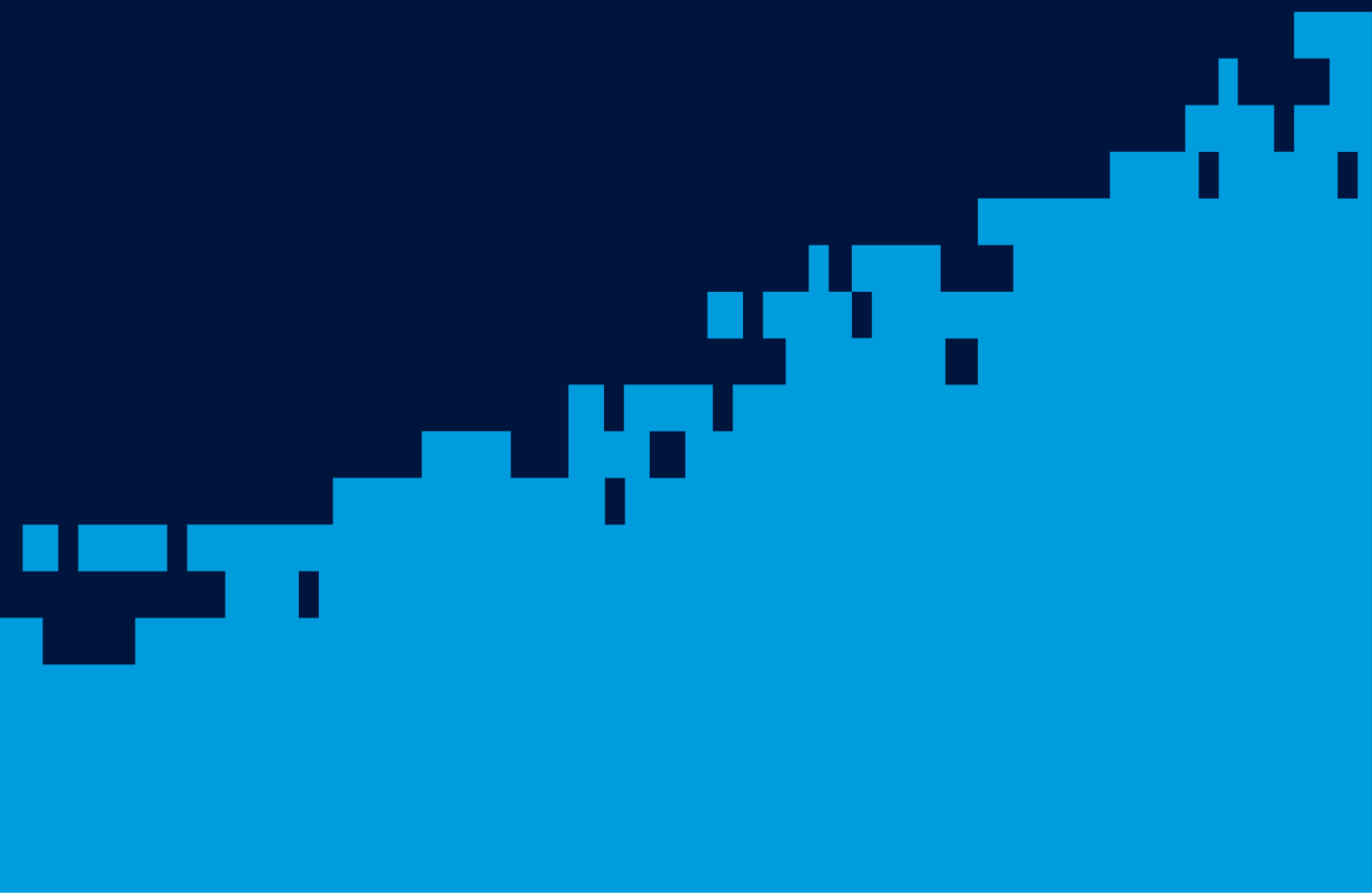


Early Years Alliance / City Families CIC

Evaluation of the ABSS / City
Family CIC Creche Service

Final Report

February 2025



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Executive summary

About the evaluation

The Early Years Alliance (EYA) commissioned RSM UK Consulting LLP (RSM) to evaluate the A Better Start Southend (ABSS)/City Family Community Interest Company (CIC) Creche service, previously known as the ABSS Creche service. This report summarises findings from the following research activities, undertaken between July and November 2024:

- An initial interview with the creche leadership team at City Family CIC.
- A desk-based review of monitoring data.
- One focus group with creche staff and one focus group with ABSS service managers.
- Three in-depth interviews with project stakeholders (ABSS service managers: Southend Association for Voluntary Services (SAVS) Engagement, Peer Support Workers for Social and Communication Needs (SCN), and Welcome to the UK).
- One focus group with parents and carers who involved with the ABSS service, SAVS Engagement as parent champions¹.
- A survey of parents and carers using creche services².

About the Creche Service

The ABSS Creche Service (now City Family Explorers) aims to eliminate obstacles for parents or carers in accessing ABSS services by providing high quality childcare, free of charge. The creche service was delivered by ABSS directly from September 2016 to November 2023. From November 2023 onwards, ABSS commissioned City Family CIC, a legacy organisation for ABSS, to deliver the creche service as City Family Explorers Creche Service. Creche sessions are located across Southend so that children are cared for near the ABSS service their parents or carers are attending. At the time of writing, the creche supported parents or carers to participate in 8 ABSS services³.

Key findings

The creche service was generally associated with positive experiences and has been impactful for service users (children attending the creche, as well as parents and carers) and ABSS services. Participants reported that the creche service was an enabler for them to access and engage with ABSS services. The support received through the creche contributed to positive self-esteem and their feelings of inclusion within the community, by allowing positive interaction and relationship building with other parents. The creche also improved access to parenting support and advice. Positive impacts of the creche were evident among children attending the service. These include improved communication skills and confidence in interacting with adults and other children. The creche also supported learning and educational outcomes. What is more, the flexibility demonstrated by the creche team supported planning and delivery of ABSS services and contributed to increased demand and uptake.

