



London Borough
of Hounslow

Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel Deep Dive 2025-26

Report

ONE
HOUNSLOW

Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel 2025-26

Chair: Cllr Emma Siddhu

Vice-Chair: Cllr Allan Joseph

Panel Members:

- Cllr Aqsa Ahmed
- Cllr Rasheed Bhatti
- Cllr Ghazala Butt
- Cllr Hira Dhillon
- Cllr Bishnu Gurung
- Cllr Farhaan Rehman
- Cllr Daanish Saeed

Co-optees:

- Kamran Asghar
- Jenny Capstick MBE
- Rachel Jerrome
- Chris Kettel
- Rev. Michael Maguire

Meeting dates

- 19th June 2025
- 23rd September 2025
- 24th November 2025
- 4th March 2026



Deep dive report and recommendations

Families First Partnership Programme

Date	Engagement type	Activity
19 th June 2025	CYP Meeting 1	- Overview of, and introduction to, panel deep dive process - Data on groups vulnerable young people in Hounslow - Discussion of potential topics, and agreement of deep dive focus on <i>Families First Partnership Programme (FFPP)</i>
23 rd September 2025	CYP Meeting 2	- Development of Terms of Reference - Presentation on FFPP objectives and Hounslow approach to multi-agency safeguarding by Jennifer Hopper (Assistant Director, Family Help & Protection)
24 th November 2025	CYP Meeting 3	Received a presentation on Families First Partnership Programme implementation in Hounslow from Jennifer Hopper (Assistant Director, Family Help & Protection)
10 th –25 th February 2026	Engagement	Members and co-optees visited the Hope Church community café & foodbank, and the Kids' Play café, hearing from parents, volunteers, and childminders around the challenges that families face currently
4 th March 2026	CYP Meeting 4	- Reflections on engagements with community organisations - Update on spending decisions and developments of FFPP in Hounslow - Consideration of evidence and developing workshop recommendations

Overview of deep dive process

Scope & Define

- Scope and research priority
- Understand current activities and evidence base
- Consider any equalities issues
- Agree the key questions
- Agree Terms of Reference

Research

- Consider data & evidence
- Review good practice
- Consider relevant research
- Understand service activities and processes
- Call for evidence from experts, groups, residents

Engage

- Engage service users, residents, VCSE organisations, experts and interested groups
- Specifically consider Equalities Groups

Recommend

- Analyse all the evidence
- Identify implications for Hounslow & specific groups
- Make innovative, challenging recommendations
- Sign off recommendations
- Submit recommendations

Terms of Reference

The main areas of investigation are:

- **KLOE1** – What key outcomes for children and young people are impacted by welfare or safeguarding concerns and the move towards early help/intervention as expected in the FFPP?
- **KLOE2** – How does early help/intervention in Hounslow operate at the moment, and what developments will be required to move to the FFPP approach?
- **KLOE3** – What is the Council's current delivery plan for the FFPP?
- **KLOE4** – Which groups of children and young people would particularly benefit from FFPP support?

Executive summary

- There are many different categories of vulnerable children and young people in Hounslow, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those living in poverty, those living in temporary accommodation, and those who are looked-after. **Adverse child experiences have been shown to increase unsafe behaviour** and exposure to unsafe situations later in life.
- The Council has the opportunity, through the Families First Partnership Programme, to **strengthen its early intervention strategies**, potentially reducing reliance on high-cost statutory services. Over recent years, the Council has been committed to safely reducing looked-after children (LAC) numbers, meaning that longer-term changes are the focus of allocated FFPP funding.
- FFPP, and its implementation in Hounslow, will allow for the championing of **effective, joined-up and integrated services**. In particular, the Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection Team, and Family Group Decision-Making areas are being increasingly synergised.
- Support services for vulnerable parents/carers and families exist across the Borough, which are free of charge and situated in community spaces and places. However, there are **barriers** to accessing these, including transportation, English language capabilities, mental health, and awareness.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Pre-decision scrutiny	Examining, analysing, and evaluating information, options, or potential decisions <i>before</i> a final decision is made on a policy.
Multi-agency working	This involves organisations taking joint responsibility for finding effective ways of working together, making joint decisions where possible and seeking and providing information. ^{1}
Family Group Decision-Making	A structured process that leads to a family group meeting, helping families to identify their own strengths and solutions, and mobilising resources and alliances in their identified network. ^{2}
Early Help	The Hounslow Early Help Offer is a collection of services which aim to provide effective support to families as soon as difficulties start, to prevent them from getting worse. ^{3}

Panel Meeting 1

*Potential topics, data on vulnerable young people and
evaluating pre-decision scrutiny*

19 June 2025

What is the Families First Partnership?

- New scheme intended to allow councils to invest in providing early help to support families.
- Aims to foster multi-agency working by bringing together a range of services, including education, health, social care, housing and voluntary sector partners.
- Ultimate goal to improve outcomes for children and families experiencing challenges such as poor attendance, financial hardship, housing instability, domestic abuse or emerging mental health needs.

The Panel might want to find out...

