

Recognising the Invisible Barriers:

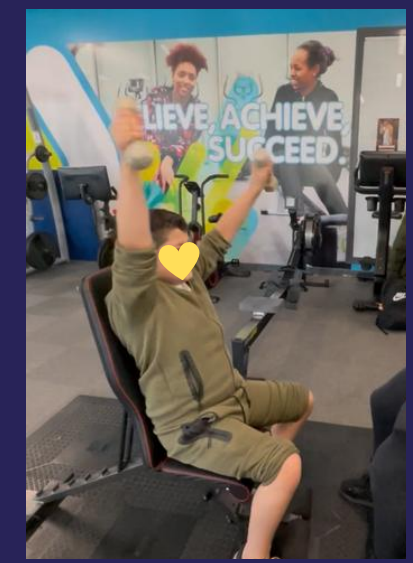
*The Change that is Within
Our Control*



Laetisha Azzahra Witoyo
(Year 5 medical student)



This is David :)



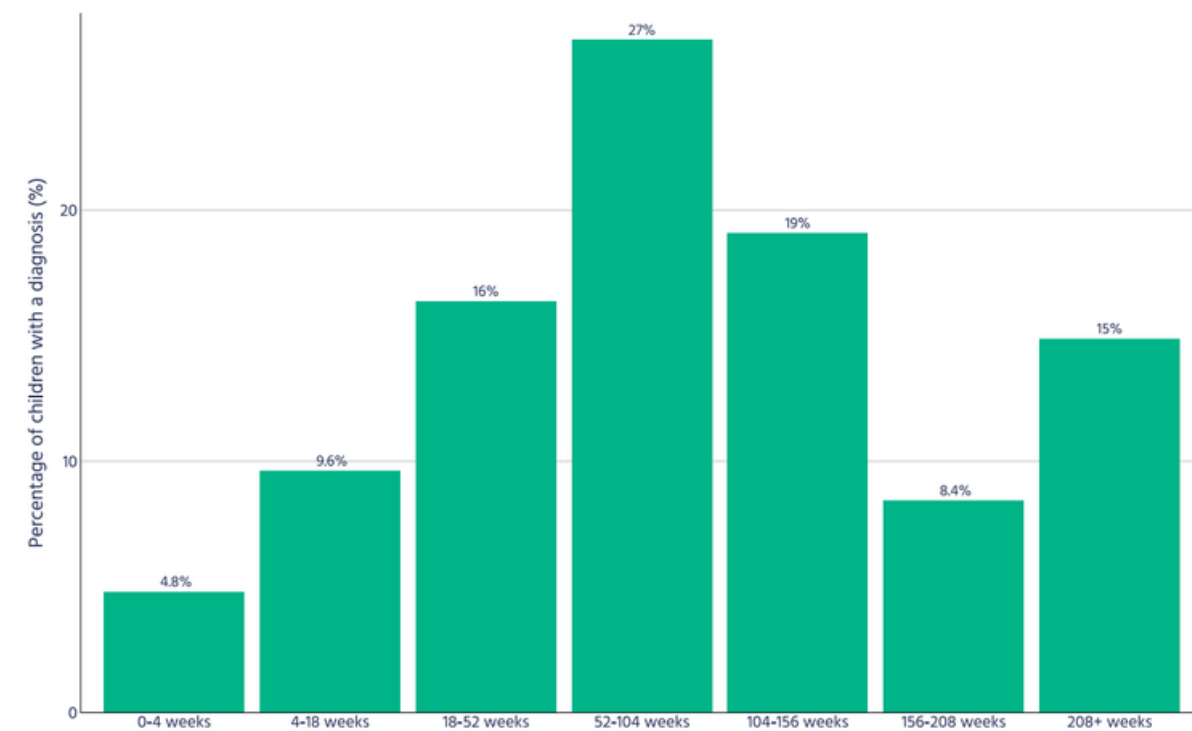
2022



2026

Unfortunately, this is the very real reality many families face...

