UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC ATTITUDES TO THE EARLY YEARS

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# A Comprehensive Programme of Work

## 5 Interlinked Workstreams

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<tr>
<th>Workstream</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td><strong>Big Questions</strong></td>
<td>Public conversation on early years using a consultation methodology</td>
<td>435,141 responses</td>
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<td><strong>Observational Research</strong></td>
<td>Ethnographic research with 12 families</td>
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<td><strong>Explanatory Qualitative Research</strong></td>
<td>40 in-depth interviews with survey respondents and online community</td>
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<td><strong>Nationally Representative Face-to-Face Survey</strong></td>
<td>c.3,700 interviews inclusive of a sample boost of parents of a 0-5 year old</td>
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<td><strong>Online Survey of Parents</strong></td>
<td>1,000 interviews with parents of a 0-5 year old to explore impact of COVID-19</td>
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PARENTS IN THE UK ASPIRE FOR THEIR CHILDREN TO BE HAPPY
What is the most important factor in children growing up to be happy adults?

60% think children’s mental and physical health is the biggest contributor to their future happiness.

Base: All UK adults providing an answer (445,416)
PEOPLE OVERWHELMINGLY BELIEVE THAT A CHILD’S FUTURE IS NOT PRE-DETERMINED AT BIRTH
Which of the following is closest to your opinion of what influences how children develop from the start of pregnancy to age 5?

- Mostly the traits a child is born with (i.e. nature): 1%
- Mostly the experiences of a child in the early years (i.e. nurture): 42%
- Both nurture and nature equally: 56%
- Don’t know: 0.5%

Base: All UK adults providing an answer (436,620)
AND PARENTS RECOGNISE THAT NURTURE IS AS IMPORTANT AS NATURE

Which of the following is closest to your opinion of what influences how children develop from the start of pregnancy to age 5?

- **16%** A child’s environment (i.e. nurture)
- **72%** Both their genetic make-up and environment
- **7%** A child’s genetic make-up (i.e. nature)
- **4%** Don’t know

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)
HOWEVER
MOST PEOPLE
DO NOT
UNDERSTAND
THE SPECIFIC
IMPORTANCE
OF THE EARLY YEARS
Q

Which period of a child and young person’s life do you think is the most important for health and happiness in adulthood?

76% are not aware that the first five years are most important for health and happiness in adulthood.

24% Start of pregnancy to 5 years

Base: (436,620) UK adults
At what age do you think a child’s brain and mind is developing the fastest?

64% think that the brain develops fastest from conception to age 2.

87% think the brain develops fastest from conception to age 5.

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)
THE REALITY OF LIFE MAKES IT HARD FOR PARENTS TO PRIORITISE THEIR WELLBEING
PEOPLE AGREE THAT THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF PARENTS AND CARERS HAS A GREAT IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILD(REN)

How much do you agree or disagree with this statement?:
The mental health and wellbeing of parents and carers has a great impact on the development of their child(ren)

99% AGREE / STRONGLY AGREE

90% STRONGLY AGREE

9% TEND TO AGREE

Base: All UK adults providing an answer (438,458)
NEW PARENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO MENTION PRIORITISING PRACTICAL MATTERS OVER THEIR WELLBEING

When you were expecting your child/first child, what did you do to prepare for their arrival both practically and mentally?

Top mentions

- Prepared things for the baby e.g. cot, pram, clothes (68%)
- Prepared room/ space for baby to sleep (41%)
- Attended an antenatal class or group (29%)
- Learnt about baby care from books, the internet etc (25%)
- Planned financially (19%)
- Talked with family/friends about how they might support (19%)
- Sought advice from family/friends/other parents (18%)
- Attended health appointments (14%)
- Created a birth plan (14%)
- Moved to a new house (12%)
- Learnt about what babies can feel/think/do as they develop (11%)
- Took time to look after my own wellbeing (10%)
- Found out about facilities for parents available in my area (10%)
What long-term impact, if any, do you think the last six months will have on your mental wellbeing?

37% think the pandemic will have a negative long-term impact on their mental wellbeing.

Base: COVID-19 impact survey, October 2020, all parents of a 0-5 year old (1,000)
FEELING JUDGED BY OTHERS CAN MAKE A BAD SITUATION WORSE
As a parent, how often, if at all, do you feel judged by others?

70% of parents of 0-5s feel judged by others.

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)
PARENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO MENTION FEELING WELCOME IN PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS

Thinking about your local area, which places, if any, do you feel welcome or comfortable with your child?

Unprompted top mentions

- Playgrounds: 48%
- Parks/green spaces: 37%
- Soft play areas: 37%
- Local shops and supermarkets: 36%
- Cafes and restaurants: 31%
- Family's/friends' houses: 31%
- Doctor's surgeries: 30%
- Libraries: 28%
- Nursery/playgroup/pre-school: 28%
- Children's centres: 27%

Base: Natrep study Dec 2019 – Jan 2020, parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)
And what impact, if any, does feeling judged as a parent have on you?

48% of parents who feel judged say that it has an impact on them.

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old who feel judged (718)
IT TAKES AN EMOTIONAL TOLL …

And what impact, if any, does feeling judged as a parent have on you?

