

Equalities Monitoring Early Help

Annual Report – 2023/24



Published

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1. Introduction

The Early Help Team provides support and intervention to children, young people, and families of Bracknell Forest at the earliest opportunity. Early Help is not the responsibility of one service or organisation – it is everyone's business. One of the most significant and transformational programmes of activity within early help services is the national Supporting Families Programme overseen by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The programme focuses on collaborative early help partnerships that offers efficient local services which can identify families in need and provide the right support at the right time by providing effective, whole family support to help prevent escalation into statutory services.

The Early Help Service includes:

Targeted Youth Support Service works with young people to deliver targeted 1-1 intervention and universal group activity, including sexual health clinics and LGBTQIA groups. The team has a specialist MakeSafe worker who undertakes direct work with children at risk of exploitation and complete return home conversations after periods of missing. TYS has a youth council that are part of the British Youth Council and Member of UK Youth Parliament. There are specialist youth clubs for young people with SEND with a focus on independent living, building self-esteem confidence as well as a place to socialise and meet new friends.

Family Hubs – there are three multi-agency family hubs that meets the requirements of the National Supporting Families Programme to ensure the right support is available to the right families at the right time. Early Help Professionals deliver high-quality casework to create effective change to mobilise strength for families, children, and young people. The model brings a range of agencies together to deliver flexible services to children, young people, and families from family hubs. Delivery comprises of a core and local need offer. The core offer is based around targeted one-to-one (tier 2) interventions and health delivery. 0-19 Children's Health, Reducing Parental conflict and Job Centre staff are integrated to enable them to work and deliver services from the family hubs. Parenting programmes including Support for Families impacted by Domestic Abuse, are delivered on a rotation basis ensuring good accessibility for families. Early Help supports the 0- 19 age range and up to 25 for young people with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND). We have recently introduced a range of targeted parenting intervention including Time Out for Parents of SEN children, Triple P Family Transitions and PAACEs (Parent and child adverse childhood experiences).

Education Welfare Service comprises of a team of highly skilled officers in a variety of roles. Who work alongside several different professionals, schools, and families to support with elements of school attendance. They track Children Missing Education, have responsibility for supporting the Elective Home Educated community and assessing suitability of education, supporting with Emotional Based School Avoidance, and improving school attendance. In addition, Child Employment and Entertainment Licencing is another element of the team. EWS also carry out the legal duties in respect of school non-attendance. The Working Together to improve attendance Government guidance was published in May 2022 and became statutory on the 19th August 2024.

Migration Team bring together officers working across the 7 Government migration programmes to support displaced people including those arriving from Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Syria, amongst other countries. The team ensure migration support services are available to all refugees and asylum seekers within Bracknell Forest, whilst promoting the long-term integration into the borough through use of the integration star.

Young Carers Service supports young carers under the age of 18 who have or share caring responsibility for an adult or another young person within the household or family. The service aims to promote the health and wellbeing of young carers and their families by preventing and protecting children and young people from undertaking excessive and inappropriate caring roles and responsibilities. The all-age carers strategy was published in

2024 and has a focus on young carers with priority area 4 ensuring we have a robust offer that is accessible to all young carers.

Our Vision and Mission

Vision - Bracknell Forest is a place where children, young people and their families feel safe, have access to high quality education and well-being services, giving them the opportunity to live healthy and empowered lives in their community.

Mission - To collectively work together to create and embed an Early Help system that identifies, is shaped by, engages with, and supports children, young people, and their families to flourish, thrive and achieve their potential in the communities in which they live.

Practice Framework:

Early Help is seen as a partnership responsibility and is built on a foundation of shared values, beliefs and principles underpinning local ways of working to identify, respond and improve outcomes. Central to our practice is the early identification of children, young people and families who would benefit from early help to improve their outcomes and to avoid escalation to statutory services.

