



 **BEST**
 **START**
 **IN LIFE**

Plan

April 2026–March 2029



Funded by
UK Government



Contents

(click on the headings to move to section)

No.	Section	Page
i	Executive summary	3
ii	Introduction	4
iii	Aims of the Solihull Best Start Plan	5
a)	Solihull context: Child development at 2 years	6
b)	Solihull context: communication delay by geography at 2 years in 2024-25	7
c)	Solihull context: the health of our youngest children	8
d)	Solihull context: current child development at 5 years and targets	9
e)	Solihull context: looking deeper	10
f)	Solihull context: need across the borough	12
g)	Solihull context: location of Family Hubs	13

No.	Section	Page
Chapter 1– Support for Families		14
1.1	Best Start Family Hubs	14
1.2	Parenting Programmes	15
1.3	Early Attachment & Home Learning Environments	16
1.4	Healthier Babies & Toddlers	17
Chapter 2- More accessible early education & childcare		19
2.1	Increasing access	19
2.2	Holiday Activity & Food (HAF) Provision	21
Chapter 3- Improving quality in early years		22
3.1	Improving quality	22
3.2	Speech, language & communication work	24
3.3	Support in Solihull	25
4.	Communication & Education	27
5.	Monitoring, Evaluation and Governance	28
6.	Interdependencies	29
7.	Further information	30
8.	Appendices	31

Executive Summary



Children and young people having the best possible outcomes is a key priority for Solihull Council. The aims of the Solihull Best Start Plan are to ensure that every child is supported to achieve a good level of development by age five, reduce inequalities - particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds - and strengthen the early years workforce and inclusive practice.

The plan outlines Solihull's continued focus on building strong home learning environments, delivering effective parenting programmes, improving access to integrated early years, maternity, health and family support services, identifying possible additional needs early whilst supporting families effectively and enhancing the quality of early education and childcare. It sets out statutory targets to the end of 2028, details the development of Best Start Family Hub offer, expanded parenting and home learning programmes, improved pathways for children with additional needs, and strengthened partnership working across health, education and community sectors.

The plan also highlights local actions on speech, language and communication, early help, workforce development, data and monitoring, and alignment with wider strategies to support children's wellbeing, school readiness and long-term outcomes across the borough. The Maternity and Early Years Strategy strapline was *'Success for Today, Prepared for Tomorrow'* and this focus continues into this Best Start Plan for Solihull, reducing inequalities and improving life chances, starting with our smallest residents at the time we can, collectively, make the biggest difference.

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

Introduction

Children and young people having the best possible outcomes is a key priority for Solihull Council. This critically important work starts early, and this plan outlines our commitment to enable Solihull children to have the best possible start in life and achieve a good level of development at 5 years. [Giving every child the best start in life](#), published in July 2025 by the Department for Education, aims to increase the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of reception nationally to 75% by 2028 (an increase from the current level of 68%). This is part of the Government's [Plan for Change - GOV.UK](#)



Locally in Solihull, improving the health of pregnant women, babies and children is theme 1 of the [Joint Solihull local health and wellbeing strategy 2024-32](#). Maternity and Early Years has also been Priority 1 in the health inequalities strategy at [Tackling health inequalities: a blueprint for Solihull 2022 – 2025](#) and aims to create key foundation for the Best Start Plan work. In 2024, four new [Family Hubs](#) opened in Solihull, operating as a 'one-stop shop' for activities and services from pre-conception up to 19 years (and up to 25 years for young people with additional needs). These hubs will be fundamental in the delivery of this Best Start Plan, as places where families already take their children (with up to 12,800 visits to the hubs every 3 months (2025)) with around 88 partners delivering across 24 service areas. The hubs are located where families have the most potential to benefit from the support, directly addressing inequalities in the borough.

This plan outlines our local implementation of Government policy and is aligned with the national policy document chapters:

- **Chapter 1** - Better support for families
- **Chapter 2** - More accessible early education and childcare
- **Chapter 3** - Improving quality in early years including reception

“The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual, and emotional – are laid in early childhood.”

Michael Marmot, 2010

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

Aims of the Solihull Best Start Plan



The aim of the Solihull Best Start Plan is the implementation of the deliverables in the Government policy document, [‘Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life’](#) to:

- break the link between a child’s background and their future success – with particular focus on supporting families in parts of north and west Solihull, reducing disparities in early child development.
- raise the **healthiest** generation ever.
- deliver **accessible, integrated maternity & family support services** from pregnancy to 5. A healthy pregnancy, birth and perinatal period are pivotal in laying the foundations of later healthy development and maternity services are key partners in this work.
- deliver **high-quality early education** and **childcare** to set every child up for success, with local action to support inclusion and early intervention to prevent escalation of need.
- deliver a new Best Start Family offer to bring together **parenting, healthcare** and **education support services** to ensure all babies, children and families have access to the early intervention and support they need, including children with additional needs.
- ensure that **Neighbourhood Health Services** work in partnership with family hubs, schools, nurseries, childminders and colleges, ensuring support for young children’s health and development is available and accessible in communities. Work in underway to create multi-disciplinary team approach to health and family support in Solihull, as part of the ‘10-year Health Plan for England’, published in July 2025.

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

a) Solihull context: Child development at 2 years

- Every child has a development check at 2 years with the Health Visiting service using a nationally mandated tool, the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). The tool assesses development across five domains; problem solving, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, personal-social skills and communication.
- At the 2-to-2.5-year health review in 2024-25, **85.2%** of children in Solihull were at or above the expected level in all five areas of development (communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social skills). This is **3.9% above** the national average of 81.4%. For each domain, the proportion of children on-track is:



- In 2024-25, 1,786 2-year-old children out of a total of 2,023 had an ASQ check by the time they were 2½ (88.3%). The ASQ check is a questionnaire that parents/carers complete which is then validated by a health professional in the Solihull Health Visiting team at the 2-year check (a face-to-face appointment). The ASQ is the nationally mandated tool for use at the 2-year-old check.

NB: there is no direct correlation between the ASQ check and the proportion of children reaching a 'good level of development' at the end of reception year in schools as the two assessments measure different domains of development and are not comparable data sets.

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

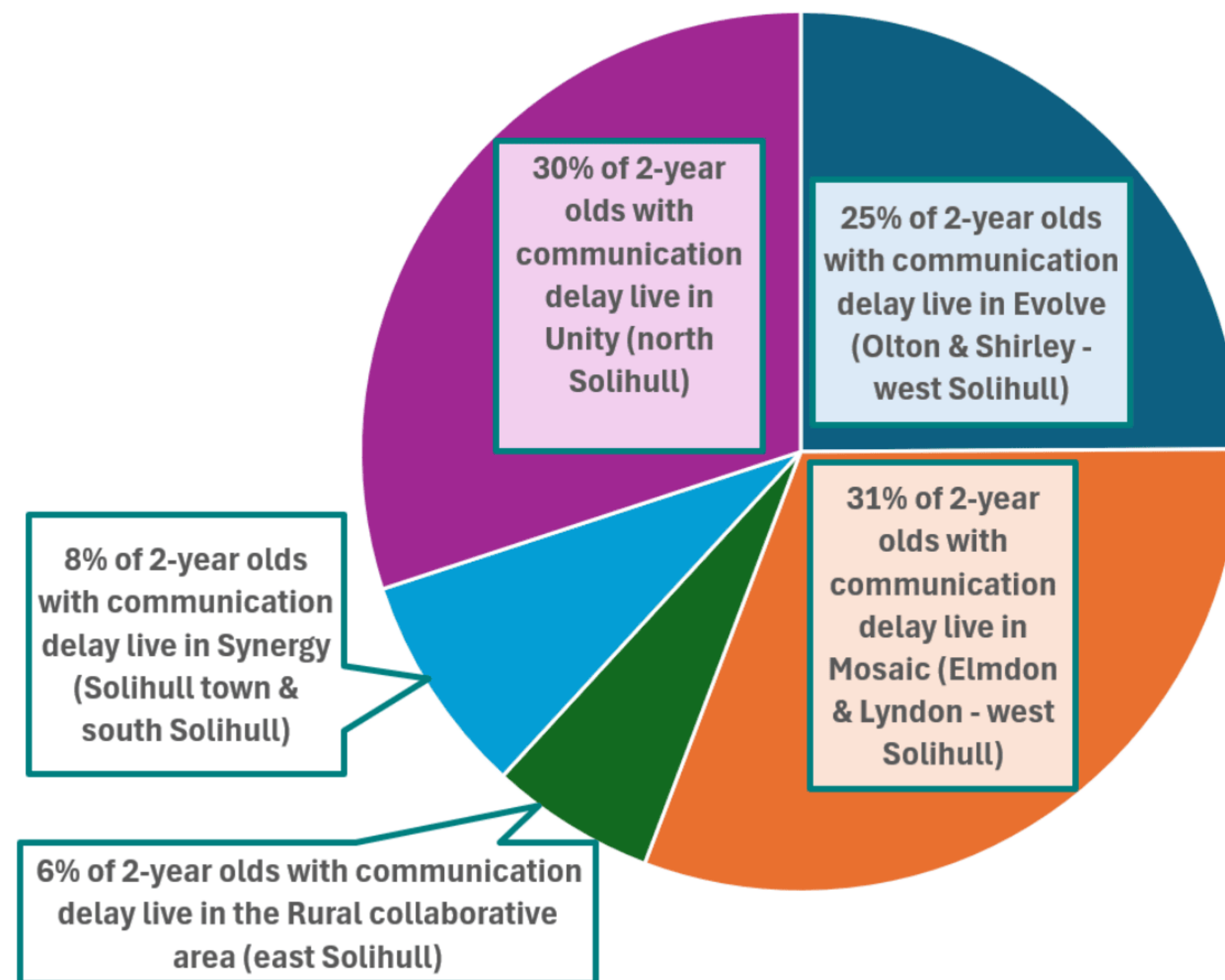
b) Solihull context: communication delay by geography at 2 years in 2024-25

86% of the children not on-track with their communication development at 2 years, as measured with the ASQ tool by the Health Visiting team, live in either north or west Solihull, compared with east and south Solihull (14%), that are comparatively more affluent areas.

Research shows that for children in lower income households where parent/carers can be managing difficult daily pressures, there can be a decrease in engagement in activities known to support early language development, including chatting, playing and reading together. This can lead to children hearing less words and developing a lower vocabulary than children in more affluent areas. This can impact negatively on social skills, school attainment, emotional wellbeing and employment status at 30 years. Research also shows that 60-90% of young people in the youth justice system have communication needs.

Poverty is an indicator of poorer outcomes and an estimated 28,134 Solihull residents live in the 10% most deprived areas, almost a quarter (23.9%) of these residents are aged under 15 years. A further 8,029 residents live within an area amongst the 10-20% most deprived areas of England, a fifth (20.3%) are children aged under 15 years.