- 17% lowers self-esteem, causes self-doubt or insecurity
- 13% makes them feel inadequate or like a failure
- 10% makes them feel sad or unhappy
- 9% causes anxiety or worry
- 7% causes stress or pressure

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old who says that feeling judged has an impact on them (421)
FEAR OF FEELING JUDGED MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR PARENTS TO ASK FOR HELP OR SUPPORT FOR THEIR CHILD

What, if anything, makes it difficult for you to ask for help or support for your child?

Top mentions

- Want to avoid showing weakness: 16%
- Don't want to feel judged: 15%
- Feeling of failure: 14%
- Not knowing where to go/who to ask: 10%
- Time pressures: 9%
- Not knowing who to trust: 8%
- Not wanting to burden others: 8%
- Ability to get an appointment: 5%
- Feeling uncomfortable discussing issues: 5%
- Sense of personal responsibility: 4%

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)
FRIENDS AND FAMILY PROVIDE KEY SOURCES OF TRUSTED SUPPORT
PARENTS WANT HELP AND SUPPORT WITH A RANGE OF ISSUES TO ENSURE THEIR CHILD IS HEALTHY AND HAPPY

What things do you think parents might need support with to ensure that their child aged 0-5 is healthy and happy?

- Health: 38%
- Nutrition: 33%
- Behaviour: 24%
- Sleep: 20%

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)
PARENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO MENTION FRIENDS AND FAMILY AS TRUSTED SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Where would you turn for information you can trust about bringing up your child/children?

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019)
Overall, how many family, friends and other parents, who you can turn to for help and support if needed, do you have within the local area or within easy reach?

18% have 2 or fewer people locally to turn to for help and support.

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019).
PARENTS PERCEIVE SCHOOLS HAVE A PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN GIVING CHILDREN THE BEST CHANCE OF HEALTH AND HAPPINESS IN ADULTHOOD.
WE ASKED EVERYONE IN THE 5 BIG QUESTIONS ABOUT VIEWS ON RESPONSIBILITY

Which of these statements is closest to your opinion? It is primarily the responsibility of parents/others/shared responsibility of parents and others to give children aged 0-5 the best chance of health and happiness.

- It is primarily the responsibility of parents: 46%
- It is primarily the responsibility of others: 0.4%
- It is the shared responsibility of parents and others: 53%
- Don’t know: 0.2%

Base: All UK adults providing an answer (439,974)
PARENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEALTH AND HAPPINESS IS PURELY THEIRS

Which of these statements is closest to your opinion? It is mostly the responsibility of parents to give/everyone in society to give/parents and society are equally responsible for giving children aged 0-5 the best chance of health and happiness

**Parents of 0-5s**
- Parents: 58%
- Everyone: 20%
- Parents & society: 18%

**Other parents**
- Parents: 58%
- Everyone: 22%
- Parents & society: 16%

**Non-parents**
- Parents: 45%
- Everyone: 25%
- Parents & society: 17%

Base: All non-parents (1,414), parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019), parents of a 6-17 year old (788)
BUT INTERESTINGLY WHEN WE ASK PARENTS ABOUT SCHOOLS AND RESPONSIBILITY, THINGS EQUALISE

And do you think parents or schools should mainly be responsible for …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Category</th>
<th>Equal</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Writing Skills</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination &amp; Creativity Skills</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking &amp; Listening Skills</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Skills</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills &amp; Behaviours</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Awareness</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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Base: All parents of a 0–5 year old (1,019)

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COVID-19 HAS MADE LIFE MUCH TOUGHER FOR PARENTS OF OUR UNDER 5S
LONELINESS HAS INCREASED DURING THE PANDEMIC

How often do you feel lonely

38% reported feeling lonely before the COVID-19 pandemic

63% reported feeling lonely after the first lockdown in the UK

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019), Dec 2019 – Jan 2020
Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,000), October 2020
Overall, how comfortable or uncomfortable would you feel seeking help or support for...?
How you’re feeling.

34% FELT UNCOMFORTABLE ASKING FOR HELP WITH HOW THEY’RE FEELING, COMPARED WITH JUST 18% BEFORE THE PANDEMIC

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,019), Dec 2019 – Jan 2020
All parents of a 0-5 year old (1,000), October 2020.
MANY COMMUNITIES HAVE BECOME MORE SUPPORTIVE DURING THE PANDEMIC, ALTHOUGH THIS EXPERIENCE HAS NOT BEEN UNIVERSAL

To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local community has become more supportive over the last six months?

52% % AGREE LEAST DEPRIVED AREAS 40% OVERALL 33% % AGREE MOST DEPRIVED AREAS

Base: All parents of a 0-5 year old in England (732)
THREE KEY THEMES EMERGING FROM THIS RESEARCH

1. PROMOTE EVIDENCE
   The importance of promoting the education and dissemination of evidence on the primacy of the early years to the whole of society

2. PROVIDE SUPPORT
   The need to provide more support to parents to protect their wellbeing

3. ENCOURAGING SOCIETY
   Encouraging society as a whole to be more supportive of parents, carers and families in the early years
THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS ...