

Early Years Consultation

March 2023

Parent and Carer Survey Analysis

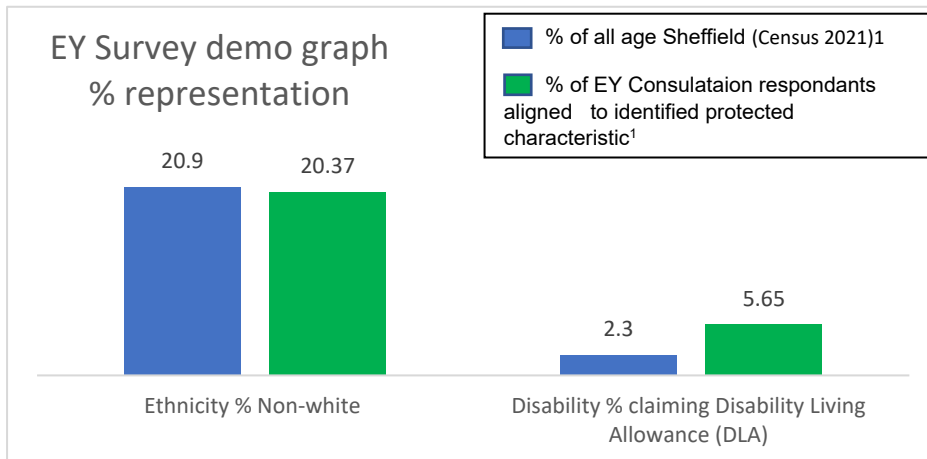
The key aim of the 2023 Parent/carer consultation was to inform the development of the new 2023 Early Years (EY) Strategy, which will be named, “Start for Life Sheffield”, and is due to replace the current EY strategy, ‘A Great Start for Life’, in March 2023.

To ensure the EY new strategy is reflective of our city, and our families, the Early Years and Early Help Commissioning team embarked on delivering a comprehensive across sector Early Years consultation. The findings within this report, detail the voice of Sheffield Parent/carers. Please note, the professional/partners survey and across sector EY consultation focus group findings are recorded in a separate analysis report.

The primary aim of this survey was to understand the experiences of families with care of young children in Sheffield, from a parent and carer perspective. The survey questions focussed on what is working well and where improvements could be made. This report will summarise the responses, capturing the voices of Sheffield families.

A total of 133 parents or carers responded on a wide range of subjects connected to early years experiences.

The demographic population of the Early Years survey respondents



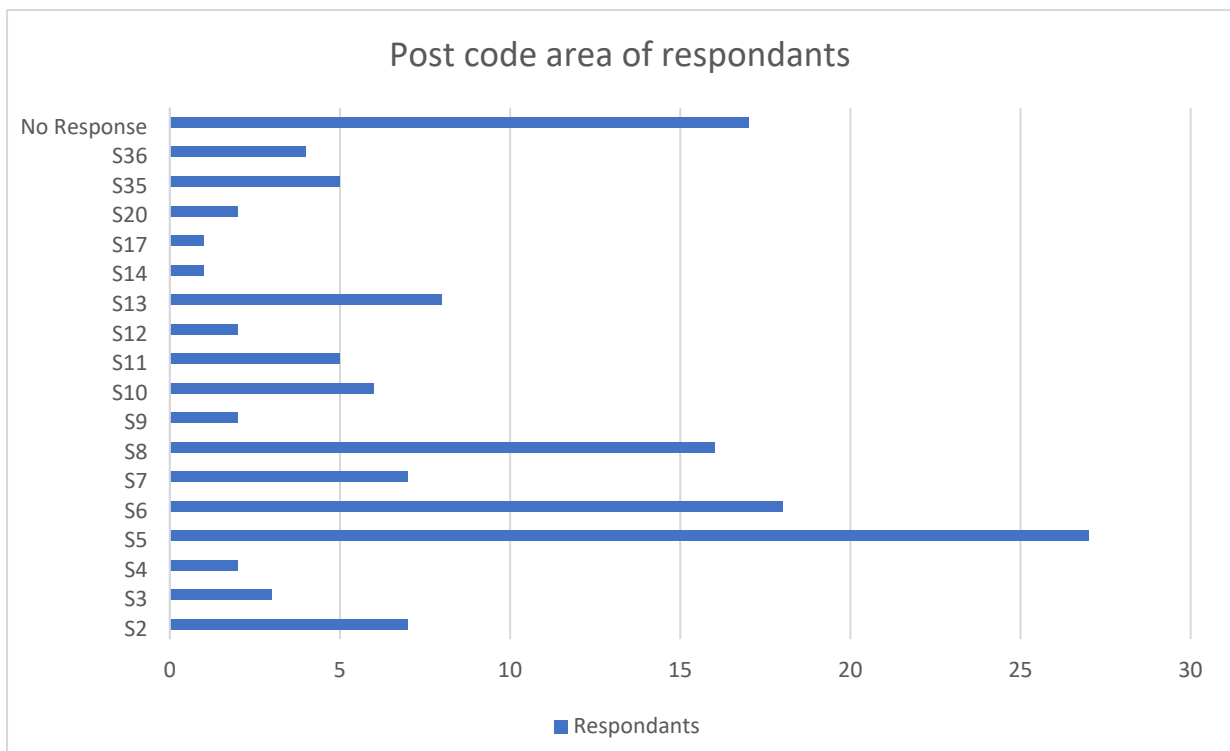
53 parent or carers identified having 2 or more children.
66 parents or carers identified having 1 child.
14 No response.