Proportion of children who are not on-track with their communication development at 2 years by school collaborative area (geography)



**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

c) Solihull context: the health of our youngest children

2024/25

76.7%

Healthy weight (ages 4-5)

+1.7% vs England

2024/25

85.6%

MMR vaccination at age 5 (2 doses)

+1.9% vs England

2023/24

174.4 per 1k

Emergency admissions (0-4)

+7.5 vs England

2023/24

15.5%

Dental decay at age 5

The metrics above show that, in Solihull, the rates of children overweight at 4 years and the MMR vaccine coverage are slightly better than the England average, but the rate for emergency hospital admissions for 0-4 year olds is higher. Dental decay is a leading cause of school absence for 5-9-year-olds and can cause issues with pain that can impact on learning, confidence issues and poor wellbeing. Solihull has lower dental decay rates than the England average of 26.9% but children in lower income households are more likely to have decay.

Health checks by Solihull Health Visiting Service (NHS)

2024/25

93.6%

New birth visits within 14 days

+8.4% vs England

2024/25

95.2%

6-8 week review

+10.1% vs England

2024/25

96.1%

12-month review

+7.8% vs England

2024/25

88.3%

2-2.5 review

+7.4% vs England

2024/25

100.0%

ASQ-3 completion

+6.1% vs England

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

d) Solihull context: current child development at 5 years and targets for Solihull

A measure of success of this plan is the monitoring of the proportion of children achieving a 'good level of development' (GLD) by the end of reception year (5 years). This is a national assessment covers 12 areas, including personal, social development (e.g. relationships with others), communication, physical development, literacy and maths. Solihull has been set the following statutory targets for the proportion of children achieving a good level of development as follows:

Year (end of academic year)	GLD at the end of reception	GLD at the end of reception for children in receipt of free school meals
2023-24 (baseline)	70.5%	54.9%
2024-25 (actual)	69.8%	52.0%
2025-26 (projection to meet target)	73.5%	57.9%
2026-27 (projection to meet target)	76.5%	60.9%
2027/28 (target)	79.5%	63.9%

In addition, other measures will also be monitored closely, such as child development at 2 years (proportion of children who are on-track with development in their 2-year Health Visiting check using the Ages and Stages questionnaire (ASQ) tool). This tool explores development across five domains; communications, problem solving, fine motor skills, gross motor skills and personal-social development. Every family resident in Solihull is invited for this check for their 2-year-old. Data on children accessing family support, parenting and early home learning programmes, additional needs and health issues, such as tooth decay, will be also be regularly monitored.

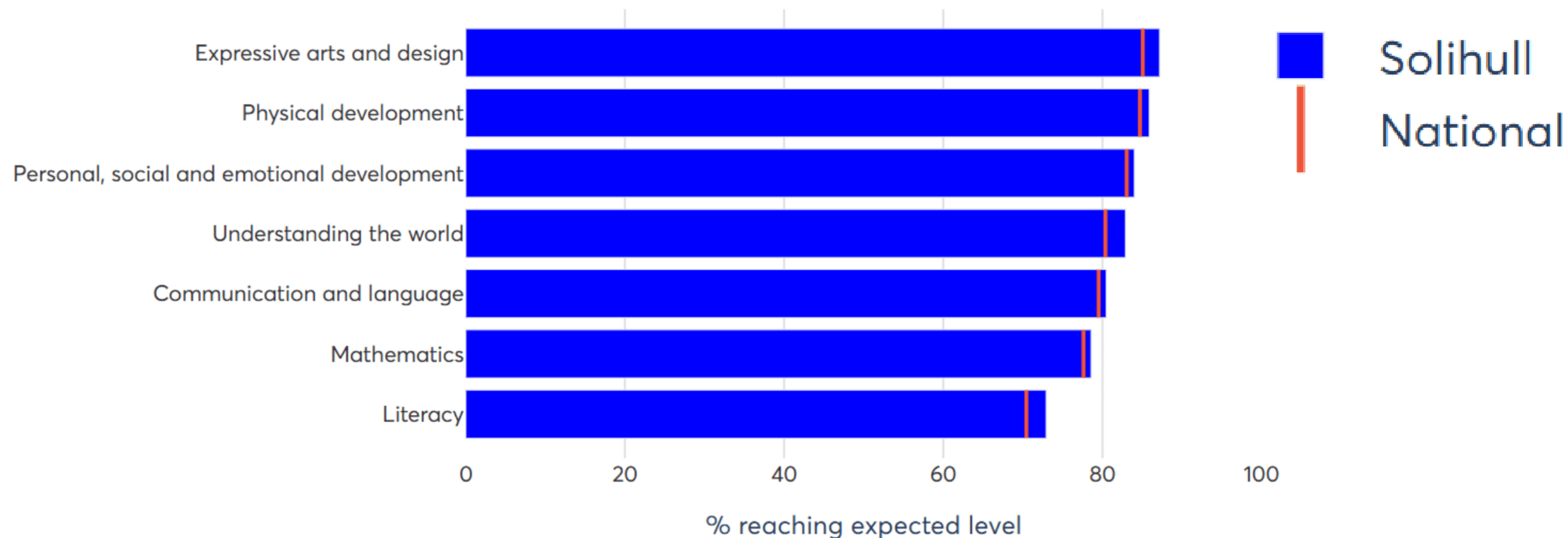


**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

e) Solihull context: looking deeper

Achievement across EYFSP areas of learning

Solihull

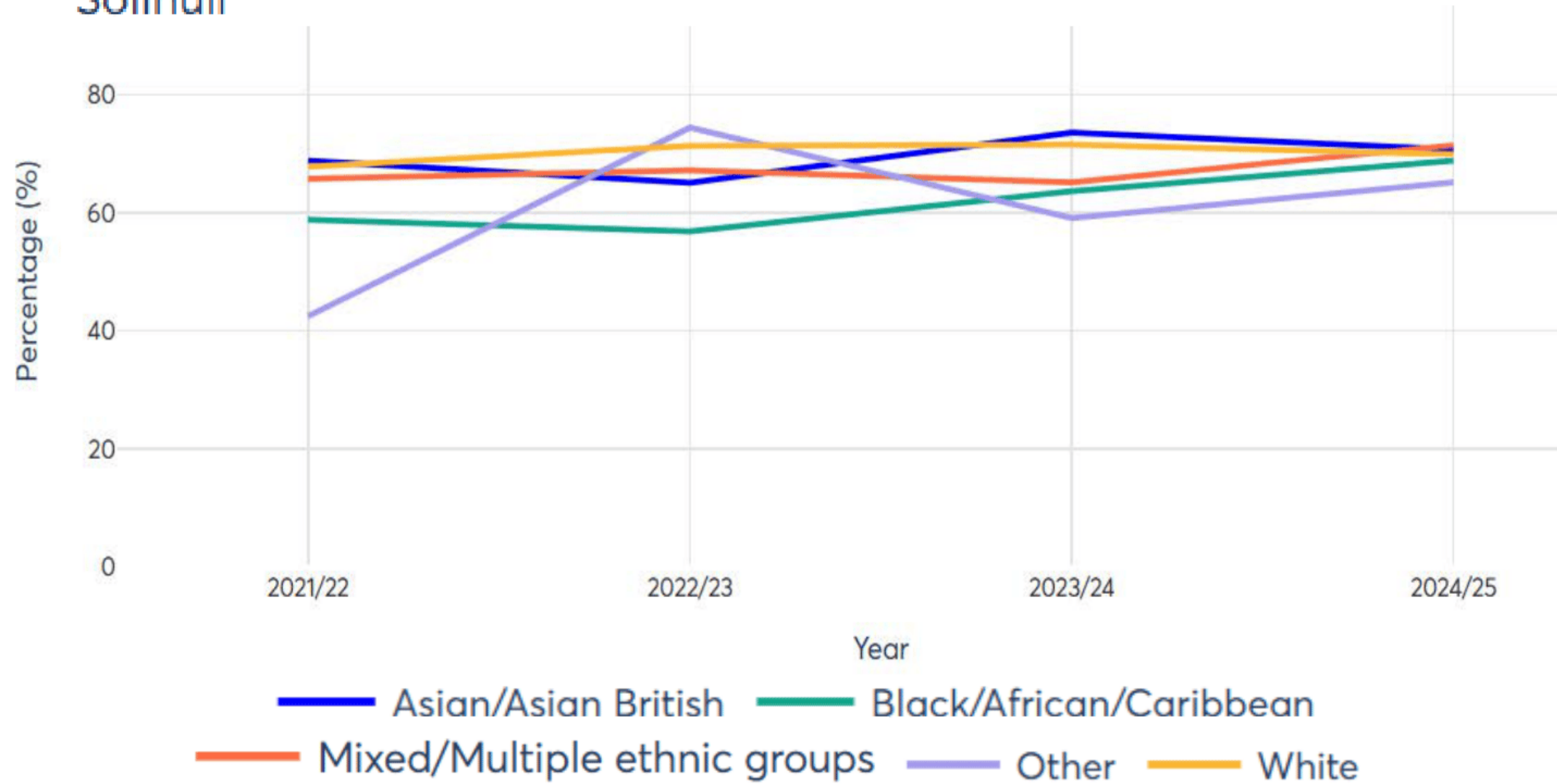


Estimates for the number of additional children needed to achieve a good level of development at 5 years to reach the target by 2028 are 251 children overall and 46 in receipt of free school meals [[NESTA](#)]. However, the birth rate is declining and local analysis that considers this for Solihull estimates that, in reality, approximately 63 additional children need to achieve GLD overall, with an additional 23 achieving from the FSM group to achieve the target.

