



# HELPING FAMILIES TO FLOURISH IN SURREY

A review into the effectiveness of long-term, community-based, early intervention support for vulnerable families and young people in Surrey: 2020-2024

MARCH 2025



## Surrey Care Trust

Every year we mobilise hundreds of volunteers, work with our natural environment, and focus people's community spirit to create opportunities and make a difference to vulnerable people.

Through our range of adult learning, employment, mental health, and educational support programmes, we help people to build the confidence and skills they need to thrive in life, learning, and work.

By harnessing the power of our natural environment, at our community garden, allotment, and local waterways, we help people to nurture their wellbeing and engagement with their community.

And, through our range of support programmes for young people and families, we help to build positive childhoods and flourishing families.



SCAN ME



## **SOS: SPOTLIGHT ON SURREY**

Over the past five years, we at Surrey Care Trust have conducted a series of Spotlight on Surrey surveys, delving deeper into the most pressing issues facing our local communities. Previous reports have examined the impact of the 2020-2022 pandemic - both during and one-year on, and the needs of vulnerable people throughout Surrey.

Copies of those reports can be found at: [www.surreycaretrust.org.uk/real-life/sos-spotlight-on-surrey-surveys](http://www.surreycaretrust.org.uk/real-life/sos-spotlight-on-surrey-surveys)

Our latest survey 'SoS: Helping Families to Flourish in Surrey', reviewed the impact of our long-term, community-based, early intervention support - Early Help Mentoring. This review, encompassing nearly 500 parents and young people over a four-year period, demonstrated the effectiveness of our mentoring model and its ability to simultaneously alleviate multiple health and social care pressures - all within a climate of increasing demand and decreasing resources.

**Crucially, the findings highlight the necessity of taking a holistic, whole family approach to truly transform the lives of young people.**

# INTRODUCTION

Living as a young person in Surrey—a county known for its wealth and perceived opportunities—means navigating a complex landscape of both advantages and challenges. Experiences vary widely, shaped by factors such as socioeconomic background, access to services, and personal circumstances. Despite Surrey’s reputation for affluence, significant pockets of financial deprivation exist, with some areas ranking among the lowest 10% nationally. Additionally, while the county is home to many high-performing schools and colleges, an increasing number of young people are disengaging from education due to social, emotional, and mental health challenges.

Towns like Guildford and Woking offer vibrant yet expensive music, arts, and social scenes, with events, youth clubs, and volunteering opportunities. In contrast, rural boroughs such as Waverley and Tandridge remain isolated due to limited public transport, restricting access to the same level of opportunities. Surrey is also one of the most expensive places to live in the UK, making housing unaffordable for many young people and impacting their growing independence and future aspirations. Like elsewhere, young people in Surrey face pressures from education, social media, and an uncertain future. Although mental health services exist, high demand and financial constraints often make them difficult to access. For some, Surrey is a place of opportunity; for others, financial hardship, mental health struggles and difficult family relationships create significant barriers to success.

Supporting vulnerable young people and their families is essential in helping them build resilience, develop life skills, and engage with their community. As a former Surrey Care Trust volunteer mentor and a current Trustee, I have seen firsthand the vital role mentoring plays in providing guidance, encouragement, and practical support to young people and parents facing complex challenges.

This report explores the impact of Surrey Care Trust’s mentoring program, demonstrating how long-term, community-based interventions can lead to improved well-being, confidence, and future opportunities. Understanding the significance of such interventions and fostering true community support—through volunteering and partnerships with other youth services—is essential to ensuring that all young people, regardless of background, can thrive.

This is why we have shared our findings in this report and why we, as a community, must work together, through initiatives like mentoring, to create a Surrey where every young person can succeed.

**Professor Naomi Winstone PFHEA NTF**  
Professor of Educational Psychology,  
Director of the Surrey Institute of Education,  
University of Surrey



# SURREY CARE TRUST EARLY HELP MENTORING MODEL

Devised over decades, SCT's holistic, community-based, **whole family mentoring** model is provided over two stages:

- 1) short-term, intense support from experienced staff
- 2) long-term, less intensive, preventative/step down support from expertly trained volunteers



Thanks to funding from Surrey County Council and the Henry Smith Foundation, our family mentoring was delivered through the Early Help service. This programme ran from early 2020 to early 2024, supporting hundreds of young people and families across ten of Surrey's boroughs.