By Ethnicity

Another ethnic group 3
Asian or Asian British 9
Caribbean 3
Black African, Black British, or Mixed or multiple ethnic groups 7
White 108
Prefer not to say 3.

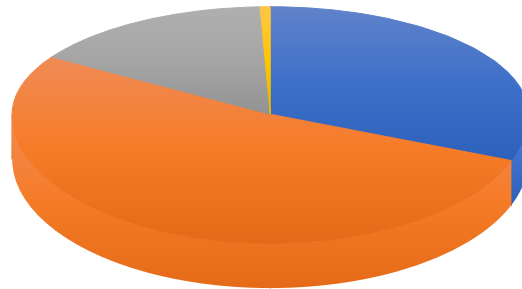
<u>Parents/carers identified as having a disability.</u>	<u>Parents /carers who identified having a child with a disability or additional need.</u>
Yes 7	Yes 13
No 124	No 118
Prefer not to say 1	No response 2
No response 1	
Yes 7	

City wide geographic response



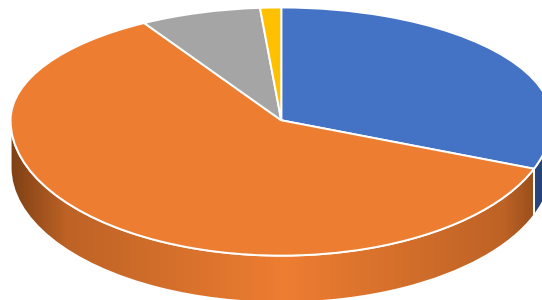
What families told us about support and services for Early Years in Sheffield

It is easy to get advice when I need it



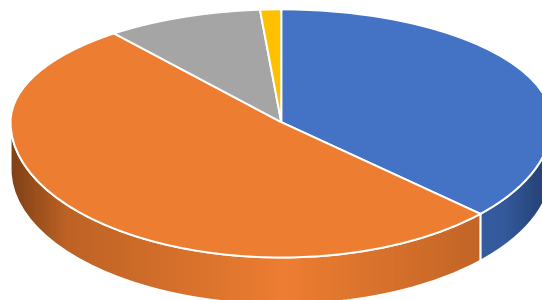
■ Strongly agree 41 ■ Agree 69 ■ Disagree 22 ■ Strongly disagree 1

I know where to go or who to call for support and help if I'm worried about my child



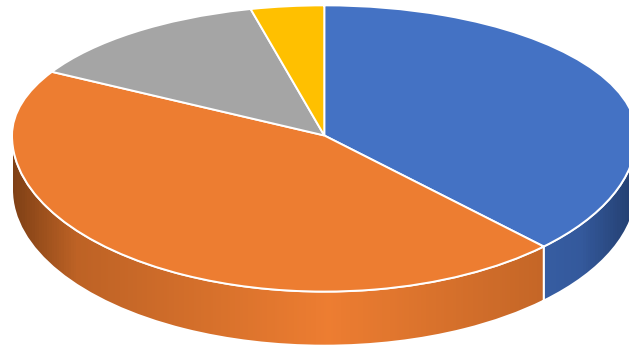
■ Strongly agree 41 ■ Agree 79 ■ Disagree 11 ■ Strongly disagree 2