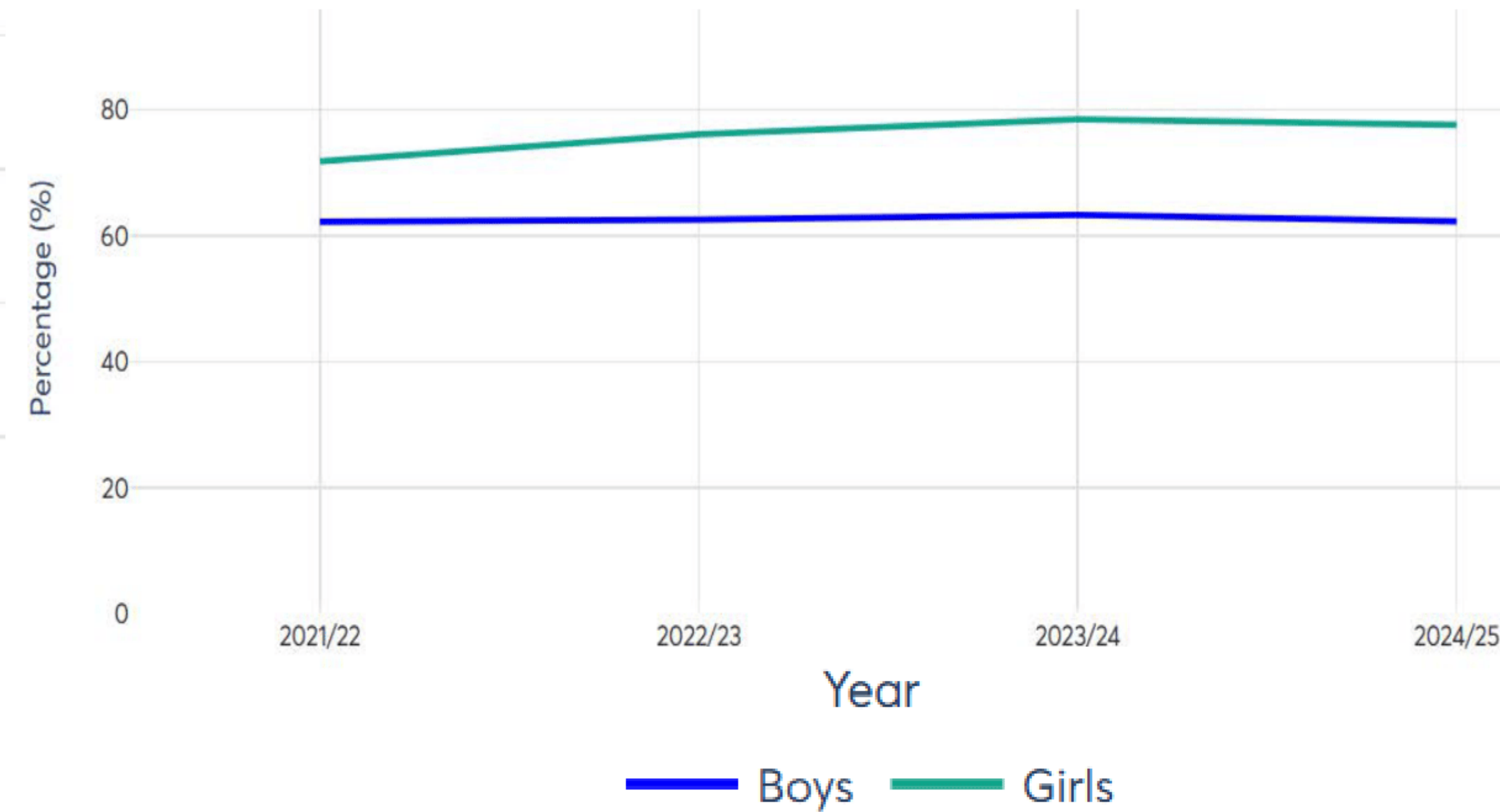
**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

Analysis of GLD by ethnicity and gender

Good level of development - Ethnicity Solihull



Good level of development - Gender Solihull



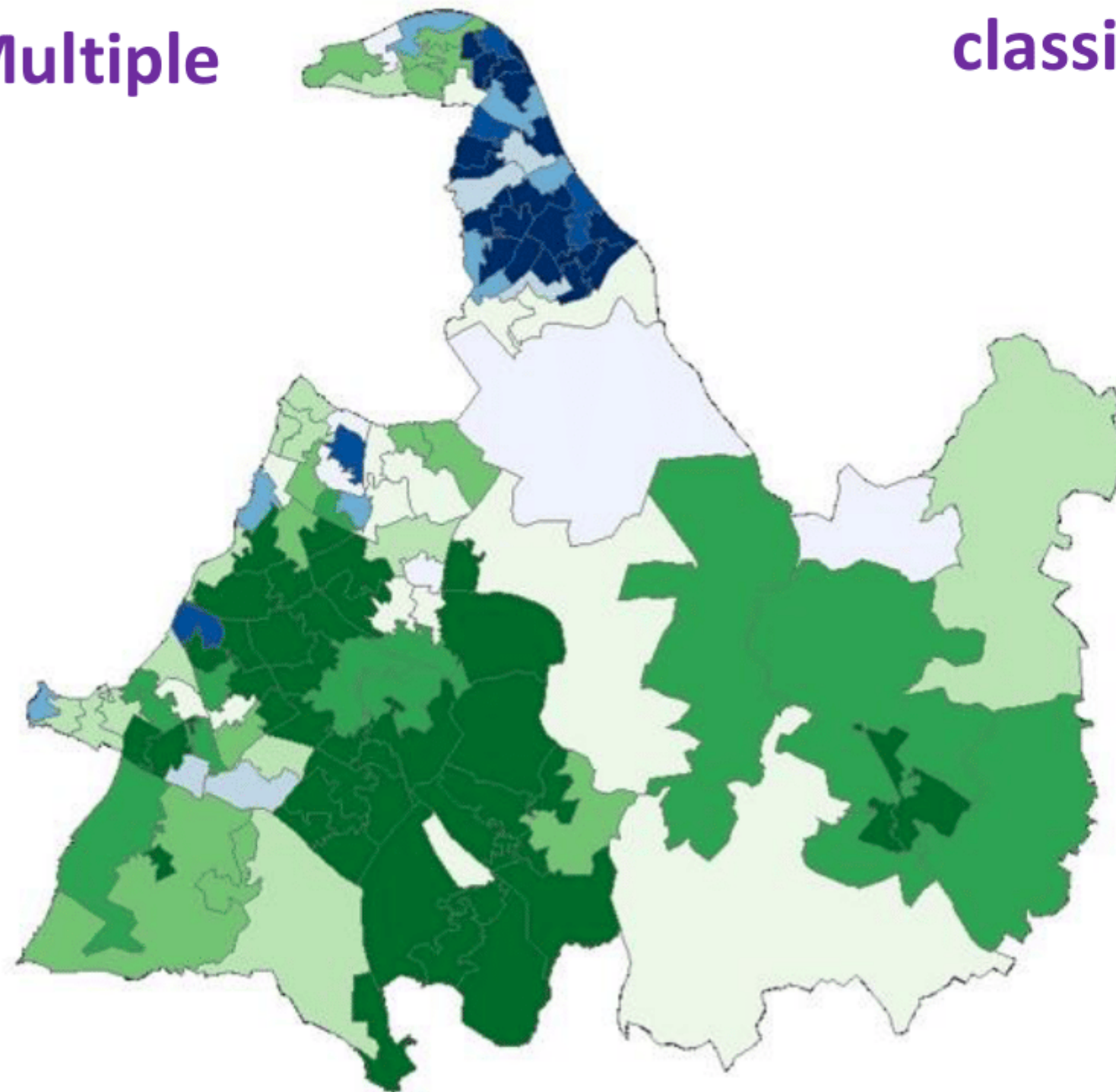
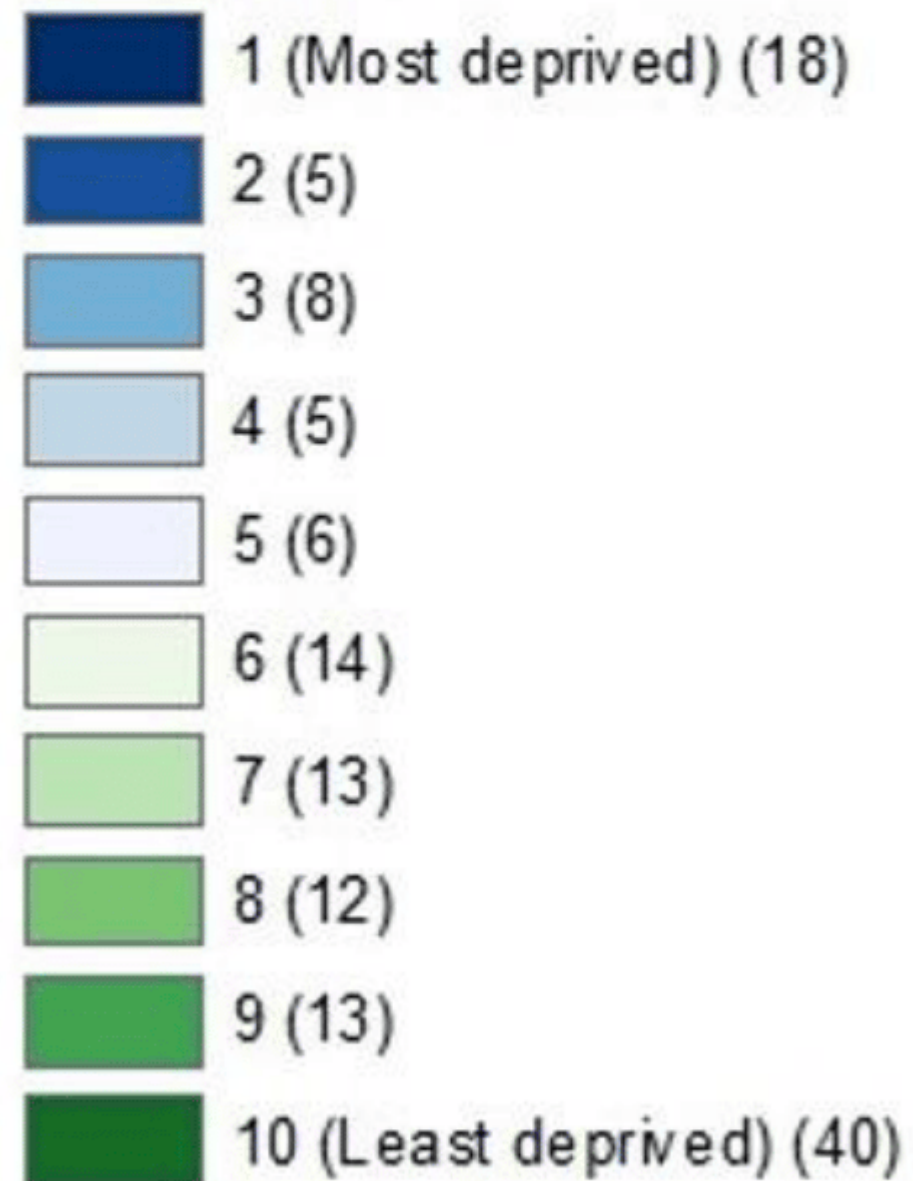
There are clear disparities in children achieving a good level of development (GLD) at 5 years in 2024-25 with a lower proportion of Black/African/Caribbean children (68.8%) achieving GLD in Solihull compared with White children (69.9%), Asian/Asian British children (70.7%), and children with Mixed/Multiple ethnicity (who have the highest proportion at 71.4%). There is also a stark gender disparity with 77.6% of girls achieving GLD in 2024-25 compared with 62.3% of boys. These disparities will inform targeting and roll-out of programmes in the borough, aiming to narrow the inequality gaps. [Source: [NESTA, 2025](#)]

