Annual equalities, diversity, and inclusion report 2025-26



achieving for children

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1. Introduction

Achieving for Children (AfC) is a not-for-profit organisation serving the Royal Borough of Kingston, the London Borough of Richmond, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Its core aim is to support children and young people to live safe, happy, healthy, and successful lives. As an organisation of **2,008 employees (representing 1,368 full-time equivalents)**, with 1,400 being children's services practitioners, we place young people at the core of our integrated education, health, and social care services.

This annual equalities report demonstrates our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). It outlines our approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), our understanding of these areas within our workforce and the families we support, our actions in 2025-26, and our equality objectives through 2027.

The PSED, effective since 5 April 2011, mandates public bodies to integrate equality into their daily work to combat inequality and discrimination. Its three core duties require us to be mindful of the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations across protected characteristics.

We recognise the nine protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Additionally, due to the characteristics' particular relevance to our work with children and young people, we include 'care-experienced' and 'socio-economic status' as integral characteristics across all our projects.

This reflects our commitment to addressing the unique challenges, barriers, and inequalities faced by those who have been in the care system and individuals impacted by financial hardship.



2. Our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion

Our approach to implementing equality, diversity, and inclusion is set out in the EDI policy agreed by the Company Leadership Team. This approach is underpinned by AfC's behavioural values: empower, trust, and respect, which are set out in our strategic plan 2024-29.

Achieving for Children's commitment to equality and diversity is enshrined in our promise: *'We will embrace diversity and champion inclusion'.*

This commitment means we respect cultural differences, value diversity to enrich our organisation and meet community needs, and actively identify and address inequalities. We focus on providing equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination, harassment, and intimidation, and achieving the highest standards in service delivery, decision-making, and practices for our workforce and the children, young people, and families we support.

Equality objectives

Our proposed equality objectives, set for achievement by 2027, are separated into internal (workforce focused) and external (focused on children, young people, and families). These objectives have been developed based on existing policies, annual equalities reports, staff survey feedback, and equalities data.

Workforce

Objective 1:

To strengthen organisational ownership of the equality, diversity, and inclusion programme.

Objective 2:

To develop a workforce committed to investing in equality, diversity, and inclusion by creating and promoting training, development opportunities, and resources across AfC.

Objective 3:

To provide all staff with an equal opportunity to thrive by fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce and creating avenues for personal and professional growth for underrepresented staff.

Children, young people, and families

Objective 4:

To strengthen community engagement and data collection to ensure all children and young people have what they need to thrive.

Objective 5:

Champion the recognition of care-experienced as a protected characteristic within the framework of equality, diversity, and inclusion.



Responsibility for equality, diversity, and inclusion

While the AfC Board of Directors and Company Leadership Team hold ultimate responsibility for EDI, the EDI Board, established in 2021 and comprising AfC staff from across services, is responsible for implementing annual EDI work in line with the action plan.

The EDI Board reports to the AfC Board of Directors and Company Leadership Team. Ultimately, we believe all AfC colleagues, individually and collectively, are responsible for creating a truly inclusive environment and for championing and role-modelling equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Reporting and monitoring

AfC produces this annual equalities report each summer, aligning with the business planning cycle, to demonstrate our compliance with the PSED. Other equality reports are produced as requested by the owning councils.

Managers are required to complete equality impact assessments (EIAs) to ensure that equality implications of decisions are considered. Actions from EIAs are monitored through team plans by service managers. Key EIAs are published on our website, and the EIA process has been made accessible in line with government requirements. The EDI Board provides a challenge to AfC's equality, diversity, and inclusion practice.

Language and terminology

We adhere to government guidelines for inclusive communications, while we have also created an internal glossary to support staff to be confident with the language they use. These can be found via these links.

Inclusive communications

Writing about ethnicity



3. Our workforce

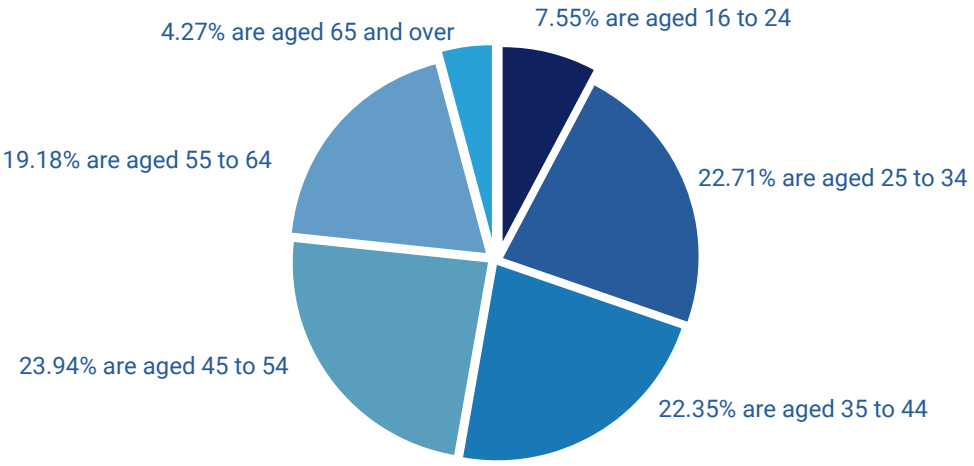
The data below provides a workforce profile as of 31 March 2026. It includes all permanent, temporary, and casual employees, while excluding agency workers. Percentages shown throughout the following sections are based only on employees whose equality information is known and recorded. Where employee data is unknown, either because no information is available or individuals chose not to disclose it, these figures are excluded from percentage calculations, and no assumptions have been applied.



Workforce demographics (as of 31 March 2026)

Age

The majority of our employees (69%) are aged between 25 and 54, with the smallest percentages being aged 16 to 24 and 65 and over.



We are actively trying to develop and recruit young people through various apprenticeships and traineeships.

Disability

5.65% of our employees reported a disability, a slight increase from the previous year.



19% of working-age adults nationally have a disability (Scope: Disability Facts and Figures). This suggests our organisation is not yet fully representative. We acknowledge that not all employees disclose their disability status, which may affect this figure.



We are committed to making reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities and providing flexible working arrangements, supported by manager guidance on reasonable adjustments.

(Please note: 65.38% of employees choose not to disclose their disability status.)

Race and ethnicity

21.9% of our employees are from ethnically diverse communities.

35.47% of employees chose not to disclose their ethnicity.

Our workforce has a slightly higher Black, Asian, and Ethnic Minority representation than the general population.

16.2% in Richmond

13.9% in Windsor and Maidenhead

33.1% in Kingston where the broader local population is significantly more ethnically diverse



We are also working on ensuring our staff are knowledgeable and informed about the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the children, young people, and families we support through workforce race equality standard initiatives.

Sex

80.98% of our employees are female.

This closely reflects broader national trends across children's services and social care, which is historically a female-dominated profession. To support our workforce and those with caring responsibilities, AfC maintains robust flexible working and menopause policies, both reviewed every three years.