Services are delivered close enough to where I live and I can access them



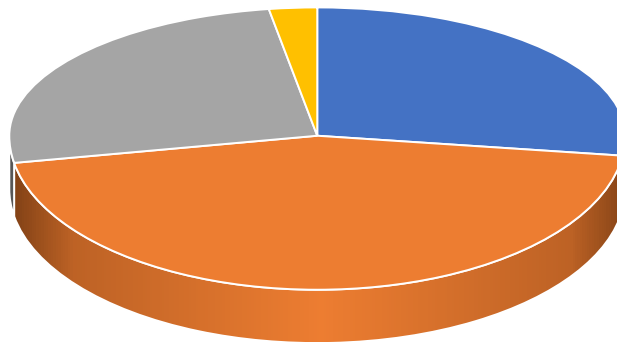
■ Strongly agree 49 ■ Agree 68 ■ Disagree 14 ■ Strongly disagree 2

I attend groups and activities in my local family centre/family hub



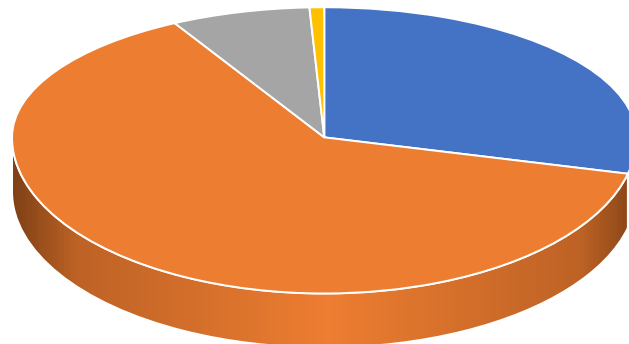
■ Strongly agree 50 ■ Agree 59 ■ Disagree 18 ■ Strongly disagree 6

I attend groups run in my community by voluntary services/local people



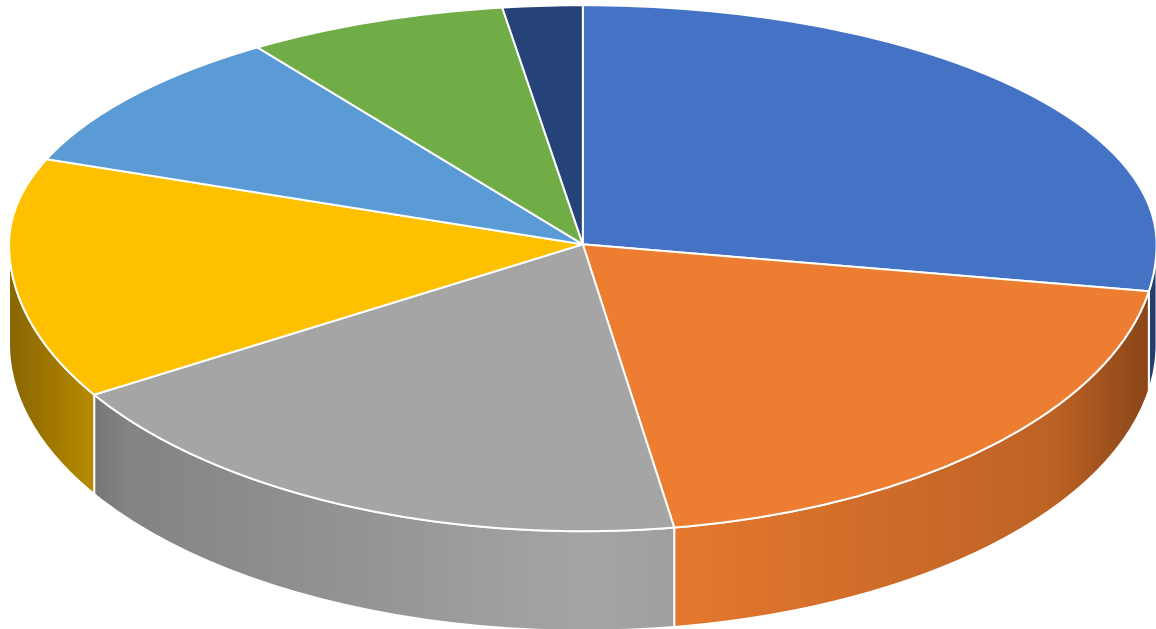
■ Strongly agree 36 ■ Agree 60 ■ Disagree 33 ■ Strongly disagree 4

