

Wellbeing: Early Years

Responses to our emotional health and wellbeing questionnaire were received from a mix of parents, grandparents and carers attending the Baby Bounce and Rhyme and pre-school children's story time groups:

- Local commissioners report that Bristol has higher rates of mental health diagnoses than the national average.
- Baby Bounce and Rhyme and pre-school children's story time service users reported that services like these were very important and helped support both the parents and their children with their emotional health and wellbeing.
- Supported by Healthwatch Bristol, service users shared their experiences, highlighting the importance of support groups and stated which types of health and social care services helped support their families' health and wellbeing needs, further stating which services could be improved.

Healthwatch Bristol is working on a city-wide project concentrating on emotional health around the city. Statistics show that one in four adults and one in ten children are affected by mental health and that this is an issue that affects everybody. Bristol City Council is therefore prioritising this. The key objective of the project is to improve emotional health and wellbeing across the city.

Healthwatch Bristol is keen to find out people's experiences on this topic and have put together a short survey, with a focus on emotional and health and wellbeing.

Please click on the link to access the questionnaire: <http://bit.ly/2iVHJnV>

Healthwatch Bristol (HWB) was keen to hear from parents with pre-school children to find out if they experienced any emotional difficulties and what community activities or health and social care services they use to help keep them and their children emotionally well. All information collated was anonymous. HWB spoke to parents, grandparents and carers from two groups, the Baby Bounce Group and the pre-school story time group which are run by Junction 3 Library.

This report shows strong evidence of how the emotional health and wellbeing of parents with pre-school children is improved when accessing groups like these, as they provide peer support and a safe place for them to share with their children.

Healthwatch Bristol

"I greatly appreciate these groups, they are welcoming, it's a good place for advice and it's important to be around other parents and babies."

A Service user

"Early Help is a great service and helped support me with both mine and my children's needs!"

A Service user

Call: 0303 303 0023
Text: 07592 787 533
healthwatchbristol.co.uk

Healthwatch Bristol speaking to parents and carers at Baby Bounce and Rhymes group and pre-school children's story time group about emotional health and wellbeing.

Follow up

Data Analysis: Feedback from ten participants

Question 1

This question asked if people had received any support from voluntary/community groups. All ten participants stated that parents and toddler groups had a positive impact and helped them and their children with their emotional health and mental wellbeing. One participant stated: "Community groups help with lots of activities and keeps me and my two pre-school children active! It's a good place for advice and discussing problems." Parks and children's centres were also stated as an activity/support and a way to help their children keep busy, as well as a good way of relaxing. Three out of ten people said how they would access support and advice from their health visitors. Seven out of ten said that they received support from friends/families. One out of ten stated that they accessed a paid service called National Childbirth Trust for support.

Question 2

This question aimed to find out which services people used to support their need: A

community psychiatric nurse, a psychotherapist/counsellor, a social worker, a psychiatrist, mental health support, a GP, another type of NHS health and social care worker, and LIFT/Wellbeing therapies staff.

Nine out of ten stated that they used their GP for general health care. One out ten said that her GP helped refer them to a bereavement counsellor, which they subsequently used.

One out of ten stated they accessed a paid service with National Childbirth Trust for support. One out ten said, "Early Help has been helpful and provided me with advice and support. They also informed me about places I could take my baby which helped me feel less isolated!"

Question 3

This question focused on how well these services supported their needs. Fifty per cent of the responses received said that their GP/HV supported their needs very well. Three out of ten stated that their GP supported their needs quite well. Two people said accessing appointments was difficult. One person said, "When appointments are available,

staff at May Trees Practice are good!"

One participant said that bereavement counselling had supported them very well and helped them overcome a difficult period of time. One participant said that they were unhappy: "My postnatal check-up was quick and like a tick box - not really open to questions and concerns!" They were concerned that if someone had a problem that this GP was not approachable. One commentator praised their midwife at Montpelier Health Clinic and said that she was very thorough, supportive and felt this support aided them with their health and wellbeing.

Question 4

Asked if there is anything else that they would like to see instead or in addition to this six out of ten participants said that they were happy with local community groups/services, with one person stating, "I am happy with community groups for myself and my children, as there is something we can access every day!" Four out of ten people said that parks/outdoor areas could be improved to make them safer and more accessible for pre-

Follow up

school children. One person stated "More safe open spaces /parks are required and would provide additional opportunities outdoors for my children to feel safe and explore." Two out of ten said that more free activities should be made available for them and their pre-school children.

Summary

This report strengthened and articulated well that all ten parents, carers and grandparents said how Baby Bounce and Rhymes groups, as well as other parent and toddler groups, all helped support them and their children with their emotional and mental health. Many stated how

peer support was a great benefit and how it helped to air concerns, worries and issues in a safe space. Several participants added how activities like these helped them socialise and meet other parents and children. Many participants stated they would contact a family member, a friend, or another parent if they needed support.

Very few participants used health and social care service to support them with their emotional and mental health. Those few who had used them for this reason felt well supported and found these services very beneficial. Most people used their GP/HV for general health needs.

Recommendations

Some GP services could be improved to help support parents better and be more approachable to people's questions and concerns.

Statistics show that good quality natural landscape in urban areas can affect how people feel as it reduces stress and sadness, lifts the mood and makes people feel better. With this in mind more should be done to improve these outdoor areas. Half the parents felt that outdoor spaces, like parks, should be developed to make them more accessible and a safer environment for them and their younger children.