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

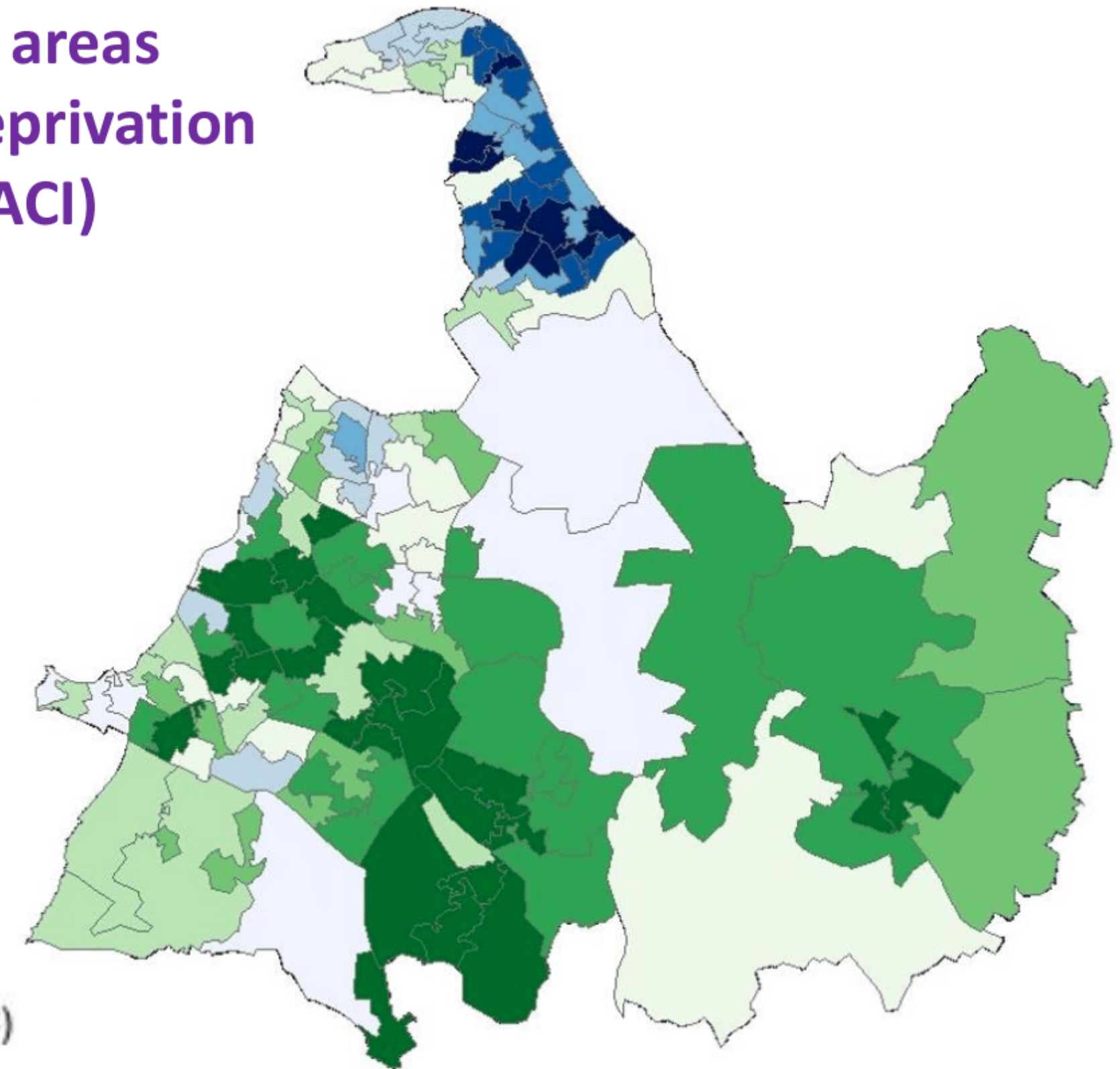
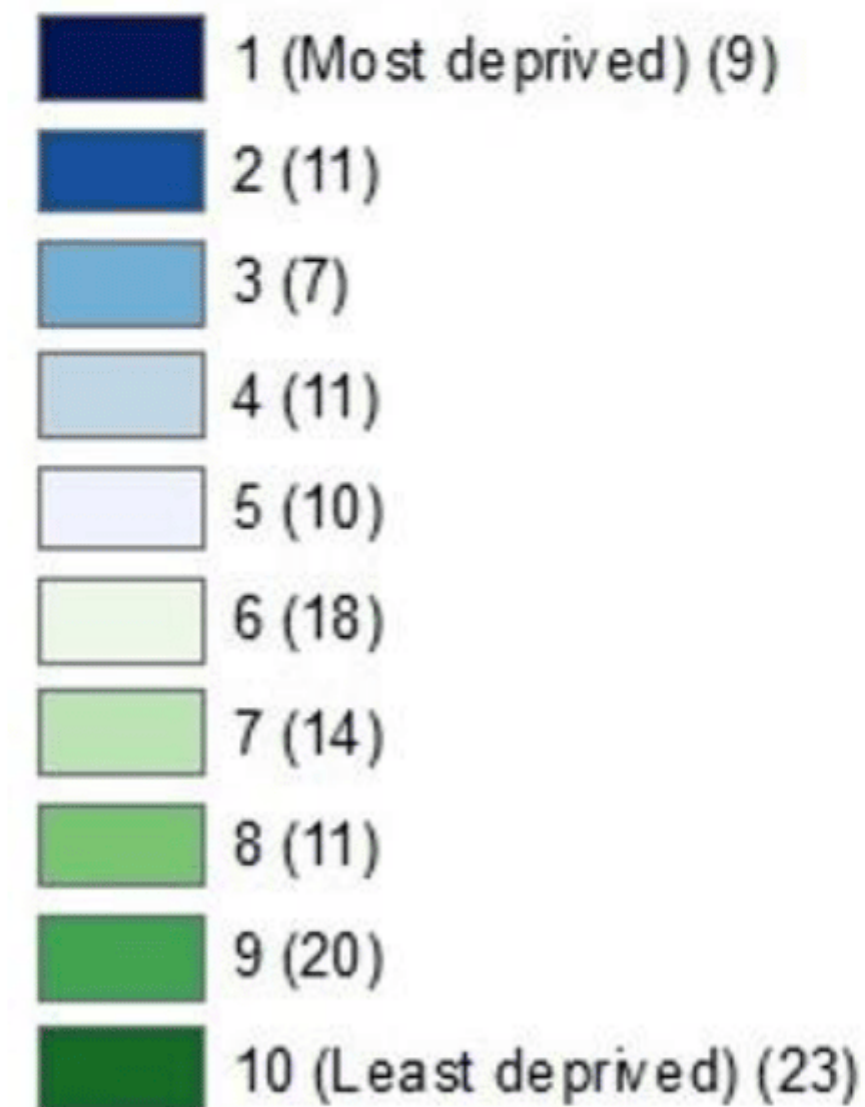
f) Solihull context: need across the borough

The following maps show the neighbourhoods in Solihull experiencing the most deprivation overall (map 1) and affecting children (map 2). There is clear vulnerability in communities in north and west Solihull, with complexity also clear in Meriden. Analysis of data for the area was undertaken to locate the Family Hubs. This aligns with the direction from by the Department for Education that 70% of family hubs in the borough need to be located in neighbourhoods within the 30% most deprived communities, according to 'income deprivation affecting children' (IDACI – see below right). This will ensure the families who can access hubs the easiest, have the most potential to benefit, directly addressing inequity.

Map of Solihull showing areas classified by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)



Map of Solihull showing areas classified by the Index of Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI)