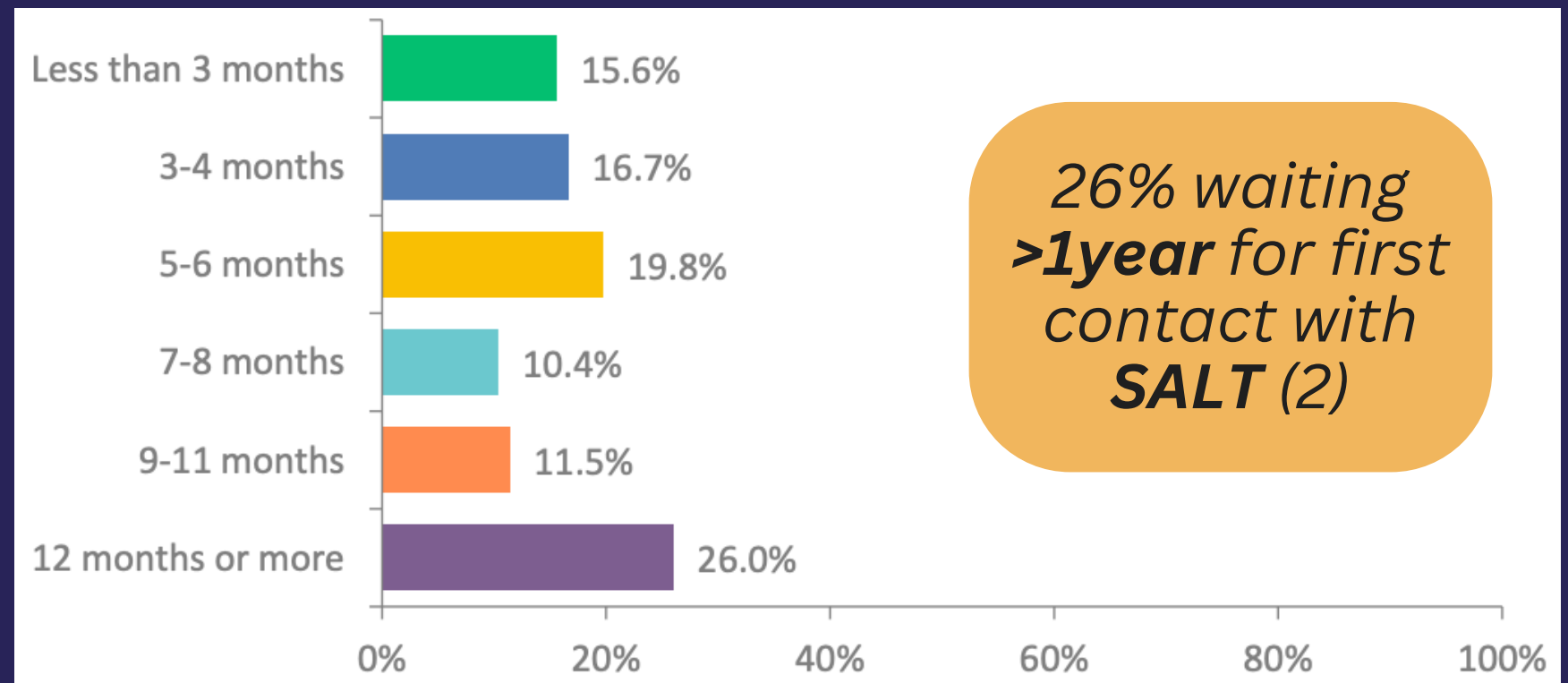
Figure 13. How long children waited from referral in or before the 2022-23 financial year to a diagnosis for autism in 2022-23 and 2023-24.