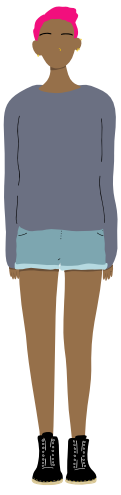
Recognising men as an underrepresented demographic within our social care workforce, we recently updated our paternity leave policy with enhanced rights and entitlements. Building on this momentum, a new AfC Employee Network (AEN), Men United, was formed this year to provide a dedicated, supportive space for male colleagues to connect, share experiences, and discuss wellbeing.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap measures the difference between the average pay of men and women across the entire organisation (rather than equal pay for equal work, which is governed by our job evaluation scheme).

Because female colleagues represent the vast majority of our overall workforce, our strong commitment to internal progression is reflected in our senior leadership structure.

83% of our highest-paid staff are women. As a result, our mean gender pay gap is **-3.75%** (compared to -3.89% last year), demonstrating that women are strongly represented across all pay bands and leadership levels within the organisation.



Gender reassignment

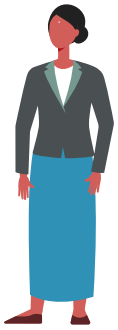
While we collect this data, **84%** of staff have left this field blank, resulting in a very small percentage of recorded data. AfC provides support and understanding for employees transitioning or having transitioned, recognising the importance of sensitive and supportive processes. We uphold our legal responsibility to protect the rights of trans people and prevent discrimination or victimisation.

Religion or belief

31.64%
largest faith group is Christian

Employees with no faith or religion or who did not declare their religion account for **55.64%**.

These figures largely reflect local demographic trends.



Marital status

Married or in a civil partnership	32.15%
Single	28.82%
With a partner	8.81%

Figures largely reflect local data, but further work is required to reduce the 30.22% 'not known or not shared' categories.

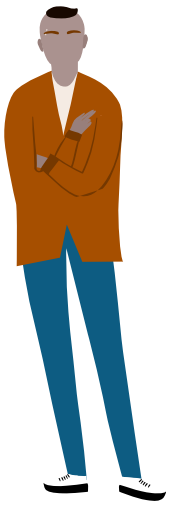
Pregnancy and maternity

We currently do not report on this, but data is collected at a team level when staff take maternity or paternity leave. Our policies in relation to maternity and paternity have been reviewed and updated in the last year. As at 31 March 2026 across AfC, 15 employees are on maternity leave, representing **1%** of the workforce.

Sexual orientation

3.83%
identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other

This is an increase from 2% in 2024. Nationally, in 2024, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that 3.7% of the UK population aged over 16 are lesbian, gay, or bisexual, similar to our figures from a year ago.



Objectives

OBJECTIVE ONE:
To strengthen organisational ownership of equality, diversity, and inclusion

Our employees come from a broad range of professional disciplines including social work, teaching, health services, and public sector management. We work hard to ensure that our workforce represents the diversity of the children and young people we work with. We are committed to the recruitment, training, development, and promotion of people with disabilities and those with care experience.

The EDI Forum

A core component of our workforce engagement is the monthly EDI Forum, which provides a 'welcoming and safe online space' for staff to explore complex topics with openness and non-judgemental intent. A recent highlight was the '**Mind and body: inclusive health at work**' session, hosted by Javade Khan (Head of Communication Marketing and Websites) and Jabed Hussain (Associate Director, Digital, Technology and Commissioning).

These forums are vital for navigating sensitive conversations and ensuring that diverse insights directly inform our corporate culture. By integrating health and wellbeing into the EDI dialogue, we continue to build a more supportive and inclusive environment for all colleagues.

Widening access and supporting staff

To ensure all colleagues can regularly participate in our EDI Forums, we are taking the following steps:

- working with managers to encourage forum attendance as a potential professional development opportunity
- sharing summaries and proposed actions on our intranet, so that colleagues can catch up flexibly
- including EDI as a core discussion topic as part of supervision and annual review conversations, ensuring staff who cannot attend live sessions still have a voice in the EDI dialogue

Efforts to systematically embed EDI into our core organisational processes have also progressed, including the ongoing implementation of the equality impact assessment schedule and the integration of EIA action monitoring into team plans. This ensures that EDI considerations are a consistent and integral part of our planning and delivery.



OBJECTIVE TWO:
To develop a workforce that is committed to investing in equality, diversity and inclusion issues, by creating and promoting training and development opportunities and resources in AfC

Our strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion was evident across our services and workforce throughout 2025-26, with high staff engagement in training and awareness-raising events. We champion EDI and anti-racism through our forward-looking training offer, our well-attended monthly EDI Forum and at a strategic level through the EDI Board.

Thought-provoking lunch and learn sessions, led by an experienced psychotherapist and EDI trainer, provided a safe space for staff to explore complex topics. These included sessions exploring intersectionality, microaggressions and the subtle ways bias shows up at work, and unconscious bias.

Aligning with our EDI action plan, we placed a strong emphasis on supporting staff with disabilities and neurodivergence. This included sessions on neurodiversity in the workplace, building neuro-inclusive spaces, and balancing work and neurodiverse parenting. These initiatives are crucial in ensuring EDI policies and practices are embedded across all our work, promoting inclusion and good practice.

Throughout the year, we observed increased participation in EDI training, demonstrating strong interest among staff in developing their understanding. The training curriculum addressed key topics, including effective approaches to managing racism and promoting greater awareness of protected characteristics.

Training and learning reach (2025-26)

Throughout the year, we delivered a comprehensive suite of in-person, virtual, and e-learning training opportunities to build EDI capability across our workforce and partner networks.

- **Course delivery:** a total of 60 instructor-led courses were delivered across the year (many in person), alongside a catalogue of eight core e-learning modules.
- **E-learning completions:** 619 e-learning modules were completed by employees across our services.
- **Training attendance and multi-agency reach:** 855 total attendees participated in our instructor-led EDI sessions. This figure represents a broad audience across all three boroughs (Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead), comprising internal AfC staff and multi-agency colleagues from partner education, health, and early years settings.
- **Management and leadership integration:** core EDI and anti-racism modules remain fully embedded within our leadership induction pathways and ongoing management apprenticeship programmes.



Feedback from these sessions continues to inform the development of future learning opportunities. New training offerings for 2025-26 included:

- neurodiversity: inclusion in the workplace
- race: inclusion in the workplace
- sexual abuse and disabled children: prevention, identification, and response
- ordinarily available provision (OAP) in practice: supporting inclusion in early years settings
- vocational profiling workshop
- child sexual abuse and disability: understanding vulnerabilities and the professional role
- our popular lunch and learn sessions also included:
  - active allyship
  - building confidence to have the race conversation
  - code switching and burnout

Feedback highlights the importance of our strong training and development offer

'The course facilitator was excellent at breaking down barriers and creating a safe space to discuss sometimes challenging topics. The work in the seminar was useful in providing information about racism in the workplace and also in encouraging thinking about everyday practice.' Managing racism in the workplace

'This was such an insightful and meaningful course. It was engaging and very well delivered. I have already recommended this training to my colleagues and I am extremely pleased with the learning points I have walked away with.' Total respect (Windsor and Maidenhead)

'Really useful session, made even more so by a variety of needs for application by attendees and trainer. Thank you all.' Disability awareness

'This course was reflective and to the point; there were links to lots of research as well.' Working with fathers: what we think about fathers (and why we might think that)

'I really loved that we had the opportunity to think about how areas of this course could be applied within our current roles. Being able to brainstorm and discuss our roles and ideas with others was also invaluable. It was a great and important reminder to keep children's feelings, needs and development at the core of all we do.' Young people's voices - personalisation and participation, special educational needs and disabilities

All AfC staff are required to complete equality and diversity e-learning as part of their induction. EDI workshops are an integral part of all conferences, and quarterly early help and social care whole service events have consistently covered themes around identity, gender awareness, social graces, young carers, unconscious bias, and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Attendance at these events has successfully grown over the last year.



