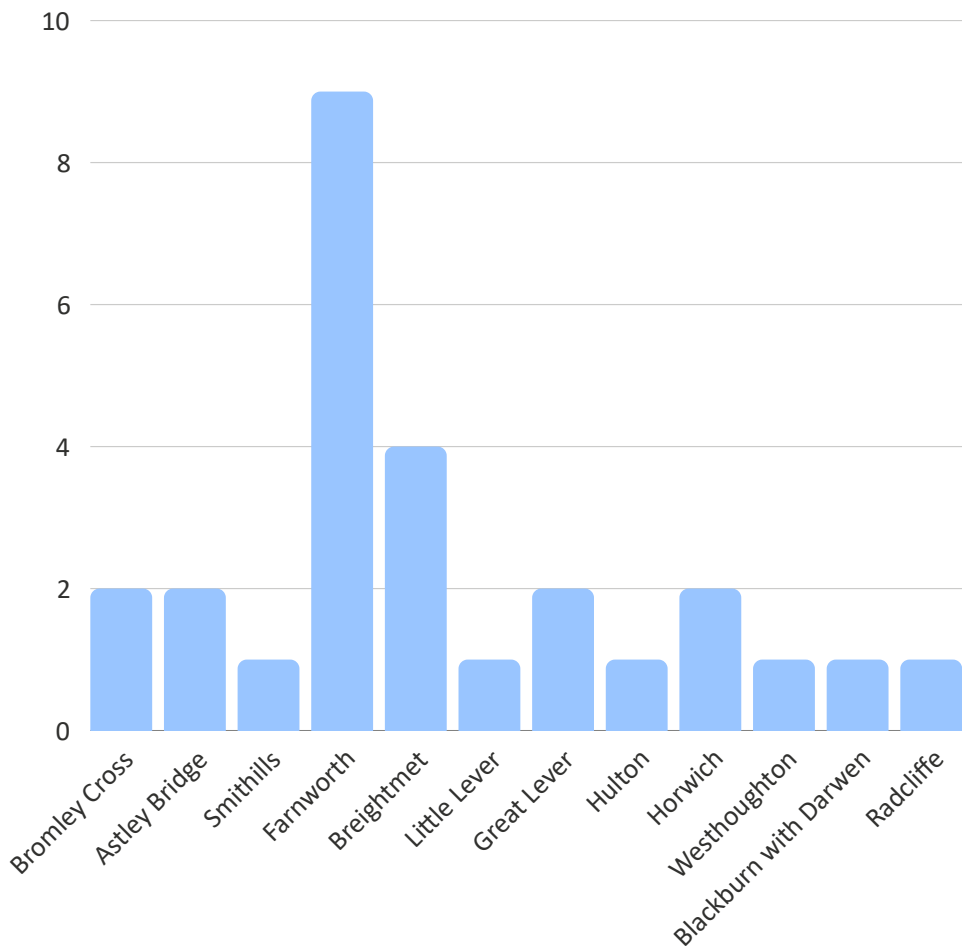
Age Group at Point of Referral	Number	Percentage
2-5	1	3.7%
5-8	14	51.9%
8-11	8	29.6%
11-19	4	14.8%

- 5-8 age group represents the highest proportion of referrals this quarter
- 8-11 age group represents a moderate proportion of referrals

The data for this quarter has shown an increase in referrals for young people aged 5-8 as compared with our previous report. This could be due to changes in iThrive funding for neurodiverse children, which now offers support for children aged between 5 and 10. Alternatively, changes in the diagnosis criteria for ADHD and ASD may have also lead referrers to move away from statutory referrals.

Last quarter we saw more referrals for young people aged 11-19. However this age group is among the lowest proportion of referrals this quarter. This may be due to coming toward the end of the academic year, with young people looking forward to the summer holiday and needs within school settings becoming less of a concern.

Referrals by Neighbourhoods



This data shows a significant amount of referrals coming from Farnworth.

The neighbourhoods in this graph have been grouped into North, East, South, and West to demonstrate need in specific areas of Bolton.

- Bromley Cross, Astley Bridge, and Smithills all make up the North area.
- Farnworth, Brightmet, and Little Lever make up the Eastern area
- Great Lever and Hulton make up the Southern area.
- Horwich and Westhoughton make up the Western area.
- Blackburn with Darwen and Radcliffe both fall outside of the Bolton area with Radcliffe being part of the Manchester area, and Blackburn with Darwen a part of Blackburn.

From this data, it is evident there is an increasing need along the eastern areas of Bolton for Neurodiversity support (36.1% last quarter, 51.9% this quarter).

Area	Percentage this quarter	Percentage last quarter
North	18.5%	16.7%
East	51.9%	36.1%
South	11.1%	27.8%
West	11.1%	19.4%
Non Bolton Area	7.4%	0%

Parents experienced:

A safe and honest space to talk without feeling judged.

- 100% of parents said they were taken seriously.
- 100% of parents felt they had all the support available with the service.
- 100% of parents felt they were involved in the discharge of the service.

100%

Would
recommmend to
a friend

Allocated to Bolton Wanderers
in the Community
Neurodiversity offer

14

Signposted to parenting
course: Riding the Rapids

10

Allocated to other providers

13

Signposted to parenting course:
Parenting workshops

16

Signposted to Parent Peer
Support

20

Supporting parents to advocate
for their child in education

16

Families describe the iThrive Navigator offer as a positive service, providing them with the reassurance, confidence and strategies to manage their child's Neurodiversity.

Many parents reported feeling listened to and able to speak honestly with the Navigators, where they may not have felt able to with other services.

