

**Bolton Community Champions
and Bolton Library and Museum Services:**

Creative Wonder Play: June 2022 Final Report





1. Background and rationale to the programme of work.

In November 2021, Bolton Library and Museum Services began Create Wonder Play- a series of creative early year consultation sessions.

The project, commissioned by Bolton Community Champions, aimed to bring EY families together through fun, informal, artistic, creative play sessions, allowing children and carers to enjoy new experiences whilst socialise with others in community settings after the previous period of restrictions.

The project also aimed to gain insight into the experiences of Bolton families living through Covid, successive lockdowns, social distancing and restrictions, with particular focus on infant & parental wellbeing, child development & post-natal support and a view of enabling services to help support young children and families better in the wake of the emotional & social cost of Covid restrictions.

Key findings from sessions found that:

- Socialisation, emotional development, along with speech language & communication were key parent/carer concerns for their children. This was also highlighted by educational professionals.
- Declining parental/ carer mental health due to heavy restrictions during such a key family period was also evident for some families. The inability to see family and friends, the cancellation of EY provisions and limited EY health support contributed to many parents' negative emotional wellbeing.
- Parents wanted access to local, community EY sessions that their children enjoyed and helped aid development, with a variety of times to fit in daily routines such as naps.



- Weekend sessions were also requested to enable working parents & their children to attend and share family experiences.

From preliminary paper surveys, some families were willing to pay a small cost and sited pay per session was preferable than block payments.

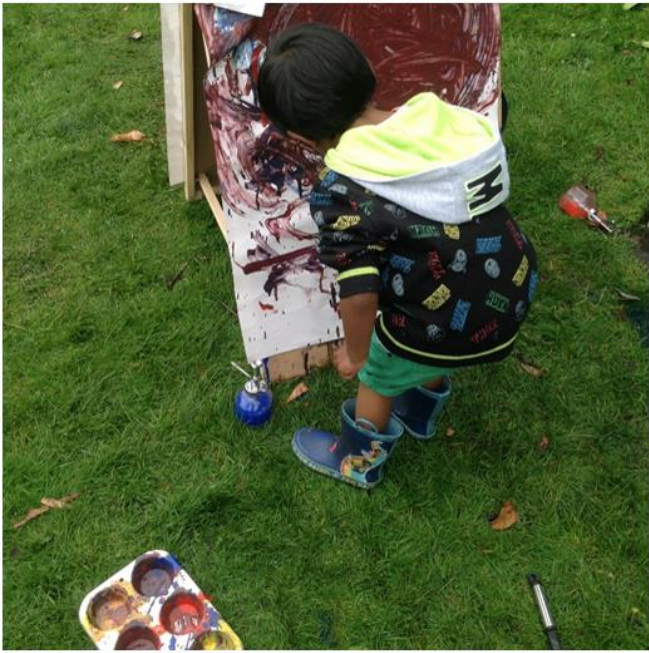
An online survey was also used to gain parental voice. The full analysis of this survey is in the Appendix in this report.

Key findings from the online survey support findings from sessions and include:

- Children's socialisation skills were recorded as being impacted the most.
- Parents listed feelings of isolation during the epidemic period, though many also saw it as a valued time to bond.
- Many parents expressed interest for EY health support with breast feeding, responsive bottle feeding, behaviour and developing milestones as their top 4 answers. In person support was also the top response.
- Movement, art & craft and messy play were the top 3 answers for EY sessions
- Parents highlighted weekday mornings closely followed by weekends for session times
- Libraries and community centres were the most popular locations for EY activities
- Almost half of the respondents said they would pay up to £3 for sessions.

It is hoped that findings from this project will help shape future work addressing areas key areas of concern for EY families.







2. Engagement methodology with families

Feedback and experiences have been captured through a variety of methods including

- Face to face conversations
- Family handprint stations
- Post-it comments
- Photography
- Film
- Observations
- Adults: Initial feedback forms (Dec 2021)
- Adults: Preliminary paper survey (Jan/ Feb 22)
- Adults: Online survey (Live from March 22- June 22)

3. Delivery of sessions & child led play

Sessions were held in a variety of locations- including libraries, community centres and 2 education settings. Although never exclusive, several sessions were also aimed at targeted families including those with EY SEND children, families with ESOL, and those supported by specific family charities.

Running alongside the sessions was an initial paper consultation survey which later moved online.

Attendees also received Create Wonder Play tote bags containing targeted family information including health & social care, dental kits, library and literacy materials, a small book, bubbles and drawing pad. Bags also contained a LFT kits & Covid vaccination information.

The majority of Create Wonder Play sessions were led by a creative arts practitioner with an extensive background in primary education, child led play.

For our preliminary working group, music and rhyme sessions were also led by an EY music practitioner.



For the SEND session, Bolton Library and Museum staff held a quiet drop light room for families.

All sessions enabled children to interact in their own way, using a range of fine and gross motor skills, listening and communication skills, creating and learning from their experience.

Create Wonder Play sessions varied depending on the venue site, resources and target audience.

These were:

- Messy, and creative, arty play
- Baby light sensations

Total number of sessions:31

Total number of venues: 16

Estimated attendance: 600

The busiest sessions were at Farnworth, Little Lever & Central Junior Library. Weekend sessions were also very popular at Central. Up to 70 people attended each event.

Feedback regarding child led creative play sessions:

We've had an overwhelming response at some sessions- especially for those families who can't afford going to paid experiences. Children and adults have really enjoyed doing something different, experiencing something new and socialising with others in a community setting.

Adults appreciated getting out of the house and meeting others in their local area, especially in our earlier sessions when there were many restrictions.

A number of families regularly attended sessions and from these staff have noted the impact regular attendance can have. Children grow in confidence -from being shy, lacking eye contact and staying close to their adult, to smiling, running into sessions, independently playing without an adult, engaging with other children and new people.

"These sessions being in the community and accessible is so important for my young child who hasn't experienced anything like this before"



“Social skills have affected my little one. It’s lovely to get out to all these activities once again. Thank you for putting the events on”

“More we can have in the local area the better opportunity to go out on a Saturday would be a massive difference to us as a family”

4. Special Education Needs & Diversity

For EY SEND families we talked to, lockdown and the restrictions meant delayed diagnosis of specific needs massively individual support. Not being able to leave house nor being with loved ones confused and frustrated children and added to child and parental anxiety.

Parents appreciated SEND sessions solely for their children, where numbers were kept low, an individual approach taken, and their children’s needs valued.

Delayed a lot of processes covid hit in the middle of diagnosis so hard to wait for further meetings and assessments”

“SEND sessions one bus route safe place to come and be quiet”







4. Children's voice- creativity and child led play

"The foam was my favourite it was like snow"

"I'm making Chapattis"

"The blue jelly feels satisfying and the foam is so cool"

"My feet feel feathery soft playing in the talc section"

"I've got bubbles! I've got green bubbles- what have you got? " Blue bubbles" "What colour does that make?" "Purple bubbles!!"

Given the heavy restrictions young families have endured, the importance of play has been even more crucial for development and wellbeing of young children. Delays in building bonds and shared experiences due to limited social bubbles, locked playgrounds, cancelled playgroups and closed nurseries have limited children's encounters with others.

Social interactions, self-expression, collective imagination & the expansion of gross & fine motor skills bring about the development of self through the play.

For many children, the Create Wonder Play sessions were the first public social events they had attended.

There was a real sense of occasion at many sessions and a feeling of joy and excitement where children explored different activities. Many parents said that they would try these new activities at home.

Although some children were slow to participate at first, they loved the opportunity to touch, feel and smell new & different sensations. They loved being able to create & make items that expressed their artistic selves.

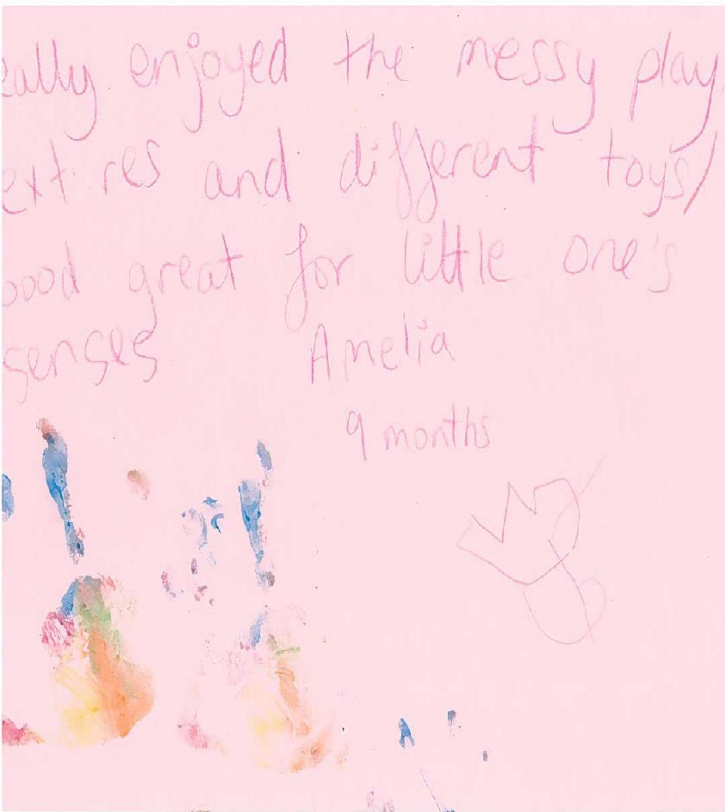


We loved making a swirling snowstorm'