To raise awareness and build an inclusive culture, we successfully celebrated a number of cultural events and ongoing staff initiatives throughout the year, guided by our EDI calendar and presented below in chronological order.

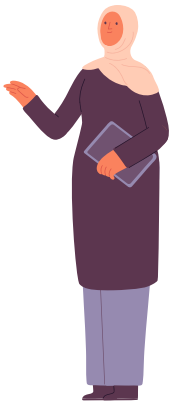
- **Black History Month (October 2025):** honoured the vital contributions of Black leaders across education and social care while celebrating local heritage. Through our 'culture through cuisine' events and 'lunch and learn' sessions on microaggressions, the service fostered a deeper appreciation for staff diversity and addressed the impact of unintentional behaviours on workplace inclusion.
- **Race Equality Week (February 2026):** under the banner **#EveryActionCounts,** staff were encouraged to take simple, actionable steps to address workplace inequality. The event featured five days of challenges focused on driving change, culminating in a 'big promise' commitment to move from awareness to active steps to reduce inequality in the workplace.
- **Ramadan challenge (February to March 2026):** the fourth annual Ramadan challenge invited colleagues to fast for a day in solidarity with Muslim co-workers, fostering deeper cultural empathy and community. Participants reported that the experience served as a powerful educational tool, sparking insightful conversations about faith and observance both within the workplace and at home.
- **International Women's Day (March 2026):** we celebrated the theme 'Give to gain', focusing on the importance of mentorship and sharing resources to foster gender equity. Reflections from across the service highlighted a commitment to opening professional doors for underrepresented groups, specifically supporting neurodivergent staff and those from diverse backgrounds, while celebrating achievements in traditionally male-dominated industries.
- **Neurodiversity Celebration Week (March 2026):** featured our largest range of events to date, with diverse speakers covering topics from neuro-inclusive language to HR for neurodivergent professionals. A workshop on balancing work and neurodivergent parenting encouraged colleagues to share experiences and learn collaboratively.

Ongoing staff networks and practice initiatives

AfC Employee Networks (AENs): a new staff network group, Men United, was formed this year, joining well-established networking forums across the organisation to provide a dedicated, supportive space for colleagues to connect.

The Black Voice of Social Workers: this discussion group continues to thrive, sharing learning experiences and promoting anti-racism practice across our work while offering colleagues opportunities to lead, facilitate, and inform policies and workplace culture.

Windsor and Maidenhead Family Hub Team: the team has embedded EDI into the heart of their service by dedicating half of their meeting time to discussing shared vision, vulnerability, and consistency. This grassroots approach allows staff to safely share lived experiences, strengthening team bonds and directly improving resident support.



OBJECTIVE THREE:
To provide all staff with an equal opportunity to thrive by fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce and creating avenues for personal and professional growth for underrepresented staff

This year saw our first work experience week in partnership with Kingston Council. The post-16 work experience speed networking event provided an opportunity for 16 young people to learn from colleagues across the organisation. Staff from our leadership team and frontline services shared their professional backgrounds and career journeys to inspire young people and encourage them to think more broadly about career paths and consider careers in the public sector. This gave the young people an opportunity to develop their skills and confidence to create their own personal professional pitch.

EDI staff survey

While representing a sample of our overall workforce, these 105 responses provide qualitative insights that directly evidence and shape our EDI roadmap. By pinpointing specific staff priorities, this direct feedback grounds our action plan in the lived experiences and immediate needs of our colleagues as we work to expand survey engagement.

Staff feedback

Staff feedback indicates that the organisation's commitment remains visible, with scores showing a strong belief that AfC cares about EDI (7.5/10) and sets clear goals (7.1/10). We are recognised for successfully creating safe spaces, raising awareness, and making a proactive commitment to change.

However, staff identified clear focus areas for the future.

- **Mental health and wellbeing:** 55%
- **Neurodiversity**: 45%
- **Anti-racism:** 38%

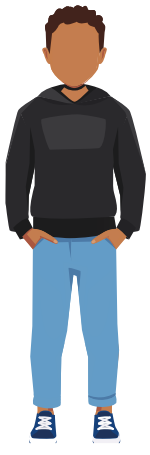
Strengthening engagement and inclusion

AfC Employee Networks continue to be a popular avenue for staff to build community and push for change.

Our neurodiversity AEN, launched in August 2024, is approaching its two-year anniversary and continues to foster awareness.

To address feedback that staff can be 'time poor' and struggle to access resources, we are:

- **embedding EDI into supervision:** ensuring it is discussed regularly in a structured environment.
- **improving event visibility:** better promotion and publication of EDI events to allow for earlier diary adjustments.
- **manager toolkits:** developing a toolkit on Connect, our staff intranet, to help managers lead insightful EDI conversations.



Future policy and practice

The EDI staff survey results are directly informing our action plan for the coming year, with a focus on accountability and empowerment. We are also beginning a trial of embedding reasonable adjustments as standard into interviews, such as providing interview questions in advance, and supporting neuro-inclusion.

- **Accountability:** we are developing a managing unacceptable behaviour policy and action plan to provide staff with clarity and support regarding both customer and staff conduct.
- **Recruitment:** building on our pilot of blind recruitment for senior positions, we are exploring a rollout for additional roles across the organisation.
- **Leadership and training:** EDI is being integrated into the Leadership Centre of Excellence and the induction process for all new staff to ensure it is an immediate priority.
- **Communication:** to increase transparency, we are publishing specific articles on our staff website following board meetings and encouraging associate directors to provide EDI updates in team meetings.



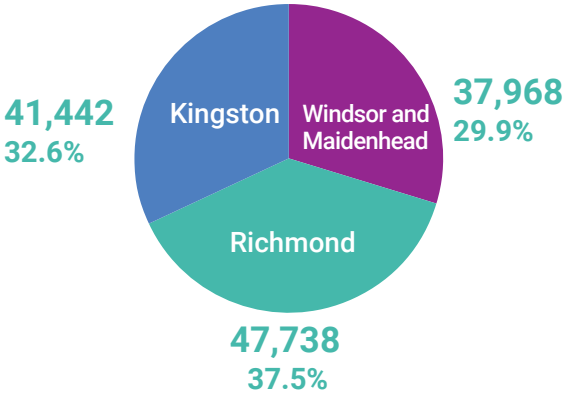
4. Our children, young people, and families

We collect and collate a range of equalities information about the children and young people we work with, which is reported to Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead councils as part of our contract arrangements and to corporate parenting groups. We acknowledge that due to the young age of the individuals we support and the sensitive nature of the information, we do not currently collect data on gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, or sexual orientation. Our focus remains on providing relevant support and services based on the specific needs of the children and young people in our care.