**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

g) Solihull context: location of Family Hubs



Evergreen Hub - Kingshurst

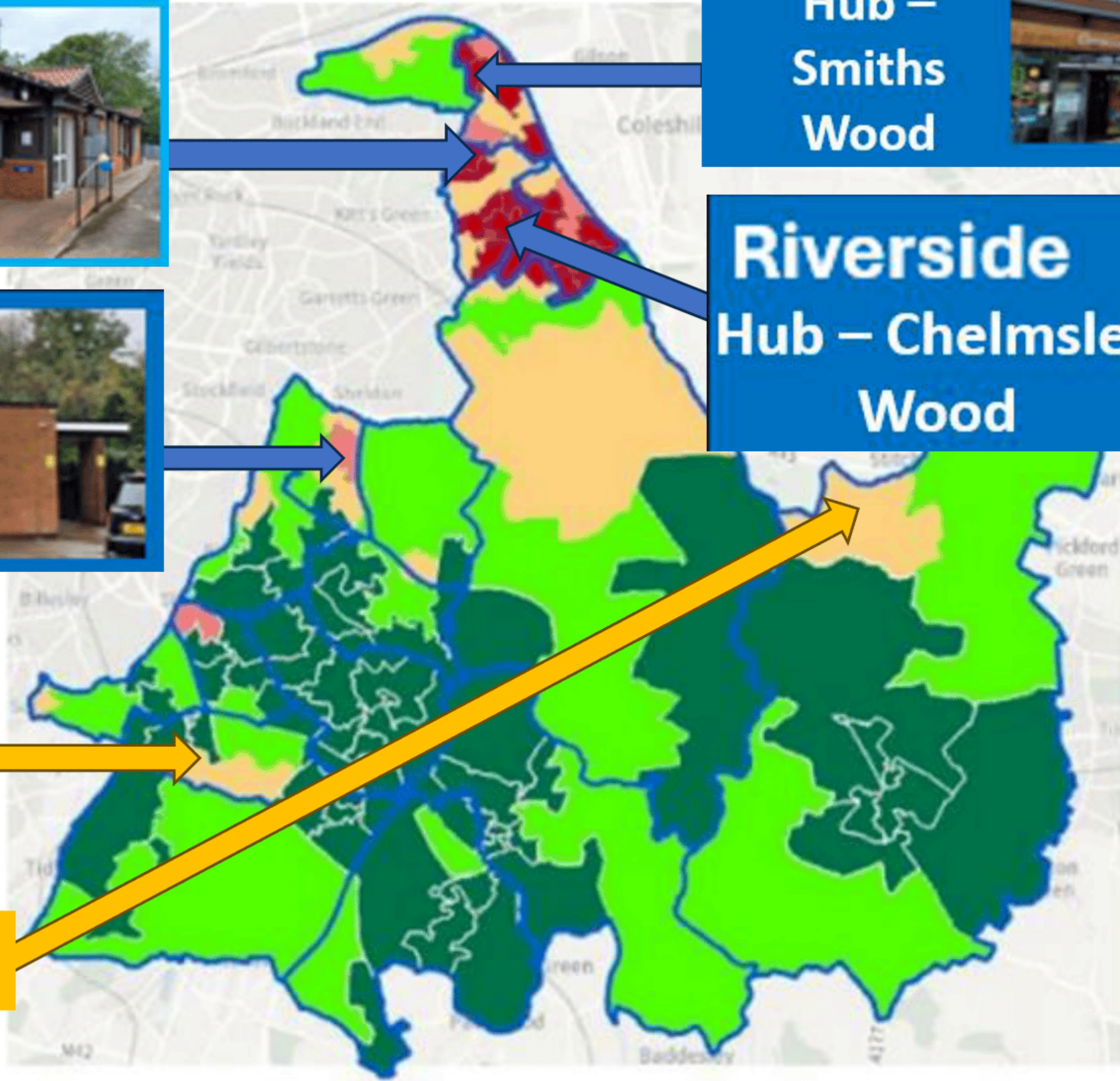
Hatchford Brook - Elmdon



Elmwood Hub - Smiths Wood



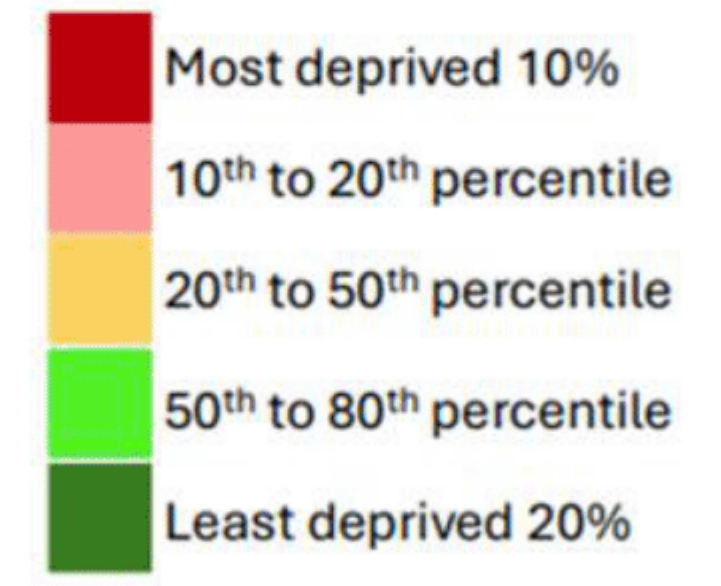
Riverside Hub - Chelmsley Wood



Outreach - Shirley

Outreach - Meriden

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 Overall Deprivation



Source: MHCLG



Small enough to care, but big enough to make a difference

Chapter 1 – Support for families

Families thrive when they can access the right support at the right time and we are committed to ensuring that families have a clear understanding of what's available to support their parenting journey from the earliest days until school and beyond.



1.1 Best Start Family Hubs

- **Best Start Family Hubs Programme:** Best Start Family Hubs will have enhanced service provision to support parenting & a good home learning environment (HLE), supported by central Government funding. They will bring together education, health services, libraries & local voluntary and community groups. All [Family Hubs in Solihull](#) will become Best Start hubs with key services working together for children.
- **Help for families of children with additional needs:** Each Best Start Family Hub will have a children and family services professional specifically trained in SEND and additional needs. This will help identify children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) early, making links with local education settings/health services & assisting parents/carers in navigating complex services. Family feedback will monitor whether parents/carers can access quality SEND advice and support where services are joined-up and working effectively together.
- **Parent Panel:** Parents will be involved in decisions about how their local Best Start Family Hubs are delivered: with funded outreach work for families who do not typically engage with family services, such as fathers, young parents & global majority communities. All Best Start Hubs will work with a parent panel to shape effective services for local families.
- Riverside Family Hub is proposed as our first Best Start Family Hub and we are working through new branding guidance with Communications Team, both for the physical hubs and our digital and printed offer.
- **'Start for life' offer** – we will build on the current offer (online at [Solihull Start for Life offer](#)) to create an interactive timeline of services from pre-conception to school (extending from 2 years as included in the Healthy Babies Plan) and link the Solihull 'Start for Life' offer with new national digital parenting hub (at [Best Start in Life](#)). This will give families a clear view of what to expect when and how to ask for local support at the time they need it most, particularly if they are concerned with their child's development or possible additional needs.
- We are committed to learn from Test, Learn and Grow pilots from across the country and beyond to inform local service delivery, striving to continually improve outcomes for our youngest residents.

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

1.2 Parenting Programmes



- **Solihull Parenting programmes** – we will commission a suite of evidence-based interventions, designed to support parents and caregivers in developing the skills, knowledge, and confidence to positively influence their child’s early development. This will build on our existing offer, where we have over 3000 registered participants and equip us with an offer which will include support across all levels of need and support levels. Our interventions will:
 - Be grounded in robust evidence showing improvements in a range of defined qualitative and quantitative outcomes including in parent-child relationships, parenting practices, communication development and/or child outcomes (especially in social, emotional, and behavioural domains).
 - Include structured sessions, trained facilitators from across the partnership, and fidelity frameworks to ensure consistent delivery.
 - Be accessible, practical, and culturally adaptable, meeting borough wide needs and delivered in group, 1-1 settings or through outreach.
 - Be strategically focused at delivering evidence based, early support for the 3–4 age group, as this cohort is central to achieving progress towards the 2028 GLD target.
- Togetherness (previously Solihull Approach) is utilised routinely in Health Visiting and School Nursing services and training on this programme is being rolled out to schools in 2026-27. The approach has been evaluated as effective in improving child pro-social behaviour, parent-child relationships as well as reducing behavioural difficulties and stress and anxiety.
- Programmes will be delivered across the partnership including education, health, local authority and Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sectors. This will include us offering a partnership training programme, coordinated by hubs, ensuring the widest, most consistent delivery across Solihull.

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

1.3 Early Attachment and Home Learning Environments (HLEs)



- **Early attachment** – a Fairer Futures funded project which aims to train staff on recognising parent-infant attachment needs and community support is underway. The project aims to foster positive interactions to support early communication and personal-social development and will run from 2026-2027. Parents/carers can also be referred into specialist support to aid their attachment, provided by the Solar service in Solihull. This work directly supports a child’s ability to self-regulate emotions and prevents mental health and emotional wellbeing issues, addiction and health-impacting behaviours in later life.
- **Solihull HLE programme** – we will invest in structured programme in 2026 that equips parents and caregivers with strategies and activities to enhance the quality of parent-child learning interactions in the home. These interventions will:
 - Focus on early language, literacy, communication, cognitive and social and emotional development through everyday routines and play, building on our current offer delivered across 88 partners from our hubs, community bases and in homes. Our services will continue to be designed to be accessible, practical, and culturally adaptable, delivered in 1-1 or group settings or through our outreach offer.
 - Emphasise quality parent-child interactions and parental engagement in learning and often include modelling, resources, and goal setting.
 - We are currently exploring the EasyPeasy App and 50 things to do before you’re 5 to ensure we have a Solihull specific, universal offer for families that can be accessed at any time of the day or night.
 - We will work in collaboration with neighbouring authorities who currently deliver this as part of completing due diligence.
 - We will structure our teams to deliver the most effective services and ensure no gaps
 - Programmes to be disseminated through Family Hub sessions, Hub partners including Health Visiting, Midwifery and community partners such as libraries, community groups, childminders and nurseries.

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

1.4 Healthier Babies and Toddlers



- **10 Year Health Plan** – This plan joins with the health plan locally where Neighbourhood Health Services and maternity services will coordinate with Best Start Family Hubs to enable local integration of services that help move healthcare from hospitals to the community and from sickness to prevention. This plan will strengthen referral pathways, and a multi-disciplinary approach will foster close working and safe information sharing.
- **Healthy Babies:** this plan links directly with the Healthy Babies Programme for Solihull which aims to reduce infant mortality and vulnerability in our tiniest residents by supporting pre-conception health, promoting healthy pregnancy and enhancing a robust infancy offer. The programme aims to create a strong platform for families and supports good early child development. This work links directly into the Local Maternity and Neonatal System (LMNS) priorities for reducing vulnerability in infancy and improving outcomes, addressing factors such as smoking, alcohol and genetic risk. Midwifery, health visiting and Family Hubs will work together to support families, particularly at key transition points, from pre-conception onwards to form a seamless pathway for the first five years, reducing inequalities.
- **Solihull Healthy Child Programme Service (0-19 years)** will support the delivery of this plan: the Health Visiting team are uniquely placed to support families effectively, delivering up to five mandated checks for families from pregnancy to 2 years, supporting with any identified needs. This enables support at the earliest point. Through this plan the team, in partnership with Public Health and relevant agencies, will:
 - **Analyse data where families were not seen for their 2-year check by 2.5 years** in 2026 to understand reasons for cancellations and the barriers families face accessing the check. This will inform work to tackle barriers to increase reach (87% compared to 81.3% nationally).
 - **Review and refresh the pathway following the 2-year check** for children who are identified as developmentally delayed by March 2027. Service providers, parents/carers and agencies will work collaboratively to review and further develop the pathway following the check to ensure children are supported effectively as early as possible and families can access high-quality, joined-up care when special educational needs and disabilities are identified.
 - **Family Nurse Partnership** – will continue to support young parents/carers with effective parenting alongside fostering peer support in groups at Family Hubs, supporting young families to achieve early development milestones.

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

1.4 Healthier Babies and Toddlers (continued)



- **Speech and language support in the community** – options will be explored for provision to support children with early communication development. Part of this support may be group sessions in Family Hubs for children who are identified as delayed with their communication at their 2-year check. Skilled practitioners will support parent/carers with approaches to take at home to encourage rich language and communication development through play, particularly bespoke advice in how to support children with additional needs in developing communication approaches.
- **Immunisations** will be promoted in the early years to support health and prevent the spread of diseases such as Measles and Chicken Pox.
- **Supporting healthy eating:** Healthy Start vouchers will continue to be promoted to eligible families and Healthy Start vitamins for pregnancy women will be available from Family Hubs in Solihull from early 2027.
- **Supporting toilet training:** research shows most children can learn to be clean and dry with the right support, including some children with additional needs [source: [Barriers to early potty training evidence base – ERIC](#)]. Children with sensory needs may require additional time and support and potty training should be seen as a process and not a single event. It happens over time and children can practise sitting on a potty or toilet from when they can sit up independently. Research also shows it's best for children's bowel and bladder health to stop using nappies between 18 and 30 months and this can save families around £400 per year. An advice campaign on toilet training and how to get started will be delivered across Solihull, to increase parental confidence and understanding of this milestone.
- **Tackling tooth decay** - a supervised toothbrushing programme is being rolled out in primary schools and early years settings for 3–5-year-olds in the most deprived areas (year 2 begins in Sept 2026) in collaboration with the Solihull Special Care Dental Service in University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust. The programme incorporates daily toothbrushing at school/settings and is an evidence-based means to reduce tooth decay, a leading cause of school absence and pain that can impact on confidence, happiness, school achievement and wellbeing.

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

Chapter 2: More accessible early education and childcare

2.1 Increasing access

High-quality early education and childcare significantly improves children's life chances and helps parents/carers work. Children who attend quality early education between ages 2-4 perform better throughout school, with the greatest benefits for low-income families.