I feel that professionals listen to my concerns



■ Strongly agree 38 ■ Agree 82 ■ Disagree 11 ■ Strongly disagree 2

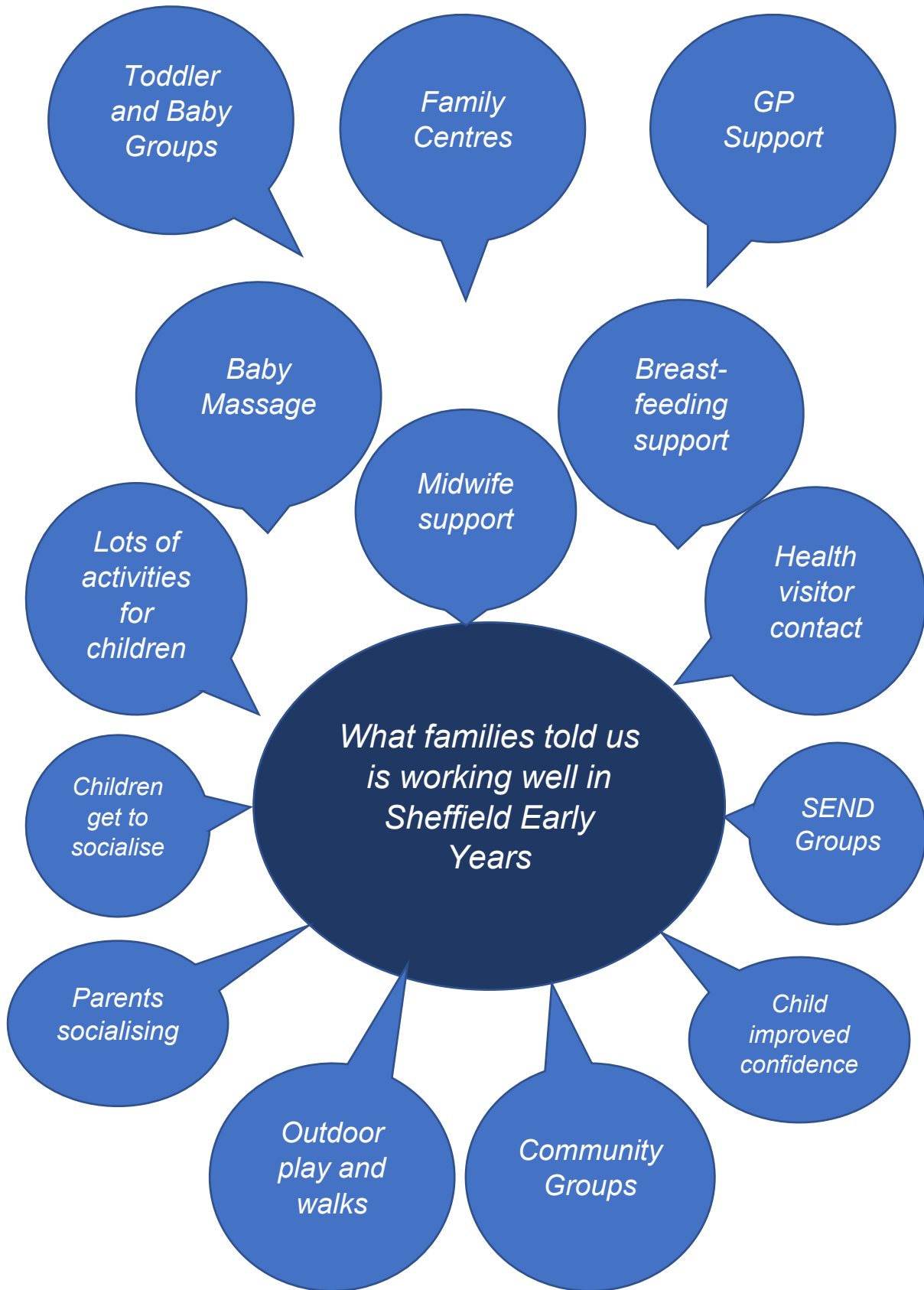
Who families identified as their sources of advice-



- Family & Friends 103
- General Practitioner 74
- Health Visitor 70
- Family Centre/Hub 51
- School or Nursery 34
- Social Media 31
- Other (Personal Research/Internet/Books/NHS Website/Paediatrician) 10

The survey highlighted the ongoing importance of personal networks to parents and carers in Sheffield with 77% identifying family and friends as a source of advice. The survey also identified the importance of General Practitioners in providing advice to young families in Sheffield with 55% of respondents positively identifying them as a route for advice. There was consistency across the survey around the significance of Health Visitors for parents and carers with children in early years; 52% of respondents identified Health Visitors as a route for guidance. Family Centres Hubs were identified by 38% of respondents as somewhere they could seek advice. Schools and Nurseries were identified by 25% as a source of advice but a high proportion of respondents identified having children under 1 which may distort this figure. Social media was identified by 23% of respondents. 10 respondents identified other sources to find advice regarding their children and cited NHS website, personal research, internet, books, paediatrician as sources of advice, this comprised of 7% of all survey respondents.