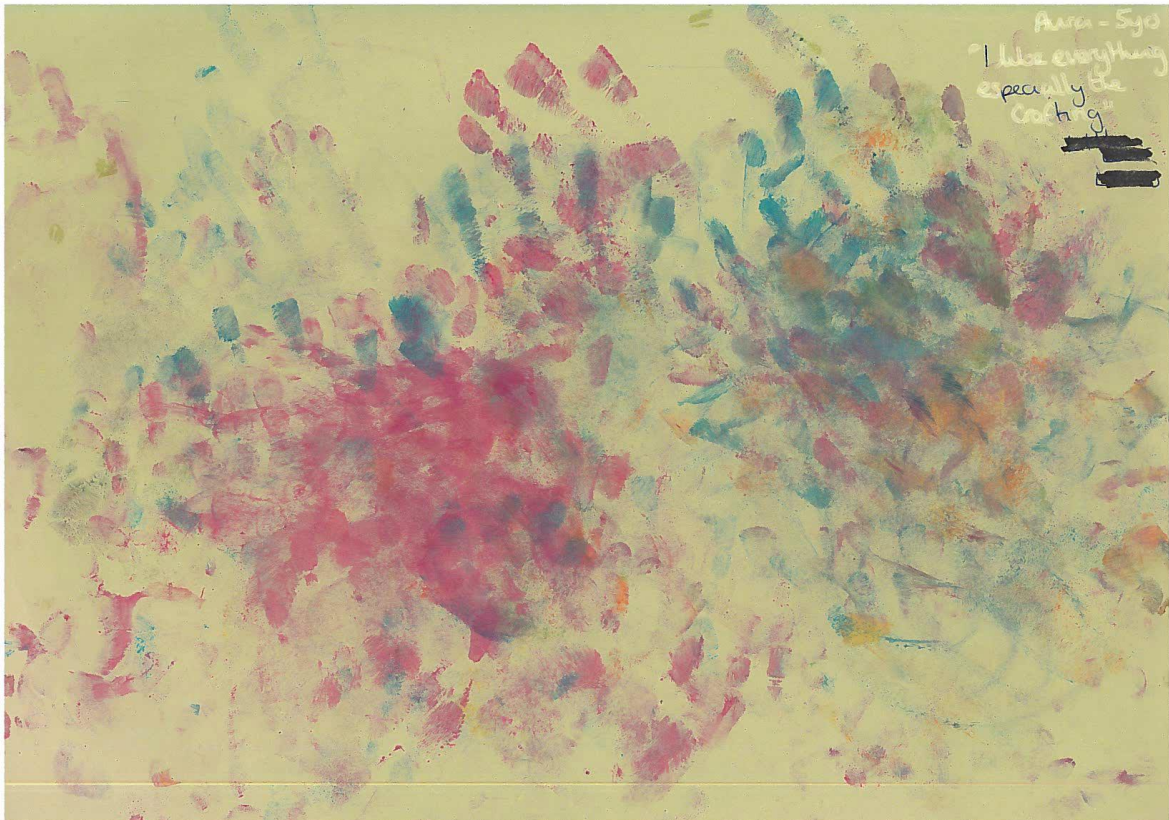
Oliver enjoyed the ball pit and the lights, jingle bells and the bubbles'



'I loved playing with the foam.
I also loved the arts and craft'



'Really enjoyed the messy play, textures and different toys/ food- great for little ones.'



'I loved everything – especially the crafting'



'We enjoyed making the forest, messy play, the story and bubbles. Thank you!'



5. Parental consultation findings

Common themes of concerns:

- Child social and emotional development through having limited life experiences and interaction with others.
- Children's speech, language and communication delays.
- Delays in diagnosis & support (including SEND).
- Isolation, loneliness due to lack of support for some families.
- Varying degrees of professional support- again affecting parental wellbeing & child development.

For those with little network support, or with children with special needs, effects were often felt hardest.

"He was a lockdown baby – he gets overwhelmed (with groups of people) and doesn't speak. The oldest is fine but the youngest mumbles with baby talk – he makes noises but not words. He is booked in for the speech therapy. I am worried to be honest. He shows me (what he wants) but doesn't really talk"

" he doesn't like big groups of people...."

"..my eldest child has been quite anxious and it has hindered her social skills. My youngest has not been able to attend baby groups"

"Social interaction affected, longer to become familiar and comfortable with new people"

"Born Feb 2020 into a shielding family meant that the child saw approximately 10 people for the first 12 months of her life.."

"The children born into 'lockdown' need opportunities to learn to socialise..."

"Covid affected us with a few ways – son born in September 2020 and spent first 9 months under some form of lockdown. We had no family nearby so where isolated even though exempt for some restriction. ... our child was very unaware of other children when he went to nursery and (found it) hard to cope with. Improved a lot now but took quite a while to catch up."



It should also be noted that not all carers felt their family had been adversely affected by the pandemic, or if it had they, they had largely recovered.

Impact on parental support:

Ongoing sadness and anxiety due to:

- antenatal, perinatal, and neo-natal restrictions
- lack of post-natal support for parents.
- social distancing rules and no family support
- baby groups for communal support
- No or little child health advice

Question: How was having a child during the pandemic for you?

“Overwhelming”

“Isolation- feeling down and lonely. No activities easily accessible- stuck in a rut. Tired of being at home. Suffocating”

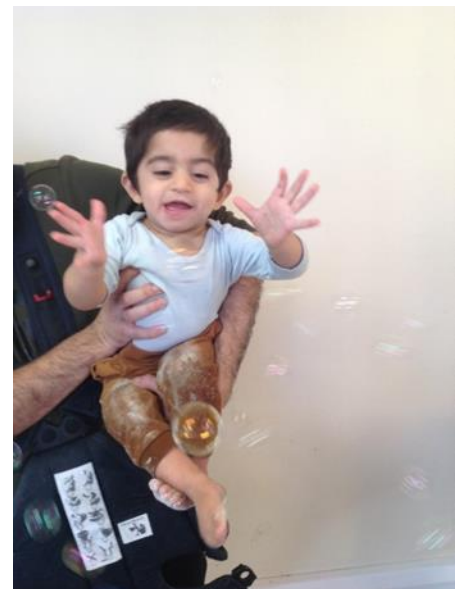
Impact due to lack of provision:

- Lack of sessions, particularly early on
- Not much on weekend for working parents
- Existing sessions are expensive and usually require having to pay for block sessions

Families requested:

Sessions at different times of the day to accommodate nap patterns

- Drop-in informal sessions
- Baby sessions
- Outdoor session
- Quiet sessions for SEND children
- Sessions in the local areas.
- Consideration for only family sessions (limiting child minder numbers)



“Today has been amazing to see so many children all playing together and have lots of fun.”

“The sessions being in the community and accessible is so important, particularly for my youngest child who hasn’t experienced anything like this before.”

“We had such an amazing time today; it really helps for social situations.”

“It’s the first time we have been to a session like this. It’s good to see the children doing sessions like these”

“It’s been hard not having the interaction with other children but now play session are becoming more available and local, it’s nice to see him slowly coming out of his shell”

“Social skills have affected my little one. It’s lovely to get out to all these activities once again. Thank you for putting the events on”

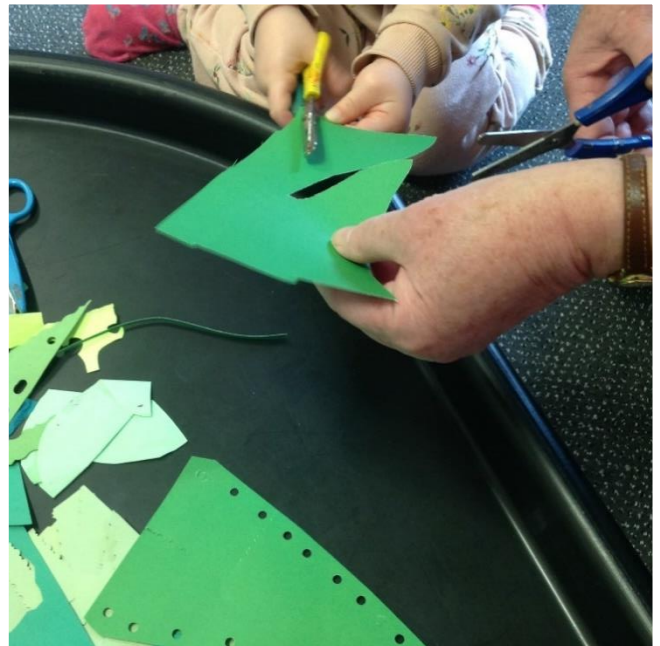
“..he had fun .. he hasn’t seen so many children unless at the park where there are older children. Today they are a similar age as him he is so happy” can you do this again?”

“Missed out of education, was quite withdrawn good for other adults needs to see new faces and need child led activities”

From EY partners and educational settings:

- Speech and language.
- Children needing reassurance (social and emotional health)
- Reserved when meeting new people.
- Children not knowing boundaries and impacting parental wellbeing and mental health issues for all family members.
- Children in social and physical bubbles- only experiencing a small part of the school.
- School community not mixing.
- Not allowing parents into the school or holding collective EY to form school community bonds
- Dental hygiene.





6. Programme challenges

Covid and the Delta and Omicron variants overshadowed the project, leading to several delays which impacted audience number reach.

Restrictions and the risk of viral spreading meant care had to be taken to reduce possible infection risk. Wider promotion of the winter and early spring sessions was limited to reduce attendance numbers.

Some target audiences were even harder to reach due to hesitancy mixing with others. Many partner organisations were also heavily stretched due to heavy workloads – including covering staff sickness, self-isolation rules and restructures.

7. Partnerships and added value.

The project has enabled EY services to work together and further develop relationships with partners.

It has led to reflection on future family offers through working with partners and targeting specific families including how to support our staff understand and support EY principles.

EY partner involvement:

- Start Well
- Healthy Start Team
- EY Charities
- Bolton Together
- St James Primary and Grosvenor Nursery
- Bolton at Home- Tonge UCAN& Johnson Fold community centres





8. Next steps

Findings from the project will help:

- plan different types of sessions for the needs of all EY children and families and address the many issues surrounding the impact Covid has had on young children's development.
- work with partners, services and charities to support greater EY programs in the borough- including targeted work to reach underserved communities.
- reflect on training needs of our staff to support the needs of families.
- support proposals for future programs targeting EY provision.

9. Summary

Create Wonder Play has enabled EY creative experiences and conversations with young families around their needs post Covid restrictions. For many children, these have been important events where they have engaged with large groups and with others their age.

It has strengthened relationships with other services, agencies & charities in working together supporting Bolton families with our collective EY programs.