A strength of the creche service was effective communication within the creche team as well as with parents and ABSS service managers. Another strength was the role of the creche in enabling social interaction between parents. Limitations and areas for improvement included lack of low awareness about the creche service. It should be noted that the creche is not a standalone service. It is only available to participants of ABSS services, as such it is, or should be, promoted through ABSS services. Our research also indicated demand for creche services during school

¹ Two additional parent and carer focus groups were planned. However, these consultations were later cancelled due to lack of availability from parents and/or carers.

² Survey responses were lower than expected. This means that the survey findings presented in this report are indicative and cannot be generalised to represent the whole population.

³ ABSS Governance Support, Early Math Matters, Your Family, Welcome to the UK, Safe Steps (IDVA), Peer Support Workers for SCN, SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions), Work Skills.

holidays and for longer periods. Although the creche team reported limited uptake of creche services during school holidays to date. Offering longer sessions would require the service to become Ofsted registered. This is something the creche leadership team is considering.

Recommendations

Four recommendations have emerged from the evaluation of the creche service. These are:

1. Provide more tailored advice to parents and carers to help support their children's development and wellbeing.
2. Create a standardised communication plan with consistent messaging targeted to existing and potential service users.
3. Expand the availability of the creche service and length of sessions to accommodate the needs of service users. The latter would require Ofsted registration.
4. Create and maintain an inventory of resources available to children attending creche.

Introduction and approach

Introduction

The Early Years Alliance (EYA) commissioned RSM UK Consulting LLP (RSM) to evaluate the ABSS/City Family CIC Creche service, previously known as the ABSS Creche service.

The purpose of the evaluation is to examine the impact that the creche service has had on the children who attend the creche, parents/carers, ABSS services, and the wider system of early years services served by it. An evaluation that examines the impact of the creche service will support ABSS in better understanding the overall impact of the programme. It will enable City Family CIC to understand the impact of the service to date, what is working well and areas for improvement in the future. The evaluation approach was discussed and agreed with EYA. The remainder of the report summaries the findings from research activities, draws conclusions and shares recommendations based on the findings.

Evaluation approach

Our approach to the evaluation was designed to answer the following research questions:

- What difference has the provision of the ABSS creche service made to families accessing ABSS services or participating in ABSS activities?
- What difference has the ABSS creche service made to individual service providers when planning and delivering services?
- What difference has the ABSS creche service made to the system of services provided to early years children and families in Southend?
- What impact has the service had on parents/carers who use the creche?
- What impact has the service had on children who regularly attend the creche?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of how the creche operates, and what recommendations can be offered for its further development?

Research activities⁴

The research activities included:

- An initial interview with the creche leadership team at City Family CIC to gain an understanding of the anticipated impacts of the creche service and inform the development of the subsequent research tools.
- A desk-based review of the creche monitoring data to analyse the uptake and use of the creche service, inform the development of the research tools, and identify the costs associated with the service.
- One focus group with creche staff and one focus group with ABSS service managers.
- Three in-depth interviews with project stakeholders (ABSS service managers: SAVS Engagement, Peer Support Workers for SCN and Welcome to the UK) to gain in-depth strategic overview of the development of the creche service, and grant insights on how the service has changed over time and how it aims to develop as part of City Family.
- One focus group with parents and carers who are involved with SAVS Engagement as parent champions⁵.
- A survey of parents and carers using creche services to explore in more detail any themes emerging from our analysis of the ABSS creche survey data or our qualitative research.

⁴ Research tools used for data collection are presented in Annex A.

⁵ Two additional parent and carer focus group was planned. However, these consultations were later cancelled due to lack of availability from parents and/or carers.

The evaluation team also undertook several activities to promote the surveys and encourage completion. These are detailed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey promotion activities

Activity	
Printed Flyers	100 flyers with the link to the survey and the QR code were sent directly to City Family CIC to distribute to attendees of the creche service.
Sharing links and QR codes	<p>We shared survey links and QR codes with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City Family CIC communications and marketing team, to include in the City Family CIC newsletter, City Family CIC event webpages and social media posts. • The Early Years Alliance team to be shared via their social media channels and during an internal event involving parents and carers who use the creche service. • ABSS service managers (SAVS Engagement, Peer Support Workers for SCN and Welcome to the UK)

Analysis and triangulation

Qualitative data analysis

Anonymised transcripts for all participant responses to a specified sub-set of the probes which were relevant to the research questions were analysed in NVivo. A thematic analysis was undertaken of all data which involved a process of familiarisation, initial coding and theming, identified through codes (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Each set of transcripts was examined individually and then collectively.

Quantitative data analysis

In total 16 survey responses were received⁶. This included 3 invalid responses from respondents who had not used the creche service. Therefore, the analysis was based on 13 usable responses, out of a total eligible population of 38 to 41 people, equating to a 31% to 34% response rate.

Descriptive statistics were produced, pertaining to the frequency and proportion of response options (Yes/No, or agreement levels) to each question.⁷ Free-text responses were analysed using content analysis.

Limitations

Survey response rates

Despite the extensive efforts by the evaluation team, City Family CIC and ABSS to promote the survey and encourage completion, the response rate was lower than expected. Whilst we have not been able to identify a definitive reason for this, it is possibly due to the relatively small number of people who have used creche services and a lack of spare time among parents and carers.

The relatively low number of potential respondents (between 38 to 41) and subsequently low number of responses to the survey (13) means that the survey findings presented in this report are indicative and should not be generalised to represent the whole population.

⁶ From an estimated 38- 41 unique parents and/or carers who use the creche service.

⁷ Survey data and descriptive statistics have been reported as numbers rather than proportion of responses where the number of respondents were 5 or less.

Engagement with parents and carers

The evaluation team had originally sought to conduct 3 interviews/ focus groups with between 8 and 10 parents/ carers at each focus group who used or were using the creche service. These were intended to explore any differences in impact and/ or challenges experienced by parents/ carers using the creche for different purposes. The evaluation team offered flexible interview times (i.e. outside of traditional working hours) and in-house interpreters for people who indicated that they were not fluent in English. However, despite the extensive efforts of the evaluation team and City Family CIC to engage them, only 1 focus group took place with Parent Champions.

Given the difficulties involved in finding participants to attend the other two focus groups, the evaluation team offered an alternative approach. Instead of conducting two more focus groups, we offered six, 15–20-minute interviews with parents. These were also offered at flexible times with the option to receive questions in advance. The evaluation team received contact details of three parents, who indicated an interest in taking part in an interview. However, none of these interviews went ahead, as the parents subsequently declined to take part, or did not respond to the evaluation team's attempts to contact them.

About the creche service

Background to the Creche Service

The ABSS Creche Service (now City Family Explorers) aims to eliminate obstacles for parents or carers in accessing ABSS services in Southend by providing high quality childcare, free of charge. The creche allows parents/carers to focus on and fully participate in projects and activities where they can develop their own skills and knowledge or carry out the role of Parent Champion, while their children are being cared for by skilled childcare workers in the same location.

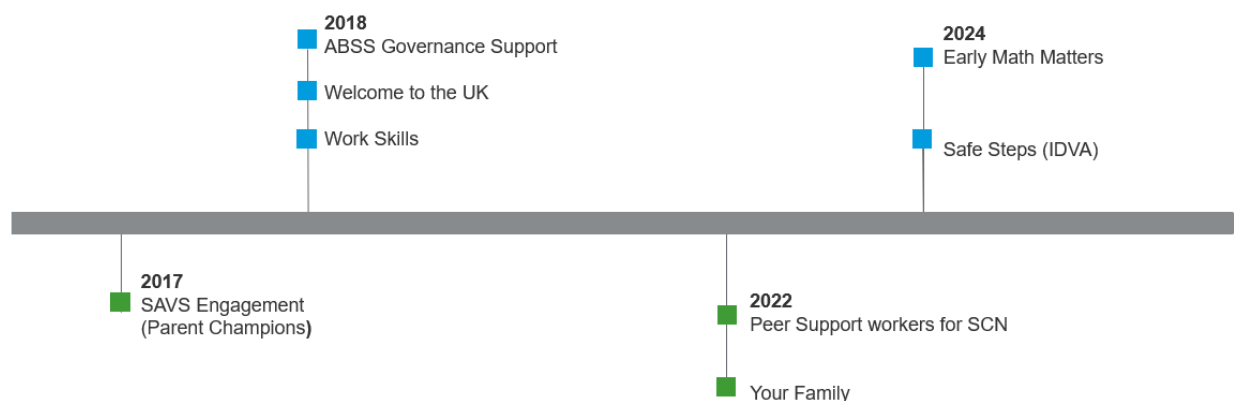
Table 2 shows expenditure on the creche service by financial year from 2017 to 2024. Annual expenditure ranged from £57k in 2018/2019 to £120k in 2022/2023. 2022/23 was also the year in which the largest number of children were supported (see Table 4). However, it should be noted that monitoring data is only available from 2022 onwards. With 228 creche sessions in 2022 (Table 3. Number of creche sessions per year), the average cost of a creche session was £525. This fell to £278 in 2023. This is likely due to the decrease in the number of parents and children supported during that time across a similar number of sessions, making each session relatively more expensive. Further analysis of the average costs of the creche service is hindered by the lack of monitoring data before 2022. Estimating how the costs per child supported or the average cost of the creche service changed over time is therefore difficult to analyse.

Table 2. Creche service expenditure by financial year from 2017 to 2024

Financial Year	Expenditure
2017 – 18	£118,341.07
2018 – 19	£57,767.02
2019 – 20	£91,345.56
2020 – 21	£77,453.65
2021 – 22	£101,084.33
2022 – 23	£119,808.24
2023 – 24	£73,418.59
Total	£639,218.46

The creche service was delivered by ABSS directly from September 2016 to November 2023. From November 2023, onwards, ABSS commissioned City Family CIC, a legacy organisation for ABSS, to deliver the creche service as City Family Explorers Creche Service. As part of City Family CIC, the creche team is based in the Family Hub, a physical space in the SAVS building. The creche team travels across Southend to support ABSS service delivery. They provide creche sessions on the same premises, but in a separate room to ABSS events. Currently, the creche supports parents or carers to participate in several ABSS services. These are displayed on the next page.

Figure 1. Timeline of services supported by the creche



Structure of the Creche Team

The creche service is delivered by a small team of Early Years Practitioners. It consists of five practitioners, with three permanent employees supported by two bank staff. The creche leadership team is composed of a Deputy Manager with responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the service and a Senior Manager overseeing the strategic direction of the creche.

All of the creche team hold a Level 3 or higher qualification in Early Years. They regularly take part in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) including working with children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); baby room practice and attachment; Solihull training; Domestic Abuse awareness; as well as keeping up to date with statutory training such as Safeguarding, PREVENT and Paediatric First Aid.

Planning and delivery of the Creche Service

The Deputy Manager plans creche sessions in coordination with ABSS service managers. When a creche session is required to support an ABSS event, ABSS service managers complete the creche booking form (as included in Annex B) and share it with the Deputy Manager via email. A risk assessment of the venue where creche is taking place is conducted prior to each session as well as on an annual basis. The creche staff plan resources based on the ages of the children, who are booked onto the sessions in advance. In addition, there are weekly activities planned using resources outside of the usual activities, including sensory activities. Children who attend the creche service for six or more consecutive weeks, have a learning journey completed for them by the creche staff. This includes their progression in terms of physical, emotional and social development.