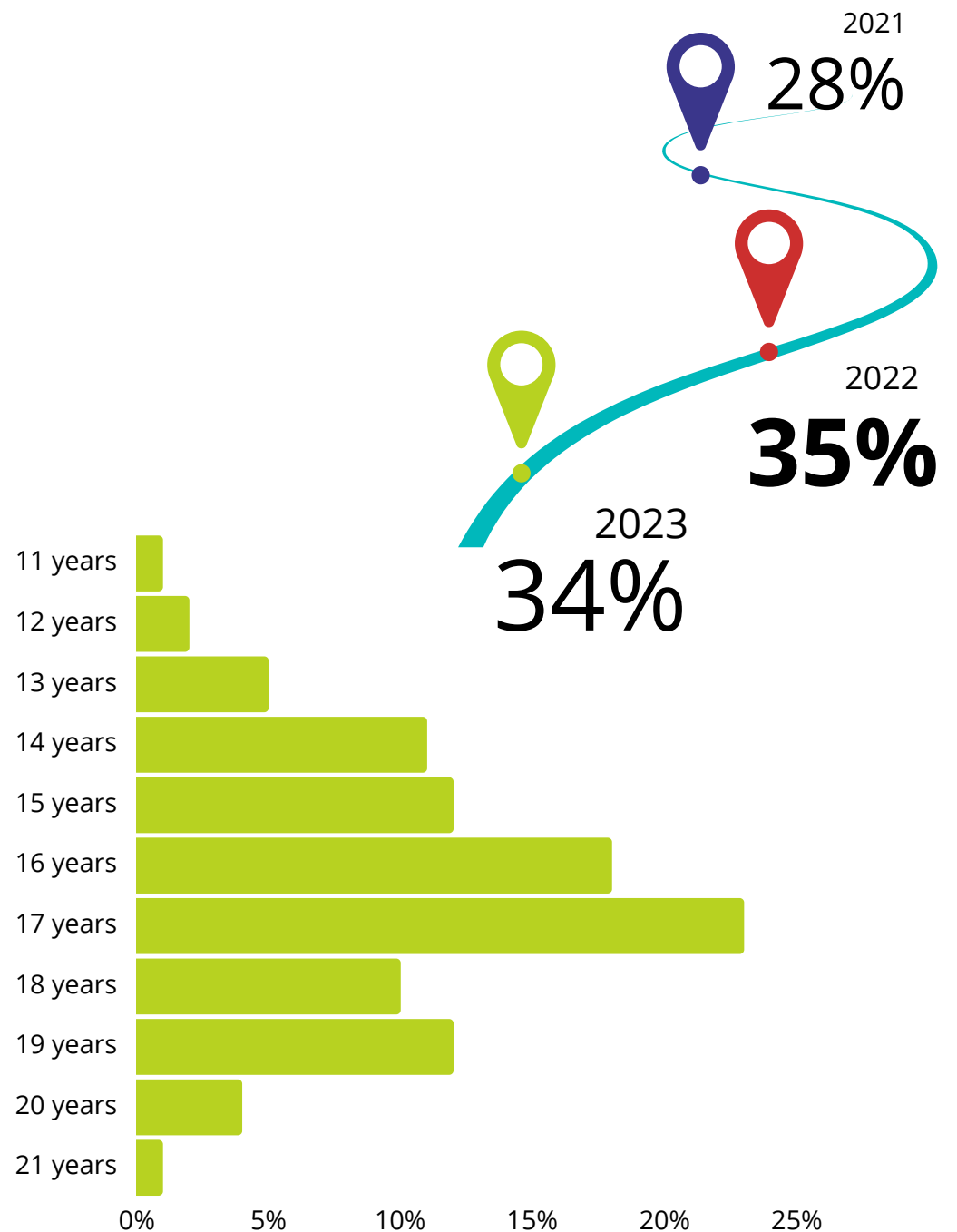
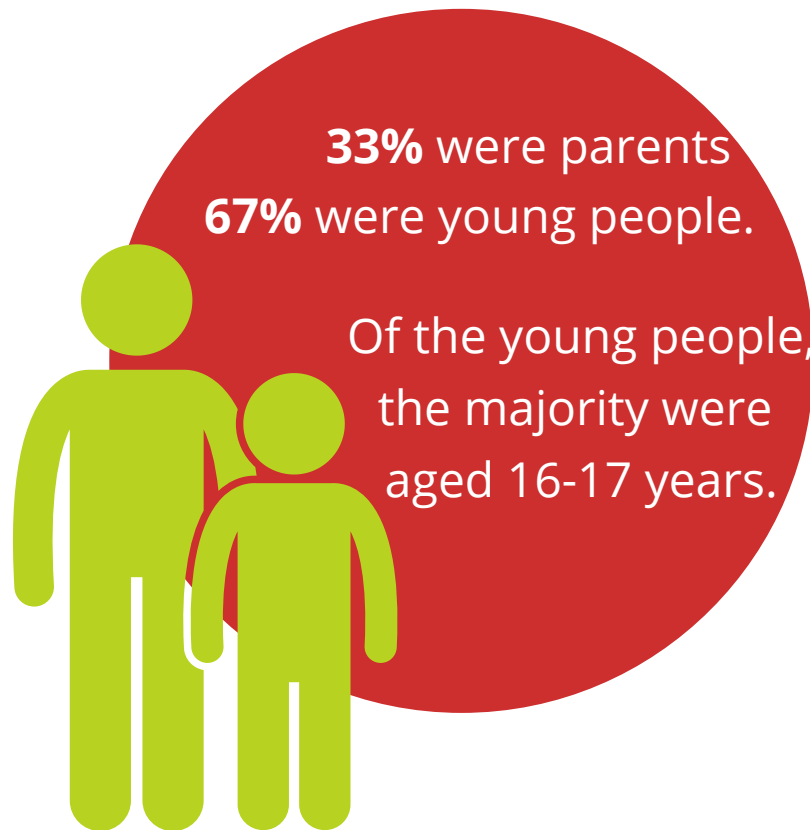


The majority of families supported through the Early Help service were identified as having **'Additional Needs'**. They were possibly on the very edge of statutory services or referred as part of a supported step-down from statutory services.