Through conversations, we have identified that many families are still adjusting to life post restrictions with children needing and on long waiting lists for support with social skills, emotional development and speech & language. Some parents are also coming to terms emotionally with the past 2 years. Many parents are also wanting extra health advice to support their children's developmental needs.

Children and families have also expressed their delight at sessions with many parents stating how important provisions in local settings are.

Create Wonder Play sessions have also allowed us to further promote libraries as valuable community assets.

With this important feedback, we hope to further enhance our own Bolton Library and Museum Early Year's offer to create exciting and vibrant opportunities for Bolton children -supporting their developmental needs through our exciting and enhancing life outcomes.



Appendix 1:

Sessions comments:

Affects of lockdown, isolation, restrictions on child development:

“Not being able to socialise with their friends”

“Social anxiety – 3 year old doesn’t like to go out without parents. Less opportunity to meet others – no play dates and have varied interaction. Delayed development. Walking / Speech delay.”

“Younger child – fewer activities to go to means he is more attached to me”

“Yes, the first lockdown was 2 days after my little ones 1st Birthday, so the majority of his life has been effected by covid. We missed out on all the groups and sessions we would have gone to if covid was not an issue”

“Children did feel isolated, they went into their shell.”

“Yes, definitely youngest still building confidence with groups and not used to other children, speech delayed compared to her older sister. 4y really struggles with anxiety [word I can’t read] with hand washing + Scared of relatives catching “The little bug”. 4 yo struggled emotionally when starting school and has needed extra support.”

“Not able to go to any group. Now we are going to groups baby’s confidence has grown and trying new skills”

“..My eldest child has been quite anxious, and it has hindered her social skills. My youngest has not been able to attend baby groups.”

“... After the 1st lockdown it was hard for her to meet new people as she’s only seen mum + dad she was a bit scared.”

“Yes – Particularly my younger child. I feel her speech was delayed and also she was unable to attend child group sessions so her behaviour in concentrating on certain tasks is not always great.”

“Social interaction affected. Longer to become familiar and comfortable with new people.”

“Feel that she is getting words wrong, 1st part of words not correct but maybe she is slightly deaf”

“I have a son who is 4 years of age, and a daughter who is 2 years old she was born just before the pandemic, so she hasn’t been able to see and experience as much as her brother has, which has set her back a bit due to no play groups”



“My son was born in the pandemic. Lack of interaction with both adults and children his age has had a impact on his development”

“Speech and language delays, immune systems are very low, dental hygiene is poor...”

“There just isn’t anything to do with a newborn. When I had my 4 year old I went to a group every day, busy babies, new mums group. But the council offer nothing now unless referred by hV”

“Older child – More emotional and at times anxious. Baby – Forming relationships with others, not wanting to be away from me. Speech development + language skills – masks hindered. + No school etc.”

“Extremely shy around adults + other children”

“Impact from covid – children are very (hesitant), especially meeting new people and different environments”

“We’re really found that its impacted everything including social & emotional behaviour”.

“Impact from covid – children are very (hesitant), especially meeting new people and different environments”

“...building confidence with other children and other people”

“I have a son who is 4 years of age, and a daughter who is 2 years old she was born just before the pandemic, so she hasn’t been able to see and experience as much as her brother has, which has set her back a bit due to no play groups”

“Missed out of education, was quite withdrawn good for other adults needs to see new faces and need child led activities”

“He was shielding for 2 years; all of his interactions were on facetime came on over a month ago and had to get on with it”

“Speech and language are a bit slower”

She was bad at first at first but we started going to a youth club with (early years) messy play and it really made a difference

“V. slow to verbalise needs beyond ‘baby talk’ Seems to have caught up since easing of restrictions and engaging in more social activities.”

“My little one sometimes cry [sic] when we meet with other people, she is quite shy”

“I feel she struggles with understanding her emotions + Often has outbursts of rage”



“She has missed out on playgroups and other social activities that my older children could do.”

“No groups open.”

“Born Feb 2020 = into a shielding family meant the child saw approx. 10 people for first 12 months of her life. Interaction with children her own age only just starting”

“The first 6 months he was in lockdown so he was very clingy and took a long time to be comfortable with people other than my husband and myself.”

“My little girl was born at the beginning of covidpostnatal depression, and all classes had to stop I felt alone and vulnerable, the class today has been so good for social and confidence”

“The pandemic has been hard, especially working from home and looking after toddler. We worry about his social skills; he is scared of other children as he isn’t used to seeing them”

“It’s been hard not having the interaction with other children but now play sessions are becoming more available and local, it’s nice to see him slowly coming out of his shell”

“Social skills has affected my little one. It’s lovely to get out to all these activities once again. Thank you for putting the events on”

“As a nana the lockdown was so hard not being able to see my first grandchild was very heart breaking and affected everything socially and mentally”

“During the pandemic it was difficult socialising with others as never got the chance except with sister really felt was missing out”

“He was shielding for 2 years; all of his interactions were on facetime came on over a month ago and had to get on with it”

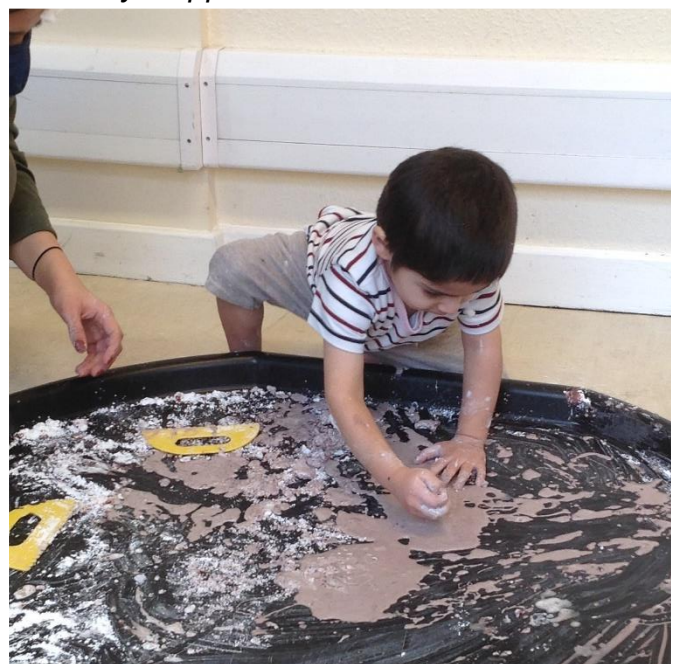
‘was shy and quiet after 3 months of no interaction’

It was very hard, I didn’t go out , tried to go to things but they stopped... it was hard”

“My son was born in the pandemic. Lack of interaction with both adults and children his age has had an impact on his development”

“She was 2 (when it started) .. (we were lucky we had a garden so did lots of things there) She was nervous when we went back to things. She’s done alright but I know other people who have struggled.”

“He was a lockdown baby – he gets overwhelmed (with groups of people) and doesn’t speak. The oldest is fine but the youngest mumbles with baby talk – he makes noises but not words. He is booked in for the speech



therapy. I am worried to be honest. He shows me (what he wants) but doesn't really talk."

"She was 2 (when it started) .. (we were lucky we had a garden so did lots of things there) She was nervous when we went back to thing. She's done alright but I know other people who have struggled"

"Behaviours – children have found it hard to adjust to boundaries and parents have found it hard too"

"...there are a lot of child minders here with lots of children. My child doesn't like loads of people "

"Behaviour-1st lockdown-home schooling was difficult with children"

"Building confidence with other children and other people"

"Born at lockdown-it was sad- no groups we jumped at 1st opportunity to go and do things"

"In the lockdown weren't able to visit and go to places or other groups. Sometimes they just want to stay at home and watch tv (not wanting to go school or do anything)"

"She was 2 (when it started) .. (we were lucky we had a garden so did lots of things there) She was nervous when we went back to thing. She's done alright but I know other people who have struggled."

"My eldest struggled – wasn't with any other children. .. behind in speech".

"During the pandemic it was difficult socialising with others as never got the chance except with sister really felt was missing out"

"It was very hard, I didn't go out , tried to go to things but they stopped... it was hard"



Effects of lockdown, isolation, restrictions on parents, carers & families:

“Overwhelming”

“Isolation – feeling down + Lonely. No activities easily accessible – stuck in a rut. Tired of being at home. Suffocating”

“Less social interaction with other parents”

“I moved to Bolton from the West Midlands when I married my partner. I wanted to be able to make friends by attending groups with my son and this has not happened as we couldn’t attend groups.”

“Impact on us has made me a lot more anxious we have no health visitor clinics open, and the GPS would not see then apart from at 6 weeks review so often felt worried and just probably need a bit of reassurance.”

“Was stressful”

“It was very difficult; we were socially isolated and couldn’t see our sources of support as they were isolating. Developed social anxiety and found returning back to seeing people hard also. Definitely still more anxious. Data [sic] had to return to work to care for youngest as usual support not available so lot of anxiety about return to work.”

“Not having family around., No help or advice. Mental health affected.”

“It has been hard to do the same thing everyday with no support”

“I found it difficult not being able to take my child to classes / groups in order to aid her development + concentration and I found myself worrying a lot that she would be behind.”

“Lack of postnatal appointments. No contact from health visitor.”

“First of our friendship circles to have children, so we’ve been quite secluded” – Reported reduced mental health, and feelings of isolation

“In complete lockdown, only able to see at end of drive left me crying. When I could see them, being able to cuddle + talk to them help”

“When I was pregnant, it was lonely not being able to see friends / family”

“Quite isolating”

“For a mother with two children it’s so difficult, my older daughter wanna play all the time with her



friends, and I have to say no because of covid” – reported feelings of isolation

“Nobody to speak to”

“No routine, no reason to leave the house. Nothing to look forward to. No opportunity to learn how to entertain / develop with a baby. Not got other mums around you who are going through the same”

“When lockdowns were on it was extremely tough not seeing relatives – Especially when bubble rules applied etc. No in person weighing clinics + Breast feeding support”

“First time parent and limit support network”

“Gave up work so had more time with the children. Stressful juggling a toddler and homeschooling my 6 year old”

“I suffer with mental health (Depression + Anxiety) and it’s made me worse with anxiety”

“With my elder child I got to go to lots of groups + Made lots of friends due to lockdown this wasn’t possible with my younger child.”