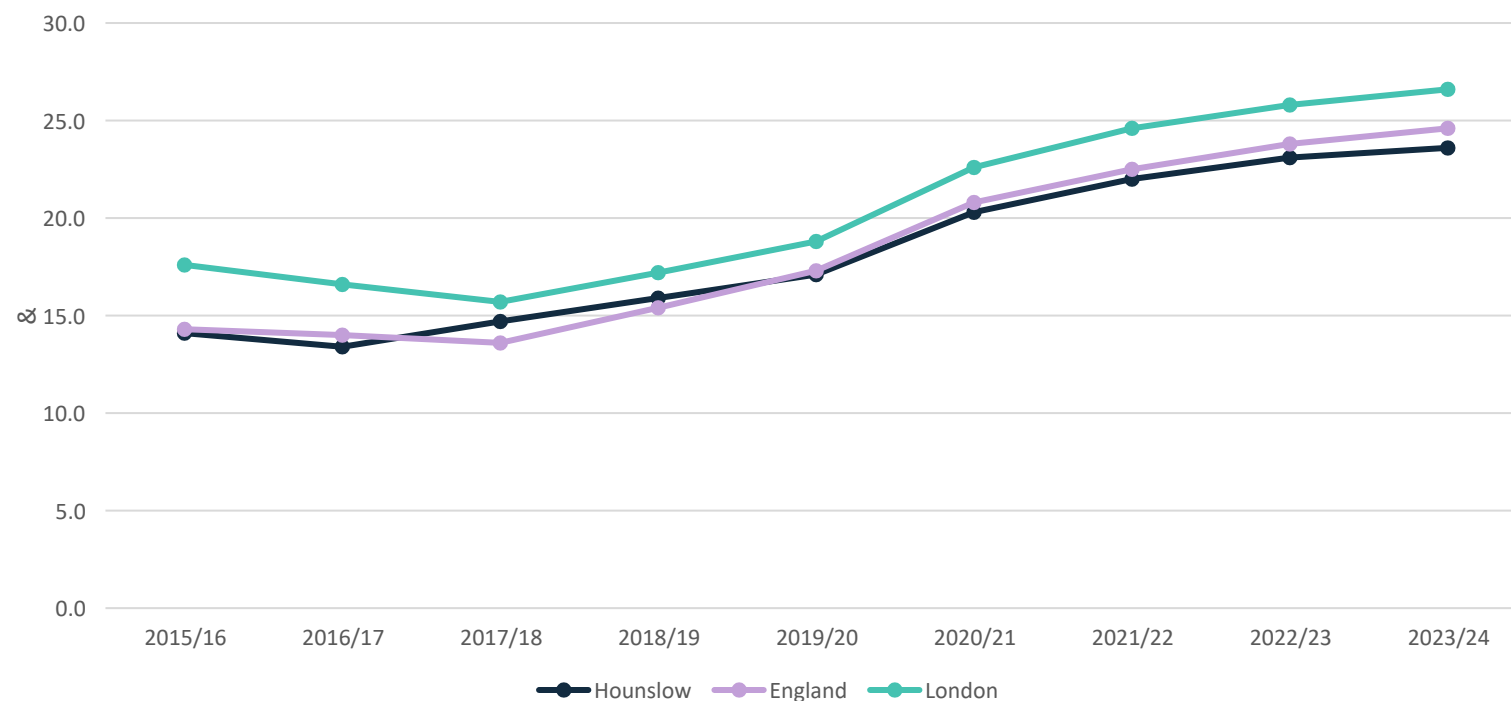
- What the impact and effectiveness of the Families First model is in addressing need at the earliest opportunity?
- How can it reduce demand on high-cost services such as children's social care.

What will Families First look like in Hounslow?

- Families First Partnership in Hounslow poised to benefit from significant national investment through the government's Supporting Families programme, which has allocated up to £500 million for 2025/26
- This funding aims to bolster early help services by fostering multi-agency collaboration, enhancing data systems, and streamlining access to support for families facing complex challenges such as unemployment, poor school attendance, mental and physical health issues, and domestic abuse.
- Opportunity to strengthen its early intervention strategies, potentially reducing the reliance on high-cost statutory services.
- The Supporting Families programme emphasises a "whole family" approach, encouraging local authorities to develop integrated service models that address the interconnected needs of families.

Vulnerable young people in Hounslow

Percentage of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) in Hounslow, London & England (%)



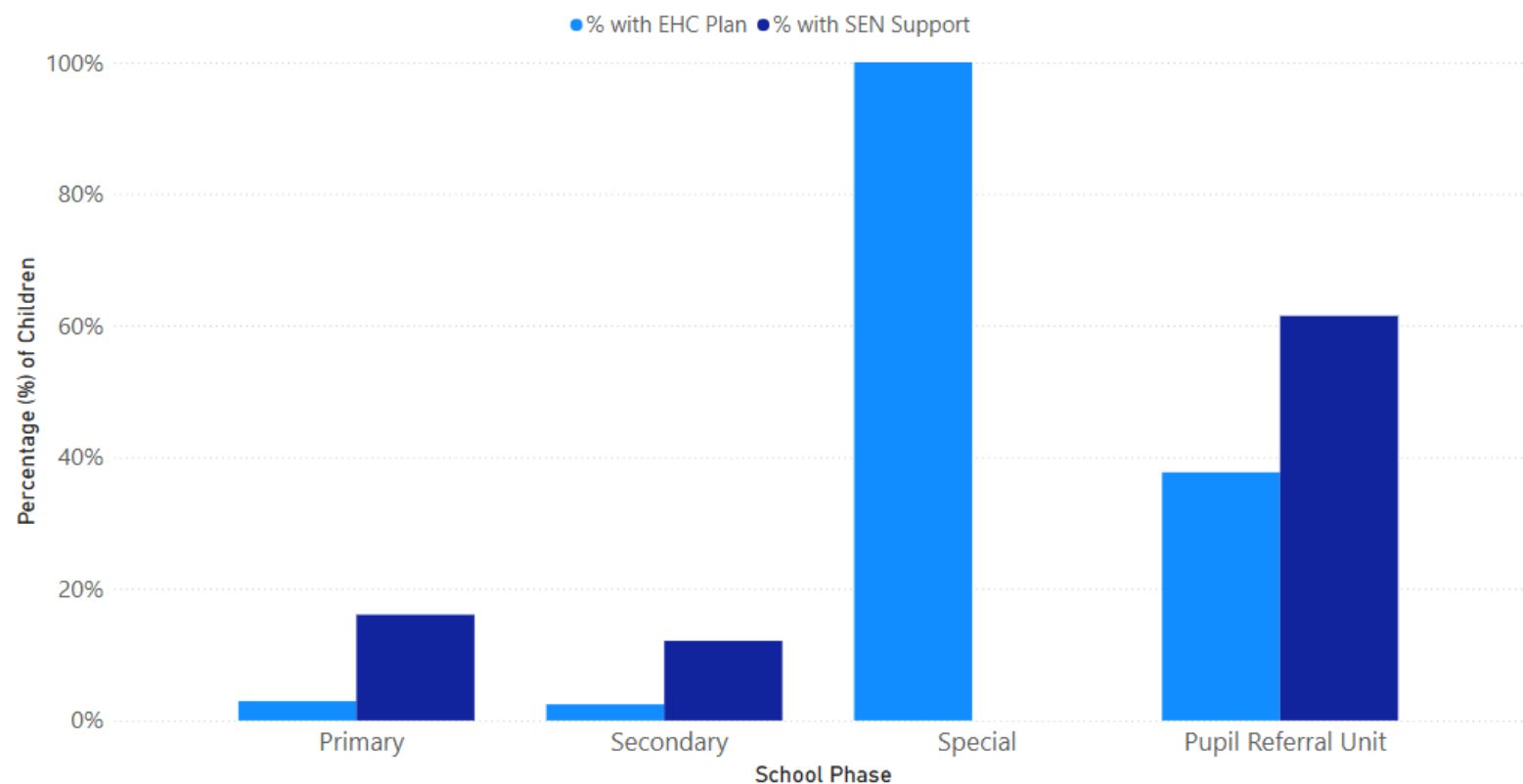
- 20-23% of children eligible for FSM since 2020/21
- For SF alternative provision schools, Hounslow has 71% FSM eligibility vs. 61% nationally, and 50% across London

Source: Department for Education. Figures exclude independent schools.