For this study, we analyzed 1,147 monitoring assessments from 484 beneficiaries of the Early Help service. These assessments were collected throughout the entire duration of the study and covered the entire region of Surrey.

# OUR DATA

The majority of our beneficiaries accessed the service in 2022. Only 1% started in 2020 and 2% in 2024.

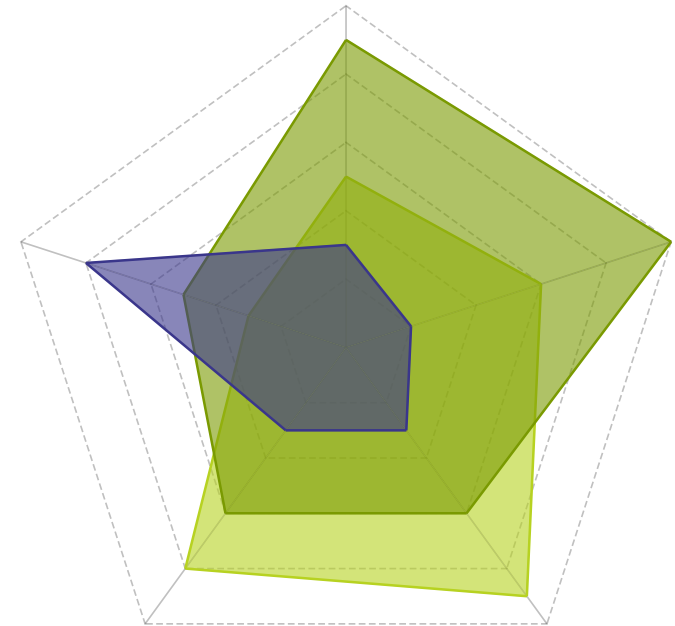


# MEASURING PROGRESS

Many of our beneficiaries completed Outcomes Star assessments throughout their intervention or, in some instances, used other comparable tools.

On average, each beneficiary completed a range of assessments:

- benchmark assessment
- mid-intervention assessments
- closing assessment

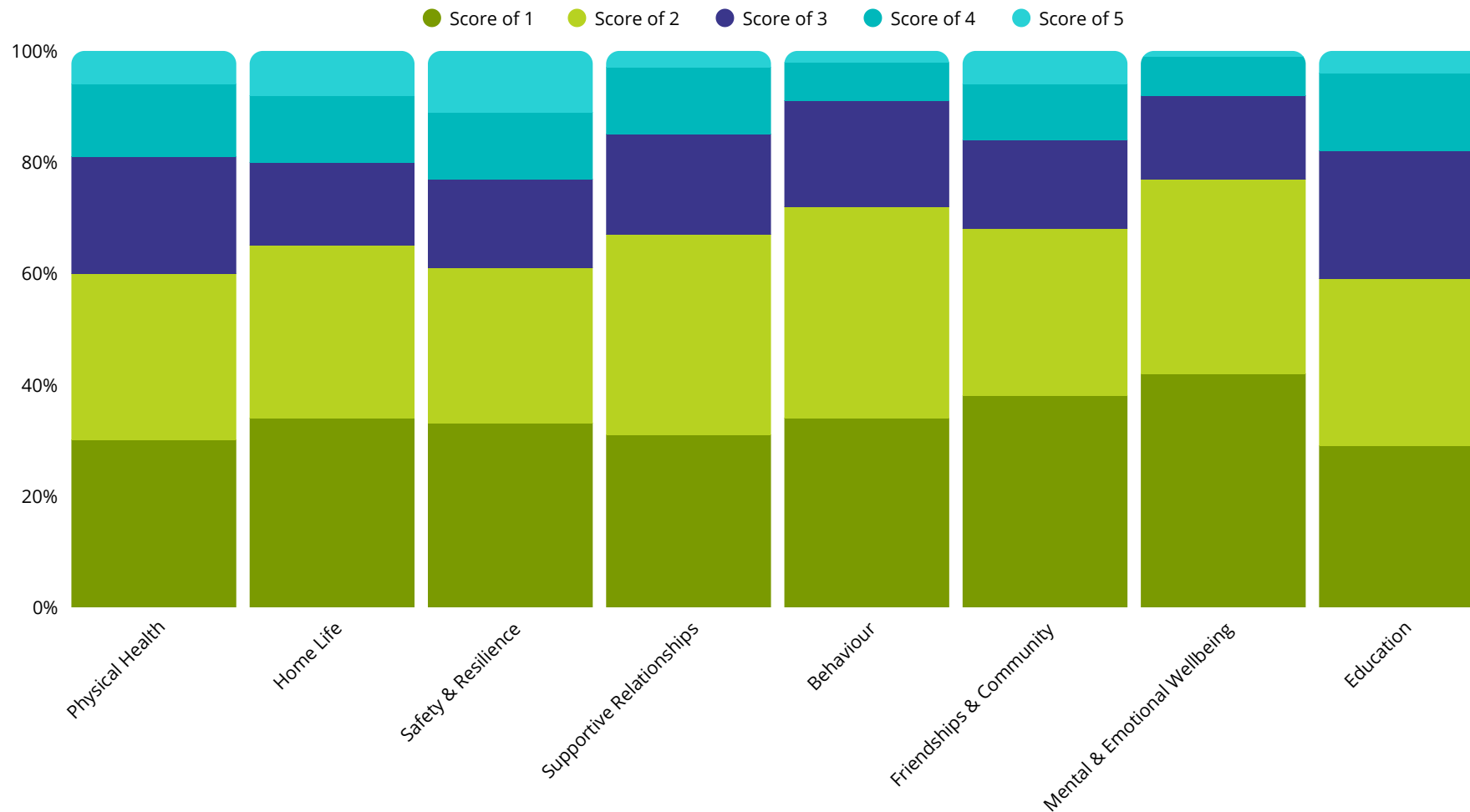


These were either completed as self-assessments or with support from a mentor. Each assessment asked the beneficiary to rank how they felt amongst 8 different categories:

- Physical Health
- Home Life
- Safety & Resilience
- Supportive Relationships
- Behaviour
- Friendships & Community
- Mental & Emotional Wellbeing
- Education



**FINDINGS:** at the start of their mentoring, **66%** of beneficiaries scored themselves an average of 1 or 2 across all 8 categories, not just in one area.

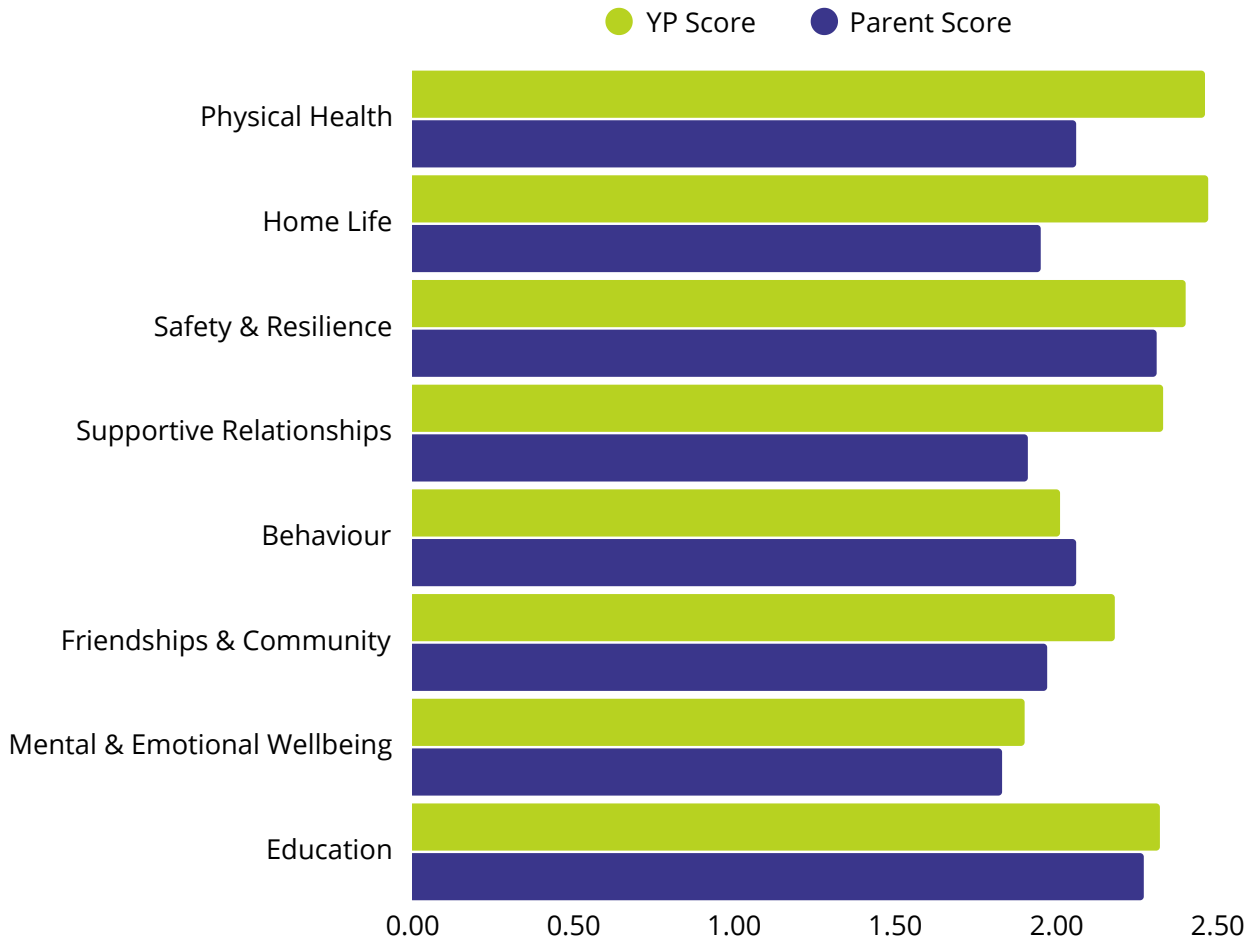


- A score of 1 indicates being “stuck”
- A score of 2 indicates “accepting help”
- A score of 3 “working to make a difference”
- A score of 4 “finding what works”
- A score of 5 “solutions found/effective...”