General information on children and young people (aged 0 to 19)

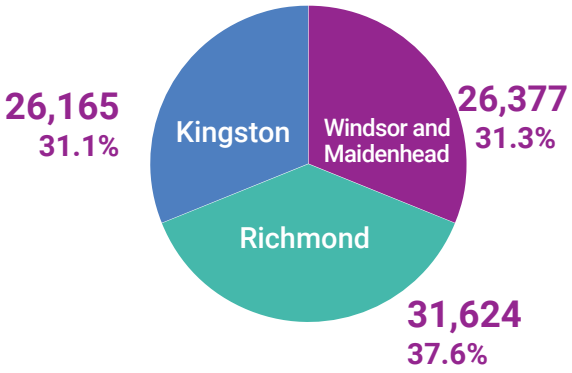
127,148

children and young people aged 0 to 19 years old



School population

84,166 pupils



Population versus school enrolment disparity

The difference between the total 0 to 19 population (127,148) and the statutory school roll (84,166) equates to approximately 42,982 young people. This gap is accounted for by:

- early years children aged 0 to 4 years who have not yet entered compulsory school education
- young people aged 16 to 19 years who have transitioned into higher education, apprenticeships, employment, or training outside the school system
- children educated in independent settings, educated out-of-area or borough, or electively home educated (EHE)

Demographic breakdown and social care cohort comparison

Social care and statutory cohorts by age



Most common age group for children in need (CiN)



Most common age group for children looked after or in care



Most common age group for children subject to a child protection plan (CPP)



Most common age group for children and young people with SEND or an EHCP

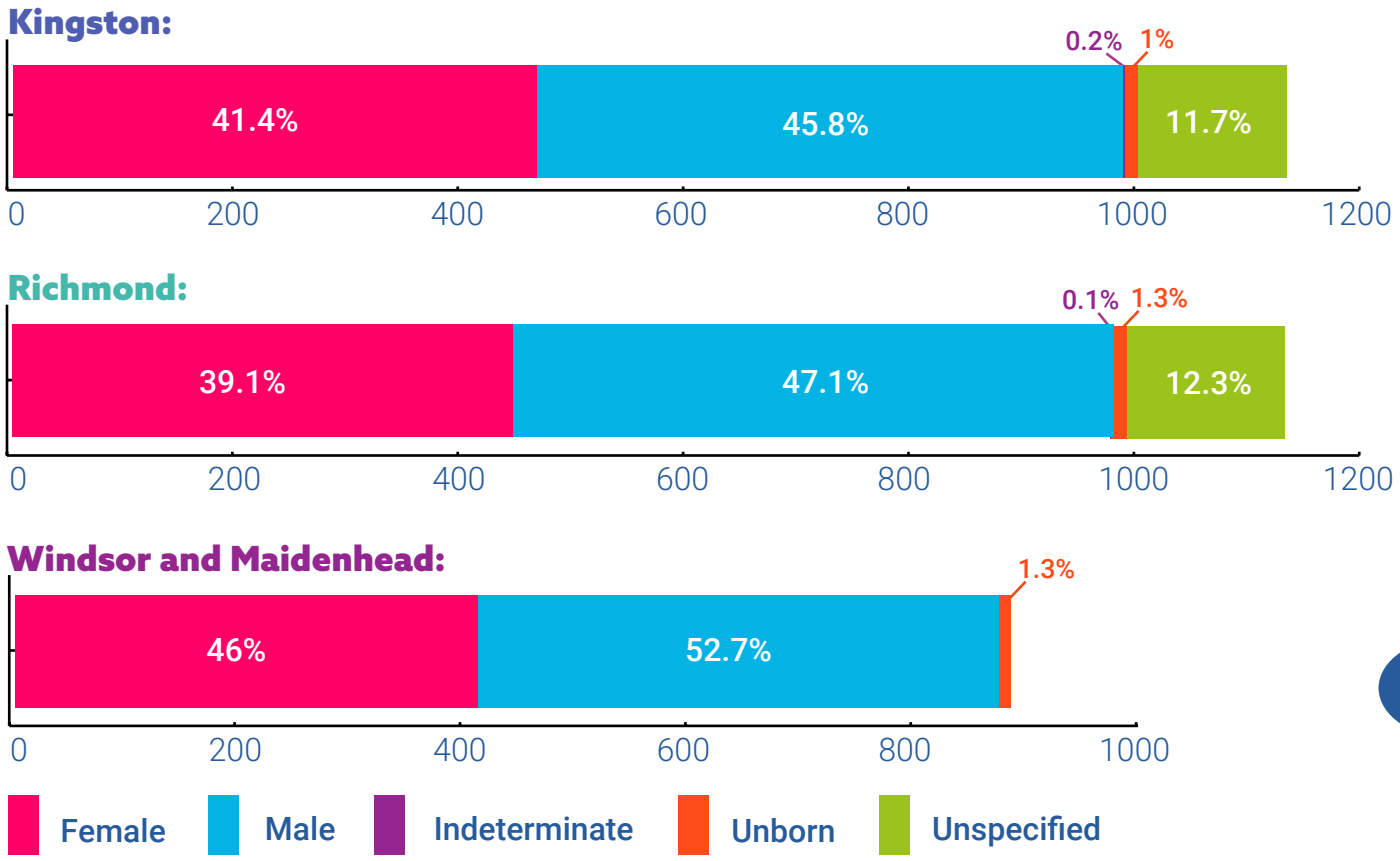
*EHCP: education, health and care plan

Sex and gender representation

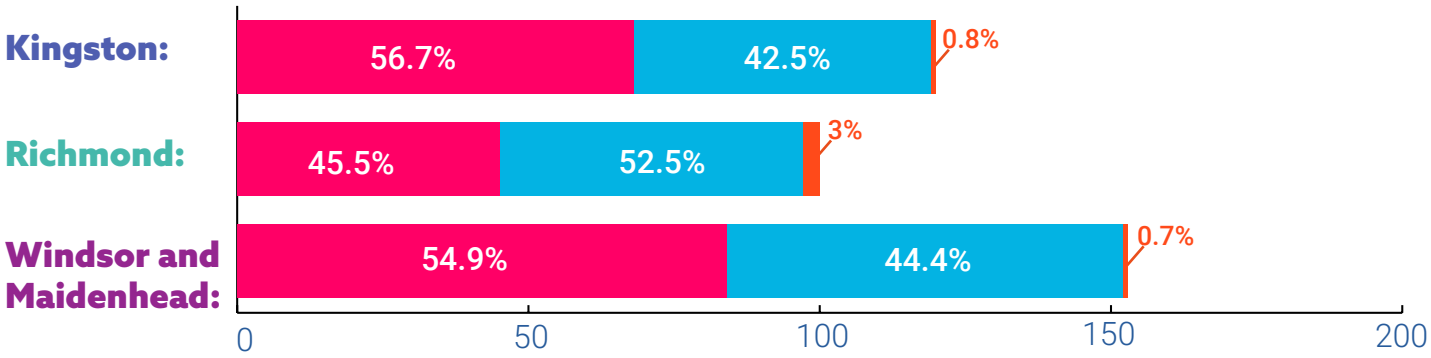
The gender breakdown of males and females aged 0 to 19 is almost **50/50** in all boroughs, with a slightly higher proportion of males across all three.