Vulnerable young people in Hounslow

Figure 1. Hounslow pupils with a support plan by school phase and support plan type

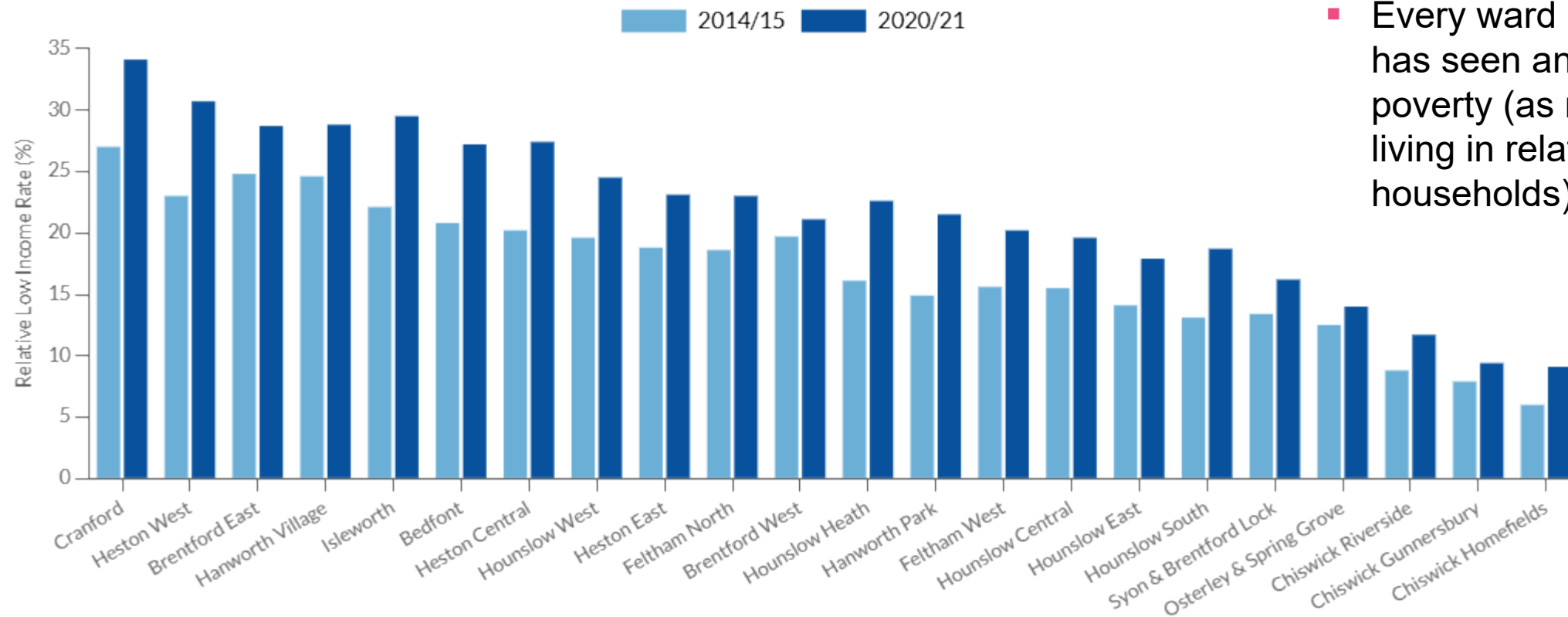
Source: School Census - Spring 2024



- More than one in 10 secondary school children receive SEN support in Hounslow
- Woodbridge Park Education Service (PRU) is disproportionately represented by young people with EHC Plans or SEN support (38% and 61%) respectively

Source: Hounslow Data Hub.

Vulnerable young people in Hounslow

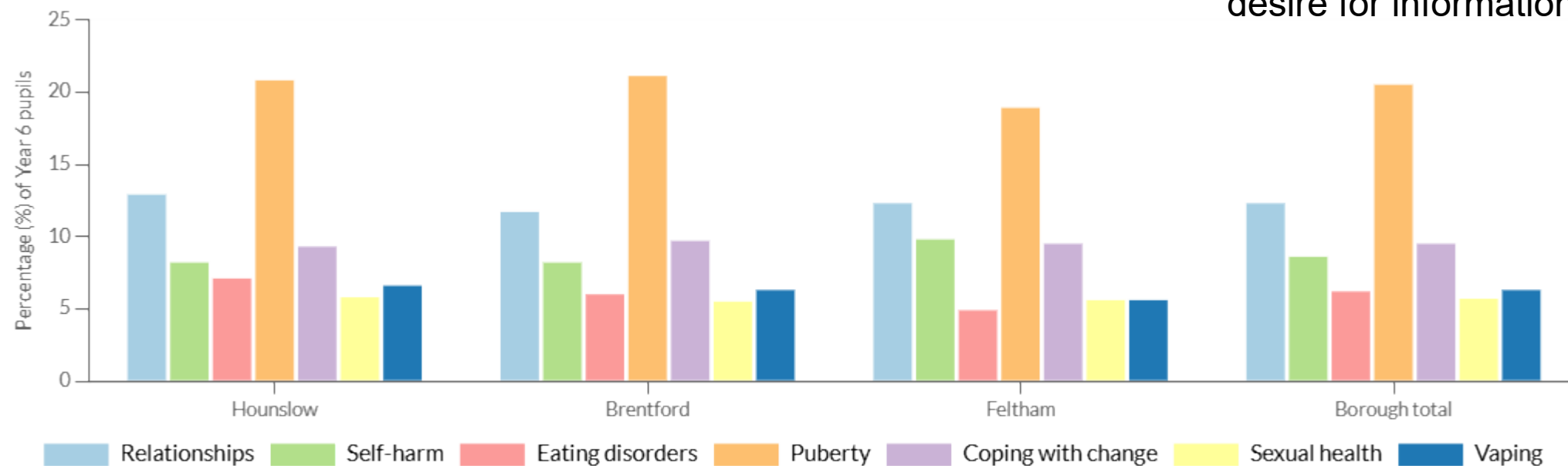


- Every ward in the Borough has seen an increase in child poverty (as measured by % living in relative low-income households)

Source: Hounslow Data Hub.