Parents said:

- "Lauren was amazing, she handled everything with me perfectly"
- "Emma was very friendly and has done her best to help with the resources available."
- "She listened to me and pointed me in the right direction"
- "Very engaged."

Case Studies

Joel and his Mum's Journey with Emma

Joel, aged 5, and his mum were referred to the iThrive Navigators with concerns regarding sleeping and eating issues, which may be contributed to by sensory issues. Alongside this, Joel's mum was looking for some support with school as Joel had not long moved to a new school after having a very poor experience at his previous school regarding neurodiversity support and safeguarding.

Since our first meeting, Joel's mum and myself sat down with Joel's SENCO and class teacher to discuss potential adjustments to be put in place and facilitate a positive relationship between mum and school professionals. This meeting was extremely positive, with Joel's mum admitting she feels much more reassured having had this meeting.

Following our first meeting, I signposted mum to different parenting courses to support her understanding of how Neurodiversity can affect eating and sleeping habits. Mum has since told me she has booked onto 3 of these courses.

Myself and Joel's mum sat down for a 2nd meeting to discuss our progress and any further concerns. This enabled mum to express how Joel struggles with dysregulation and communication. Mum believed that as Joel struggled verbally, this created a lot of frustration as he couldn't express his needs and wishes. This prompted the discussion of visuals that Joel could use to aid his communication.

I have therefore created a selection of visual cards, known as PECS, that mum can print out and trial at home with Joel. These cards will hopefully aid communication, making Joel's home environment more inclusive of his needs.

Joel's mum has expressed an improvement in confidence and understanding of Joel's needs, feeling much more reassured and supported by the professionals currently involved.

"It was lovely to meet you, the kids absolutely loved coming to meet you."

Case Studies

Riley (aged 8) and family's journey with Lauren

Riley's referral to the iThrive Navigators listed concerns of emotions regulation, friendships with children his own age and being a 'flight risk' in school.

During our initial meeting we discussed how Riley is a chatty little boy who really enjoys being around adults and playing board games. However, he struggled to understand his emotions and feelings, becoming anxious with new things, and could sometimes feel sick due to the excitement.

We discussed ways to help him to understand his emotions. I signposted Mum to a website where she could access work sheets that can be done at home and in school. We had a teams meeting to discuss ways of completing the work and the family really enjoyed doing this. They kept the work around the house in sight and discussed them regularly in the hope that Riley was able to remember these strategies and use them without prompt.

Riley didn't enjoy going to school and soon became 'a flight risk' due to hearing voices telling him that he needed to get out of the class room.

During one of our discussions, we found that Riley was seated at the back of the classroom with no doors or windows close by. I asked if we could try to have him seated at the end of the row closer to the door. He may need to see an exit so he doesn't feel trapped or claustrophobic.

Once seated near the door, Riley expressed that he felt calmer and that he didn't need to get out of the classroom, even more so if the door was left open. During times where this wasn't possible, he was placed at the end of rows and was able to use fidget toys to calm him. Riley was able to concentrate more during lessons and became less anxious.

Riley is also due to start support with BWitC next month.

"It was a pleasure to of met with you on Friday,
we both come away feeling listened to and understood!"

An increase in referrals with Emotional Based School Avoidance as the main concerns has been noted this quarter.

Children as young as 5 years old are struggling to go into school. The Navigators have had parents express they have to leave their child upset at the school doors.

Some parents have expressed their child experiences physical symptoms of anxiety the night before school, or morning of, causing significant emotional distress for the child before their school days begins. In some of the Navigation cases, parents report their children attempt to abscond from them in order to not go to school, have significant episodes of dysregulation, or be physically unwell.

Children who do not attend school or are on part time timetables

9

Referrals with emotional dysregulation as a concern this quarter

22

Referrals with lack of attention/concentration as a concern this quarter

12

This quarter there has been an increase in referrals to the Neurodiversity offer for children aged 5 - 8.

The majority of the referrals show concerns for emotional dysregulation and lack of attention.

In some cases, it has been found that the use of screen time takes up a lot of the children's free time. It is important that professionals share the correct advice on screen time, ensuring this is accessible to parents.

It has been useful to be able to signpost to the sessions facilitated within the family hubs in Bolton. In particular, the Bolton Shared Care SEND Support drop in and the Family Help parent drop in on Saturdays. Parents are able to discuss their concerns and discover strategies they may be able to use within their home.

What young people, parents and professionals are telling us

"I really appreciate everything you have done for us"

-Parent email

"That makes me feel a lot better....that puts my mind at ease thank you."

-Parent email

"I feel like a weight has been lifted off of my shoulders"

-Parent after a school meeting

"Thanks for all your support for the family"

-Email from Bolton IAS

"Thank you so much. I didn't know where to turn or who to speak to. I knew you would be able to help"

-Parent during phone call

"Thank you so much for your support; it is truly appreciated. For once, I feel listened to regarding **** difficulties."

-Email from parent after 2nd follow up meeting

"Thankyou so much for coming along with me, i feel better going next time now."

-Parent after a school meeting

Next Steps

The next quarter will focus on continuing to support families in the community, ensuring access to information, support and advice. A key priority for the next quarter will be continuing the outreach sessions within the community, with the potential to increase these sessions to twice a month, depending on demand.

The Navigators will also be looking into creating a space for the Navigators in other Greater Manchester areas to come together to discuss key themes, gaps in support, and a space to share information.

The Navigators will be reviewing resources available to parents, with the potential to create additional resources to reduce the gaps in information and support.

Overall, the focus remains on early access to support, information and advocating for families of Neurodiverse children.



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

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