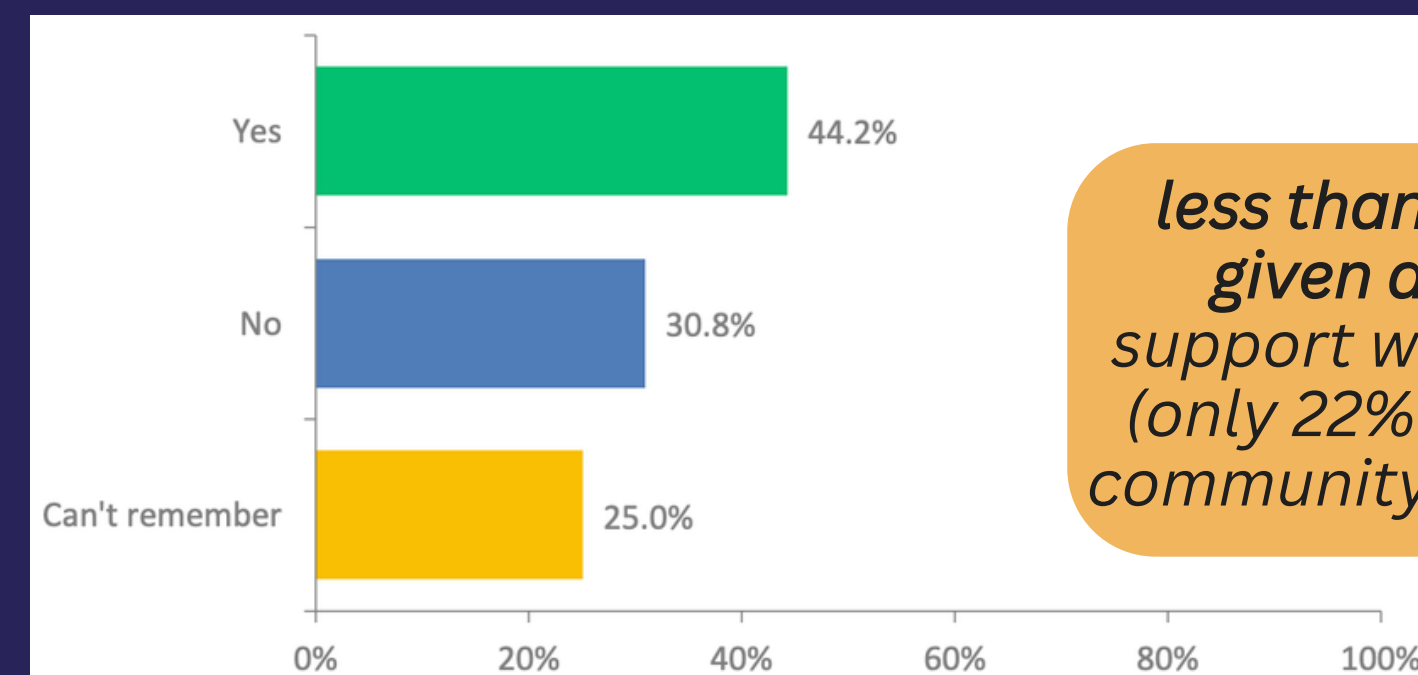
Source: Children's Commissioner's office analysis of unpublished Community Services Data Set data on NDD diagnoses.

diagnostic assessment waiting times up to **4 years+** (1)

no diagnosis = no support?



26% waiting >1year for first contact with SALT (2)



less than half were given advice or support while waiting (only 22% told about community services)(2)

3 Invisible Barriers to Action



Destigmatisation Checklist

- Understanding*** behaviour in the context of autism
- Empathy*** - to understand the impacts on the child
- Compassion*** - to explore how we can support our children to maximise their potential



**Unconscious
“over-normalisation”**

Destigmatisation Checklist

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if we stop at this step...
**over-normalisation,
diagnostic
overshadowing**



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1

**Unconscious
“over-normalisation”**

Destigmatisation without empathy and compassion is just as harmful as the stigma itself.