Our Approach is:

Systemic - We build relationships to work collaboratively with a family at the centre to understand their relationships and history to help them resolve issues. Services are delivered by partners working together as a system of support through community, universal and targeted support to achieve good outcomes for children and their families at the earliest opportunity.

Restorative and Relational – we use restorative practices to create respectful and strong relationships where families feel supported. This enables better outcomes through less conflict with professionals and improved relationships within the family, wider network, and community.

Whole Family working - We work with the whole family (including significant males and those not in the home) to individually understand their strengths, challenges and to support each other's goals, long term change and stability.

Lead Professional – One professional will lead the assessment, plan and review process and co-ordinates professional involvement to achieve the intended outcomes

Timely and Focused: We provide timely and focussed help and support at the earliest possible stage to avoid escalation to statutory services.

Strengths based – we work in partnership with families to utilise their own resources and strengths to overcome challenges and develop long term solutions to areas of need rather than focusing on difficulties

Multi-Agency Workforce – Services are delivered by a well-trained and supported workforce with specialist workers and a diverse range of partners and commissioned services

Trauma Informed – we are aware of the impact of trauma and through our processes and structures we work to the 6 principles of trauma informed practice to not re-traumatise.

Voice of the Child – we engage children and families in decisions, ensuring their voices are heard and listened to and they have positive experiences with the services we provide.

Inclusive – we ensure the services and activities we deliver are inclusive and value diversity and that through our increased understanding of the barriers experienced by our service users we improve accessibility to and quality of services.

The service has several strategies and policies which underpin the work of Early Help, including but not limited to:

- National Supporting Families Programme
- Children Act 1989
- Working together to safeguard children 2023
- Stable Homes, Built on Love 2023
- Statutory Guidance to Improve Young People's Wellbeing 2023
- Section 507B, Education Act 1996 and EWS Statutory Guidance - Working together to improve school attendance, Children Missing Education, Children educated at home, child performance and activities and Legal action
- Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, Nationality and Borders Act 2022 and Illegal Migration Act 2023
- Statutory guidance for local authorities' youth provision 2023
- Early Help Strategy 2021 – 2026 and Supporting Families Systems Guide
- Youth Strategy 2024 – 2026
- Best Start in Life 2022
- All Age Carers Strategy 2025 - 2030

2. Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

a. Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

The service operates several standards linked to timeliness, one of which is the average number of working days from receipt of the referral into the service to the day an allocation decision has been made by the Early Help duty manager, and that families are closed in a timely way. This ensures that all referrals are processed in the same manner and that support is focused and promotes resilience. Reporting against these targets are referenced in the service's performance scorecard.

Early Help allocates funds where financial need has been assessed to enable parents/carers to attend programmes identified as a benefit to them and the family. This includes transport and childcare costs and limits some of the barriers imposed on low-income families. In addition, there is access to interpreter services for those individuals where English is not their first language.

The Migration team receives grant funding for individuals being supported by the Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Reallocations and Assistant Policy (ARAP) schemes. These grants have specific guidance to ensure that grant spend is equitable across the schemes.

Early Help collects Special Category Data and Personal Identifiable Information as part of its processes, and this is managed with the Information Governance Lawyer via the Data Protection Impact Assessment data processing system. This ensures that all data is processed safely and fairly and supported by a legal framework.

Along with other services within the Council, recruitment has been undertaken in the service in the last 12 months and has been blind recruitment, where characteristics such as age or ethnicity, are not shared in advance of a formal interview.

There is a zero-tolerance approach taken to any instances of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation, from staff and from customers using the service. Where there is an incident of this, action is taken immediately. The service is aware of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and this it is unlawful to discriminate, treat some people less fairly or put them at a disadvantage.

b. Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

It is expected that all staff within the service complete training on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion 2024, Racial Equality in the Workplace, Unconscious Bias, and Bitesize Training regarding Black History Month. Training is ongoing for staff on promoting inclusivity.

Opportunities for advancement and promotion within the team have been made available to all members, and support has been offered to those seeking to apply.

The application of the Council's flexible working policies, also enable work arrangements to be accommodating of personal and family needs, ensuring a commitment to a strong work / life balance.

More broadly work has been progressed to develop the data maturity of Bracknell Forest's Early Help partnership to provide a more comprehensive overview and understanding of early help services in the community and the impact they have on improving outcomes for families, children, and young people.

The Early Help Strategy was launched in January 2023 and outlines the vision, objectives, and commitments for the wider partnership, this at its heart is rooted in advancing equality of opportunity for all.

c. Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic.

The leadership of the early help is committed to promoting good relations between groups within the wider community. Role modelling this to team members and ensuring an ongoing commitment to personal learning and development in this area is a priority.

The Early Help Partnership Group reflects the services that support children and families in the borough and seeks to bring together partners to advance opportunities to support each other and deliver services consistently in line with the Early Help approach.

The Youth Service run a LGBTQI+ youth group who took part in Bracknell's first PRIDE event, supporting each other and other young people to remember the journey to equality. Young Carers and young people with SEND are supported through youth groups where they can access information, advice, and guidance.

3. Breakdown of customers/service users by protected characteristics

Equalities Monitoring

A range of information is collected by early help to understand who is accessing services and the outcomes achieved, compared to the wider Bracknell Forest population.

Equalities monitoring is a key requirement of internal and external commissioned providers, to ensure that service delivery meets the needs of communities. Regular reviews of the available data take place, and where appropriate action is taken.

Disability Equality – this can include physical, mental health, learning or sensory disabilities and includes conditions such as dementia as well as hearing or sight impairment.

Between April 2023 – March 2024 a total of 370 Early Help Assessments were completed with young people and families.

The service has developed the offer of support to children, young people, and families and continue to work with colleagues in SEND and the parent carer forum to raise the profile and ensure access of early help services.

Racial Equality

2021 Census data showing ethnic breakdown of Bracknell Forest population: 86% white British or other, 7% Asian, 2.5% Black British, African, or Caribbean, 3% mixed ethnicity, 1.5% other.

73% of early help assessments are completed for families from a white background, indicating a significant representation compared to other ethnic groups. 16% of assessments for other ethnicities indicates the service is actively supporting a diverse range of communities. The presence of various Asian, Black, and mixed ethnicity backgrounds in the assessments demonstrates an effort to engage with and support all community groups. The increase in the percentage of "not yet obtained/known" data highlights a need for improved data collection methods to better understand and address the needs of minority communities. The service's commitment to supporting all communities across Bracknell Forest is evident, though continuous efforts are necessary to ensure equitable access and representation for all ethnic groups. Overall, while the early help service predominantly supports white backgrounds, it is also engaged with a diverse range of ethnic groups. Continued efforts to improve data collection and understanding of the needs of all communities will help ensure equitable service delivery moving forward.

Gender Inequality

A higher proportion of total children, young people and families supported by early help were females, account for 51%, compared to 48% of males. Some caution needs to be applied in interpreting this as when broken down by the age range 12-18 years old 55% of females and 44% of males were supported. This data is very similar to that reported in last years report.

In addition, each member of the household is included in the assessment, and where a male father / significant male is absent or separate from parents, they may not be included within the assessment account for the slightly higher percentage of females supported. Further work is taking place to ensure that the service increases the numbers of father / significant male's who are included.

Sexual Orientation Equality

There is some evidence nationally that young LGBTQIA+ people have a higher rate of support needs, particularly around their mental wellbeing and sense of belonging. The Targeted Youth Support Service operates a weekly LGBTQIA+ youth group. The group is attended by young people from across the borough and seeks to provide a safe space for young people to be themselves, share experience, support one another, and gain any information and support that they may need. The youth service supported Bracknell's first PRIDE event last year and supported young people to contribute to the day including access to the Bracknell walk youth centre for PRIDE planning meetings.

Gender Reassignment

The National LGBT survey in July 2017 found that Trans people feel least comfortable with life than other groups and for young people transitioning while at school over 36% felt that their school was supportive of their decision.

Early help services support young people and families who are transitioning through one-to-one support and access to resources and information. Most Early Help staff received training last year, and a refresher is now recognised as necessary. The training covered key topics such as understanding gender identity, the experiences of transgender and non-binary individuals, the spectrum of gender identity, and concepts like gender dysphoria and non-binary identities. Staff are also trained on safeguarding, anti-bullying strategies, and how to help young people challenge discrimination. In addition, we offer mental health first aid training to support young people and work closely with health and other specialist organisations to ensure appropriate support for those facing challenges related to gender identity.

Age Equality

As of the 2021 Census, Bracknell Forest's population was recorded at 124,600, reflecting a 10.1% increase since the 2011 Census. The gender distribution remained relatively balanced, with 49% male and 51% female. This slight change reflects a small increase in the female population. The percentage of the population aged 0-24 years was around 30.3% as per earlier estimates, but the exact figure may require further refinement from the census breakdown.

The total population of Bracknell Forest is projected to rise to 131,262 by 2043, a 5.7% increase from 2021. However, the number of people in the 0-24 age group is expected to decrease by 1.9%, equating to around 26.8% of the total population, down from the previous 30.3%.

The need for universal and targeted support for families remains vital, especially as the younger population sees a slight decrease while the overall population grows. This changing demographic will shape future social services and community planning.

Data acquired by the council's early help service as part of Phase 3 of the national supporting families programme (01 Apr 2022 to 31 Mar 2025), provides a view of the needs of children, young people and families in Bracknell Forest. The two highest single most common ages for children being supported were 13 & 14 years old (both 8.1%) and two lowest were prebirth (0.3%) and 1-year olds & under 1 (both 3.02%). 12- and 14-year-olds, were the highest and second highest child age range to be supported and prebirth and under 1's & 18 years old are the lowest age ranges to be supported by early help services in this reporting year. It would be expected for support to be usually provided to young people before they arrive at their 18th birthday, and this is one rationale for the low recording of 18 years old. The two years combined represents approximately 5% of the total number covered by early help assessments completed.

The Migration Service has supported 90 young people under the age of 18 since the start of the scheme, with 47% being female and 53% male. The most common ages among Ukrainian minors in the program were 12 years old (13 children) and 17 years old (9 children). Additionally, 247 adults have received support since the scheme began. Under the Afghan scheme, 34 children have been supported, with a gender breakdown of 47% female and 53% male. The children's ages were evenly distributed from 1 to 17 years old, while 28 adults have also received support since the scheme's inception. Referral cases involved 18 adults and 13 children, ranging in age from newborn to 17 years old, with 54% female and 46% male.

Religion or Belief Inequality

2021 Census data: 48% Christian, 40% no religion; 6% no response, 1% Buddhist, 2% Hindu, 2% Muslim, 1% Sikh.

Early Help actively explores religious beliefs and diversity through assessments and direct work, ensuring that practitioners understand the families they are supporting. Additionally, the service recognises, supports, and celebrates various religious and cultural events, fostering an inclusive environment that respects all communities.

The team is committed to honouring traditions and embracing the rich diversity of individuals and families. Early Help have participated in and hosted several cultural celebrations, including the Hong Kong Community Event, Independence Day, and Refugee Week.

Pregnancy and Maternity Inequality

Support for pregnant women and families is provided through the universal offer in Family Hubs. For those requiring more targeted help, Tier 2 support offers a team around the family approach.

The Early Help team provides a wide range of services for expectant and new mothers, including walk-in clinics with health professionals, parenting and socialisation groups, and one-to-one support. Early help commission Homestart to provide support from pregnancy through to age 5 and collaborate closely with the LIFE charity to offer additional assistance to young parents up to the age of 25.

Early Help recognises and addresses potential inequalities and barriers for our staff related to pregnancy, maternity, and parental responsibilities, ensuring a supportive, inclusive, and fair environment. We follow the legal protections of the Equality Act 2010, as outlined in BFC's policies, to prevent discrimination. Risk assessments are conducted to ensure a safe work environment for pregnant employees, with adjustments made for their safety and comfort. We support flexible working arrangements, provide breastfeeding breaks, and offer

suitable facilities. Throughout maternity leave, we maintain regular communication, ensuring career progression, well-being, and guidance for a smooth return to work.

Marriage and Civil Partnership Inequality

2021 Census: 48.3% of people are married or in a civil partnership in Bracknell Forest – slightly higher than SE and England averages. 35.4% have never been married, 2% are married but separated, 9.4% are divorced and 4.9% widowed. 63% are living in a couple and 37% not. Overall, nearly half of Bracknell Forest households are married or in a civil partnership.

The early help service supports adults who are married, in a civil partnership or single. Several programmes are offered to support parents/carers as part of our core early help offer.

4. Key issues for 2024/25:

The service continues to receive complex case referrals, driven by a variety of national and international factors, including the rising demand for support, mental health challenges, the cost-of-living crisis, and global events.

We are actively working towards becoming a Council of Sanctuary, part of a broader movement to foster a culture of welcome, inclusion, and empowerment for those seeking sanctuary.

The proposed School Attendance Strategy will undergo public consultation from November 2024 to January 2025, with feedback carefully considered before being presented to the Council Cabinet in March 2025. This process will ensure that any potential impact on individuals with protected characteristics is fully understood before finalising the strategy. The goal is to ensure that every child and young person in Bracknell Forest has access to quality education and opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Additionally, the service has reviewed its current support for young carers in Bracknell Forest. Over the next year, we will strengthen this offer, ensuring it is robust, accessible, and inclusive for all young people, regardless of their background.

5. Actions and mitigations planned:

The Youth Strategy, alongside the Early Help Strategy, is designed to promote equality and fairness in the delivery of early help services, while simplifying access and prioritising support for those with the greatest need.

The current offer for young carers provides them with access to support, guidance, and information, and is currently under review. This review includes enhancing access to a dedicated youth workspace specifically for young carers.

The School Attendance Strategy outlines the Council's vision to improve attendance rates by ensuring that children and young people receive timely support, with the right people involved at the right time.

6. Performance against the equality objectives

Inclusive in all we do

The primary goal of the Early Help service is to support children and families at an early stage, helping them address challenges and reach their full potential. The service is available to all children and families, and it also operates specialist groups and services, including those for young carers, mental health, and LGBTQI+ individuals.

Additionally, the service provides financial assistance through the Council to improve living conditions for vulnerable residents in the community. Young carers receive dedicated support from professionals who offer advice, guidance, and assistance to ensure their needs are met and that they can achieve their true potential.

The Migration Team offers comprehensive, culturally responsive support to refugees and migrants, beginning with an in-depth welcome visit and initial assessment. These assessments are designed to understand the unique journey each individual or family has taken to reach the UK, along with their specific needs. Our specialist migration workers are trained to recognise the diverse experiences of those we support, while respecting the cultural, religious, and personal backgrounds of every individual. With a trauma-informed approach, our team actively listens to each story, acknowledges any traumas they may have faced, and ensures a compassionate, respectful response to traditions and beliefs.

By applying trauma-informed principles, we recognise signs of trauma, create a safe and supportive environment, and offer empathetic care that prioritises emotional well-being and prevents re-traumatization.

In addition to personalised emotional support, we provide practical assistance such as financial guidance, referrals to mental health services, help with navigating benefits, employment support, and assistance with school enrolment for children. Refugees and migrants are also offered free English language lessons, supporting their successful integration into the community, and fostering a sense of belonging and independence.

The Education Welfare Service works closely with schools to implement a supportive, proactive approach to improving school attendance. The service also ensures that Electively Home Educated children receive a suitable education and have access to important resources, such as information on immunisations, sexual health, and career guidance.

Accessible for all

The service operates family hubs strategically located across the borough, ensuring easy access for all residents. Each hub is fully accessible, and there is a dedicated youth centre located in the heart of the town centre.

Multiple communication channels are available, including in-person visits to family homes, universal youth work provision, group sessions, outreach services, and digital options such as email. We aim to respond to all emails within 24 hours, ensuring those seeking help receive timely responses.

Our services are available throughout the week, including some evenings and weekends, to ensure that everyone can attend group sessions and access broader support.

To ensure inclusivity, information is translated into various languages, enabling more individuals to participate in activities and access support. Additionally, interpreters are used to assist individuals and families as needed.

Accountable and fair

The early help service report required data on migration as required and wider early help service data is shared at relevant groups to ensure that all partners can contribute to discussions and hold each other accountable. The use of data supports decisions being made which are fair.

The provision of services is carried out in line with the Council's statutory duties and are in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Diverse and inclusive workforce

The early help service recruits staff via the Council's recruitment process which means that applications are anonymised, and that limited data on a protected characteristic is obtained prior to an interview. The early help teams are as diverse as possible and an area for development is to take positive action in relation to attracting more males into the service as appropriate.

7. Views of our customers/service users

Customer engagement, consultation, and learnings

A statutory consultation will soon begin for the proposed School Attendance Strategy. Feedback from parents, carers, children, young people, and families is continuously gathered throughout the year, both during interventions and on specific matters, to inform wider learning and improve service delivery. The service actively encourages young people's participation, engaging with the UK Youth Parliament and the British Youth Council to ensure their voices are heard.

The Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) Quality Assurance Framework is embedded within the service, with regular audits reviewing the quality of practice over the past 12 months. These audits help assess the effectiveness of interventions and decision-making, ensuring the best outcomes for children, young people, and their families. Feedback from families is also incorporated to understand their experiences and improve support.

The May 2024 audit report showed that families consistently feel heard, with parents' views informing interventions or showing clear reasoning in decisions. Work is ongoing with the Quality Assurance Team to develop tailored audit processes for various service areas, such as parenting courses, young carers, and the education welfare service.

We have integrated Early Help resources into the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to allow families to share their stories once and receive the right support at the right time. Feedback is now embedded in the casework for Early Help, the youth team, migration services, and education welfare, and is recorded within our case management system. We work closely with families to gather their input throughout interventions and track it through the Council's compliments and complaints processes. Families rate the service they receive, and this data is reported on our monthly scorecard, which is shared with senior management.

In all Early Help services, assessments are conducted using various outcome star models, such as Family Star, My Star, Integration Star, Youth Star, and Relationship Star. The service has outcome star champions who regularly update their knowledge to train colleagues and ensure best practices are followed across the team.

We have introduced and trained staff in the use of "Mind of My Own," an inclusive app that empowers young people to share their views and communicate with trusted adults. The app enhances our targeted work with children and young people and is available in two versions: one for young people who can create their own account, and another designed for younger children or those with additional needs, with adult support. Both versions are fully accessible and available in over 100 languages.

The Bracknell Forest Parent/Carer Forum, which supports parents of children with SEND needs, operates within our Early Help family hubs. Their work informs and shapes our SEND pathways. Current efforts are focused on mapping out how families are supported to ensure a smooth process. All parenting programs delivered by Early Help include specific evaluation processes, with feedback gathered at the end of each program to inform future delivery.

Early help have established robust contract monitoring for commissioned services, focusing on performance, risk management, and compliance to deliver high-quality, cost-effective support for children, young people, and families, including those with SEND. Providers submit quarterly reports that include family feedback to promote continuous improvement. To address protected characteristics, the contract terms and conditions requires providers to collect and report data on age, gender, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Providers must also show how they will address identified inequalities and service gaps, ensuring equitable service delivery that meets the needs of diverse groups.