“Feeling low due to isolation from friends / peers”

“Not able to meet new mums”

“First of our friendship circles to have children, so we’ve been quite secluded” – Reported reduced mental health, and feelings of isolation

“In complete lockdown, only able to see at end of drive left me crying. When I could see them, being able to cuddle + talk to them help”

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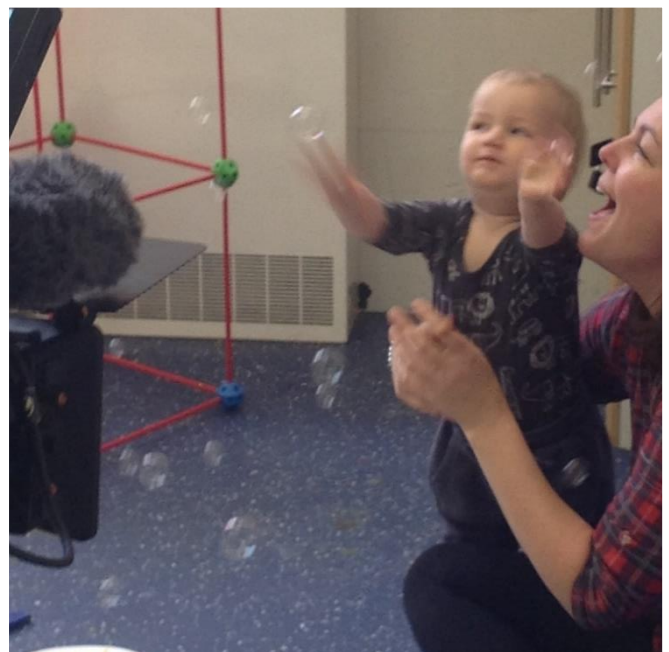
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“First time parent and limit support network”



“Gave up work so had more time with the children. Stressful juggling a toddler and home schooling my 6 year old”

“The children born into lockdown need opportunities to learn to socialise. Opportunities for Grandparents would be helpful to get as would contacts and childminding tips – the rules have changed so much since we were parents of young children.”

“I suffer with mental health (Depression + Anxiety) and it’s made me worse with anxiety”

“With my elder child I got to go to lots of groups + Made lots of friends due to lockdown this wasn’t possible with my younger child.”

“Feeling low due to isolation from friends / peers”

“Not able to meet new mums”

“Having a pregnancy during lockdown was tough. Going to scans and appointments along was hard. The time to bond after was good.”

“Impact from covid – children are very (hesitant), especially meeting new people and different environments”

“Behaviours – children have found it hard to adjust to boundaries and parents have found it hard too”

“Teenagers are struggling in the with mental health, self-harming, lonely, struggling to form new relationships”

“Born at lockdown-it was sad- no groups we jumped at 1st opportunity to go and do things”

Impact for SEND families:

“Delayed a lot of processes covid hit in the middle of diagnosis so hard to wait for further meetings and assessments”

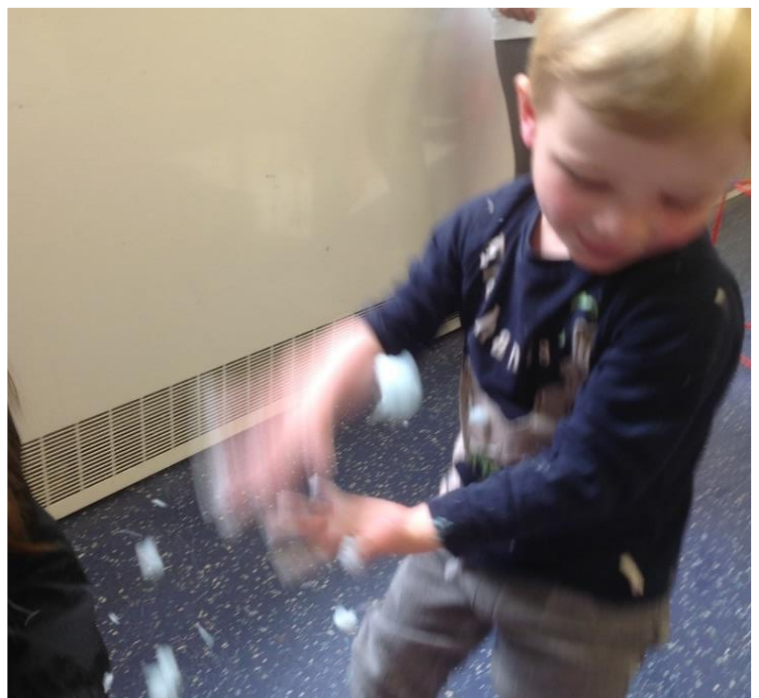
“He became quite behind with his speech and language”

“SEND sessions one bus route safe place to come and be quiet”

“First NO access and now waiting”

“Covid delayed milestones”

“Not achieving vital growth ... access to speech and language”



Session comments:

“Saturdays at 10am”

“Sunday morning / afternoon”

“Open ended, child led activities where they can fully engage”

“I think this is a fantastic idea for more groups to happen at Harwood Library. We loved the Baby Sensory session; he loved the Ball pit”

“Thank you for organising this session. It is quite difficult to find anything for my little one. We really enjoyed our time here.”

“Today has been amazing to see so many children together and have lots of fun”

“These sessions being in the community and accessible is so important for my young child who hasn’t experienced any things like this before”

“We have had such an amazing time today, it really helps for social situations”

“It’s the first time we have been to a session like this. It’s good to see the children doing sessions like these”

“It’s been hard not having the interaction with other children but now play session are becoming more available and local, it’s nice to see him slowly coming out of his shell”

“Social skills have affected my little one. It’s lovely to get out to all these activities once again. Thank you for putting the events on”

“I have enjoyed making a tele scope”

“Today has been fab, missed group sessions”

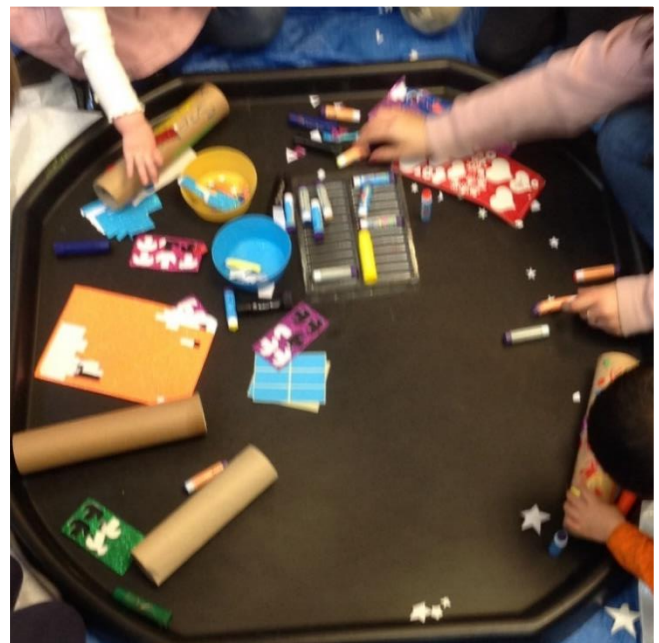
“More we can have in the local area the better opportunity to go out on a Saturday would be a massive difference to us as a family”

“Any groups just so we can mix with other children’s education not where its meant to be at social skills – only around us”

*“..he had fun .. he hasn’t seen so many children unless at the park where there are older children, today who are similar age as him he is so happy”
can you do this again?”*

“Had a lovely time. My little boy loved all the activities. It was nice to meet and see other families and children”

“Very well coming for all ages”



“Having a database of what’s on for EY families not for profit, pram friendly play groups”

“Something they could do at home, gives us ideas what we could do at home”

“Excellent museum, amazing surprise with the messy play. My 3 really enjoyed it. Will 100% be back”.

“Excellent really enjoyed being messy”

“Just hasn’t had the interactions with other children his age like my older child has”

“These has been great cutting and sticking”

“I have two little ones of two different ages”

“Great locations get good ideas to do at home, older children love it here children getting used to it who had issues with other children”

“Building confidence with other children and other people”

“Nice to meet and sit and chat with people even when baby is sleeping”

“Weekend session – creative and sensory would be great. Afternoon sessions during the week would be good, music and story sessions”

“Further provisions = lots of opportunities to mix with other children and new things, we have also met the library which has been brilliant and helpful language and socialising. If their parents’ families and children struggling and you can see that there struggling, then show them that there is some kind of support for them”

“Thank you for a lovely session. It was lovely to see so many children enjoying themselves. All the stations were well thought out and great for developing key skills- thank you for having us!”

“He loves water”

“It’s nice to be with other people”

“Lovely how involved the parents are getting so involved”

“Great fun!”

“I must say I am engaged.”

“She enjoyed it”

“She was glad she was back, she wanted to come back”

“Thank you we had a brilliant time!”

“Thank you, we’ve had a brilliant time. Really enjoyed that- it was great”

“Thank you so much- we all had great time”







Early years cultural recovery [EYCR] Consultation analysis report

Report by Consultation & Research Team

June 2022

1. Introduction & methodology

During spring 2022, stakeholders and the general public were invited to take part in a consultation to investigate how parents and carers of young children had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of development and socialisation, and to identify any additional support required to help redress any issues raised.

Methodology

- An electronic questionnaire [appendix one] was devised to capture views, with a paper copy on request.
- The survey was promoted directly to stakeholders. It was also promoted generally via social media, featured on the 'Active consultations' page of the Council website and was sent direct to eView [our residents consultation panel].

Analysis notes

- Results are presented in the questionnaire format, with don't know type responses removed unless stated. Responses may be abbreviated and / or ranked in order of popularity.
- Total percentages may exceed 100% where multi-responses were allowed and / or when rounded. Rounding is to the nearest whole number. Base: unless otherwise stated, percentages are based on respondents to a particular question.
- Sample verbatim extracts from comments are included in the report in italics, allocated to categories where feasible. Each comment may fit into multiple categories. Unless otherwise stated, categories with five or more responses are shown.
- Data has been validated, i.e. 'other' responses moved into existing response options where appropriate, however due to their nature, many comments have been retained and coded even though a number of categories do appear to overlap with existing response options.
- Care should be taken with percentages due low bases.