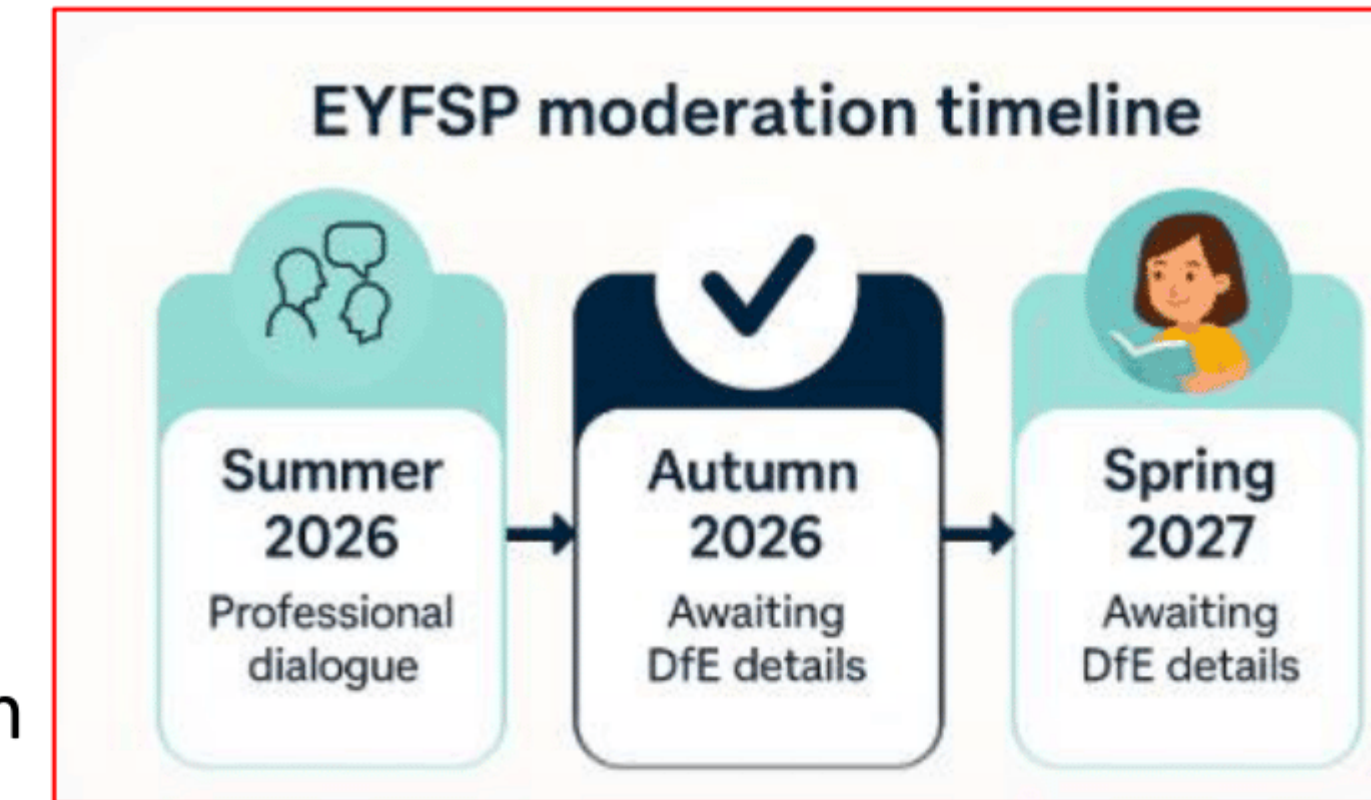
Solihull actions include:

- **Increase take-up of 15 funded hours** for low-income families (minimum expectation of 87.8% EL2s take up met 2025/6, there is a soft stretch target 91.3%) and children with SEND - promote early education across the borough, through Family Hubs, health professionals, businesses, etc. Signpost to business planning and training and talk about capacity in schools for 2-year-olds. Increase confidence through SEND training.
- **Increase availability of childcare and early education places** where needed - monitor sufficiency, target areas such as Chelmsley Wood and Meriden for early education places and areas without holiday schemes – if there is demand. School age childcare co-ordination- breakfast clubs, HAF links, wrap around. Ensure Early Years Team work with settings reduces the risk of low Ofsted inspection grades. Work to maintain current providers where possible.
- **Monitor financial sustainability** and transparency against the Early Years and Childcare guidance - Family Information Service liaison with providers and parents signposting to WM Business Growth Hub and Childcare Works resources. Monitoring and support to access additional funding (early years inclusion fund and early years pupil premium as well as DAF- disability).
- **Promote early education and childcare availability** in Solihull - publish the sufficiency strategy (2025/6) and consult with providers/parents to develop and address the new 'simplified' funding and guidance when shared (DfE).



**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

2.1 Increasing access (continued)



- **Pathways to registration and expansion support** - targeted coaching to support quality as well as growth
- **Workforce training** - networks and reflection opportunities such as GLD focussed Reception practitioner meetings, Leaders and Managers Networks, Stronger Practice Hub promotion (and Solihull bid), Dingley's Promise promotion for SEND training. West Midlands 'baby' quality development work [including Solihull College level 1 safeguarding and level 3 babies awards [new]. Community speech, language and communication training.
- **Provide instruction and additional funding for inclusion and SEND** support - support inclusion through the work of the Early Years Team and explore peer-to-peer working to improve quality and efficiency.
- **Improve accountability and quality** - self-reflection, evaluation and leadership action through networks, training and briefings. Training on the refreshed Ofsted inspection guidance and statutory and best practice requirements. Inclusion and belonging themed joint evaluation activities.
- **Provide tailored support** for settings needing improvement - Solihull Setting Improvement Approach and SEND visits to settings targeted at those who need it most. Signposting to additional training to support setting quality.
- **Improved data use** to best target resources and support - know and explore your local area information. Data sharing across teams and settings to ensure the cohorts needs are known and appropriate support available. For example: target self-care and toilet training to promote 18-month to 30-month window for potty training or speech and language therapy team support for settings with more families in receipt of additional support.

Success for Today, Prepared for Tomorrow

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

2.2 Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Provision



HAF: Supporting Development for 4-Year-Olds

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme supports the Best Start in Life strategy by improving development for 4-year-olds, reducing holiday learning loss, and creating positive experiences outside term-time for children on free school meals. We will achieve this by:

- Delivering enriching activities for 4–5-year-olds focused on language, physical, cognitive, nutritional, social, and emotional development
- Providing training and development opportunities for holiday providers including the importance of play and play work
- Increasing the number of suitable holiday clubs for reception-age children, thus boosting attendance
- Collaborating with schemes such as Free Breakfast Clubs, Wrap-around Childcare, and Best Start initiatives
- Strengthening links with Family Hubs and community-based family focussed HAF provision to offer whole-family support opportunities and connect families to wider services
- Funding has been announced for the next 3 yrs alongside free breakfast clubs that will be located primarily in low-income areas in the borough.

“Our relationships, surroundings and experiences during our first five years shape the adults we become and the society we create.”

Centre for Early Childhood

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

Chapter 3 Improving quality in early years including reception

3.1 Improving quality

High-quality early education and care sets children up for success when they arrive at school and beyond. The better trained the staff in those settings are, the more children benefit

- **Workforce development and recruitment** - support providers to reflect upon their recruitment and retention approaches. Work with Solihull College and Stronger Practice Hubs to ensure the availability of training to complement that provided by the local authority. Celebrate our local provision and encourage qualified practitioners to recognise and enjoy roles working with our youngest children - a diverse workforce
- **Support for children in receipt of additional funding** - promote evidenced practice (Education Endowment Foundation +) and mentor and coach leaders in settings to recognise and address the needs of children and families needing most help to thrive. Promote Togetherness (Solihull Approach) and trauma informed practices. Share strategies and approaches celebrated during Ofsted inspections and data improvement.
- **Quality support for settings** - promote support available within and beyond the local area. Work alongside Stronger Practice Hubs, RISE advisers, English and Maths Hubs and setting leads (including schools and child minders) to target support where it is most needed. Government funded Maths Champion training, early maths and language leads, and Hub prime/ core area professional development. Promote inter school moderation (EYFSP assessment to support Good Levels of Development) and interrogate data that is available to ensure the core curriculum areas are supported from birth to five and beyond. Help providers signpost parents to support available to them such as through the Best Start Hub and CBeebies.



**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

3.1 Improving quality (continued)

- **As early education funded places expand** - target the quality of early education in settings through in-setting mentoring and coaching alongside central training (SENCo 'shorts' and how young children learn for example as well as sector specific safeguarding training)
- **School readiness** - promote and refine the data available to schools and what it indicates for the school's own development planning. Cascade key messages to pre-school and complementary providers. Cascade the RISE webinars and EYFSP moderation messages; including those in the writing and oracy frameworks. Solihull has a School Readiness definition which was co-produced and is complemented by the Starting Reception guidance. See EYFSP data focus area – [slide 35](#) (self-care, physical, communication and literacy, mathematics). The Council will facilitate partnerships between early years and schools to share knowledge and resources aligned with [Every child achieving and thriving](#).
- **Strengthen local authority capacity to deliver preventative support before problems escalate –**
 - Early Years Early Help roles recruited and supporting early years settings.
 - Best Start Family Hub support enhanced by an early years SEND practitioner. Training and support from Solihull Children's Speech and Language Therapy service.
 - Solihull Team around the Child and Team around Early Years approaches to early identification of needs.
 - Review our section 23 approach -refers to the Children and Families Act 2014, which places a duty on health bodies (like NHS Trusts) to notify the Local Authority (LA) if they identify a child under school age with or likely to have a disability or Special Educational Need (SEND).



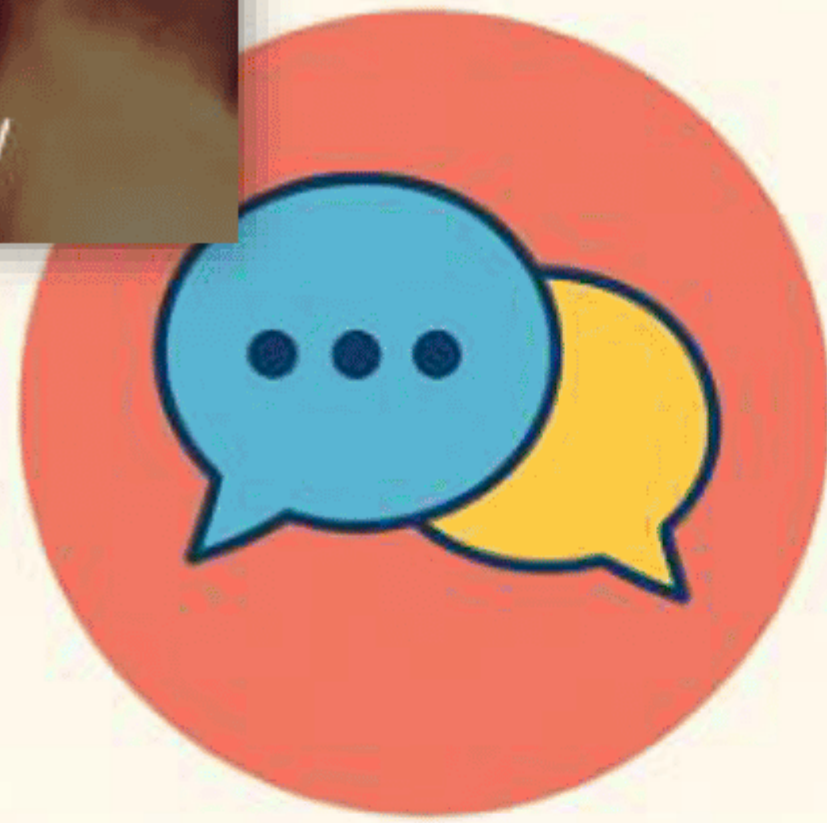
3.2 Speech, language and communication focussed work

- The local authority has a contract with University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust to give universal, and targeted, preventative support to EY settings who have the most 2-year-olds with families in receipt of additional support and early education funded children. To develop the capabilities of early years settings and upskilling early years practitioners, to further the speech, language and communication skills of the children that attend those settings. The service will work alongside other agencies (with parental agreement) to offer support to families attending targeted sessions, including Family Plus sessions.
- In spring 2026 we have community speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) community events for settings. This is to ensure all settings have a 'communication champion' who knows what the Solihull SLCN pathway is. We are current seeking funding to help release staff for these events. We will signpost to the training available during this 'Natter Matters' event and our communications.
- Complementary training and coaching from the early years team models in setting interactions supported by the communication and interaction 'short' recordings.
- Joint commissioning arrangements are in place between the ICB and Local Authority for a range of Community Therapies. The Council is currently leading Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) pathway re-design work with several key aims:
 - To develop a fully co-produced model which integrates NHS SLT and OT pathways with existing graduated pathways and other delivery models in the wider SEND system, ensuring universal, targeted and specialist tiers of care and support
 - To develop tiered levels of support; rather than have children catapulted to highly specialised support
 - To enable children to access appropriate support and assessment in a timely manner
 - To deliver a reduction in waiting lists for assessment and commission support/services individual children require to meet their needs without having to procure independent services.