As part of our workforce development plan, we are rolling out "Voice of the Child" training to enhance our practice, ensuring that children, young people, and families are actively engaged and involved in decision-making and service design. The training will focus on supporting children with communication needs and incorporating their voices into supervision.

The service is supported by 1.5 Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Officers, who coordinate parent forums tailored to parents' needs. Feedback is captured after each session, including suggestions for future topics. A tracking system has also been developed to monitor outcomes from the triage panel and gather parent feedback.

Early Help is being accessed in a timely manner, with children and young people with SEND being matched to the most appropriate services for their needs. Families can also access a variety of health clinics and support services directly through the family hubs. We are currently analysing demand at the SEND and Early Help front doors to ensure needs are being addressed by the appropriate services.

A multi-agency panel has been established to better understand and address the needs of home-educated children and young people. The first meeting, held during the summer term, included feedback from parents and young people.

The Autism Group (TAG) runs informal support groups for parents of preschool autistic children and their siblings, hosted in Family Hubs. These groups provide a space for parents to connect, share experiences, and offer support to one another.

Customer satisfaction and learnings

Comments and compliments data is captured primarily by our corporate complaints team and equal opportunities data is not captured currently; however, this can be considered for the future.

Learning is taken from all complaints and shared with the relevant team and/or wider service area. This has included the service undertaking e-learning activity, development and awareness sessions and peer reviews. The services views complaints and compliments as a learning opportunity.

Complaints activity and learnings

Complaints data is captured by BFC's corporate complaints team. For the period October 2023 to October 2024, the service received 6 complaints. Overall, the level of complaints remains relatively low with compared to the number of families being supported through an early help assessment. Early Help Services received the highest level of compliments (6) across all Early Help and Communities services between 1st April 2023 – 31st December 2023.

8. Conclusion

This Equalities Monitoring Report provides a comprehensive overview of the Early Help service's performance in fulfilling its public sector equality duties, with a strong emphasis on promoting inclusivity, accountability, and community engagement. The service demonstrates a commitment to eliminating discrimination and fostering good relations among diverse groups, as evidenced by various work undertaken, including blind recruitment, targeted support for marginalised populations, and comprehensive training on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Despite the successes highlighted in the report, challenges remain, particularly in increasing the representation of underrepresented groups within service assessments. Notably, while most early help assessments have been conducted for families of white backgrounds, there is a need to address the rising percentage of unknown ethnicity data. Furthermore, the gender breakdown indicates a continued imbalance in the support provided to young males, prompting a commitment to enhance engagement strategies aimed at fathers and significant male figures.

The ongoing data collection and analysis efforts illustrate a proactive approach to understanding community needs and tailoring support services effectively. Engagement with stakeholders, including families and community groups, enhances service delivery, and ensures that feedback is integral to future improvements. The report also acknowledges the increasing complexities faced by families, driven by factors such as mental health challenges and socio-economic pressures, necessitating a responsive and adaptive service model.

The Early Help Strategy and the proposed School Attendance Strategy underscore the dedication to advancing equality and ensuring that all children and young people in Bracknell

Forest have equitable access to quality education and support. Delivery of the LGBTQI+ youth group and targeted support for young carers exemplify the service's commitment to fostering a sense of belonging and promoting well-being among all community members.

Moving forward, the Early Help service will continue to strengthen its focus on inclusivity, adapt to emerging needs, and actively engage with diverse populations. By remaining committed to the principles outlined in the Equality Act 2010 and continuously striving for improvement, the service aims to enhance outcomes for all families in Bracknell Forest, paving the way for a more equitable, inclusive, and supportive community.

Across Early Help and Communities work will be done to improve how we respond to clients/residents who are neurodiverse. This will include joint sessions on how to implement learning from training and working with partners.