Social care and statutory cohorts

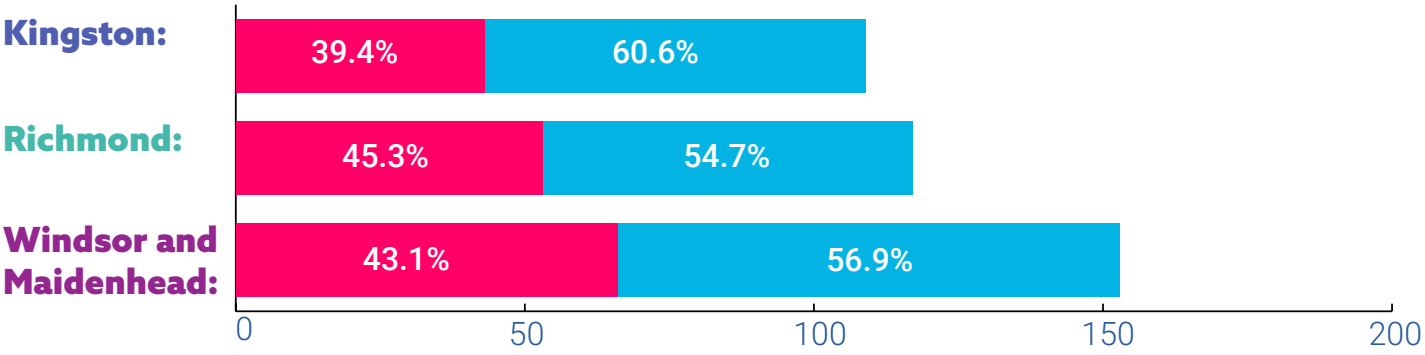
Open social care cases



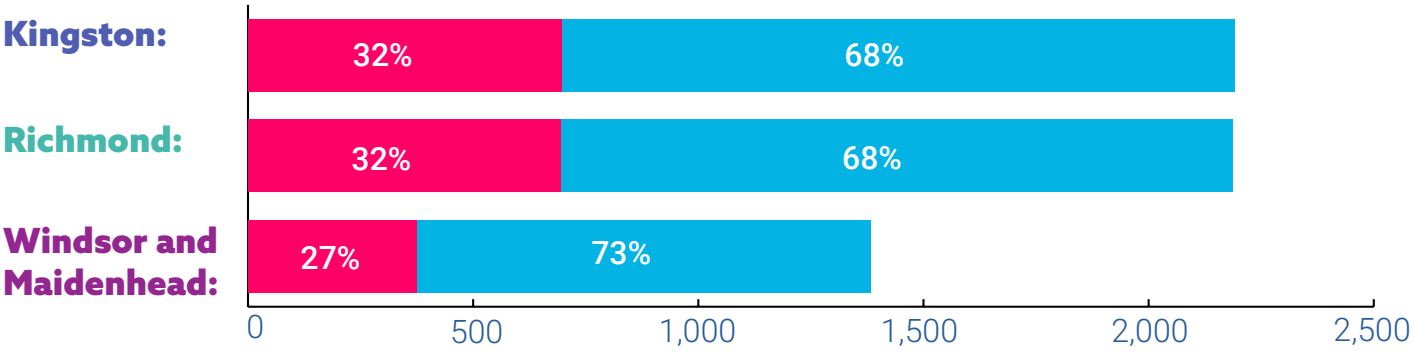
Child protection plans:



Children looked after (CLA)



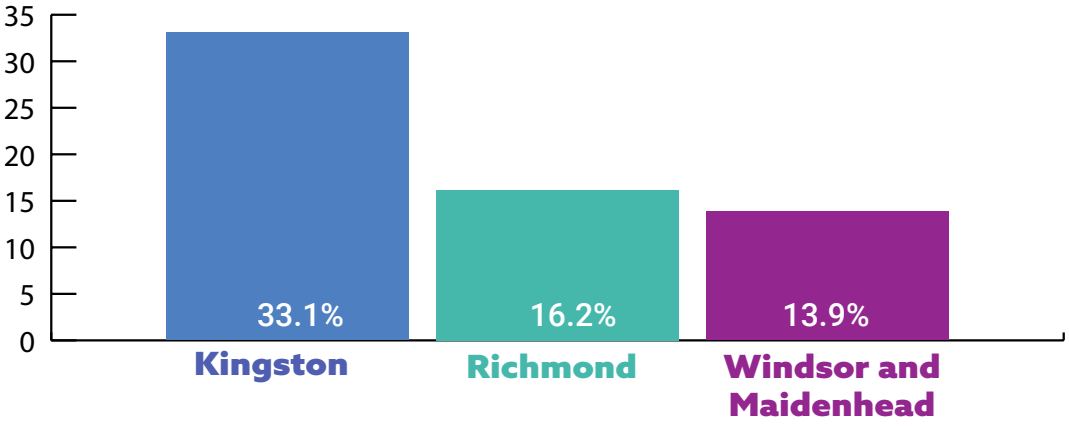
Education, health and care plans

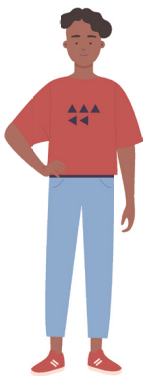


Race and ethnicity (global majority representation)

Area population baseline

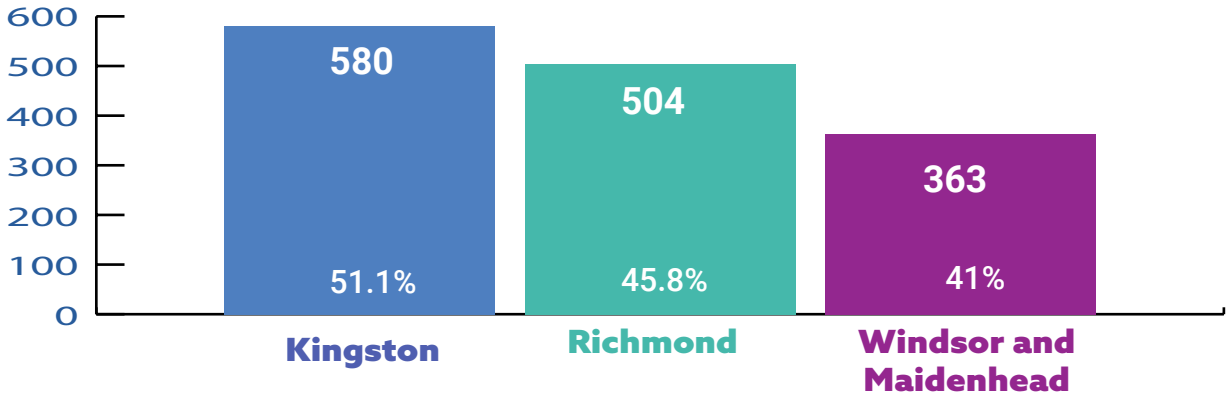
Ethnically diverse representation across the general youth population



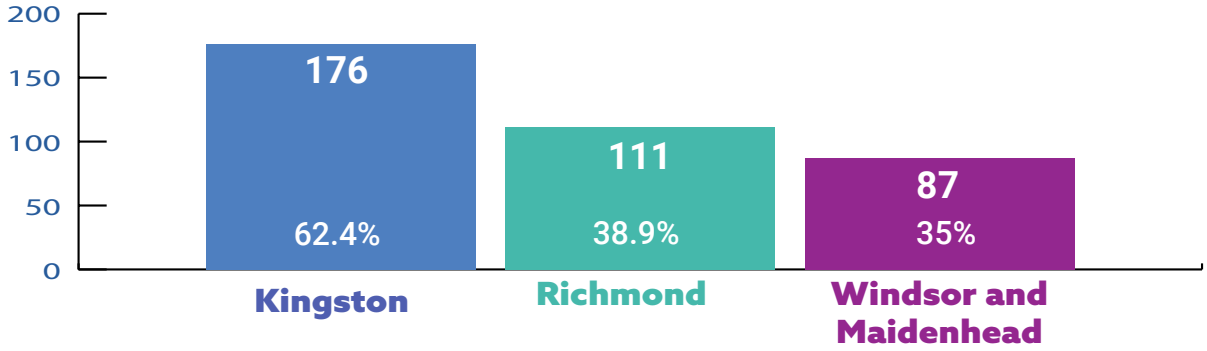


Social care cohorts (global majority representation)

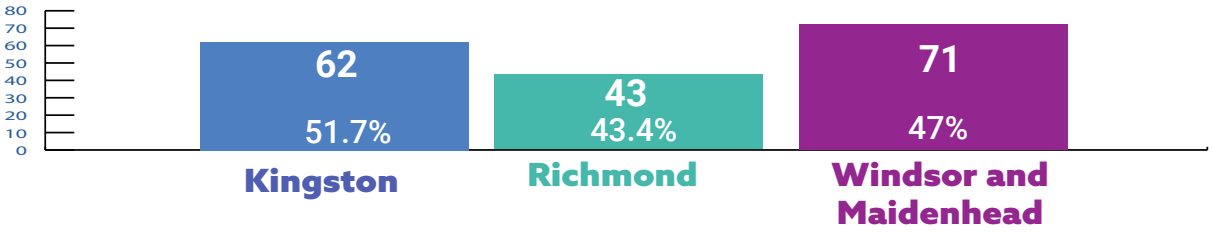
Open social care cases



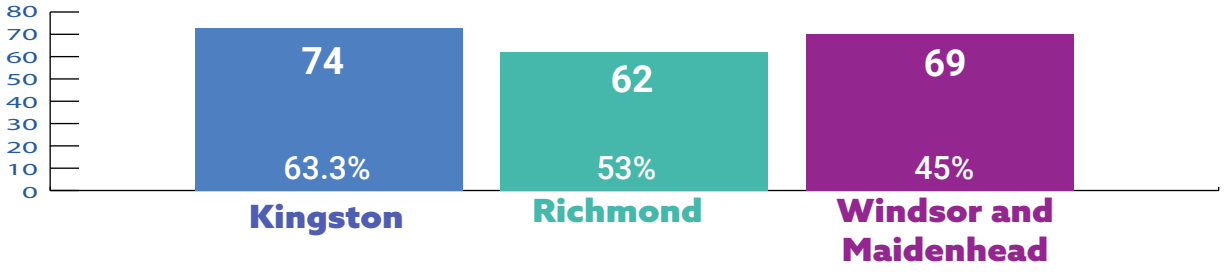
Children in need plans

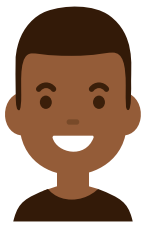


Child protection plans



Children looked after



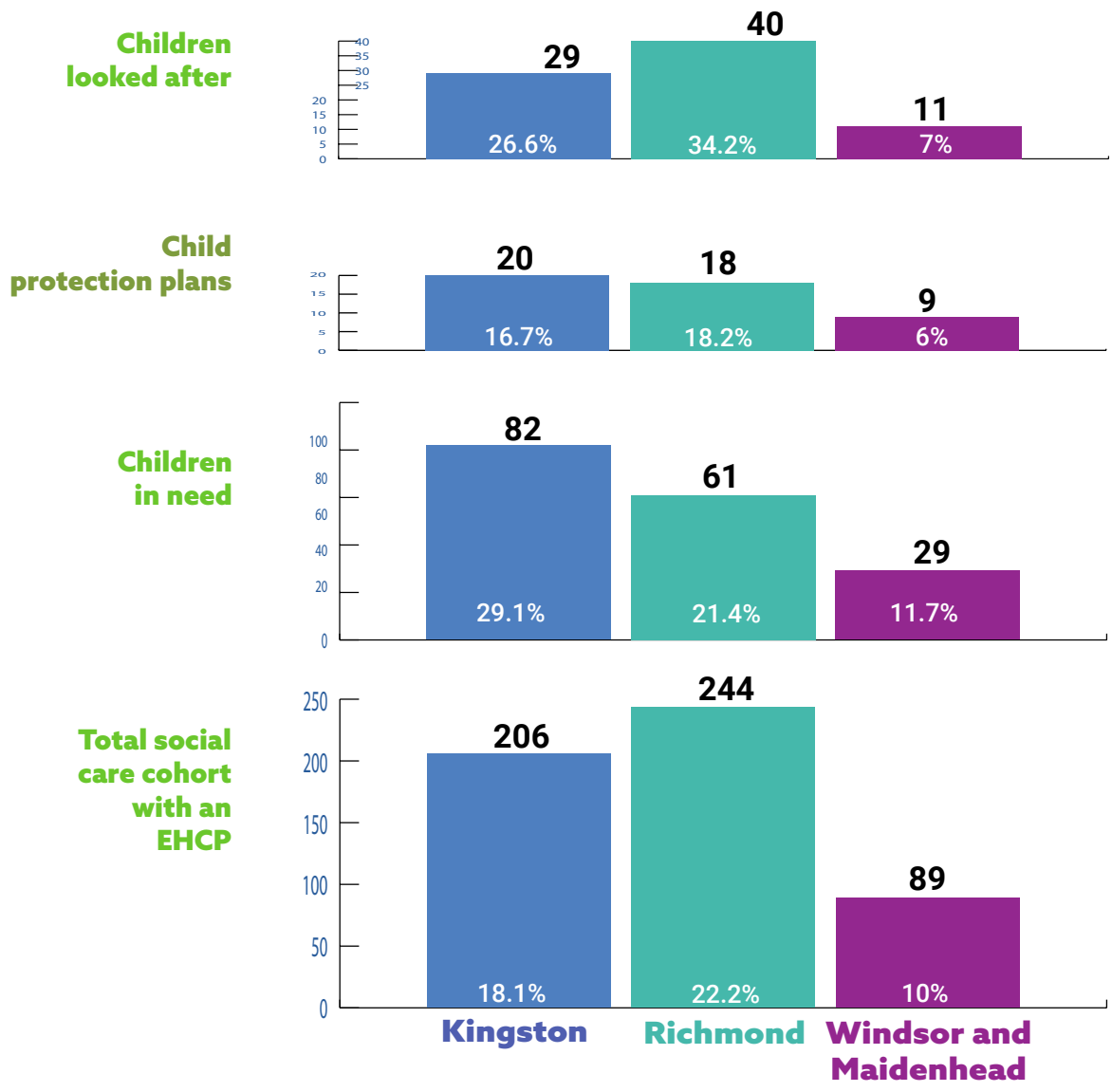


Special educational needs and disabilities

Area and school population baseline

	Pupils with an EHCP	Pupils receiving SEND support	Total
Kingston	2,192	3,456	5,648
Richmond	2,187	3,442	5,629
Windsor and Maidenhead	1,382	2,852	4,234

Social care cohort intersection (social care pupils with an EHCP)



Religion or belief

Area population baseline and social care recording:

Kingston and Richmond: no religion remains the most common self-declared faith background within active social care cases, reflecting local demographic trends.