All data was consolidated to refer to comparable metrics, and each measure was scored out of 5 points.



**A similar picture was clear across the age groups - parents and young people alike, reflecting the multi faceted nature of people's struggles.**



**Addressing only one need is insufficient if other issues remain unresolved, but this requires an intervention that can make simultaneous improvements across the whole spectrum.**



# MAKING PROGRESS

For our average beneficiary, there were 286 days between their initial benchmark and final assessment, representing the full length of the intervention. The duration of each intervention varied slightly across different demographics. For example, young people required 8% longer than adults, with interventions lasting 295 days compared to 273 days.

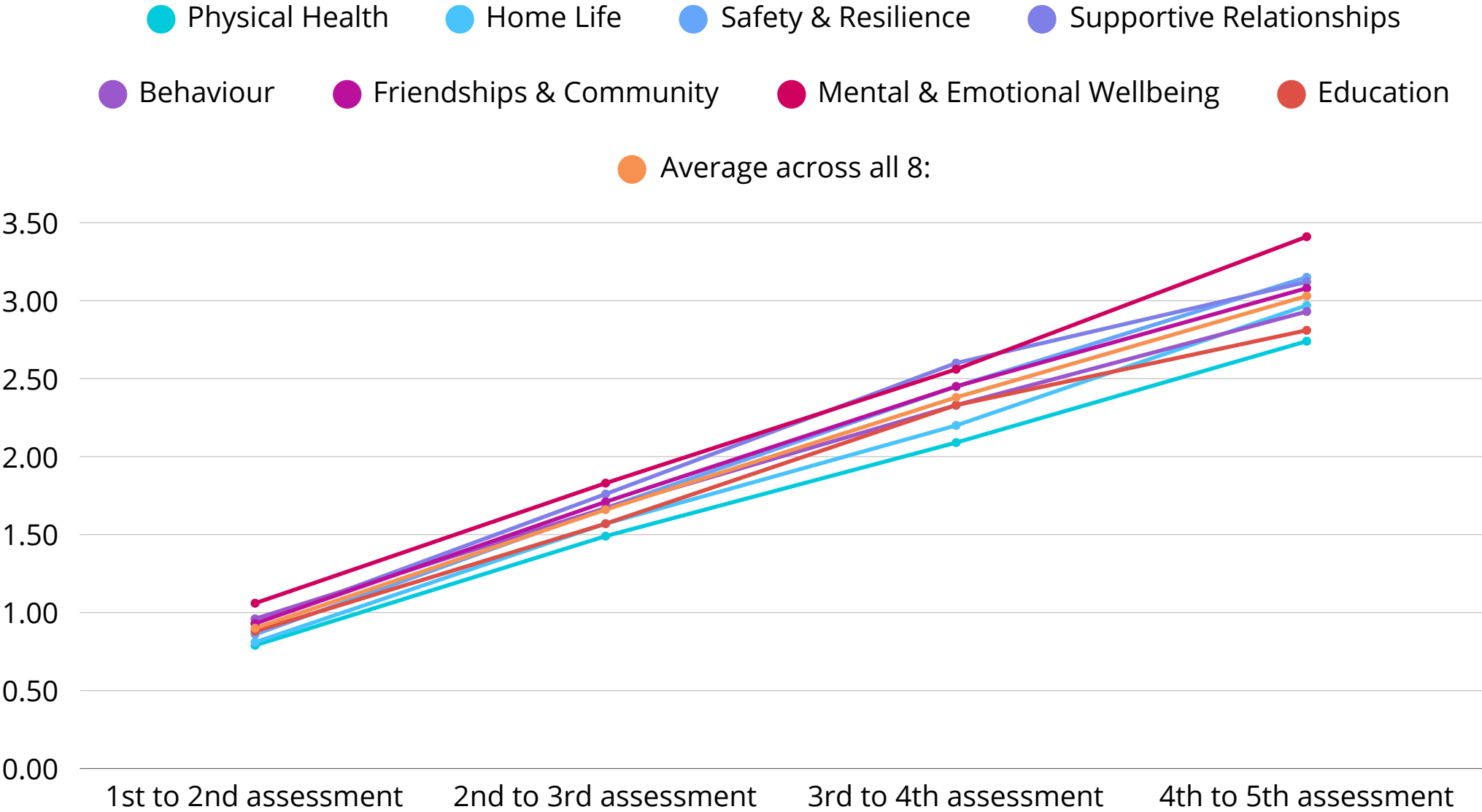
The following table shows the amount of progress made by individuals between their benchmark and final assessments. While the raw data showed some instances of regression in the early part of mentoring, overall, users made a cumulative improvement of between 12% and 18% (averaged across all 8 measures) at each assessment.

This fairly even distribution of changes across assessments highlights the importance of a long-term intervention, as individuals consistently improve right up to their final assessment.