Vulnerable young people in Hounslow

- Pupils transitioning from secondary school (Year 6) have expressed a desire for information in several areas.



Source: Hounslow Data Hub.

Panel Meeting 2

*Developing the Terms of Reference, overview of
Hounslow's FFPP implementation plan*

23 September 2025

Terms of Reference

- Over the municipal year 2025-26, the Children and Young People (CYP) Scrutiny Panel is set to conduct a deep dive into the potential benefits (and what they may be) to families and children from Families First Partnership (FFP) funding.
- The panel's first meeting involved an agreement that there is potential to explore and impact how this funding could be allocated to support a host of vulnerable children and young people in Hounslow.

The main areas of investigation could be:

- What key outcomes for children and young people are impacted by welfare or safeguarding concerns and the move towards early help/intervention as expected in the FFPP?
- How does early help/intervention in Hounslow operate at the moment, and what developments will be required to move to the FFPP approach?
- What is the Council's current delivery plan for the FFPP?
- Which groups of children and young people would particularly benefit from FFPP support?



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The Families First Partnership Programme

Scrutiny Panel Presentation

Jennifer Hopper – Interim AD Family Help & Protection

Leigh-Anne Adamah – Early Help Strategic Manager

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The Families First Partnership Programme

Context & drivers:

Launched in April 2025, this is a **national programme of social care reforms** in response to:

- * Independent Review of Children's Social Care 2022
- * National review into the murders of Star Hobson & Arthur Labinjo-Hughes
- * The Competition and Markets Authority study into Children's Social Care Placements
- * Stable Homes Built on Love strategy 2023
- * Testing of approaches under the Families First Partnership Programme Pathfinder Programme

Programme objective:

£523million funding for 2025/26 to deliver transformation, with a focus on prevention and strengthen partnership working, specifically:

Early Intervention: Preventing escalation of issues through timely support.

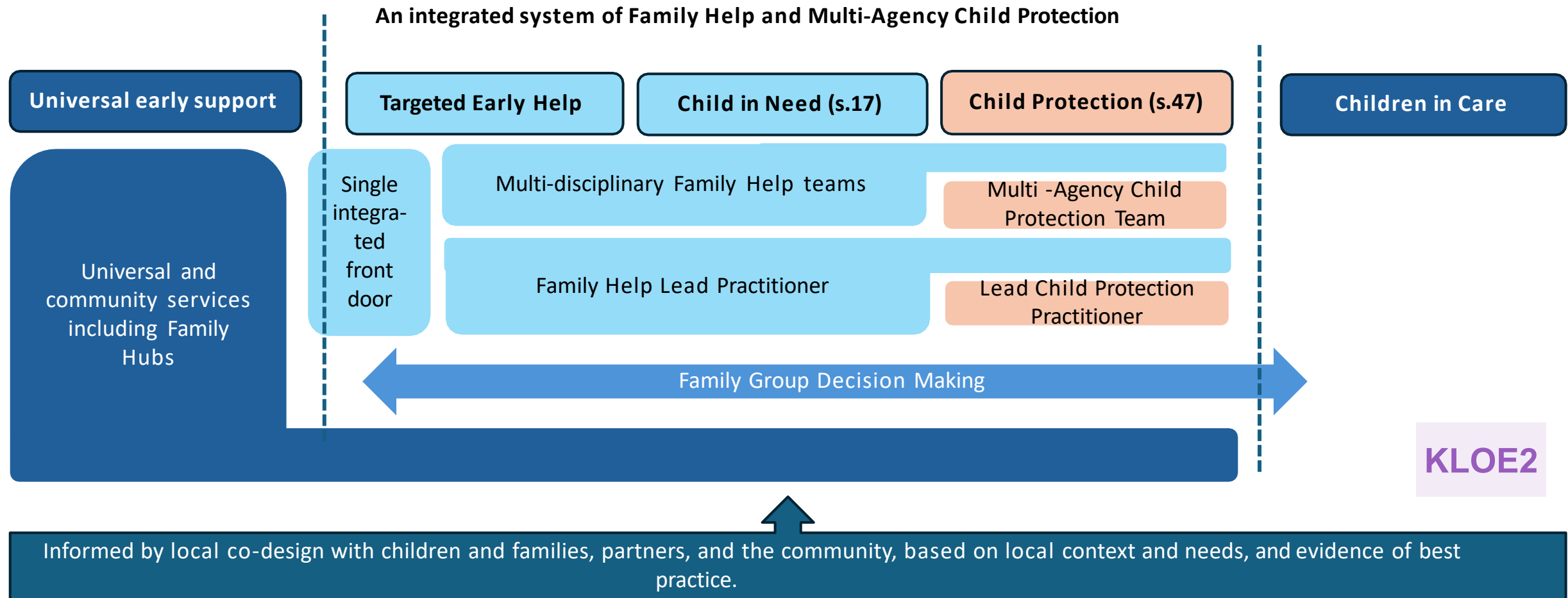
Family Preservation: Enabling children to remain in safe, supportive family environments – elevating the role of family networks.

Systemic Reform: Establishing a sustainable, child-centric social care system.

This is with a view to reducing demand on statutory services and specifically *aiming to reduce the number of children coming into LA care nationally*. This presents a challenge for us locally as we have been committed to safely reducing LAC numbers over many years and are unlikely to achieve a further significant reduction.

Local design of an end-to-end system of support and protection to rebalance the system towards prevention whilst keeping children safe

Designing a system locally to meet the needs of the population with effective, integrated and joined up services with partners.



Opportunities:

- Drive our “early help is everyone’s business” agenda and progress the work of the Early Help Partnership.
- Promote practice that engages the wider family and support networks at the earlier possible opportunities.
- Further strengthen partnership contribution to decision making and managing risk through establishing a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team (MACPT).
- Consult with partners, residents and service users to shape local implementation.
- Test new ways of working with partners and families, and learn from other LAs.