2. Responses

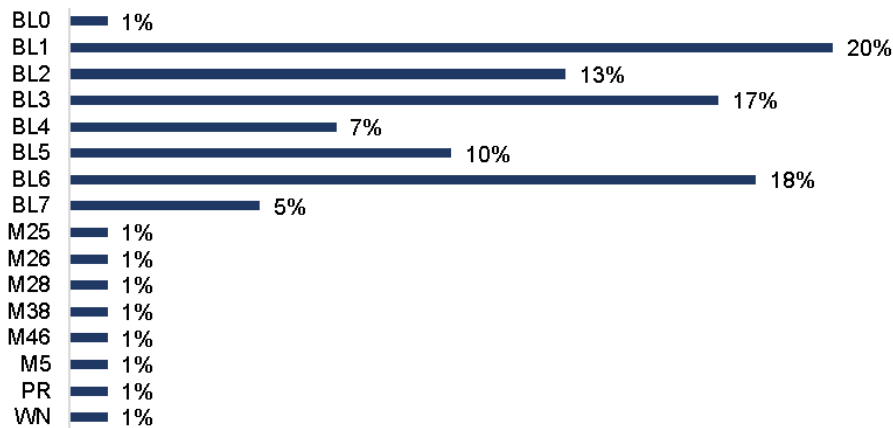
- 94 responses were received [excluding one who had no children in relevant age group].

Demographics

Q16: Please give your full postcode

- The highest percentage of respondents came from BL1 [20%], BL6 [18%] and BL3 [17%].

Q16. Postcode: % respondents EYCR survey 2022

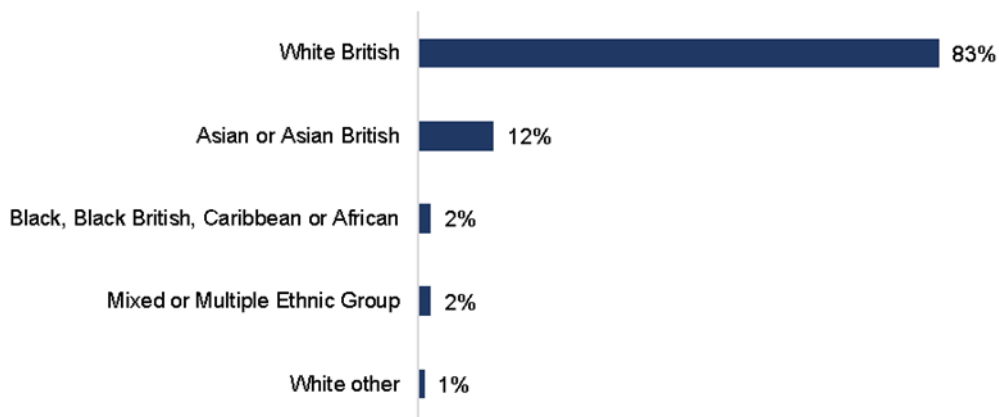


Q16. base: 84

Q17: What is your ethnic group?

- The majority [83%] of respondents were White British, 12% were Asian or Asian British, with the remainder from other ethnicity groups.

Q17. Ethnicity: % respondents EYCR survey 2022



Q17. base: 93

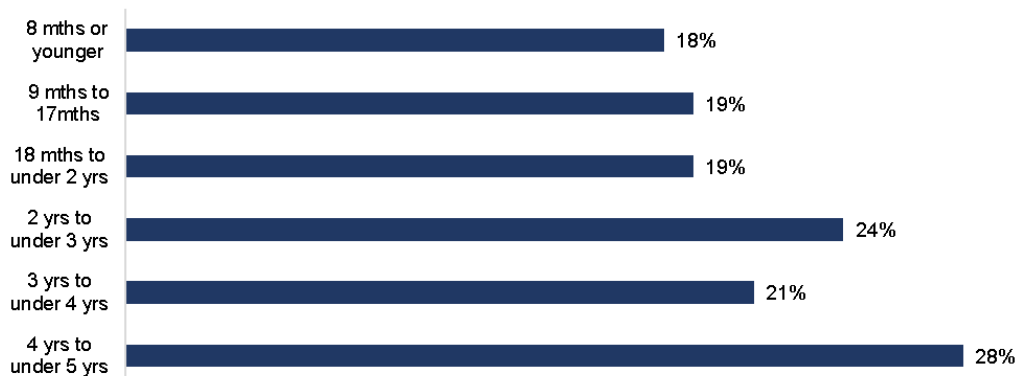
The questions

Your child

Q1: How old is your child / the child you look after?

- 73% of children were aged 2 -5 years old, with 28% of respondents caring for a four year old.
- 18% had a child aged 8 months or younger, the age range with lowest responses.

Q1. Age of child: % respondents EYCR survey 2022



Q1. base: 94

Q2: What's your connection to the child / children?

- The vast majority of respondents [94%] were the parent or carer of the child
- 5% of respondents were a grandparent, and 1% a childminder.

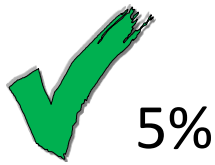
Q2. Connection to child: % respondents EYCR survey 2022



Q2. base 94

Q3: Do any of your under 5 year olds have Special Educational Needs?

- The majority [92%] of respondents said that the child did not have Special Educational Needs.
- 5% of respondents said that the child did have Special Educational Needs, and 2% weren't sure.



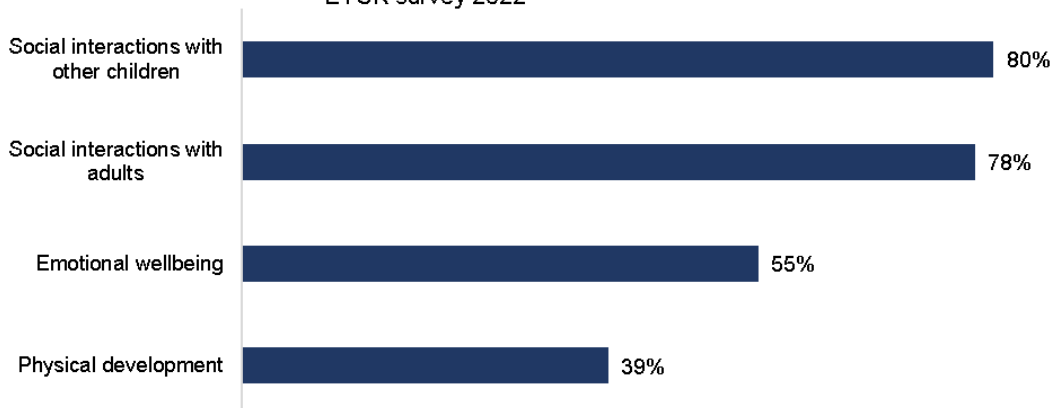
Q3. base: 92

Impact of the pandemic

Q4: How strongly do you agree / disagree that the pandemic has been challenging for your child in the following areas?

- Respondents felt that the child had suffered most in relation to social interactions with other children with 80% in agreement with this, and 50% strongly agreeing.
- 78% of respondents agreed that the child's interactions with adults had adversely affected, with 38% feeling this strongly.
- The child's emotional wellbeing had also been affected, with 55% of respondents agreeing that this was the case, although only 18% felt this strongly.
- Physical development was the factor least affected by the pandemic; only 4 in 10 respondents agreed with this with only 16% strongly agreeing.

Q4. % respondents agreeing that pandemic has been challenging for child
EYCR survey 2022



Q4. Bases: 91-94

Q5: Has the pandemic affected your child in any other ways?

Q5. Effect of pandemic on child – EYCR survey 2022		
Rank	Category	No. of respondents
1	Speech / language	12
2	Confidence / anxiety	10
3	Physical activities / environment	8
4	Social skills	7
5	Lack of support / facilities	6

Categorised comments – sample verbatim extracts

1. Speech / language

Respondents explained how the child's speech and language had been affected, because they were not mixing as much and mask wearing made it difficult for a child to pick up the way people spoke. In some case the child had caught up, but most did not say this.

- *I definitely noticed my child's speech regress as we went into the third lockdown. She stopped babbling and saying mama. Even though she clearly understood what was said to her, she stopped responding.*
- *My daughter had speech issues up until she was 18 months. All speech therapy sessions were completed over the phone which was no ideal*
- *Speech delay. As we were wearing masks that child could not read our lips.*

2. Confidence / anxiety

Children had lost or never gained confidence. Often this related to physical environment as detailed in other categories, and social anxiety, but respondents also mention fear of everyday germs and illness.

- *Confidence and independence.*
- *My child has a fear of coughing and germs.*
- *Struggles with new environments, especially when they are busy.*

3. Physical activities / environment

Some child had become frightened of playground equipment or of being outside for longer than 30 minutes. Considerable overlap in this category with confidence and anxiety.

- *Not going on a swing at a park for over a year and is now frightened to go on one.*
- *She was afraid of outside for a while during the first lockdown due to the 30 minutes only exercise.*

- *Reluctance to leave the house unless to places he knows.*
- *When she was trying to crawl she had no one to play with and learn from*

4. Social skills

As they had had little interaction outside the household, some children found it difficult to interact with and form relationships with other people.

- *My daughter was born just before the pandemic, so never got to the normal things such as swimming or soft play areas and be around children her own age.*
- *The worst bit was when nursery shut in the first lockdown - she missed out on interactions with the staff and children there ... She also couldn't see her Nanna for some time.*

5. Lack of support / facilities

For some, this was about not being able to go to playgroups etc but others felt that developmental delays were missed or that the pandemic had been poorly handled.

- *No send support, long waiting times.*
- *No playgroups or therapy available and out lockdown now huge waiting list.*
- *It is the appalling handling of the pandemic that was/is the problem. Many people need to go to jail for what they have done to us, including Bolton NHS staff and council.*
- *My son (5 years old) has suspected ASD, the traits of this haven't been noticed due to him not being in a nursery setting due to covid*

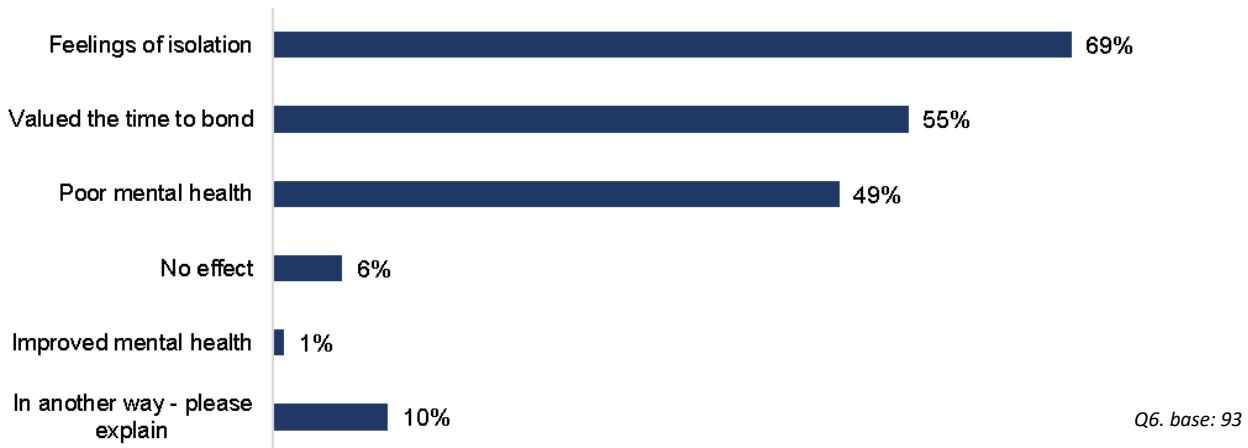
Other comments

Respondents also mentioned lack of routine, behavioural changes and bereavement “*We were one of the first families in Bolton to suffer the loss of a loved one due to covid. It was hard for us all and hard to explain to the children*”.

Q6: How has caring for a child during the pandemic affected you?

- 69% of respondents experienced feelings of isolation and 49% had poor mental health.
- However 55% valued the time to bond with the child, 6% felt the pandemic had no effect on themselves and 1% felt their mental health improved.

Q6. Effect of pandemic on caring for child - % respondents EYCR survey 2022



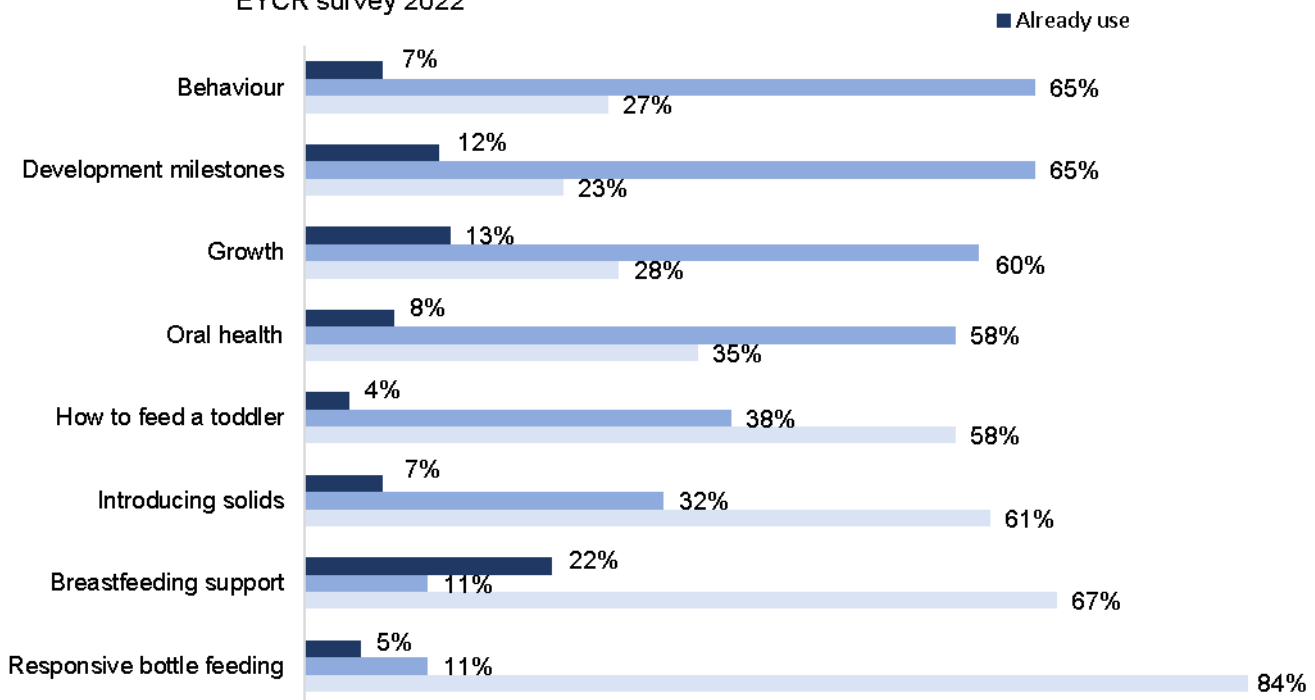
- 10% of respondents said they had been affected in other ways, although the comments often expanded on the negative effect on their mental health and feeling of isolation, such as *“missing other people and familiar interaction with family and friends”* and feeling *“, missing “baby classes and meeting other mums”* and feeling *“guilty and upset at times that children have missed out on certain experiences”*. The anxiety had left one *“unable to breastfeed”*. One grandparent had missed the opportunity to bond with the new baby, and a new mum said *“being pregnant during the pandemic was terrifying and had an impact on my mental health. I drastically reduced any social interactions to protect myself and my baby at a time where the rest of the UK returned to some form of normal. I felt lonely and like a recluse”*. Another respondent had lost trust in authority *“I no longer trust government (local or national), I no longer trust the NHS, I don’t trust the media or big tech, I no longer trust the police”*. However one respondent said *“it was emotional but overall my mental health was strong as it had to be for the children”*.

Early Years support services for babies and children under five

Q7. What Early Years health support / services are you interested in?

- Looking at those not currently using the services / support, the greatest interest was in Behaviour, and in Development milestones, with 65% of respondents interested in this support.
- There was also high interest in Growth [60%] and Oral health [58%].

Q7. Interest in health / support services: % respondents
EYCR survey 2022



Q7. Bases: 71-81

Q8. If there are any other early years support / services that you'd like, please list them here

Q8. Additional support / services required – EYCR survey 2022		
Rank	Category	No. of respondents
1	Play	7
2	Parenting	6
3=	Speech / language	5
3=	Social skills	5

Categorised comments – sample verbatim extracts

1. Play

Respondents were interested in sessions where the child could play.

- *Stay and play sessions*
- *Free play sessions*
- *Play based activities in person.*

2. Parenting

There was interest in support for parents, such as parenting groups.

- *The importance of play/ turn taking/ sharing/ having a go and how to support this*
- *Parenting groups*
- *How to actually play with my child*

3=. Speech / language

Sessions to assist with speech and language development would be welcomed.

- *Aiding with development of speech*
- *Speech and language*

3=. Social skills

Respondents wanted sessions to help the child develop social interactions skills.

- *Opportunities for interaction with other children*
- *Anything that encourages my child to interact with others without being too pushy*

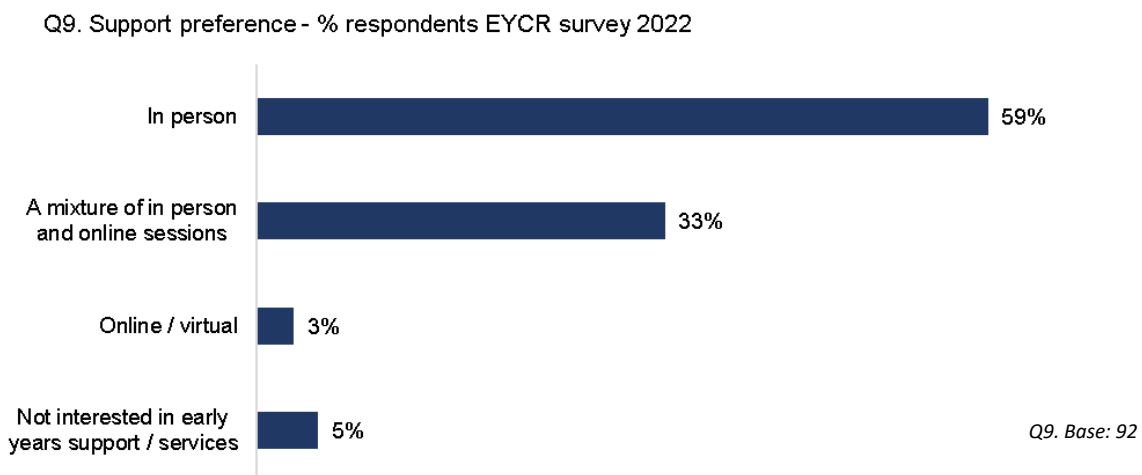
Other suggestions

Respondents also wanted the following sessions / support: SEN, creative, school ready, storey times, toilet training, sleep training, after birth support and first aid classes.

Respondents suggested that sessions should be offered during school holidays and at the weekend, to be free, run at children's centres or where car parking was provided, and felt that sessions should be promoted better so that people knew what was already on offer.

Q9. What kind of support do you prefer?