The creche provision is not currently Ofsted registered, which limits the maximum session length to two hours. Hence, the typical length of a creche session is a two-hour period. Despite not being Ofsted registered, the service follows the guidance around child development, ensuring activities cover the appropriate areas of learning. Staffing and floor space ratios and requirements are based on the Ofsted guidance. Based on consultation with the creche leadership team there is an ambition to acquire Ofsted registration to expand service provision.

Table 3 presents the number of creche sessions per year from 2022 to 2024. In 2022 and 2023 the creche sessions were arranged to support parents or carers to take part in 6 ABSS services, including ABSS Governance Support, Peer Support Workers for SCN, SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions), Welcome to the UK, Work Skills, and Your Family. In 2024 creche sessions were held for 2 other ABSS services, Early Maths Matters and Safe Steps (IDVA).

Table 3. Number of creche sessions per year

Year	Project name	Number of sessions
2022	ABSS Governance Support	17
	Peer Support Workers for SCN	0
	SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions)	61
	Welcome to the UK	74
	Work Skills	63
	Your Family	13
	Total	228
2023	ABSS Governance Support	23
	Peer Support Workers for SCN	5
	SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions)	49
	Welcome to the UK	118
	Work Skills	30
	Your Family	39
	Total	264
2024	ABSS Governance Support	1
	Early Maths Matters	4
	Peer Support Workers for SCN	6
	Safe Steps (IDVA)	7
	SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions)	23
	Welcome to the UK	78
	Work Skills	15
	Your Family	19
Total	152	
Total	644	

Table 4 presents the number of children attending the creche sessions per year from 2022 and 2024. In 2022 the largest share of the children (41%) attended the creche sessions that supported their parents or carers to participate in the Work Skills service. Yet in 2023 and 2024 the largest share of children, 39% and 38% respectively, attended the creche sessions for the Welcome to the UK service. For some of these services, such as Safe Steps, numbers of attending children and parents may not have been recorded to preserve anonymity.

Table 4. Number of children attending per year

Year	Project name	Number of children
2022	ABSS Governance Support	47
	Peer Support Workers for SCN	0
	SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions)	258
	Welcome to the UK	267
	Work Skills	431
	Your Family	50
	Total	1053
2023	ABSS Governance Support	49
	Peer Support Workers for SCN	15
	SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions)	221
	Welcome to the UK	386
	Work Skills	119
	Your Family	198
	Total	988
2024	ABSS Governance Support	3
	Early Maths Matters	20
	Peer Support Workers for SCN	19
	Safe Steps (IDVA)	7
	SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions)	76
	Welcome to the UK	156
	Work Skills	68
	Your Family	63
Total	412	
Total	2453	

Table 5 shows the number of times a parent was supported by the creche per year in 2022 and 2023. No data was available for 2024. The largest portion of parents that were supported by the creche attended the Work Skills service in 2023 (50%) and the Welcome to the UK service in 2024 (40%). It should be noted that this is a count of total service use rather than the number of individuals using the service. This means that if a parent used the creche 5 times, they would be counted 5 times in the table below.

Table 5. Number of parents supported per year

Year	Project name	Number of parents ⁸
2022	ABSS Governance Support	0
	Peer Support Workers for SCN	0
	SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions)	136
	Welcome to the UK	227
	Work Skills	396
	Your Family	41
	Total	800
2023	ABSS Governance Support	0
	Peer Support Workers for SCN	0
	SAVS Engagement (Parent Champions)	73
	Welcome to the UK	140
	Work Skills	53
	Your Family	82
	Total	348
Total	1148	

As shown in Table 6, there are in total estimated 38 to 41 unique parents who use the creche service. Please note that Build bond through play is not listed under any of the other ABSS services served by the creche.

Table 6. Number of unique parents by ABSS service

ABSS service	Number of unique parents
Welcome to the UK	10
SAVS and Governance	13
Safe Steps	4
Peer Support Workers for SCN	5
Build a bond through play ⁹	3
Work Skills	3 to 6
Total	38 to 41

⁸ The number of parents supported by the creche service, that have taken part in the ABSS projects 'ABSS Governance Support' and 'Peer Support Workers for SCN' is reported as zero. This is due to available data reporting on the 'number of beneficiaries', without disaggregating parents and children. As children are the direct beneficiaries, the 'number of beneficiaries' have been reported as the 'number of children' who attended the creche per year.

⁹ This is not a core ABSS service. "Build a bond through play" was a project funded through the ABSS CID fund. The provision of the creche service was included in their application.

Impact

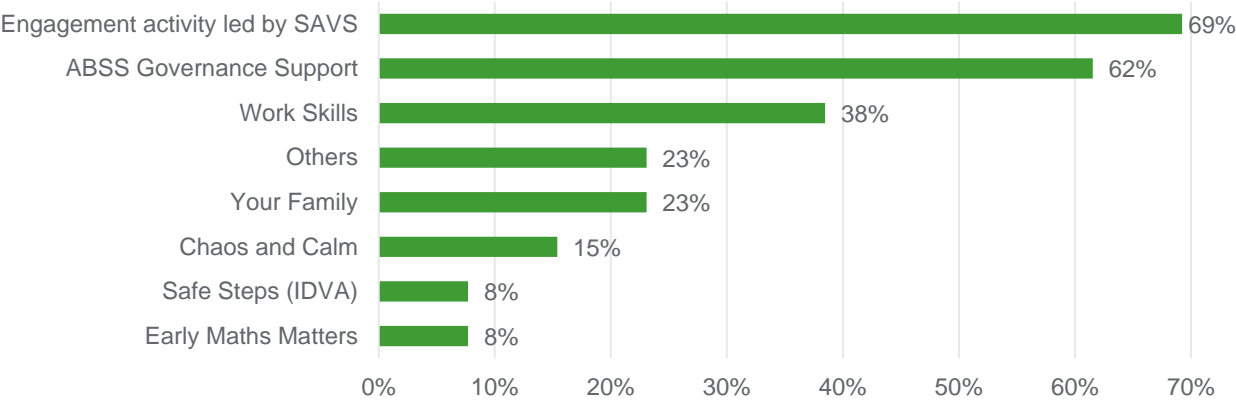
This section presents the findings on the impact of the creche service on **a) Parents and carers** **b) Children attending the creche** **c) ABSS service providers** and the wider system of early years services in Southend.

The impact of the creche service is evidenced using a combination of findings from interviews and focus groups with creche leadership team and staff, ABSS service managers whose services were supported by the creche, and parents and carers in addition to results from the parents and carers survey.

Impact on parents and carers

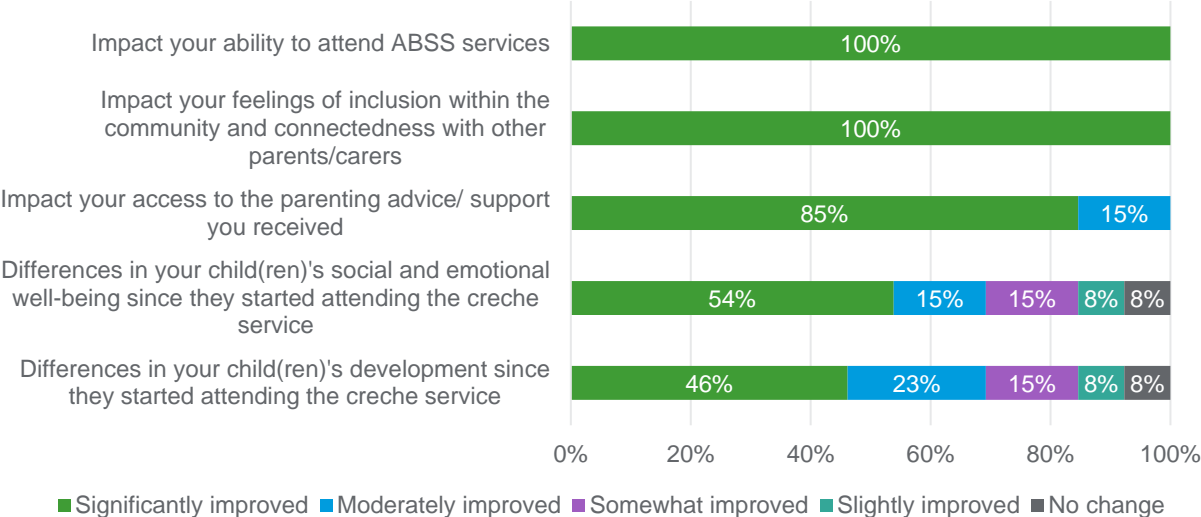
When asked about the impact of the creche service on parents and carers, all interviewees agreed that the creche enabled them to access and engage with ABSS services. Parents and carers interviewees said they used the creche frequently, to attend a variety of ABSS services and events. The Parents & Carers survey results also showed that many survey respondents who used or were using the creche service were also actively involved in one or more ABSS services (as presented in Figure 2). This suggests that the creche is meeting its primary aim of supporting broader family engagement in ABSS services. Parents' ability to attend workshops, training sessions, and community meetings is likely enhanced by having reliable support from the creche service. This is supported by the survey and interview findings (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Involvement in ABSS services



Source: Parents & Carers Survey Questionnaire for the Creche Service Q5 (Base: 13).
 Note: Total does not sum to 100% because respondents could give multiple responses.

Figure 3. Impact of the creche service



Source: Parents & Carers Survey Questionnaire for the Creche Service Q6 (Base: 13).

During interviews, all parents and carers mentioned that having the creche service was the only way they could attend ABSS services, because they had no other means of childcare. All respondents to the survey said that the creche service ‘significantly improved’ their ability to attend ABSS services and their feelings of inclusion and connectedness (as shown in Figure 3). For example, one survey respondent noted that the creche service has allowed them to fully contribute to meetings and community activities, as well as to get involved in governance which would not be possible in the absence of the creche service.

“I wouldn’t have attended hardly anything without the ability to have the creche.” (parent interviewee)

“[the creche] enabled the parents to access services that they would not have accessed if it hadn’t been there” (ABSS service manager interviewee)

The provision of a safe and nurturing environment allowed parents to focus on their own growth. This demonstrates the vital role that the creche service plays in helping to release the pressure of childcare from parents and carers, enabling them to focus on other activities. ABSS service managers also shared this sentiment, highlighting that parents and carers were more engaged with activities knowing their children were looked after in the creche within close proximity. In addition, the creche allowed parents and carers to improve their employability, language and parenting skills.

As evidenced by interviews, focus groups and the survey of parents and carers, the creche service helped reduce the anxiety some parents and carers felt about using formal childcare. Many of the interviewees, some of whom were first time parents, said they were anxious about leaving their child at a nursery setting as they never had any interaction with anyone outside of the immediate family. However, having their children close by and safe within the creche has been reassuring for them.

Parents mentioned that the creche allowed them to have meaningful engagement with other parents and regain their identity following the birth of their child. Several interviewees also shared that the creche service helped improve self-esteem and emotional wellbeing among parents and carers that recently moved to the UK. Specifically, with support of the creche, parents were able to engage with activities through ABSS services such as Welcome to the UK and Parent Champions. Some also highlighted the importance of the creche to parents and carers with experiences of domestic violence, due to creche staffs’ ability to build a trusting relationship with both the parents and the children.