3.3 Some of the support available in Solihull



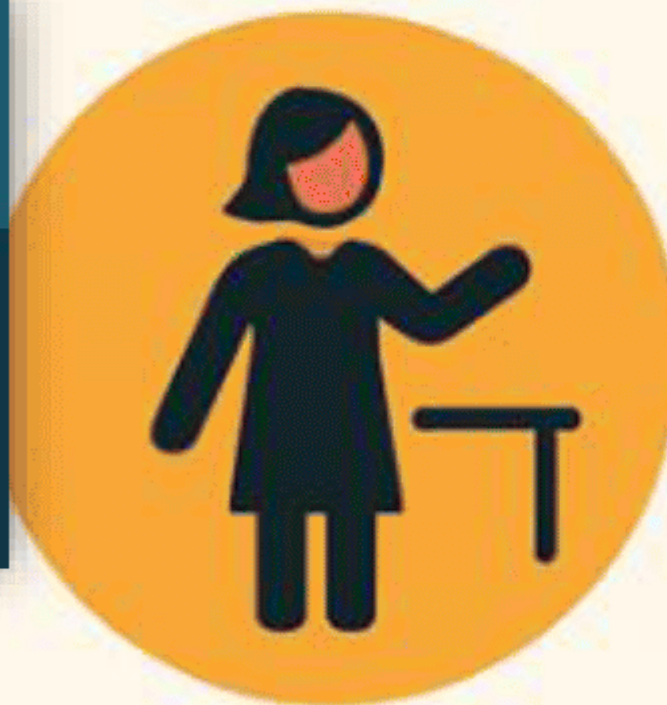
Support targeted to settings in more disadvantaged areas



Under 2 support which includes effective interactions



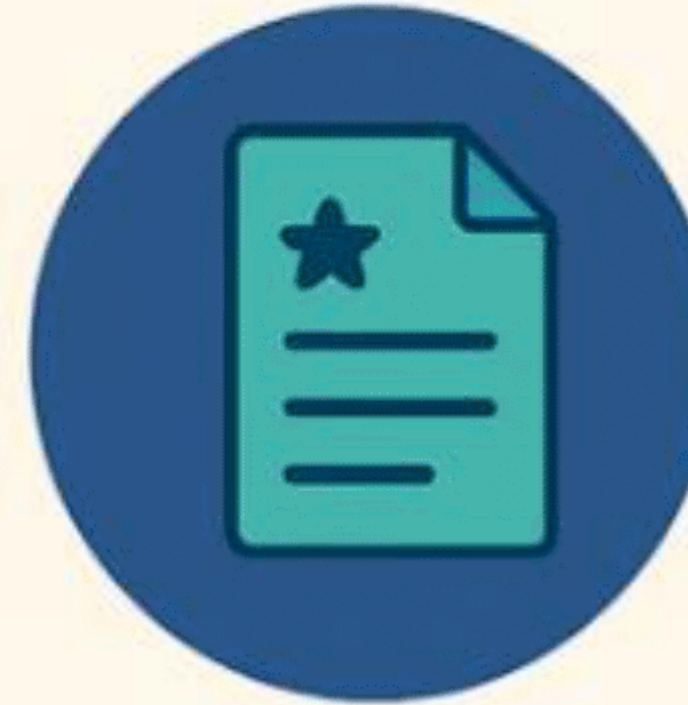
SENCo shorts on-demand training



Inclusion Support Practitioner modelling in settings



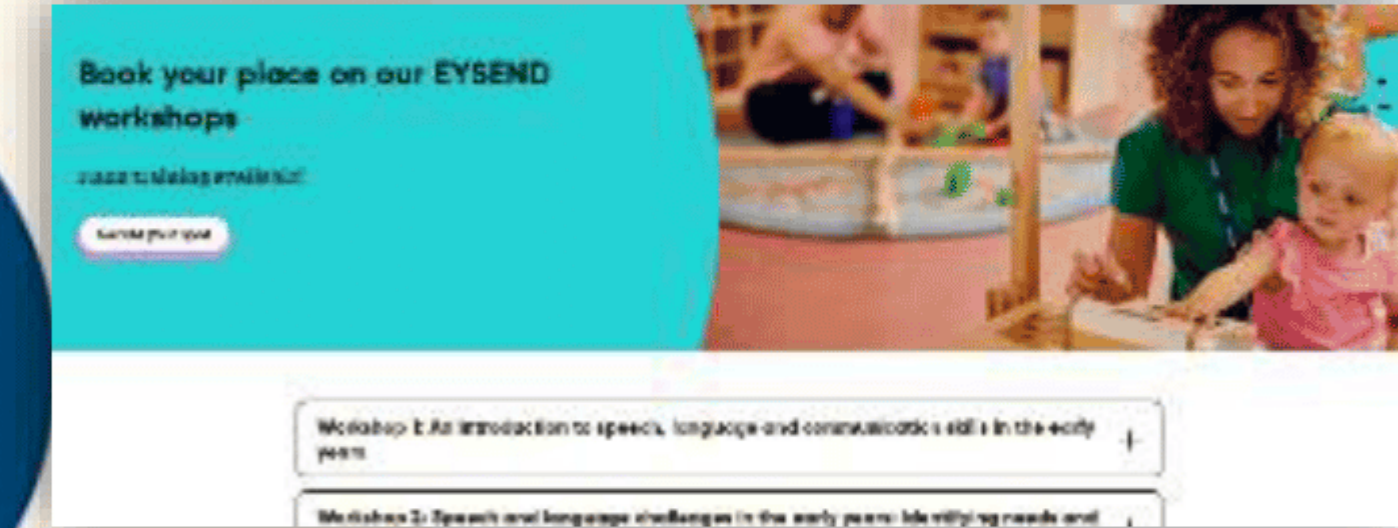
Signposting to further training



Self-evaluation support
SLCN practice



Self-evaluation support with a strong inclusion and communication focus



Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference

Early Years SEND Support



SISS and Early Years Team mentoring visits



Home support alongside health visitors



SENCo specific support



On-line on-demand training and supportive resources



Self-reflection and strong inclusive practice support



Team around the child process for a swift invitation to support



Transition stay-and-play sessions in Family Hubs



Networks to support peer working

Solihull METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Home

The Early Years Team - Information for families

Our SEND Local Offer shares details of available education, health, and social care support for children and young people with a Special Educational Need or disability, including those without Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. You can find about about resources, services, activities and events here.

SEND

- Areas of Need - strategies to support children
- Key resources for setting SENCos**
- The Graduated Approach and EHC assessment requests
- Supporting Parents
- SEND National Guidance
- Transition
- Referrals
- SEND Training & Support

Key resources for setting SENCos

- Assessment and tracking progress of children with SEND
- SEND Example Policies and Guidelines
- Planning reasonable adjustments
- Creating and managing a SEND register
- *Support Plans*/Target Plans
- Information to support additional SEND funding applications
- Working and communicating with parents/carers
- Collecting and responding to the child's voice
- Developing Continual Professional Development (CPD), including links to training from other providers



Supporting your child's development

Support available if my child attends a nursery

Support available if my child does not attend a nursery

Further information

- [The role of the area SENCo \(document\)](#) / [The role of the area SENCo \(YouTube\)](#)
- [The role of the inclusion support practitioner \(document\)](#) / [The role of the inclusion support practitioner \(YouTube\)](#)

Area	Date	Detail
Early Years Funding Reform Consultation	<i>Not yet published</i>	Government states a consultation will happen, but timing is still TBC.
Additional Early Years Inclusion Funding	2026–2027	£47m to be allocated nationally.
White Paper Publication	23 Feb 2026	Launch of <i>Every Child Achieving and Thriving</i> + SEND Reform consultation.
National Inclusion Standards	By 2028	Part of broader SEND reforms impacting early years.
Rollout of new SEND support model	From Sept 2030	First cohorts enter new system.

Specialist Inclusion Support Service

The Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS) works with children and young people who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Small enough to care, but big enough to make a difference

4. Communication and Education

4.1 A Solihull Best Start in Life **communications plan** will promote the Family Hub offer to support parenting, support early child development and strong home learning environments from pregnancy through early childhood. Clear, consistent messages will highlight how simple everyday interactions—talking, reading, playing, and routines—support children’s development and parental confidence. In Solihull, messages will be sent to families when they need them most in the form of timely push notifications at developmental stages, via the Family Hub app. This will be accompanied by advice on webpages and social media platforms, including:

- Early health and development messaging – linked to the ‘Start for Life’ offer
- Awareness and advice campaigns – such as for confident toilet training
- Collaborative communication with partner agencies and across programmes, such as Healthy babies messaging and joint posts with health services and VCFSE partners.