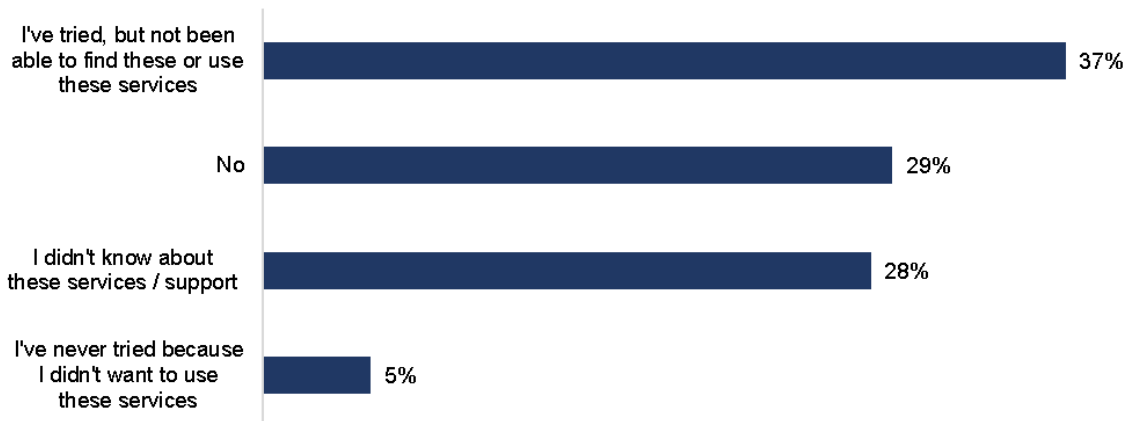
- Respondents preferred in-person sessions, with 59% choosing this. 33% were happy with a mixture of online and in person, only 3% wanted online only and 5% weren't interested in support sessions.



Q10. In the last five years, have you had any problems accessing Early Years support / services?

- 37% of respondents had had difficulty accessing services, and 28% were unaware that support / services were available.
- 29% had had no problems accessing support / services.

Q10. Any problems accessing support - % respondents EYCR survey 2022



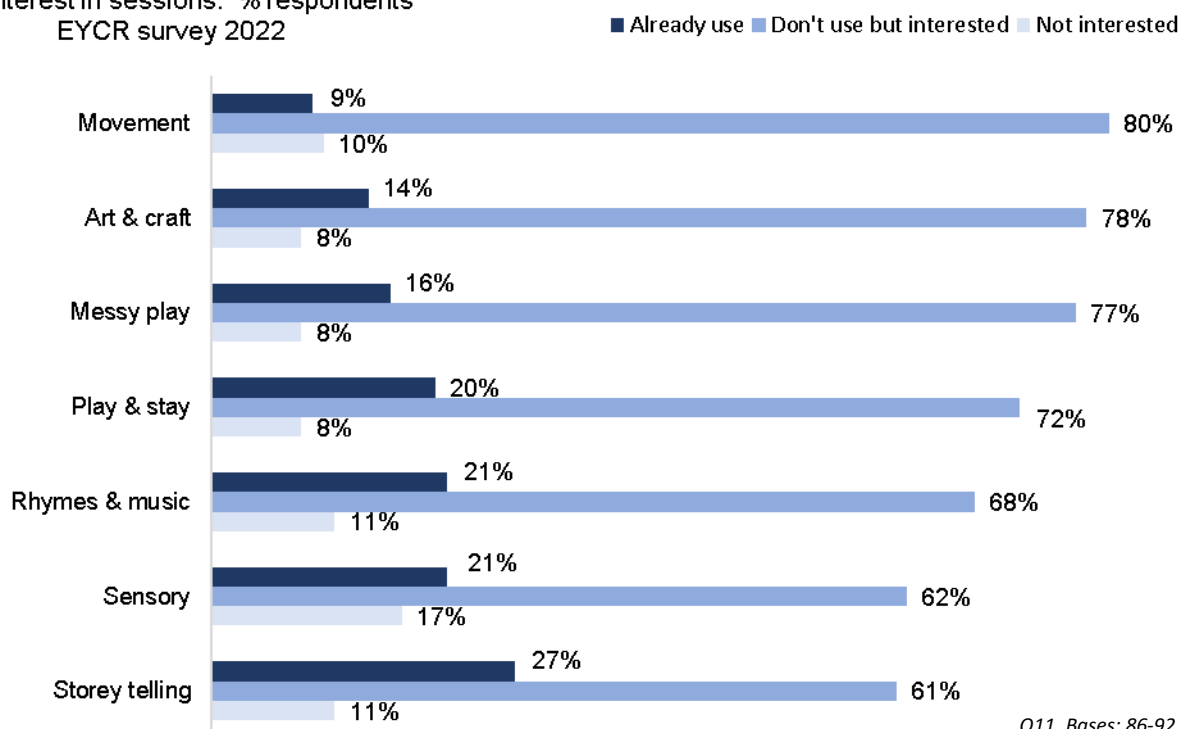
Q10. Base: 92

Baby & toddler sessions

Q11. What Early Years health support / services are you interested in?

- At least 6 out of ten respondents who didn't already take part were interested in all the sessions mentioned. The greatest interest was in Movement classes such as yoga, dance gym and sport [80%], Art & craft [78%] and Messy play [77%]

Q11. Interest in sessions: % respondents
EYCR survey 2022



Q11. Bases: 86-92

Q12. If you'd like any other type of baby & toddler sessions, please list them here

Comments – sample verbatim extracts

- Each of the following were mentioned by 3 respondents:

Signing & signing: Two of the respondents asked for “*baby sign language*”

Time / frequency of sessions: In addition to weekend session, respondents “*would love more afternoon session as most are morning*” and suggested “*arty babies to be weekly*”

- Two mentioned the following areas:

Social development as “*the pandemic affected her social skills in all areas*”

Sessions in local area: “*Not enough sessions in the area where i live and unfortunately dont have a car to drive further out*”

Outdoor sessions: “*Nature related, eg forest school*”, “*Outdoor activities*”

Parental support: “Breastfeeding class” “trained people who supported both parents and child”

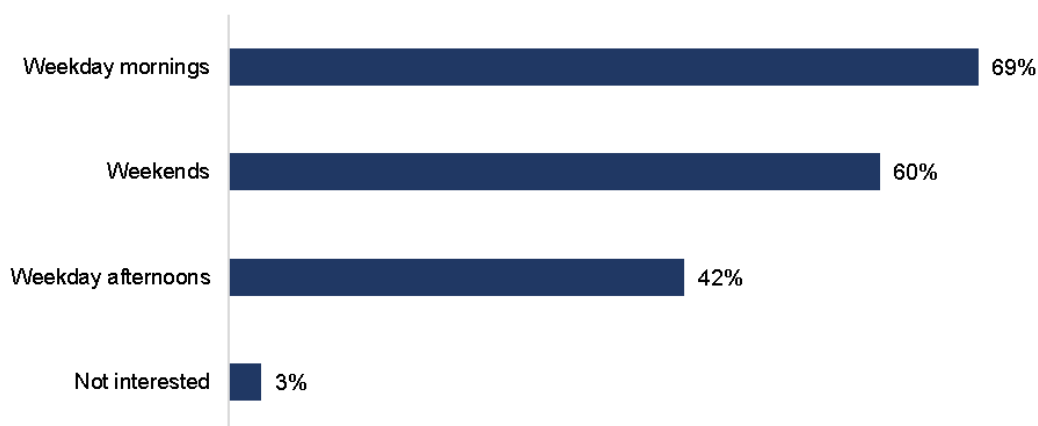
Structured sessions: “Structured play groups that focus on baby development and the EYFS”

- Respondents also mentioned: swimming “I pay for private swimming lessons but they’re very expensive”, cooking, “Sen playgroups” and “small world/ imaginative play”

Q13. When are the best times to attend sessions with your baby / toddler?

- Weekday mornings were preferred by most respondents [69%], although weekends would also be popular [60%]
- Weekday afternoons were only popular with 42% of respondents, and 3% were not interested in baby & toddler sessions.

Q13. Session times - % respondents EYCR survey 2022

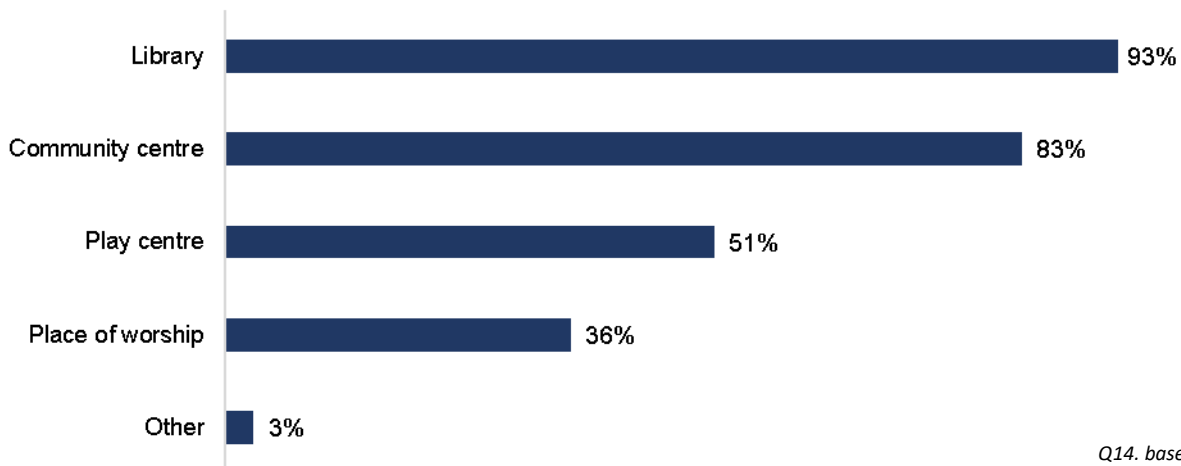


Q13. base: 93

Q14. Where would you like baby & toddler sessions to be held?

- A library was the most popular venue for baby & toddler session, with 93% of respondents selecting this. 83% would like sessions in a community centre, and just over half in a play centre.
- A place of worship was the least popular venue of those listed, with only 36% of respondents choosing this, and only 3% selected 'other'.