“[the creche] is hugely beneficial for wellbeing...I lost my sort of identity and purpose when I became a parent... being a parent champion allowed me to sort of regain my independence.” (parent interviewee)

“If we couldn’t provide creche they couldn’t attend the health literacy course to understand... the proper language to use” (ABSS service manager interviewee)

“[Parent] was scared to leave their little one in case [partner] came... but we built up that trust” (creche staff interviewee)

Similarly, the majority of interviewees said that the creche service allowed parents to connect with other parents, provided them opportunities to socialise and make new friends. Parents and carers in particular highlighted that being supported by the creche allowed them to engage with other adults, have meaningful conversations and make friends knowing their children were well looked after. Some parents shared that taking on the role of a parent champion and being part of friendship groups through ABSS services was made possible with the support of the creche. One parent indicated that the creche service allowed them to feel more integrated into the community by allowing them to meet and engage with parents with similar experiences. ABSS service managers and creche staff also agreed that the creche provided parents and carers with time and ability to engage with a support network that they did not have access to before.

The creche service has also improved access to parenting advice and support (see Figure 3), and helped parents and carers feel more confident about supporting their children's development. Some survey respondents and parent and carer interviewees also said they received helpful advice and feedback related to their children from the creche staff. This included how to support their children manage behavioural difficulties and signposting them to information on things such as nutrition, which were helpful for them and their children. Several interviewees highlighted the importance of the learning journal that creche staff completed for their child to better understand their developmental progression. On the other hand, some other parents indicated that they did not receive any parenting advice from creche staff or that it was not relevant to them. A minority of interviewees said that sharing parenting experiences with other parents who use the creche has been reassuring.

Other impacts of the creche service mentioned by interviewees included having access to quality childcare free of charge. Interviewees highlighted that the provision of the creche service free of charge has been highly beneficial for parents who could not afford paid childcare.

Impact on children

When asked about the impact of the creche service on the children who attended it, the majority of interviewees and Parents & Carers survey respondents indicated that it helped child development (Figure 3). Particularly, communication skills and confidence when interacting with other children and adults. Interviewees highlighted that activities such as drawing and storytelling helped develop their children's communication skills. Multiple interviewees mentioned that their children were excited to share drawings they had made at creche with their parents. Several interviewees also highlighted the importance of the creche as the first point of contact where some of the children learned to speak English.

The smaller setting of the creche service and consistency in staffing were highlighted as key factors contributing to improving children's interaction with others. Interviewees mentioned that having a smaller group of children and familiar staff members helped ease separation anxiety for children attending creche.

“Interacting with other children, the social skills... meeting new friends, forming those friendships and the bonds.” (parent interviewee)

“They do not speak to them in English [at home] and providing the creche [was] preparation for the kids before they go to school.” (Creche staff interviewee)

Many parent and carer interviewees highlighted that creche staff were quickly able to build a trusting relationship with them and their children, which supported their children's emotional wellbeing. Some parents also noted positive interaction between their children and creche staff as well as other children, adding that the creche has improved their children's social skills. Some parents expressed surprise that their children were excited about attending creche after one or two sessions.

Attending the creche has also supported children's learning and educational development. Both Creche staff, and parent and carer interviewees agreed that attending creche contributed to building independence among the children. In particular, interviewees mentioned that by observing other children, they were able to engage in activities without needing much support from staff members. Several interviewees also highlighted the positive impact of the creche on their children's fine motor skills development. Particularly, interviewees expressed that the children attending creche became more confident with using cutlery for mealtime and enjoyed playing with crayons and playdoh. One interviewee also shared that attending the creche exposed children to different types of foods to encourage them to experience different flavours and textures.

Impact on other services

When asked about the impact of the creche service on ABSS services, interviewees predominantly highlighted positive impact in relation to planning and delivery of services. The creche service was identified as being flexible and accommodating to the needs of ABSS services, which made it easier

“They are always very available for us in terms of capacity and availability.” (ABSS service manager interviewee)

“I’m not sure if we’d survive as a project without having the creche services.” (ABSS service manager interviewee)

for service managers to plan sessions and activities. In addition, planning of ABSS sessions that are supported by the creche were described as a collaborative process between the creche leadership team and ABSS service managers.

Several interviewees also highlighted the importance placed on children’s safety by the creche delivery team. In particular, they shared that creche staff maintained a 1:3 staff to child ratio and communicated any issues around capacity in advance to ABSS service managers.

In addition, the creche team were quick to resolve capacity issues by bringing in bank staff to accommodate any additional children attending the service. A minority of interviewees mentioned having to turn parents or carers away due to lack of capacity to accommodate additional children.

The majority of interviewees indicated that, having access to the creche, had increased demand and uptake of ABSS services. The creche service was seen as an integral part of delivery of ABSS services. Many interviewees expressed that when activities were delivered without support from the creche, the number of parents and carers attending the sessions were much lower. This included attendance at sessions that were delivered virtually to accommodate childcare responsibilities. Illustrating this, one interviewee shared that the key consideration for parents and carers when deciding to join ABSS services is having access to childcare. Several interviewees mentioned that while parents were able to attend some ABSS activities, without having the creche to look after their children, they would not be able to continue their engagement.

When asked about the impact of the creche service on the wider system of early years services in Southend, the majority of interviewees were unaware of any direct impact, while others felt the creche did not have any impact beyond the ABSS services it supports. A minority of interviewees discussed the impact of the creche on parents and carers, as enabling access to public services or early years networks. In particular interviewees shared that having the creche service available to parents and carers enabled them to access more services, build networks within the community and gain more knowledge about local services through these networks.

Strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement

This section presents findings on the strengths and weaknesses of the creche service, as well as areas for improvement. These findings are based on interviews, focus groups and survey data.