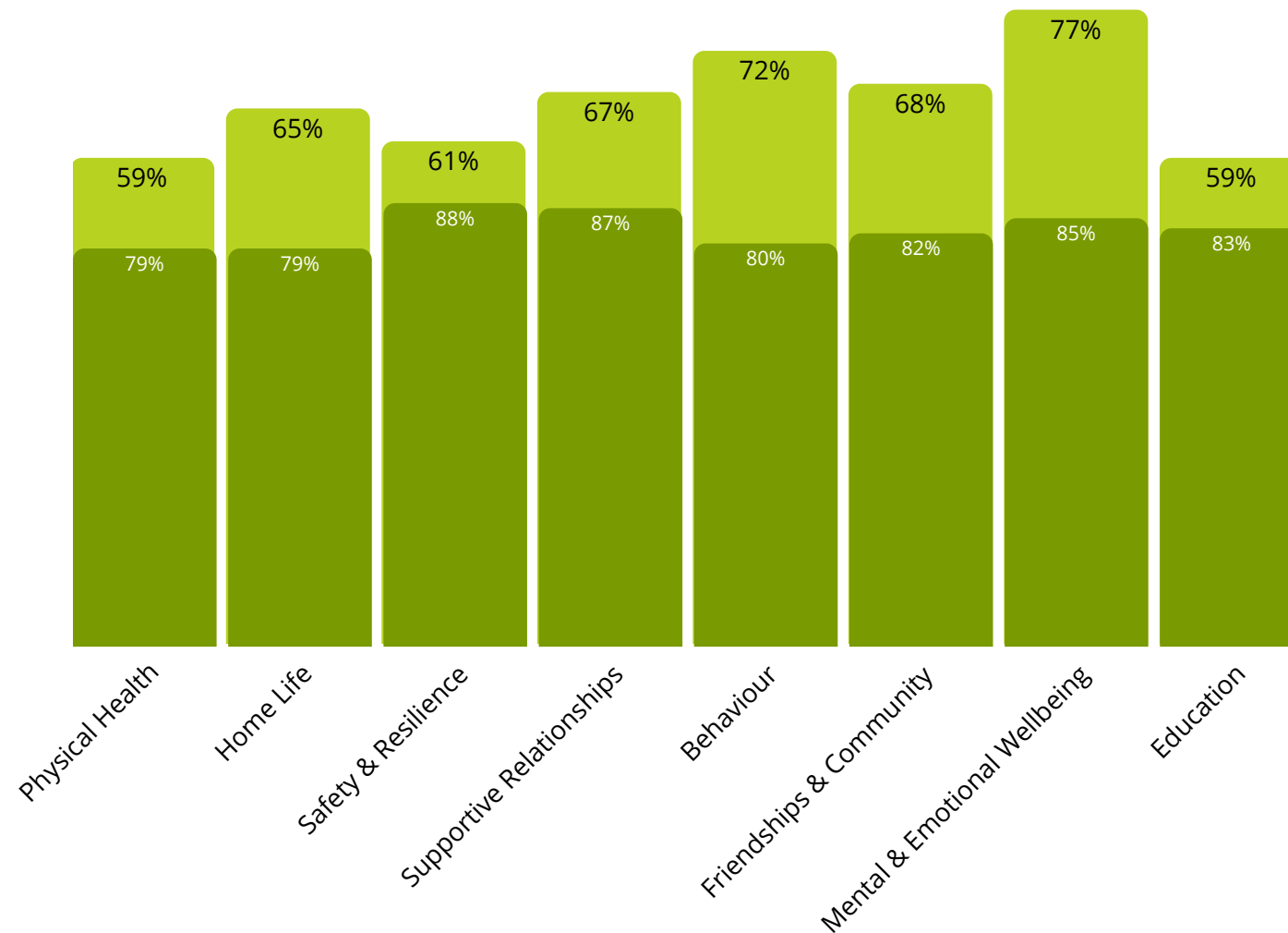
However, it is important to note that the time (and funding) required for each individual can vary significantly based on the diversity and complexity of their specific needs and circumstances. For instance, it may take less time to help individuals improve their physical health compared to addressing their mental health or educational needs.



# AVERAGE CHANGE BETWEEN EACH ASSESSMENT



By the end of the Mentoring programme almost **ALL (99%)** beneficiaries improved in at least one measure. And, of the beneficiaries who scored 1 or 2 in any area, almost 80% or more, had made an improvement in that area, by their final assessment.