Q14. Venue - % respondents EYCR survey 2022



Q14. base: 89

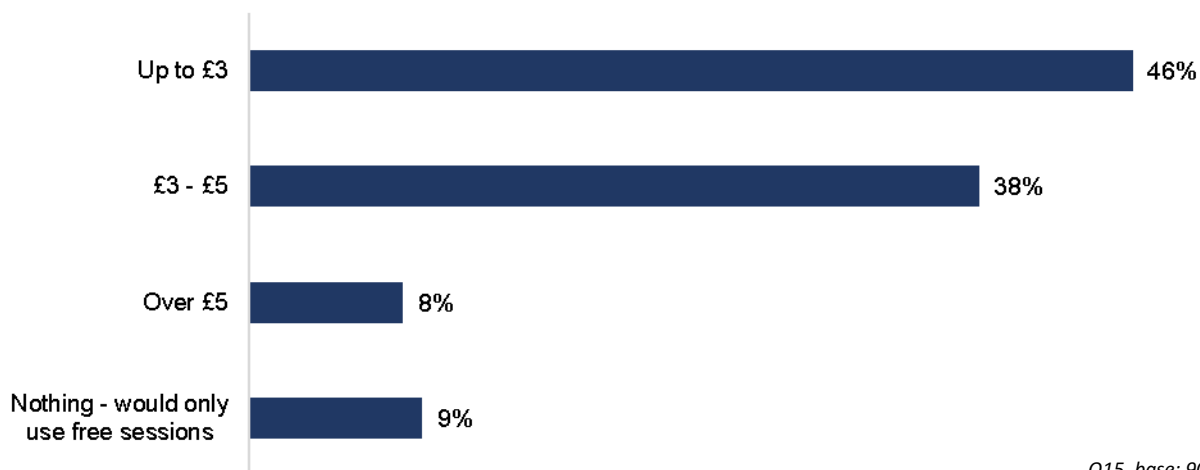
Q14a. If 'other' place, please say where

Only 3 suggestions, local schools, Alexander health centre and *“it would be great if you ran sessions at Heaton & Lostock”*.

Q15. How much would you be willing to pay for baby & toddler sessions?

- Respondents were most willing to pay up to £3, with 46% saying that. 38% would pay £3-5.
- Only 5% would be willing to pay over £5, and 9% would only attend a session if it was free.

Q15. Willing to pay - % respondents EYCR survey 2022



3. Key findings – summary

- 93 valid responses were received to a consultation carried out in spring 2022 to ascertain how early years children had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of health and social development.
- Responses were primarily received from parents / carers [94%] Q2.
- Child age ranged up to 5; with 4 year old being the largest group [28%] and 18 months or younger the smallest [18%] Q1.
- Children were most commonly affected by lack of socialisation with other children [80%] and with adults [78%]. At 39%, physical development was the least affected factor Q4.
- Turning to respondents, 69% felt isolated and 49% had experienced poor mental health, although 55% had valued the extra time they had to spend with the child Q6.
- There was interest in a number of suggested services and support, particularly Behaviour [65%] and Developmental milestones [65%] from those not currently using that support Q7.
- Awareness and accessibility of sessions and support could be improved as 37% had experienced problems accessing support and 28% weren't aware of them Q10.
- There was interest in all sessions and support that were mentioned, with Movement being the most popular option for those that didn't currently take part in this [80%] Q11.
- Respondents preferred in-person sessions [59%] Q9, with weekday mornings being the most popular time, though weekends were a close second at 60% Q13. The library was the most popular venue [93%] Q14 and the amount respondents were most willing to pay per session was up to £3 [46%] Q15.

Play and health sessions for young children - looking at the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the under five's

Bolton Libraries and Museums Service would like to understand the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on young children and their families.

As a parent, family member or childminder of a child under five, your views will help us to understand the effects of the pandemic and help us to offer baby & toddler sessions, and Early Years services / support for children under five.

If you're doing this questionnaire on a Smartphone or Tablet, you may need to use two fingers to pinch / zoom your screen to see the full page.

Your responses - keeping your data safe

If you're responding as an individual you won't be identified in any report; your responses will be anonymised and grouped together with those from other people. All questions are optional, so please feel free to skip any that you prefer not to answer.

Reports may be made public. If you are responding in an official capacity your response may be published, but no personal details will be made public.

Reports will be shared with the Bolton Vision Partnership to help aid Early Years recovery in Bolton.

Any personal data you provide will be held securely, in line with our retention schedule and privacy policy, which can be found here:

www.bolton.gov.uk/data-protection-freedom-information/privacy-notice

We use professional software called Snap Surveys to collect and process your data. As data processor, Snap Surveys Ltd. follow the UK General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR]. You can view their privacy policy here: www.snapsurveys.com/survey-software/privacy-policy-uk/

Your child

Q1 How old is your child / the child you look after? Tick more than one box if you have two or more young children

- 8 months or younger
- 9 months to 17 months
- 18 months to under 2 years
- 2 years to under 3 years
- 3 years to under 4 years
- 4 years to under 5 years
- I don't look after any young children under the age of 5 years

Q2 What's your connection to the child / children?

- Parent / Carer Grandparent Sibling Child minder Other

If 'other' please explain

Q3 Do any of your under 5 year olds have Special Educational Needs?

- Yes No Not sure

Impact of the pandemic

Q4 How strongly do you agree / disagree that the pandemic has been challenging for your child in the following areas?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Emotional wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social interactions with other children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social interactions with adults	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5 Has the pandemic affected your child in any other ways? If no, please leave blank

Q6 How has caring for a child during the pandemic affected you?

- Poor mental health Feelings of isolation In another way - please explain
 Improved mental health Valued the time to bond No effect

If 'another way' please explain

Early Years support services for babies and children under five

Q7 What Early Years health support / services are you interested in?

	Already use	Haven't used but would like to	Not interested / not applicable
Breastfeeding support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responsive bottle feeding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Introducing solids	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How to feed a toddler	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Development milestones	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Growth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oral health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 If there are any other early years support / services that you'd like, please list them here. If none, please leave blank

Q9 What kind of support do you prefer?

- In person
- Online / virtual
- A mixture of in person and online sessions
- Not interested in early years support / services

Q10 In the last five years, have you had any problems accessing Early Years support / services?

- No
- I've tried, but not been able to find these or use these services
- I've never tried because I didn't want to use these services
- I didn't know about these services / support

Baby & toddler sessions

Q11 Which baby & toddler sessions are you interested in?

	Already use	Haven't used but would like to	Not interested / not applicable
Story telling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rhymes & music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Play & stay	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Messy play	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Art & craft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sensory	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Movement - baby yoga, dance, gym, sport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12 If you'd like any other type of baby & toddler sessions, please list them here. If none, please leave blank

Q13 When are the best times to attend sessions with your baby / toddler?

- Weekday mornings
 Weekends
 Weekday afternoons
 Not interested in baby & toddler sessions

Q14 Where would you like baby & toddler sessions to be held?

- Library
 Play centre
 Community centre
 Other - please say where below
 Place of worship [church, mosque, temple etc]

If 'other' place, please say where

Q15 How much would you be willing to pay for baby & toddler sessions?

- Up to £3
 £3 - £5
 Over £5
 Nothing - I would only use free sessions

APPENDIX 3

Case Study by Demi-Leigh Chadderton

Create wonder play - Tots Session

Introduction

On Thursday 19th May 2022, Bolton Libraries and Museums services carried out a 'Create Wonder Play' session in partnership with the Community Engagement Team on the Johnson Fold estate. This was held at the local UCAN down on Johnson Fold Avenue. Utilising every bit of space we had, we transformed the UCAN into a safe haven for tots. The session was 2 hours long. Spring time for the parents to be able to attend.



During our session, we had multiple activities to do such as; creating a telescope out of foam, playing with the bubbles outside in the sun, gooey foot baths for the babies, making our favourite sweet treats out of edible dough and making the most wonderful cards using just paint and our hands, building blocks and a nature box! We had tea, coffee and juices for the parents to enjoy as their children played freely. This gave the parents the chance to socialise with the other parents. Chat about their day-to-day lives and give one another some useful tips. It was also used as an opportunity for Jacinta Frank from Bolton Libraries and museums to speak to the parents about how they coped during the Covid pandemic.

At the end of the session. Each parent/guardian were given an information tote bag to take home. This included a couple of in sensitives for the children like bubbles and some crayons. But, it also included some key information within them for the parents such as different services they can use if they are in need of help with areas like childcare, child benefits, healthy eating, dental care, covid kits and the different sessions they hold for families etc.

"She is absolutely loving this. So am I! It gives me that small break"-

The purpose/aim

The Bolton LAMS purpose and aim with the Create Wonder Play sessions are to promote growth and stimulation within this age group. As you can see on the photos aside, the women (Jacinta and Rachel) had brought with them safe materials for the children to play with. This encourages sensory engagement. Early years is a crucial stage of every Childs life. It is all about exploring and getting used to new; smells, tastes, sounds and feels. This session certainly ticked off them boxes.

Not only was the aim to occupy the children but, to also give the parents/guardians some 'them' time. A space to talk openly about any personal stories or issues. At the same time, the freedom to voice their queries and receive the answers they need.



“It has been really nice! I have always wanted him to engage with other toddlers and make connections. I’m glad he is doing.” –

Budgeting

In terms of budgeting, we did not have to spend anything other than on the juices, which cost only £1.60. Bolton LAMS were kind enough to fund the entire session for us.



“Lilly and Phillip really enjoy doing things like this. It’s good for me as well, because it’s nice to speak to the other women.”- Charlotte Downs Goulding.



Outcome

The outcome of the Create Wonder Play – tots session was great. We had 15 people in total, 5x families and 5x staff members. Six Families sent their apologies for not being able to attend. This shows the potential for future events. As well as that, we also had five staff members in total (including myself, PN Milly Stanworth and CDO Danielle Porter). Which helped to run the session smoothly.

There are future plans to have more creative play sessions funded by Bolton LAMS. In which, we can then tie in with the tots group that currently takes place at The Hope centre (Tattersall avenue) every Tuesday in partnership with Sabden Growers. This then promoted them even further. During our conversation with the parents that attended, we recognised that the majority of them did not know that it was back up and running. Some did not even know about it in the first place. Which sparked further talks about some of the parents attending with their children. Furthermore, we grasped that the parents were interested in doing more sessions down the line and when they become available.

One of the biggest outcomes for us was being able to sit down and have a chat on a one to one basis with the parents. This allowed us develop a strong relationship with those who attended on the day. It appeared that doing this allowed them to open up and increase their confidence. Which was the intention from the very beginning.

Link to the Create Wonder play session videos listed below>>>

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=336681275259881&id=100067540331079