Challenges:

- Our focus on prevention over many years means that we do not have “quick wins” to make in safely reducing our LAC population.
- Our prevention services are reliant on grant funding, which poses challenges for planning and sustainability.
- Bringing partners along with the reforms – though the reforms are DfE driven, there are expectations of partners.

Hounslow's implementation of the FFPP

KLOE3

- * Established the Family Help & Protection Service in April 2025, bringing together the Children's Front Door, Early Help, Family Help and Safeguarding into one service in Children's Specialist Services.
- * Project support in place for the transformation year through the Children's Model of Care Programme.
- * Embedding an approach at the Front Door focused on early help, information sharing and partnership working – underpinned by liaison SW roles and liaison meetings with key partners.
- * Brought together targeted early help and CIN into the Family Help Team – SWs working alongside alternatively qualified practitioners.
- * Multi-agency Steering Group working together on shaping and implementing the reforms locally.
- * Developing an engagement plan for children and families so that their experiences inform our delivery of the reforms.

Scrutiny panel support:

- * Offering insights into the core issues and challenges affecting residents that may fall within scope of the FFPP.
- * Identifying opportunities to engage with residents about the reforms and to contribute to co-production of service design.

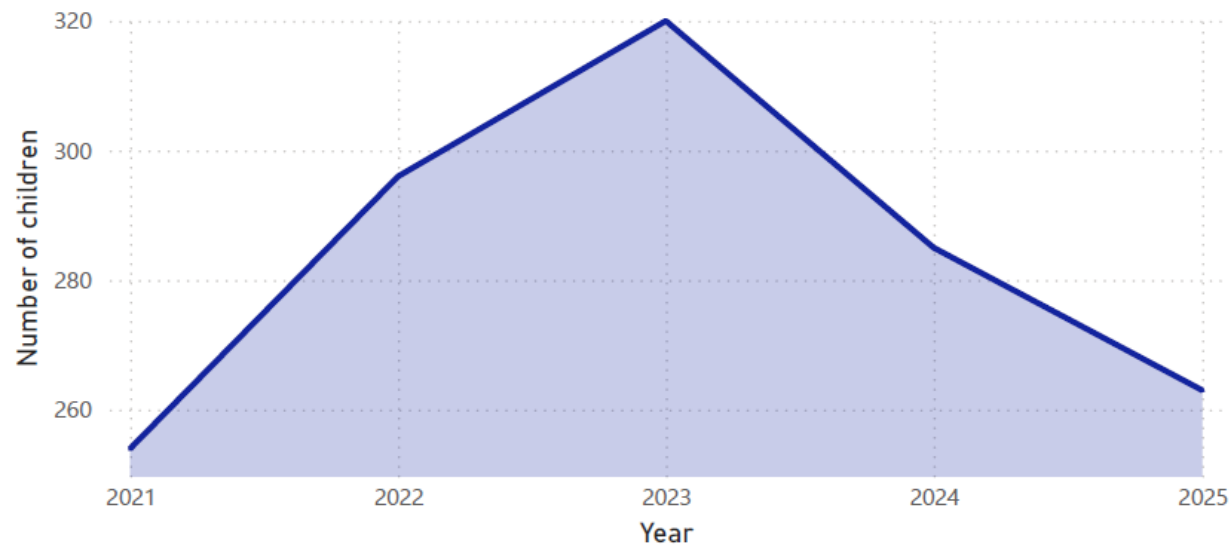
Panel Meeting 3

*Categories of need among looked-after children, FFPP
programme developments*

24 November 2025

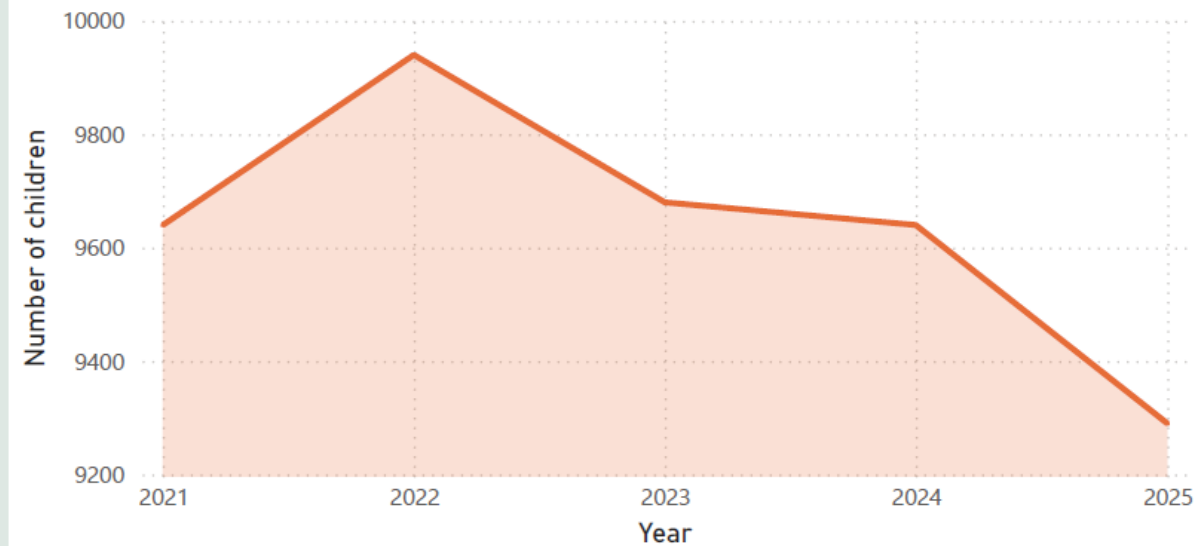
Children Looked-after, Hounslow

Area ● Hounslow



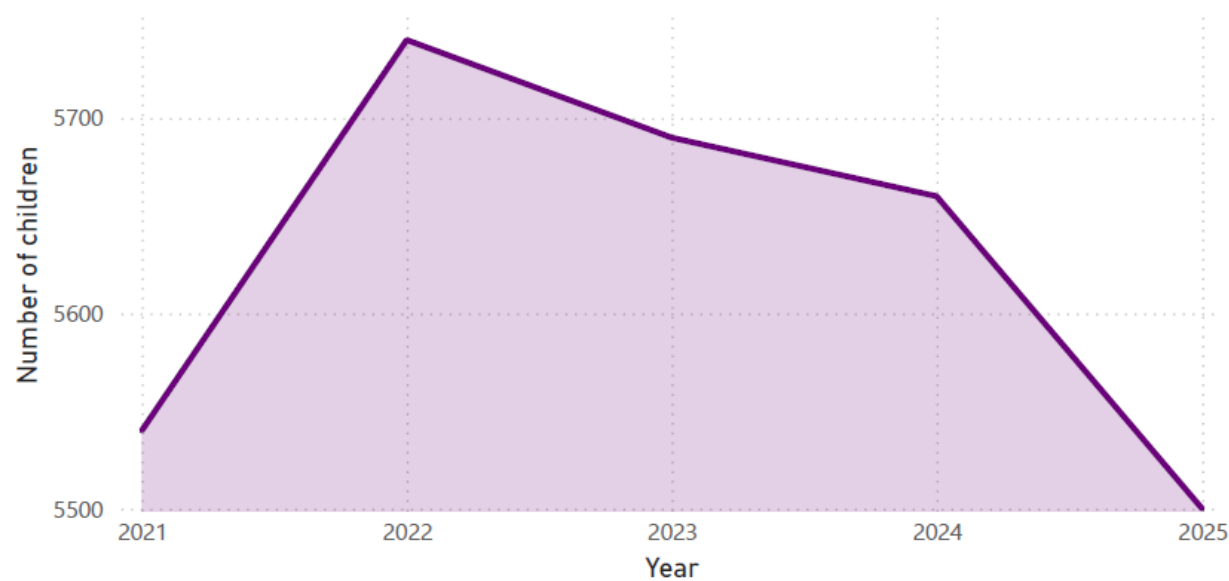
Children Looked-after, London

Area ● London



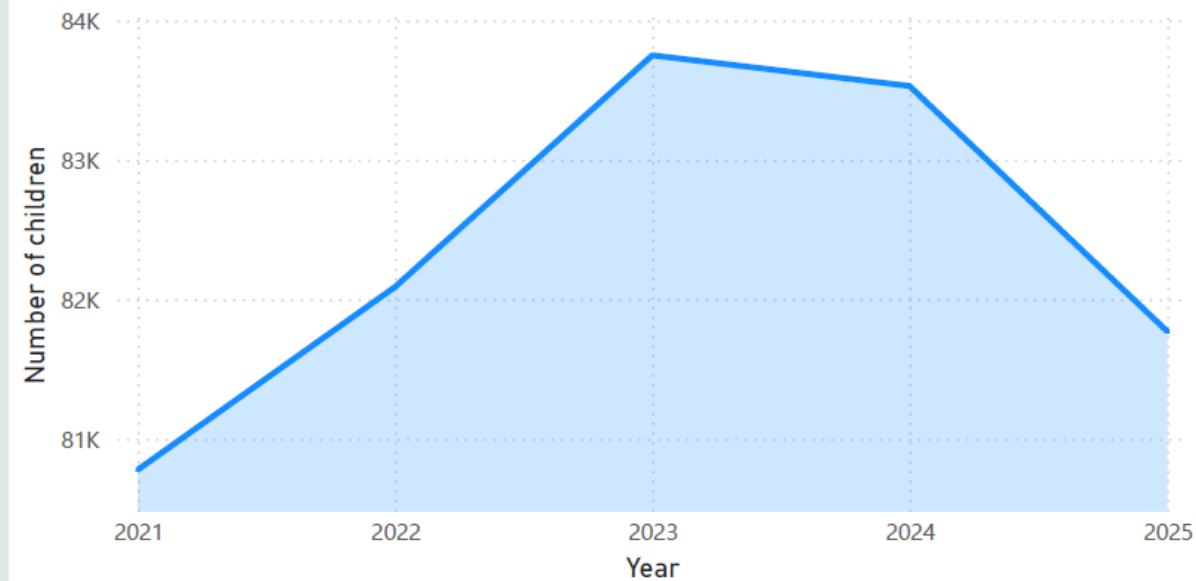
Children Looked-after, Outer London

Area ● Outer London

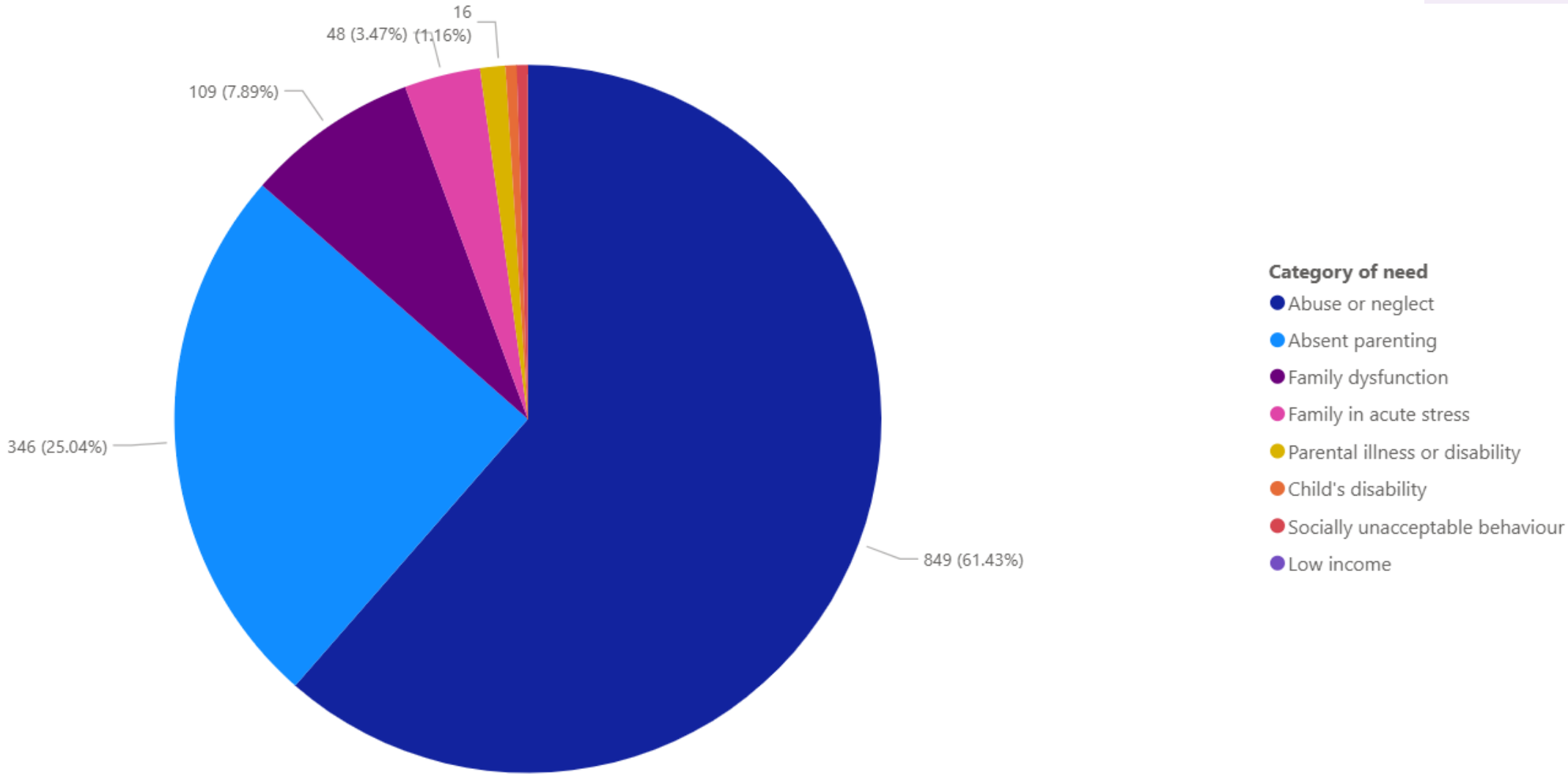


Children Looked-after, England

Area ● England

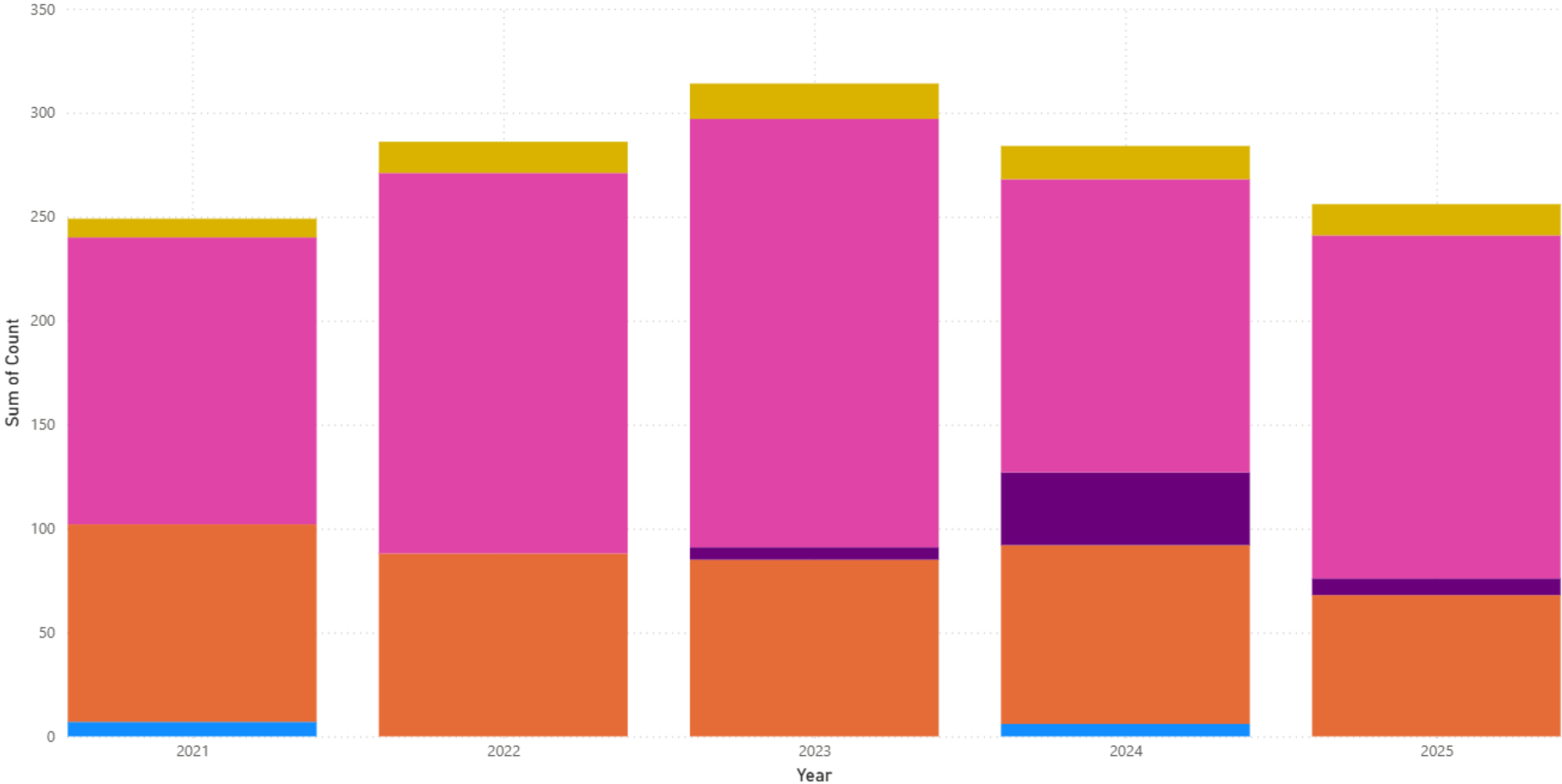


Number of children looked-after by Category of need in Hounslow



Place providers for looked-after children in Hounslow

Place providers Other LA provision Other public provision (e.g. by a PCT etc) Own provision (by the LA) Placement provider not reported Private provision Voluntary/third sector provision



Presentation by Early Help Strategic Manager and Assistant Director Operational Child's Safeguarding & Specialist

Leigh-Anne Adamah (Early Help Strategic Manager) | Leigh-Anne.Adamah@hounslow.gov.uk

Jennifer Hopper (Assistant Director Operational Child's Safeguarding & Specialist) | Jennifer.hopper@hounslow.gov.uk

FFPP developments

Update from DfE Meeting (10 November) following submission of Q2 data

- Positive feedback received from the DfE on overall progress
- Noted strong political engagement, including FFPP being the topic at CYP Scrutiny
- Particularly impressed with developments within the Family Help strand

Multi-Agency Engagement

- To strengthen multi-agency partnership with the programme, we have launched the FFPP Steering Group and engaged about the programme across a range of multi-agency forums, including:
 - ARC (Alcohol and Drug Service)
 - Designated Safeguarding Leads Safeguarding Networks (Early years, primary and secondary)
 - Early Help Partnership Board
 - Hounslow Education Partnership (HEP) Headteachers Forum
 - Clinical Improvement Group (West London NHS Trust)

Co-Production & Communications

- The comms plan has been finalised to increase staff and residents' awareness of FFPP, and opportunities for engagement.
- Comprehensive co-production plans to engage families have been finalised across the three programme strands (Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection Team and Family Group Decision Making)
- Activities include workshops, surveys, and interviews to gather lived experience and feedback.
- The survey will launch in December (before Christmas), and other engagement activities will take place from December through May 2026.