Windsor and Maidenhead: data quality improvements are currently underway to address historical misclassifications (where administrative ethnicity entries were recorded in faith fields).

Currently, unstated or not recorded represents the largest valid recording category while database cleanup takes place.



OBJECTIVE FOUR:
To strengthen community engagement and data collection to ensure all children and young people have what they need to thrive

To ensure services meet diverse needs, we have undertaken a range of initiatives.

The family hubs and Best Start in Life hubs

Our family hubs serve as inclusive community anchors, providing a 'single front door' for families with children aged 0 to 19 (up to 25 for those with SEND). We are currently evolving this model to integrate the national 'Best Start in Life' strategy, ensuring specialised early years support while maintaining our robust Youth Service and universal offer.

Best Start in Life (0 to 5) integration

We are embedding high-quality support from pregnancy to age 5 within our hubs.
By integrating services across health, early education, and community sector health visitors, we will tackle health inequalities and ensure children have the foundation needed for school readiness. We will improve support for parents through access to early education and childcare and encourage parents in their role as their child's first educator.

Integrated youth and SEND offer (5 to 25)

Beyond the early years, our hubs remain central to our Youth Service, providing safe spaces, mentorship, and targeted activities for teenagers. This 'all-age' approach ensures that older children as well as young people with SEND have consistent access to health, education, and social support in one location.

Borough developments

Kingston

The Old Malden Family Hub is fully operational. We are also planning a complete redevelopment of the Dickerage site (opening 2028-29), which will significantly enhance our capacity for high-quality youth and community spaces. We are planning the enhancement of our children's centres into our designated Best Start in Life hubs for the borough, starting with the launch of Tolworth's Best Start in Life Family Hub.

Richmond

The Hive is set to launch in November 2026, centralising early intervention alongside a vibrant youth and health offer. Ham Best Start in Life Hub will lead our Best Start in Life delivery, providing integrated support for parents through their children's early years. By the end of 2026, it is expected that all existing children's services will deliver the enhanced Best Start in Life offer to families.

Windsor and Maidenhead

The Family Hub Team continues to lead by example, dedicating 50% of their meeting time to EDI discussions. This ensures that every stage of a child's journey from birth through to early adulthood is supported by an inclusive and diverse workforce.



Other initiatives and events this year

The sixth annual Windsor and Maidenhead Inclusion Summit

Held on 20 May 2025, the summit brought together parents, carers, and key stakeholders to celebrate and advance SEND developments across the borough. Centred on the vision of being a 'beacon of inclusion' for children and young people aged 0 to 25, the event featured collaborative information sharing and a standout performance by pupils from Manor Green School, highlighting the positive impact of joint working in the community.

Ofsted focused visits to Windsor and Maidenhead children's services

The January 2026 Ofsted focused visit to Windsor and Maidenhead commended the service for delivering strong, child-centred support for children in care, including those with disabilities. Inspectors highlighted well-coordinated, multidisciplinary support that promoted emotional wellbeing and educational progress. Key strengths included early emotional screening to identify needs and a wide range of recreational activities that successfully bolster children's confidence and independence.

Ofsted's inspection of Richmond's children's services in August 2025

In August 2025, Richmond borough's children's services were awarded Ofsted's highest rating of 'Outstanding', rising from 'Good' in 2022. Inspectors praised the service for its relational approach, noting that every previous recommendation had been met.
Key highlights included inspirational support for care leavers, a highly skilled and stable workforce, and a culture that ensures children and young people actively shape the services they use.

RBWM corporate parenting strategy

In November 2025, we worked with Kickback, the children in care council for Windsor and Maidenhead, to produce a new corporate parenting strategy. We worked with the children and young people to understand the successes and challenges of our previous strategies and decide on our key priorities for our next strategy. Since then, we have agreed and published our new corporate parenting strategy, which will guide us over the next two years to make sure we are the best corporate parents we can be.

OBJECTIVE FIVE:
Champion the recognition of care-experienced as a protected characteristic within the framework of equality, diversity, and inclusion

As corporate parents, AfC recognises our profound responsibility to the children and young people in our care. We acknowledge the significant, lifelong barriers faced by care-experienced individuals, who often encounter discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment, and the criminal justice system.

In taking this step, AfC is committed to actively seeking out and embedding the perspectives of care-experienced individuals across new policy development within the organisation and alongside our partner local authorities.

Our commitment to this objective is demonstrated through the following targeted initiatives.

Baby packs, supporting new care leaver parents

Developed in partnership with the Kingston and Richmond Children in Care Council, this ongoing project provides essential support to care leavers who are becoming parents. Each pack includes practical items, such as handmade quilts from the Linus Project, self-care essentials, baby clothing, and a guide to parenthood, which has received positive feedback for its practical and emotional impact.

The care leaver recruitment scheme

Operational across our partner boroughs, this initiative creates direct pathways for care leavers to secure employment within AfC. Recognising that formal qualifications do not always reflect a care leaver's full potential, the scheme encourages hiring departments to prioritise interviewing candidates based on core skills and potential.

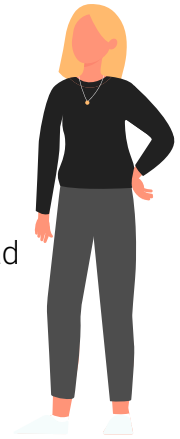
Promoting care-experienced recruitment and apprenticeships

To maximise opportunities for care-experienced young people, we are expanding manager engagement through targeted actions.

- **Manager toolkit on Connect:** intranet guidance equipping hiring managers to ringfence apprenticeship roles and apply reasonable adjustments.
- **HR authorisation prompts:** integration into recruitment workflows, requiring managers to consider care leavers before advertising posts externally.
- **AfC Virtual School and leaving care briefings:** management updates co-led by AfC Virtual School and Leaving Care teams explaining available funding and pastoral support.
- **Leadership spotlights:** highlighting successful case studies and intake dates in monthly manager bulletins across all three boroughs.

Apprenticeship opportunities via AfC's approved training provider

Our in-house training provider delivers high-quality apprenticeships to individuals aged 16 and above across multiple sectors. We actively promote these pathways with local schools, external business partners, and internal AfC departments to offer structured training, placements, and long-term career development for care-experienced young people.



Corporate rent guarantor scheme

Informed by a service satisfaction survey and direct consultation with Windsor and Maidenhead Kickback, this scheme addresses the systemic barriers care leavers face in the private rental market. AfC acts as a formal guarantor, providing the security required to unlock diverse housing that was previously inaccessible. This ensures that a lack of traditional family support does not prevent a young person from securing a high-quality home.

5. What else have we done for our children, young people, and families?

Beyond our core objectives, we have implemented numerous initiatives to enhance the wellbeing and life chances of the children, young people, and families we support.