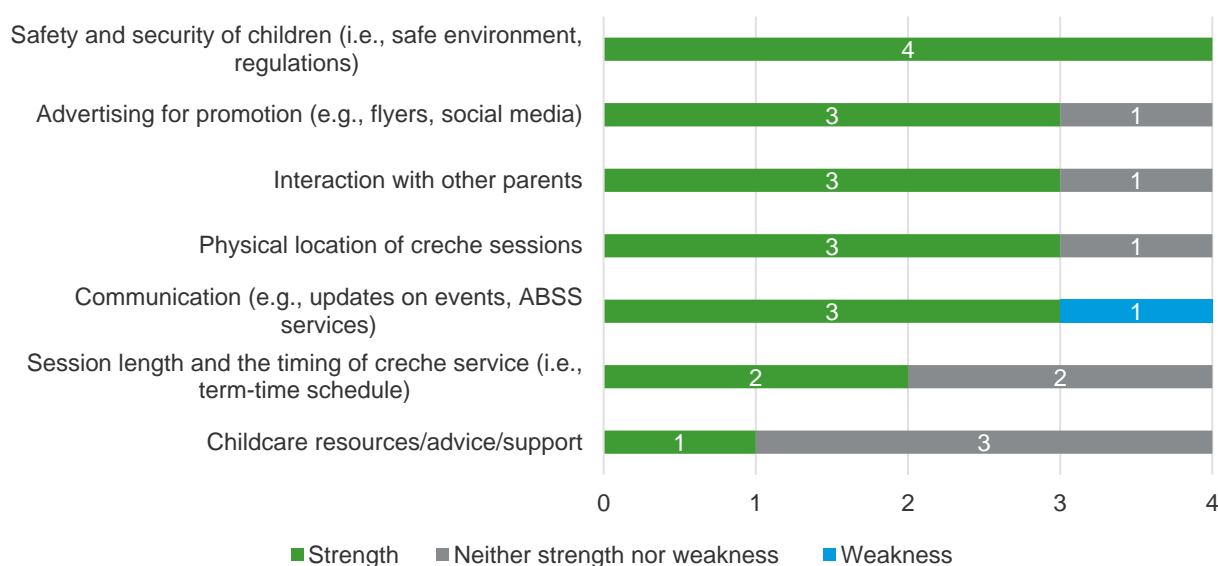
Strengths and weaknesses

Consistency and quality of care provided by creche staff was highlighted as a key strength of the service. Parents and carers said that having a small team of consistent staff within the creche allowed them to build trust with one another. The creche’s commitment to safety and security was widely praised by survey respondents (100%), who appreciated measures such as locked doors to prevent children from leaving unattended. This focus on child protection fostered trust among parents. However, one survey respondent noted an isolated incident involving the use of aerosol sprays, which triggered the parent’s asthma attack. This highlights a need for greater awareness of the potential health risks of certain activities, and ensuring staff are aware of the health needs of all participants, parents and children. Addressing such risks can strengthen the overall safety protocols of the service.

Discussions during interviews and focus groups highlighted several key strengths of the creche service. These include open and supportive communication within the creche team as well as with parents and ABSS service managers. Illustrating this, several interviewees shared that the creche team works well together and that comes across to parents in their interactions with them. Multiple interviewees also indicated that the clear channel of communication between creche staff and ABSS service managers ensures all issues are resolved in a timely manner.

Three out of four survey respondents said communication was a strength of the creche service (as shown in Figure 4). Providing feedback about children’s activities, behaviour, and wellbeing during the sessions reassured parents and carers. This could help strengthen their confidence in the creche service. However, one survey respondent found it a weakness which suggests room for further improvement (see next section).

Figure 4. Strengths and weaknesses of the creche service



Source: Parents & Carers Survey Questionnaire for the Creche Service Q12 (Base: 4), Q14 (Base: 4), Q16 (Base: 4), Q18 (Base: 4), Q20 (Base: 4), Q22 (Base: 4), and Q24 (Base: 4).

Three out of the four survey respondents also pointed out that the advertising through various channels such as flyers and social media for promoting the creche service was a strength. This

helped ensure that parents and carers who required childcare could access the creche service while they attended other ABSS activities.

However, one survey respondent noted inconsistencies, with promotion being thorough on certain occasions but lacking on others. It is important to note that the creche was not a standalone service and cannot be promoted as such. The creche was promoted as an additional service, to support the delivery of other ABSS services. Flyers were available that promoted the creche, but the responsibility of sharing these with parents lay with the ABSS services. However, a more standardised programme level approach, less reliant on information sharing by individual services, could improve awareness and engagement.

Several parents and carers highlighted during interviews and in their survey responses (as identified by 75% of respondents) that interaction with other parents was a strength of the creche service. Many interviewees described how the creche created opportunities for parents to meet one another. Through interactions with other parents, they could enhance their social connections and information sharing. Parents and carers also indicated feeling validated and supported by other parents whose children attend the creche.

The location of creche sessions was recognised as a strength by 75% of survey respondents. Delivering creche sessions near the ABSS services that parents were attending was considered a major asset. This reduced travel burden, often inherent in childcare provision, and enabled greater participation in ABSS activities. However, a minority of the survey respondents raised concerns about the sessions being too close to the events, which at times affected children's ability to settle due to noise or distractions. A balance between accessibility and distance is expected to be further considered to address this issue.

Half of the survey respondents appreciated the session timings, which allowed them to participate in various activities. A survey respondent highlighted that overlapping start and end times with event schedules were particularly helpful, as they provided flexibility for settling children and transitioning between activities. Yet it was noted that minor adjustments to session durations could enhance their utility by allowing them to settle their children before their own activities and pick them up afterward.

Three out of four survey respondents believed that childcare resources, advice and support were neither a strength nor a weakness of the creche service. This was said to be due to resources sometimes going missing. This occasionally meant the creche did not have all of the resources they would have liked for every session. Additionally, while advice provided by staff was appreciated by some, others found it less helpful or not tailored to their needs. Those that said it was a strength of the service, noted the availability of toys and learning activities for children which could contribute to an engaging and supportive environment. Therefore, ensuring consistent resource availability and refining the advice offered could improve this aspect of the service.