2

Defering Responsibility

*“It’s not my
place to say
anything”*

*acting within my remit
vs questioning things that
concern me*

diffusion of
responsibility

*“surely,
someone more
qualified will do
something”*



*“It’s not my
place to say
anything”*

*acting within my remit
vs questioning things that
concern me*

2

**Deferring
Responsibility**

diffusion of
responsibility

*“surely,
someone more
qualified will do
something”*

*“I don’t know what I
can even offer to
help anyways”*

*“It’s not my
place to say
anything”*

*acting within my remit
vs questioning things that
concern me*

2

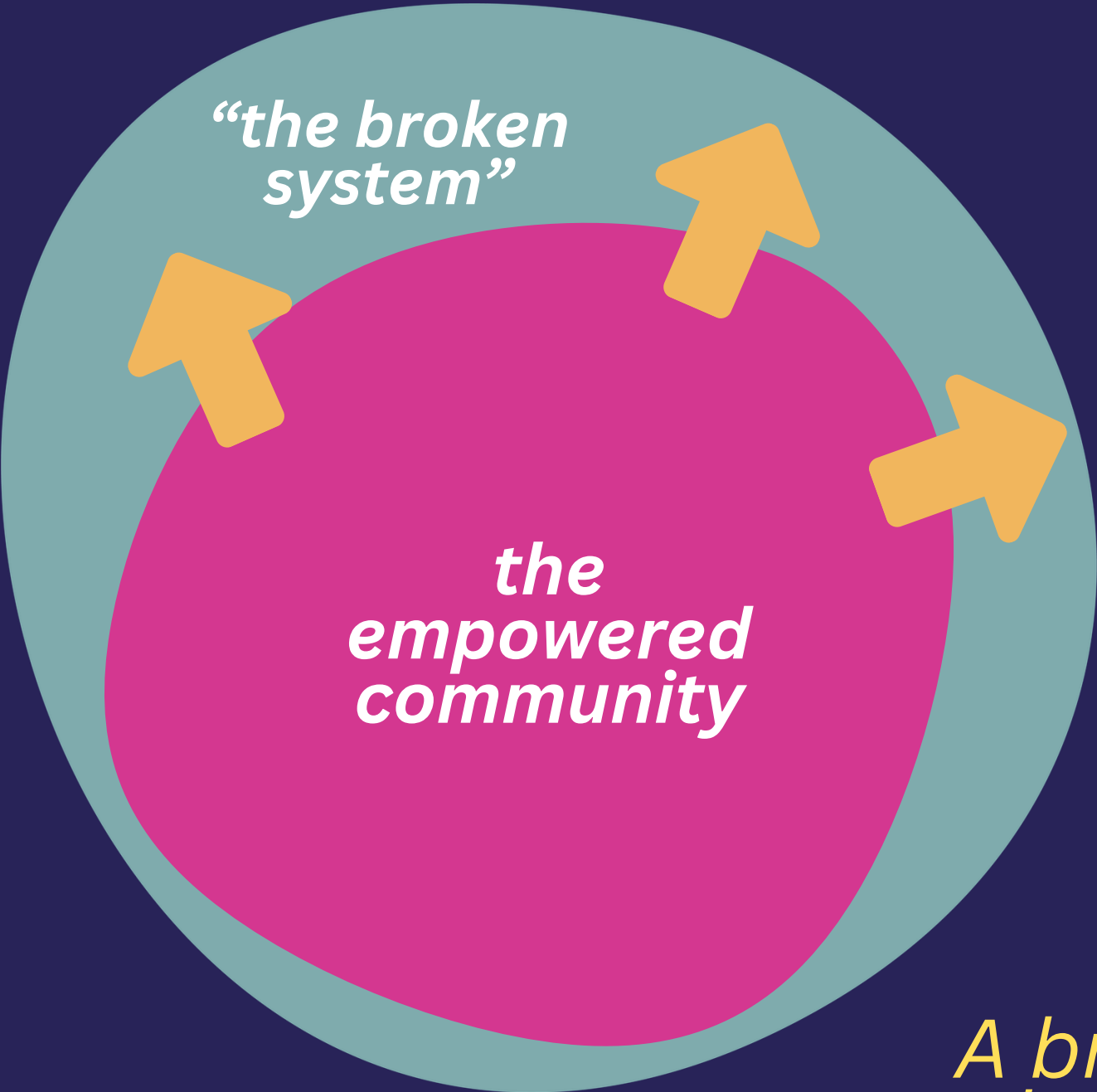
Deferring Responsibility

*“Not my responsibility”
should be everyone’s
responsibility.*

3 The Assumption of Powerlessness



3 The Assumption of Powerlessness



A broken system doesn't have to mean a broken community.

How can WE (realistically) facilitate change?