Education and equity of standards

Our boroughs continue to be national leaders in educational outcomes, ensuring that a high-quality education is the standard for every child.

Kingston and Richmond remain in the top 20 performing local authorities nationally, with Windsor and Maidenhead in the top 50, a testament to the resilience of our school communities.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG)

In December 2025, a conference was held in Kingston where the Kingston and Richmond Youth Council members presented feedback from their sexual harassment survey. The Youth Council shared recommendations for improving safety and preventing violence against young women and girls in the borough. This work supports the government's strategy to tackle violence against women and girls and the launch of the Kingston 'ending violence against women and girls strategy'.

School readiness

The 'Terrific 2s' (Kingston and Richmond) and 'Little Stars' programmes provide targeted intervention for 2-year-olds not meeting developmental milestones. By addressing speech, language, and social needs early, we are closing the attainment gap before children even enter the primary school system.

Expanding SEND provision and specialist support

We are committed to the principle that children with special educational needs and disabilities should be educated within their local community whenever possible.

We are delivering over 170 new specialist places

This includes the expansion of Dysart, Clarendon, and Strathmore via satellite sites and the ongoing development of the Spring School (Moor Lane) and London River Academy. These sites are specifically designed to meet complex needs, including social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) and severe learning difficulties (SLD).

Beyond infrastructure, we provide the soft support required to keep children in mainstream settings

In 2025-26, we delivered over 1,600 consultations to school staff and 850 direct assessments, empowering teachers to support neurodiverse learners effectively.



Windsor and Maidenhead Inclusion Ambassadors at the Windsor and Maidenhead SEND conference

In February 2026, the Inclusion Ambassadors launched the 'Just believe me' series. These are animations based on their experiences, which offer 10 key tips for professionals. In the series, they discuss their own circumstances to help professionals and other adults understand simple approaches that can make things easier for young people. While the principles were developed by the SEND community, their message is universal: what works for young people with SEND, works for every young person.

Attachment and Trauma Aware Schools scheme

Led by the AfC Virtual School in partnership with educational psychology services, this flagship programme has engaged over 100 schools across Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead to embed trauma-informed practices and relational behaviour policies, delivering whole-staff training on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and emotion coaching to improve vulnerable pupil attendance and reduce school suspensions.

Further examples can be found in our Impact report.

Supporting vulnerable families and promoting inclusion

We recognise that true inclusion extends beyond the classroom and into the home and community, particularly during periods of financial or social pressure.

The FUEL (Feed Ur Everyday Lives) programme

Funded by the Department for Education's (DfE's) holiday activities and food (HAF) initiative, FUEL successfully supported over 3,000 children eligible for free school meals during the 2025-26 holiday periods. The programme is inclusive by design, with over 200 children with additional needs accessing tailored, specialist activities that provide vital stability for families.

A key element of this success is our continued partnership with St Mary's Ukrainian School, offering a bespoke 'FUEL Ukraine' provision. This allows refugee families to celebrate their own culture and traditions while creating a trusted gateway into the wider FUEL offer and essential local support services.

Families First (Kingston and Richmond) and Families Together (Windsor and Maidenhead)

These programmes provide support to families facing complex challenges such as domestic abuse or substance misuse. We continue to support over 445 families annually with a multidisciplinary approach. In Windsor and Maidenhead, our 100% satisfaction rate remains a benchmark, proving that family group decision-making, which empowers family networks to lead their own planning, is significantly reducing the need for high-level crisis intervention.



Transitioning into adulthood

We launched a new peer mentoring programme across all three boroughs (as of February 2026) that pairs care-experienced young people with those currently in the system, ensuring that support is rooted in lived experience and cultural understanding.

Our social, emotional, and mental health intervention project in Windsor and Maidenhead

This remains a national exemplar for early intervention. Integrated within Windsor and Maidenhead's new 2026-2036 health and wellbeing strategy, the project has supported 114 children across 45 schools, maintaining a 96% success rate in preventing permanent exclusions.

This child-centred approach ensures that our most vulnerable learners remain in stable, mainstream educational environments, directly contributing to our borough's exceptional school standards.

Refugee and asylum support

The DfE-funded mentoring scheme has been expanded following its initial success with 20 young people. It is now a key deliverable in our strategy to build independence and social connection. In line with the 2026 Home Office funding instructions, we have enhanced our pathways to independence for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), specifically focusing on English language confidence and local navigation.

Inclusion through partnership: by collaborating with voluntary sector partners like Refugee Action Kingston (RAK), our admissions teams ensure that new communities and refugee pupils receive immediate support and equitable access to school places, regardless of their point of entry.

LGBTQIA+ advocacy

Achieving for Children supports LGBTQIA+ young people across our boroughs through both weekly community spaces and annual celebration events.

No Straight Answer (NSA)

No Straight Answer is our weekly LGBTQIA+ youth group for young people aged 11 to 19 (and up to 25 for those with SEND). Based at Heatham House Youth Centre, NSA meets every Friday to offer a safe, inclusive, and welcoming space where young people who identify as LGBTQIA+, or who are exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity, can build peer connections, access youth worker support, and participate in group activities.

Out 'N' About

Out 'N' About is our flagship annual cross-borough LGBTQIA+ Pride celebration event held each July for young people in key stages 3, 4, and 5 (aged 11 to 19). Bringing together young people from across Kingston, Richmond, and Windsor and Maidenhead, this event fosters empowerment, connection, and celebration of diversity in a safe and supportive community environment.

6. Looking ahead, building a foundation for the future

As we move into 2026-27, our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion is becoming deeply embedded into both our service delivery and our organisational culture. The year ahead is defined by key transformative pillars that place inclusive practice at the heart of our work.

Social care reforms: Families First Partnership (FFP)

As our primary overarching focus, the FFP moves us toward a multidisciplinary family help model. This ensures support is culturally sensitive, non-stigmatising, and empowers diverse family networks at the earliest opportunity.

National Youth Strategy and Best Start in Life

We are aligning our family hubs with these national frameworks to ensure equitable support across the life course, from narrowing developmental gaps in the early years to providing inclusive, accessible opportunities for young people aged 11 to 25.

SEND reforms

The 10-year SEND reform programme aims to create a highly inclusive mainstream education system where children receive support early, locally, and consistently. Underpinned by a £1.6 billion inclusive mainstream fund, support will be structured across universal, targeted, and specialist layers, transitioning from a reliance on clinical diagnoses to evidence-led early intervention. Mainstream settings will be equipped with new inclusion bases and direct access to a £1.8 billion 'experts at hand' service of health and education specialists.

Next steps for embedding EDI

To build on this progress and further embed EDI principles across our organisational culture in 2026-27, we are focusing on four goals. These will form the basis of the next action plan, 2027-29.

- **Inclusive recruitment:** ensuring recruitment processes are inclusive for all colleagues, embedding recommendations from the inclusive recruitment working group.
- **Meaningful celebration events:** celebrating select key events, ensuring these are meaningful with learning taken forward and avoiding a tokenistic approach.
- **Impact on children and young people:** exploring how EDI is changing practice and the impact on children and young people.
- **Disproportionality within frontline services:** using data-informed analysis to identify and address disproportionality within frontline services.