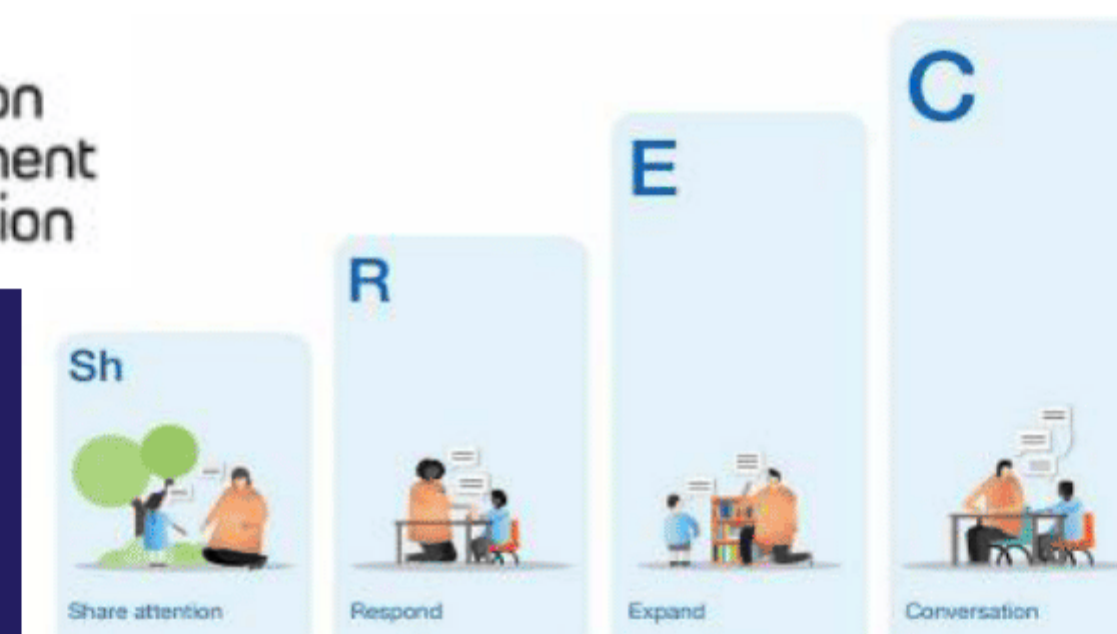
4.2 Social media posts will be used regularly to share bite-sized tips, short videos, parent stories, and signpost to services, helping to reach families across Solihull in an accessible and engaging way. These posts will be coordinated with wider communications through health visitors, early years settings, and community partners to reinforce key messages. The aim is to increase awareness, engagement, and take-up of Best Start in Life parenting and home learning support, as well as support for parents/carers who are worried about their child’s development or additional needs.

4.3 Digital platforms and printed material are being changed to feature the new Best Start in Life logo in line with the branding guidelines.

4.4 Early Years and Childcare settings will continue to receive communication from the Early Years Team and Family Information Service. Information is also shared to schools through the weekly Headlines communication. The information is also available through the www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc early years and childcare website, Solihull Local Offer, and the Solihull Children and Families site (Family Information Service, Family Hubs and Local offer- SEND).



**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**



5. Delivery, Monitoring, Evaluation and Governance

5.1 There will be a **detailed delivery plan** developed in collaboration with partner agencies, parents and carers to implement this work.

5.2 **Monitoring and evaluation** - the impact of this plan will be monitored through a number of key metrics, including:

5.2.1 Outputs such as numbers of families on parenting programmes, accessing relevant activities at Family Hubs.

5.2.2 Outcome data such as:

- Maternity data (in the LMNS dashboard) and child development at 2 years (ASQ)
- Communication development at 2 years (ASQ)
- Good Level of Development at 5 years
- Good Level of development at 5 years for children in receipt of free school meals
- Referrals into specialist services
- Qualitative information such as family experience case studies.

5.3 Data sources include :

- Local Government Outcomes Framework and the Solihull Outcomes Framework
- Local Authority [Interactive](#) Tool - public
- Local Authority –View Your Education Data- restricted viewing
- [Child Development](#) Outcomes (2- 2 ½ years) - public
- [Solihull Observatory-](#) area and ward profile dashboards - public
- [Ofsted five-year](#) inspection data – public

5.4 Interventions will be evaluated for effectiveness with pre-and post-outcome measures to further shape and inform the offer.

5.5 **Governance and monitoring arrangements:** the Best Start Plan will be overseen at the Best Start and Early Support Partnership which reports into the Families First Strategic Partnership Board and Early Help Board as part of wider children’s transformation work in the borough.



**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

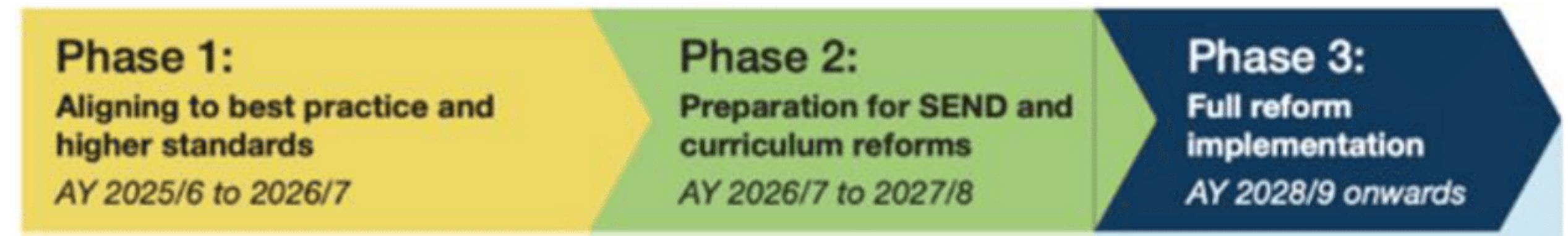
6. Interdependencies



This Best Start Plan incorporates complex work and no one agency can deliver this alone. It also interrelates with significant transformational programmes including:

- Families First Partnership Programme (social care reforms)
- Fairer Futures Fund projects – including:
 - Parenting co-ordination - intended to deliver a graduated, evidence-informed parenting offer across the system, ensuring parents feel supported and empowered to manage their children’s changing needs.
 - Parent-Infant Relationship Support (PAIRS) – intended to foster secure early attachment which leads to better early child development. This work also contributes to a wider BSol Perinatal Mental Health and Parent-Infant Relationship Support (PAIRS) Strategy
- Solihull Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Solihull Health Inequalities Strategy
- Living Well in Solihull (LWIS) Prevention Strategy 2023-28
- Healthy Babies Programme
- Children’s Community Health Services
- Healthy Child Programme
- Solihull Additional Needs Strategy and the Local SEND Reform Plan
- Solihull Setting Improvement Approach, School Improvement Strategy as well as the Education Strategic Plan

SEND reforms



**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

7. Further information - please visit:



Chapter 1 – Best Start Family Hub Offer/Start for Life

Family Hub webpages- [Solihull Family Hubs | Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

Start for Life Offer - [Start for Life offer | Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

Chapters 2 -More accessible early education and childcare

Family Information service - www.solihull.gov.uk/children-and-families/childcare/childcare-providers

Solihull SEND Local Offer - www.solihull.gov.uk/solihull-local-offer/early-years-education

Chapter 3- Improving quality in early years including reception

Solihull early years and childcare providers (Early Years Team) - www.solgrid.org.uk/eyc/

Solihull schools site - <https://solgrid365.sharepoint.com/sites/council/SitePages/Home.aspx>

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**

8. Appendices

8.1 Summary Theory of Change

8.2 12 development goals for children to achieve a 'good level of development at 5 years'

8.3 Summary of key Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data

Why change is needed	Who change is needed for	How will it work	Impacts	Primary outcomes
<p>Disparities in outcomes</p> <p>Government statutory targets to increase the proportion of children with a good level of development in Solihull by 79.5% (and 63.9% of children who have free school meals) by the end of reception by 2028.</p> <p>Need to reach families least likely to engage</p>	<p>Families in areas with most unmet needs with children at risk having delayed development & poorer outcomes</p> <p>Need to empower parents/ carers to create good home learning environments with attuned parenting</p>	<p>Increase access & integration of services</p> <p>Provision of high-quality, effective parenting and home-learning programmes</p> <p>Ensure robust pathways into specialist services when needed</p>	<p>Short-term: integrated pathways; right help, first time; clear offer to families</p> <p>Medium-term: confident parents/carers; attuned relationships; improved child development/ school readiness; protective factors against adversity</p>	<p>Secure, parental attachment; improved child development, school readiness, health, wellbeing, educational attainment, pro-social behaviour & resilience; reducing escalation</p>

8.1 Solihull Best Start Summary Theory of Change

8.2 12 development goals for children

Children's development is assessed at the end of reception year by their teacher through the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile assessment. To meet a 'Good Level of Development' children must meet 12 development goals.



Personal, social and emotional development

1. Self-regulation

- understand feelings and begin to regulate behaviour
- focus, respond and follow instructions
- work towards simple goals with patience

2. Managing self

- show confidence and independence
- understand and follow rules
- manage personal needs, like hygiene and dressing

3. Building relationships

- form positive attachments
- play cooperatively and take turns
- show sensitivity to the needs of others

Communication and language



4. Listening, attention and understanding

- listen attentively, responding with comments or questions
- take part in conversations with teachers and peers

5. Speaking

- participate in discussions using new vocabulary
- explain thinking and express ideas and feelings using full sentences

Physical development



6. Gross motor skills

- move confidently and safely
- show strength, balance and coordination in a range of physical activities

7. Fine motor skills

- hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing
- use other tools such as scissors and cutlery
- begin to show accuracy when drawing

Literacy



8. Comprehension

- understand and retell stories using own words and new vocabulary
- anticipate events and use new vocabulary in discussions

9. Word reading

- say sounds for letters and digraphs
- read simple words and sentences aloud, including sound blending

10. Writing

- write recognisable letters and spell words
- write simple phrases and sentences

Mathematics



11. Number

- understand numbers up to 10
- recognise quantities up to 5 without counting
- automatically recall number bonds up to 5 and some to 10

12. Numerical patterns

- count beyond 20
- compare quantities up to 10
- explore number patterns up to 10 such as odds, evens and doubles

8.3 EYFSP assessment 2024/5 headlines

Early learning goal	Your local authority area's percentage	National averages	Difference with national averages
Word reading	80.3%	76.5%	+3.9ppt
Speaking	85.4%	82.7%	+2.7ppt
Writing	74.1%	71.8%	+2.3ppt
Comprehension	82.4%	80.4%	+2.0ppt
Fine motor skills	87.2%	85.5%	+1.7ppt
Number	80.9%	79.3%	+1.7ppt
Building relationships	89.6%	88.0%	+1.6ppt
Self-regulation	86.3%	84.8%	+1.5ppt
Numerical patterns	79.8%	78.7%	+1.1ppt
Managing self	87.5%	86.9%	+0.5ppt
Listening, attention and understanding	82.2%	81.7%	+0.5ppt
Gross motor skills	91.5%	91.6%	-0.1ppt

Good Level of Development - GLD

Pupil group	Your local authority area's percentage	National averages	Difference with national averages
EAL	68.2%	64.7%	+3.4ppt
Female	77.6%	75.3%	+2.3ppt
FSM	53.4%	51.3%	+2.1ppt
Not FSM	73.7%	72.5%	+1.2ppt
Male	62.3%	61.6%	+0.7ppt
First language English	70.4%	69.9%	+0.5ppt
No SEN	77.0%	76.5%	+0.5ppt
SEN support	26.7%	26.4%	+0.4ppt
EHC plan	1.2%	4.0%	-2.7ppt

**Small enough to care,
but big enough to make a difference**