We asked; **What is working well?** We heard.



What Sheffield Early Years services have meant to parents and carers, in their words.....

.... Breastfeeding group has been really useful. It has been a nice place to come and socialise with mums in the same situation.

...Feel more confident in general as a first-time parent Feel supported (at key times in child development) ...Easy to raise concerns.

...Baby Groups, being able to get out and socialise is very important.... Feel less isolated, less alone, able to meet people in similar situations.

... The Family Centres are so valuable – breastfeeding support, toddler playgroup, holiday activities, information seminars eg. Weaning

... Health visitor – easy to access for quick advice, information about local groups and support Have fun Reassurance

... Feel better equipped for second child Enjoyed programmes in school holidays Improved child's confidence

*.... Lots of children and interaction for my child
.... Moved to another area, introduced me to other parents.*

.... Speech and language has given us things to focus on so my son can make progress.

... Had chance to ask questions and get advice and signposting to other services.

*.... Great chance to meet and share concerns with other parents
...Knowledge around SEND, weaning, feeding, sleeping, play, breast-feeding.*

We asked; **What would work better?** We heard.



Parents/ carers expressed their views on challenges around services, the following points were identified.

- 22% considered they had a lack of knowledge about Early Years resources available in Sheffield.
- 8% considered they did not know where their local Family Centre/Hub is or what it could offer.
- 8% considered they did not have easy local access to a local Family Centre/Hub
- 8% considered working families are disadvantaged with lack of access to services in Sheffield.
- 10% considered their Family Centres/Hubs should run more groups, education seminars and have more specialist advice available.
- 29% considered that there was a deficit generally with resources in Sheffield, identifying specifically lengthy waiting lists, struggles accessing medical support, difficulties utilising services due to location or opening times, challenges accessing specialist support.

The parent/carers stated....in their own words.

On information: -

*....Finding out things is tricky, though hopefully it will get easier.
.... Signpost.... Need to learn what's available.
... Confusing information about health providers for young children.
... Need clarity on who to call.
... Not sure who to ask, how to get in touch, how to contact a health visitor.
... Community groups should be advertised more.
...Currently unaware of groups and services.
... Don't know where to find out about Services, assumptions parents know where to find them.*

On Family Centre Hubs: -

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*....Nothing on the weekends, as a working family, it's hard to access.
... Don't know where they are.
Don't know what's available*

On waiting times / accessing key services: -

....On waiting list to see speech and language, worried won't get seen before starts school.
... Waiting list for Ryegate too long ... Hard to get GP's appointments.
... Should be easier to contact health visitor.
... Could only access support because husband drove.
... Problems getting immediate healthcare from NHS.
... Previously Health visitors used to visit Zest, wish they still did.
.... Need easier access as a paediatrician.
... Couldn't find a nursery ... Long waiting times, SEND group helps.
....More Saturday working so children don't miss school.

On services and support: -

....Groups not so much focussed on 3-year-olds.
... Need more for 18 months + Not much in early days.
... Not much on weekends More support for working families.
... Groups need to run on more days of the week.
...Found it hard to get help when son was not sleeping Found process to access sleep support long and gruelling.
... More face-to-face groups ... Time Slots ... More voluntary groups.
... Hard to find baby group when for youngest whilst eldest was in nursery, more slots?