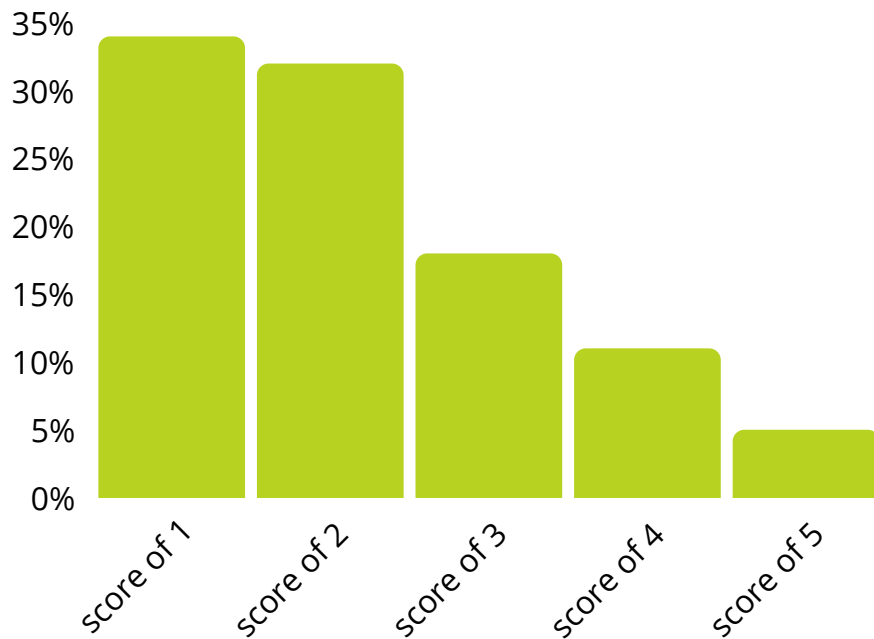
The amount of progress is noteworthy: in all areas, around 80% of individuals affected by each group made progress to a point where they are experiencing positive change.

This chart (not to scale), illustrates the level of change. For example, in Mental & Emotional Wellbeing, 77% of beneficiaries were initially struggling, but by the end, 85% of those individuals were in a better place.

This consistent spread of improvement once again demonstrates how mentoring supports people across all aspects of their lives, rather than being more effective in only one or two areas.

## % OF BENEFICIARIES SCORING AT EACH LEVEL IN FIRST ASSESSMENT

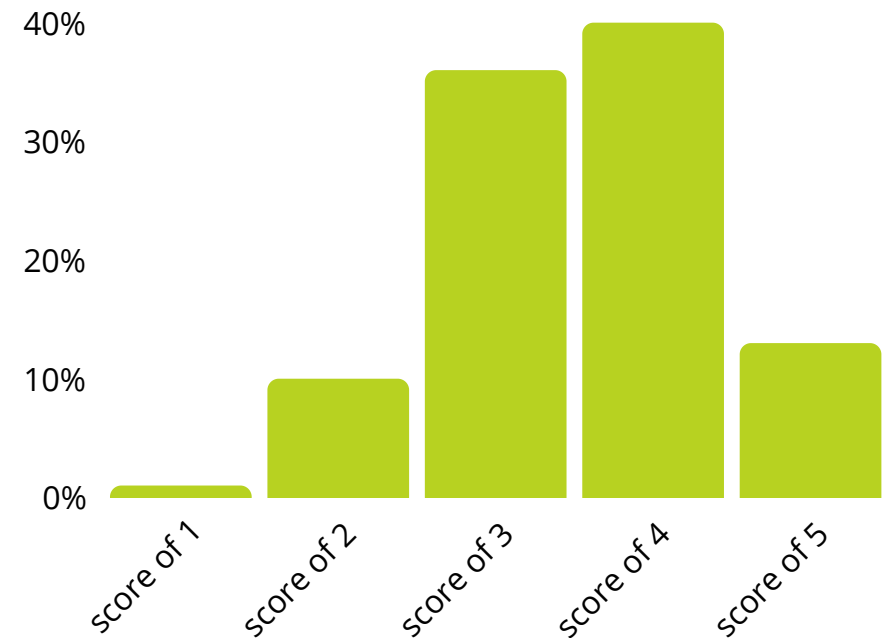
The majority of beneficiaries (two thirds) scored an average of 1 or 2 across all 8 categories:



**Across all our beneficiaries, age groups and categories, the average score in their final assessments was around 4 out of 5 across all 8 measures.**

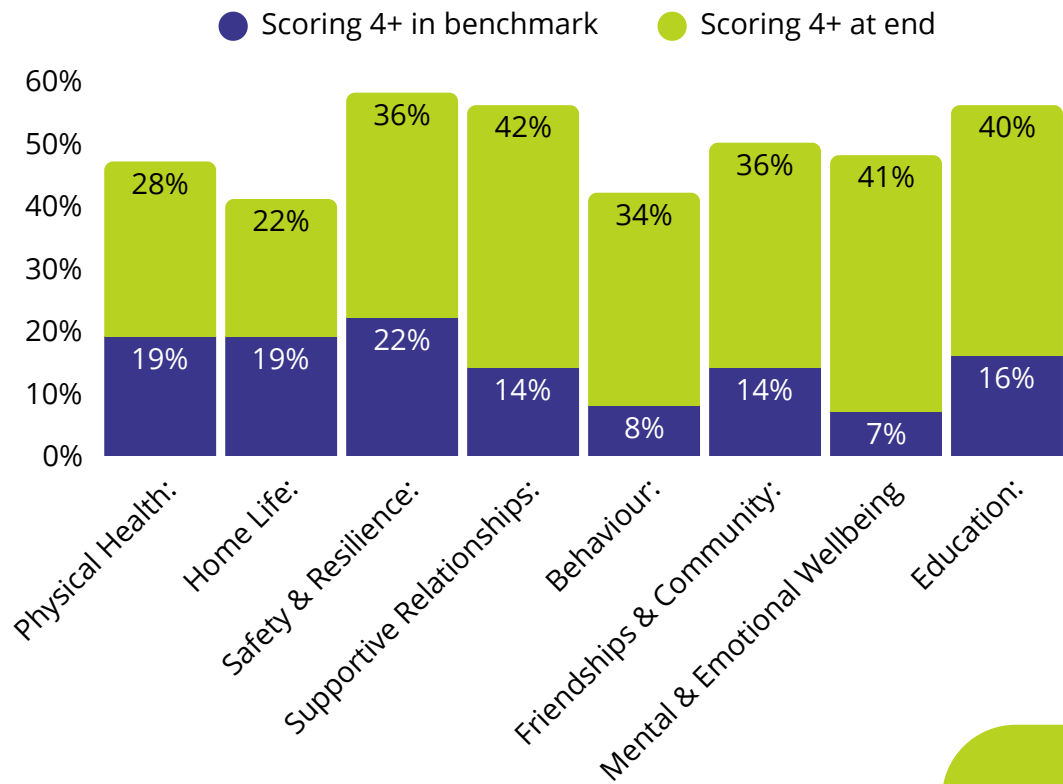
## % OF PEOPLE AT EACH LEVEL IN FINAL ASSESSMENT

The majority of beneficiaries (three quarters) scored an average of 3 or 4 across all 8 categories:



**This might not sound like much, but in reality, it represents a massive transformation. It is a powerful combination of improvement and hope.**

To be clear, we have moved from a situation where the majority of beneficiaries - both young people and parents - felt 'stuck' or merely ready to accept help, to one where they are actively working to make a difference.



And the same is true across the individual categories. At the start of the programme, less than a quarter of beneficiaries considered themselves as finding solutions in any one category. By the end of the programme, this ranges from 42% to 58%.

**Meaning, nearly 7x as many people improved in their Mental & Emotional Wellbeing, and over 5x as many people improved in their Behaviour needs, compared to the start.**





# FINDINGS

Over the four year period, this programme has delivered at least six key lessons:

- 1 MENTORING'S IMPACT IS HOLISTIC, WITH MOST MENTEES REACHING THEIR TARGET AGAINST EVERY MEASURE SIMULTANEOUSLY.**

The vast majority of our mentees reach their target in all 8, or almost all 8, of the possible areas of improvement.



## 2 MENTORING MUST BE OF A FLEXIBLE DURATION TO RESPOND TO PEOPLE'S MULTIPLE COMPLEX NEEDS.

The average intervention lasted almost a year, with most progress made after 3+ months.

## 3 A WHOLE-FAMILY APPROACH IS KEY; PARENTS PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN MENTORING SUCCESS.

Mentoring has a broad impact (regardless of age or gender); people improve across all measures and is particularly suitable for individuals with complex, combined, and challenging needs.



## 4 COMMUNITY BASED SUPPORT THAT MOBILISES VOLUNTEERS, WHILE NOT FREE, IS KEY.

Both financially and operationally. Volunteers bring many benefits as they contribute valuable time and expertise, enhancing the overall quality and impact of the intervention - for both the beneficiaries and themselves.



*Being a volunteer mentor offers me a sense of fulfilment that comes from helping someone succeed.*

*The experience has given me a better understanding of the different challenges that some people face and different cultural beliefs too.*

*The whole experience is a powerful way to give back to your community and make a meaningful impact on someone's life, so that they have the skills to reach their full potential.*

## 5 ALMOST EVERYONE MAKES IMPROVEMENTS AS A RESULT OF MENTORING

By the end of their intervention, 80% - 91% of mentees make positive progress against a measure; the fewest people (80%) made progress in Physical Health, but most people (91%) made progress (from a low starting point) in Behaviour, and in Mental & Emotional Wellbeing.



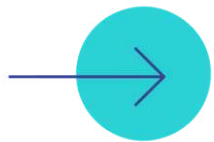
## 6 VERY FEW PEOPLE STILL HAVE SERIOUS NEEDS IN ANY AREAS, FOLLOWING MENTORING

Most people's final assessment score is a huge 4 out of 5 for every measure except for Physical Health, Home Life and Behaviour (which is a 3).

# CHALLENGES

The results of our mentoring programme for young people and their families are clear: it is a proven method that supports individuals, fosters resilience, and promotes positive outcomes for vulnerable people. It is vital that we are able to continue this support for the many young people we know will need our help in the future.

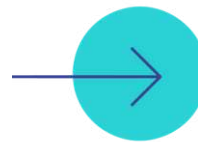
To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of this community-based, early intervention family support, we must address several key areas:



**Sustainability:** How can we continue to support families before they reach a crisis point or to where they no longer need help?



**Tracking Progress:** There is a need for more comprehensive data on referrals and follow-up services.



**Gaps in Support:** We must ensure improved assistance for young adults (18+) and those with specific needs, such as Special Educational Needs (SEN) and post-school transitions.





[surreycaretrust.org.uk](http://surreycaretrust.org.uk)  
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# THANK YOU

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Thank you also to our expert staff, volunteers, and partners, such as Surrey HomeStart, who helped to provide this support for the four year period.

Lastly, our thanks to Prof. Naomi Winstone for introducing this report and Robert Evers for conducting the analysis.



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