Personal

1. Encouraging families to share their stories.
2. Acknowledge and reflect on our reactions, actions, and inaction.

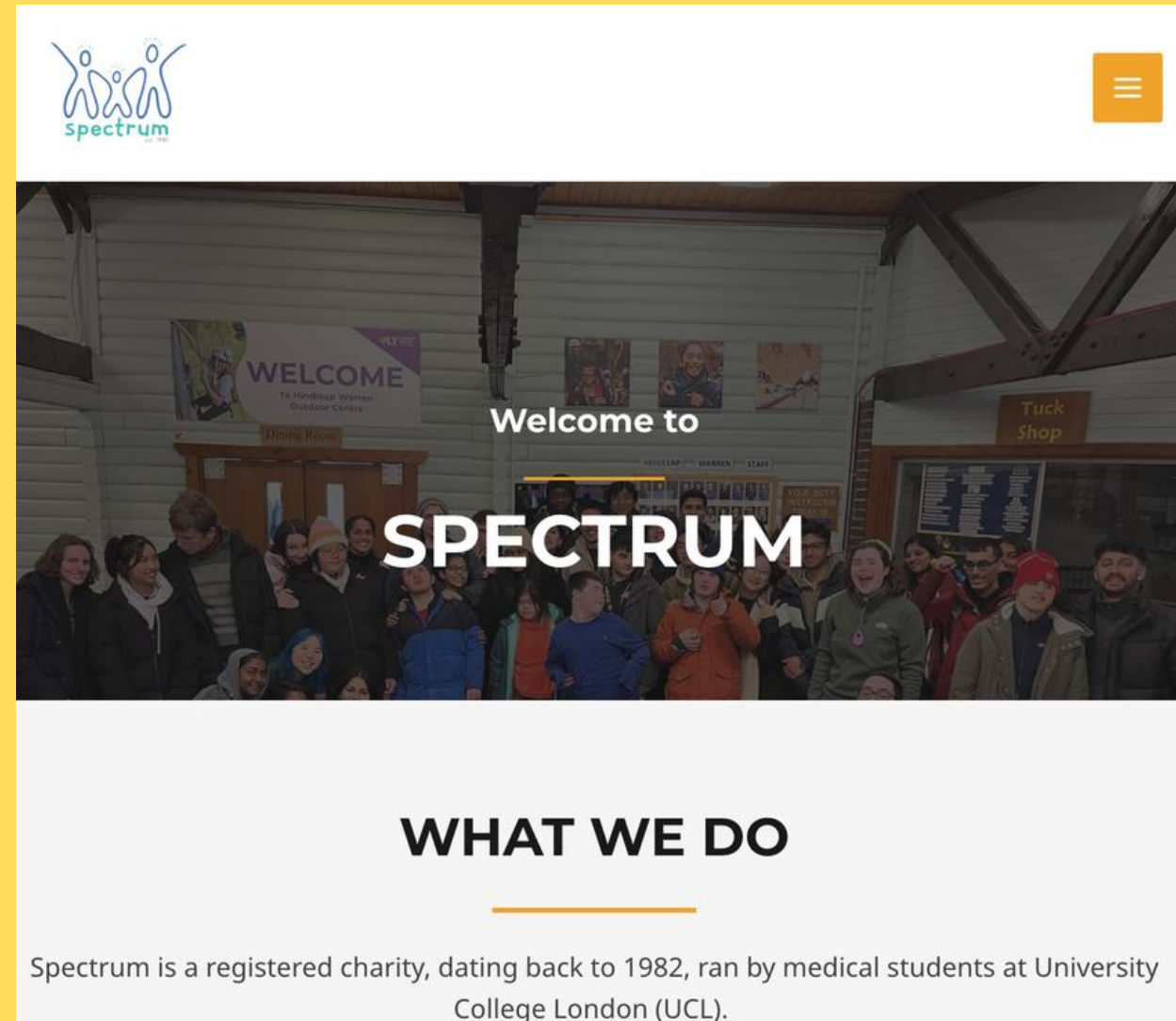
Interpersonal

1. Validate and acknowledge concerns.
2. Having clearer pathways of escalation.

Community

1. Collaborate with community organisations and encourage connections between families.
2. More emphasis on **social prescribing** for these children

Spectrum Transitions project



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Sources

1. *Children's Commissioner. Waiting times for assessment and support for autism, ADHD and other neurodevelopmental conditions | Children's Commissioner for England [Internet]. Children's Commissioner for England. 2024. Available from: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/waiting-times-for-assessment-and-support-for-autism-adhd-and-other-neurodevelopmental-conditions/>*
2. *NHS North East and North Cumbria. Speech and Language Therapy Involvement report South Tyneside and Sunderland [Internet]. NHS; 2024 Jul [cited 2026 May 2] p. 11–6. Available from: <https://northeastnorthcumbria.nhs.uk/media/nhfj0nqp/salt-involvement-report-v4.pdf>*