More breast feeding support

More baby weighing

More face to face groups to run groups on different days

		<p><i>Communicate what services are available at pregnancy stage</i></p>
<p><i>More weekend opportunities and support for working parents</i></p>	<p><i>Weaning classes</i> <i>More feeding support</i></p>	<p><i>Evaluate demand for groups and add more places if required</i> <i>More check-ups</i></p>
<p><i>More activities for children on the spectrum</i> <i>Play groups in more areas</i></p>	<p><i>Resource packs for key stages ie. potty training</i> <i>More for 18+ months</i></p>	<p><i>Market exchange for clothes and crafters</i> <i>Toy library</i> <i>Free childcare</i></p>
<p><i>First aid courses</i> <i>More free courses</i> <i>Re-instate parenting courses</i></p>	<p><i>Health visitor toddler groups</i> <i>On line 24/7 Health visitors</i></p>	<p><i>More direct contact numbers for advice</i> <i>One document listing all services</i></p>
<p><i>More sleep support...</i> <i>More affordable childcare</i></p>	<p><i>More activities & groups, more choice of activities</i> <i>On-line support for working parents</i></p>	<p><i>Include advice on what's available at maternity stage</i> <i>Better descriptions for classes</i></p>
<p><i>Talk with pre-school about expert course</i> <i>Address Ryegate waiting lists</i></p>	<p><i>More support for schools/nurseries whilst awaiting specialist support</i></p>	<p><i>Advertise and publicise services more and advise on new groups</i></p>
<p><i>Engage more Dads</i> <i>Services for all backgrounds</i></p>	<p><i>Set up buddying support with experienced and first-time parents</i></p>	<p><i>More parenting style support</i> <i>Block booking for activities</i></p>

In Summary: -

The Early Years consultation incorporated hearing from 133 parents or carers, a successful reach across City-wide postcode geographies was met. *(Note post code respondent detail listed on pg2).* The EY survey was made easily accessible via QR code access and promoted via City wide Family Centre social media pages, through in person promotion across all 7 Family Centre hub sites and via outreach activity. The survey was sent across sector professionals, providers, partners teams as a reminder to all those who participated in the EY consultation focus groups. The survey was made available online and as a paper version across key sites, to support inclusivity.

The Early Years consultation provided a broad overview of feedback, representative of the wider population. This was demonstrated when we consider having engaged a proportionate percentage representation of responses received by ethnic group and responses from families who identified as having a disability or additional need *(Note demographic representation graph detailed on pg. 2).*

In addition to the EY Parent/Carer survey, we held 7 x 1.5/2hr face to face EY focus groups, where parents/carers and parent/carers volunteers were able to provide further detail of their lived experience and insight into what works well in Sheffield and what could work better to support local families and children. Focus sessions included consultation with the Sheffield Parent/ Carers forum, where we were able to hear 1st hand from parent/carers caring for a child/ren with SEND needs, as well as hearing from the local Parent/Carer volunteer champions who deliver the Empowering parent/empowering communities (EPEC) programme as volunteers, Infant Feeding volunteers and the valuable voice of the voluntary sector staff, employed within their communities having lived local experience. *(Note The EY Focus group analysis findings are recorded within the professionals EY Consultation report).*

The survey identified that for those parents and carers engaged in Services in Sheffield, there is a good level of satisfaction. In response to viewing their concerns were listened to by professionals, 90% of respondents expressed satisfaction. Given the elevated levels of engagement with services by respondents, this is a good barometer of the views of parents and carers of Early Years practitioners and Services in Sheffield.

90% of parents and carers completing the survey identified that they know how to access support and 82% identified that they find it easy to get advice, indicating a good level of knowledge around Services and resources in Sheffield. This is analysed with the caveat that a high proportion of respondents already access community resources. However, where it was possible to identify areas for improvement, 22% of comments supplied focussed on lack of information and clarity around Early Years services in Sheffield.

The survey identified the prominence of family and friends for parents and carers in Sheffield with 77% responding that they are a source of advice. There was a significant prevalence for parents and carers with advice from General Practitioners being identified by 55% of respondents and Health Visitors were closely followed with 52% identification levels. Family Hubs/Centres were identified as being a

source for advice by 38% of all survey responders with schools and nurseries at 25% and social media 23%, other sources including NHS website and internet were identified by 7% of respondents as a source of advice.

In free commentary sections of the survey, consistent themes emerged of difficulties with waiting times, particularly for specialist resources. The need to improve early years inclusivity for all. There was synergy with respondents identifying a lack of resources for working parents and difficulties with groups being concentrated on specified days of the week. There was also high volume of commentary around lack of awareness around what is available in Sheffield, where and how to access this and this was one of the most significant areas identified for improvement.

The Sheffield City Council Early Years and Early Help Commissioning Team expresses grateful thanks to all those parents and carers who participated in this consultancy for their invaluable contributions.

¹ [Local Insight \(communityinsight.org\)](http://communityinsight.org)

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