Engagements

*Reflections from engagements with community partners
who are supporting vulnerable children and families*

February 2025

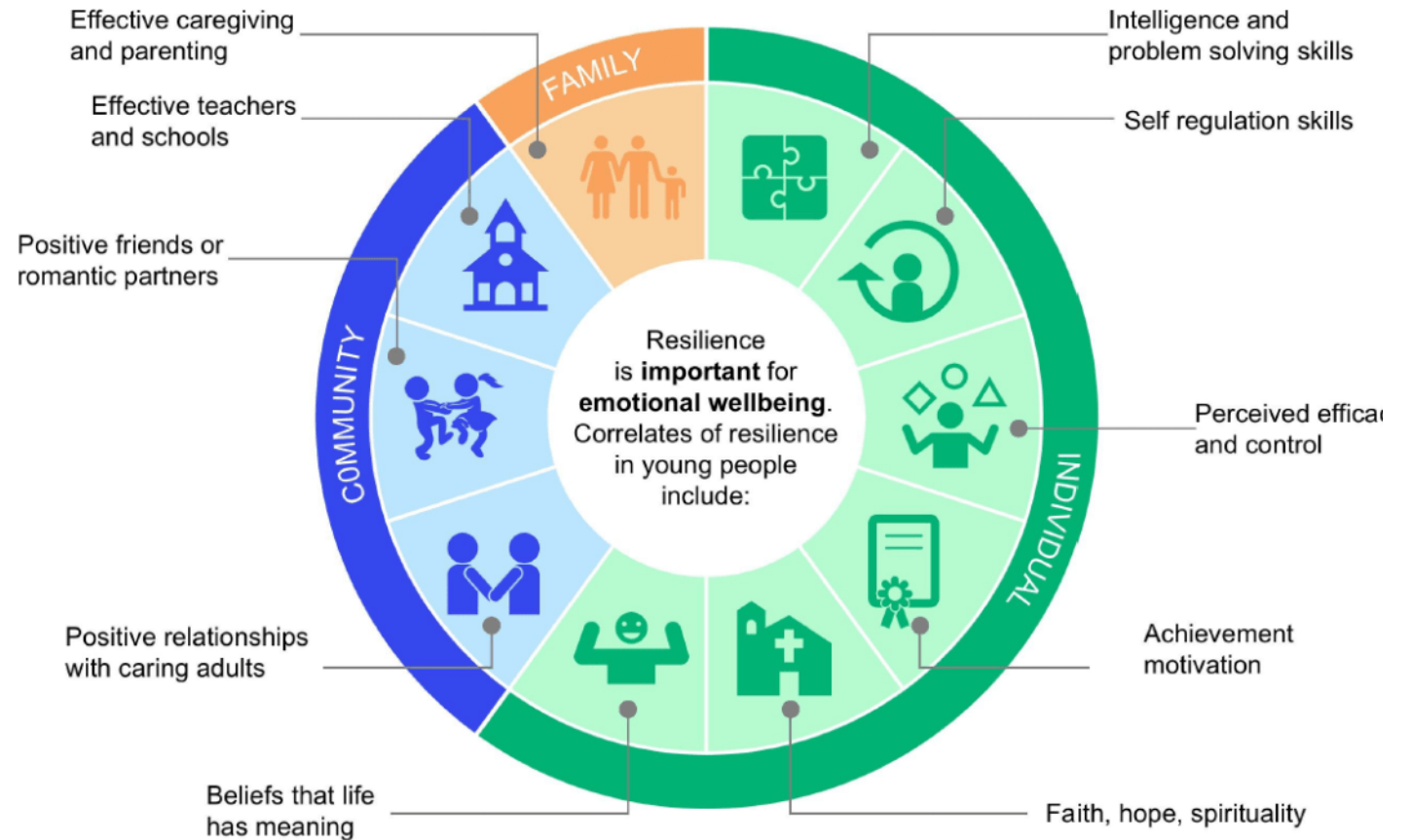
What did we learn?

- There are a number of **services that vulnerable families can use** in Hounslow, such as foodbanks, and community cafés. These spaces are well-placed to connect vulnerable residents with more specific support services, such as debt advice, English language support, child play groups, and mental health services.
- Support services tend to be accessed through word of mouth, or promotion in spaces such as area forums. There is a **lack of a consistent approach or referral pathway**.
- Adults who cannot read English face an inherent disadvantage to accessing support services, that are often advertised or run in English.
- Free services are not necessarily being accessed by families who cannot afford paid support – further indicating issues around **signposting**.

Resilience in adverse conditions

- How can we ensure that children and young people, and their families, are supported and well-equipped to cope with difficult circumstances?
- What types of change will make the biggest difference?
- What evidence have we seen in the community that enables us to draw conclusions?
- What is driving vulnerability among families?

Building resilience (the ability to cope with adversity and adapt to change)



Final recommendations

1. *The Panel recommends that the Families First implementation team assesses the effectiveness of translation services in adequately supporting families with challenges in communicating with support services.*
2. *The Panel recommends that the Families First implementation team considers reviewing the comprehensiveness of referral pathways for early intervention with vulnerable families, due to challenges faced by services in being adequately connected with families who ‘most need’ their support.*
3. *The Panel recommends that the Families First implementation team works alongside existing community groups, such as interest groups and faith groups, to raise awareness around early signs and signals of vulnerability within families – supporting the “early help is everybody’s business” approach.*
4. *The Panel recommends that the Families First implementation team provides evidence in the next scrutiny year around whether they have successfully targeted and supported families with very young children (aged 2-years and below), and adolescents displaying signs of anti-social or risky behaviour.*
5. *The Panel recommends that the Families First implementation team assess the effectiveness of communication and signposting, improving resident awareness of available provisions.*