Areas for improvement

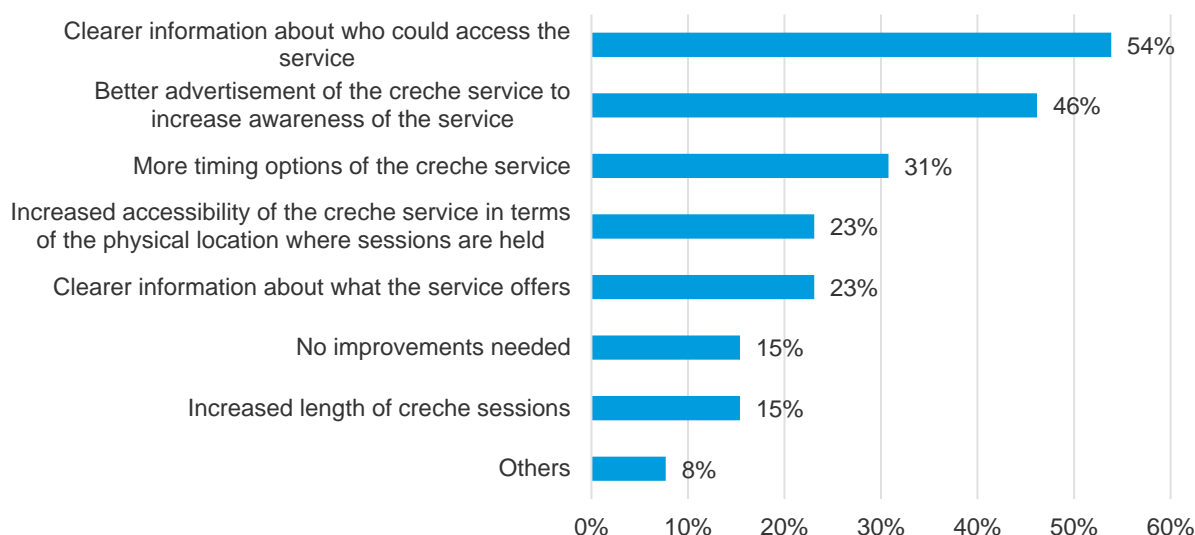
Interview discussions with the creche team, ABSS service managers and parents and carers highlighted that the current model of care provision through the creche was effective, with opportunities to build on existing good practice. Several interviewees and a small proportion of respondents highlighted the length of creche sessions as being a barrier to attending longer courses or events. Illustrating this one interviewee expressed that some parents or carers had to leave halfway through an event to pick up their child and drop them off again to a later session on the day to re-join the event. A minor point was raised in relation to accessing a bigger venue to accommodate a larger number of children to the creche.

Survey responses highlight several other areas where parents and carers felt the creche service could improve (see Figure 5). Information about who could access the service was identified as the most common area for improvement (by 54% of survey respondents). At the time of writing,

ABSS and City Family were taking actions to provide clearer communication about the service's eligibility criteria.

This is closely linked to two other areas for improvement identified by survey respondents. These included better advertisement of the creche service to increase awareness of the service (46%) and clearer information about what the service offers (23%). These findings link to points made earlier about lack of consistency when promoting the creche sessions. Addressing these areas could improve accessibility, further enhancing the impact of the service on families.

Figure 5. Areas for improvement



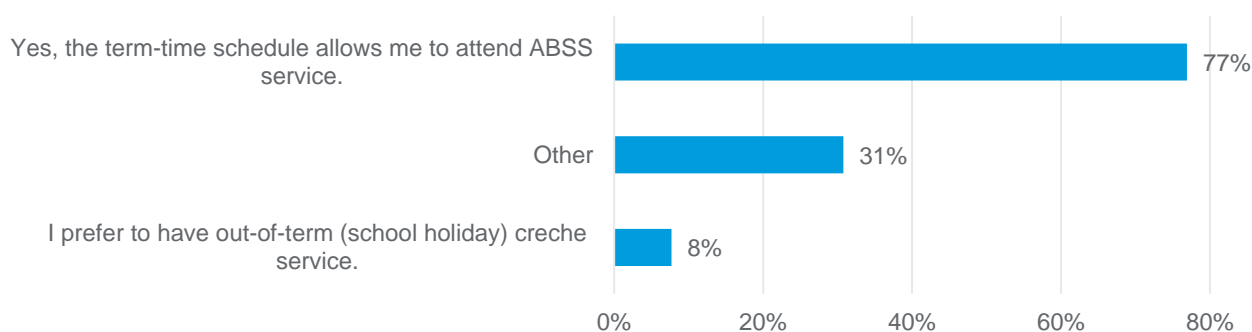
Source: Parents & Carers Survey Questionnaire for the Creche Service Q26 (Base: 13).

Note: Total does not sum to 100% because respondents could give multiple responses.

The timing of creche sessions was another area for improvement noted by one third of the survey respondents (as shown in Figure 5). However, it should be noted that creche staff respond to requests from ABSS services. The timing of creche sessions is dependent on those requests. Therefore, a recommendation here is for ABSS services to consult parents about suitable timing of creche sessions to support their engagement in ABSS activities.

Figure 6 presents the survey respondents' preferred times. The majority of the survey respondents (77%) indicated that the term-time schedule of the creche service could allow them to attend other ABSS activities. Yet a minority of the survey respondents (8%) showed an interest in out-of-term (i.e. school holiday) creche service.

Figure 6. Preference of the timing of the creche service



Source: Parents & Carers Survey Questionnaire for the Creche Service Q10 (Base: 13).

Note: Total does not sum to 100% because respondents could give multiple responses.

This indicates that continued flexibility is critical for meeting parents' needs. One survey respondent explained that adjusting the timing of the service could not only allow parents to pick up their children but also make it more accessible for parents with children in all settings. These

findings reveal that while the current scheduling has its merits, there is room for improvement in providing more adaptable and parent-centred timing options.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

This evaluation set out to answer research questions presented in our [Evaluation approach](#). Findings from the evaluation are summarised below. These show that the creche service was generally associated with positive experiences and has been impactful for children, parents, carers and ABSS services. Participants reported that the creche service was an enabler for them to take part in ABSS services. In addition, support received through the creche contributed to positive self-esteem and feelings of inclusion within the community, by allowing positive interaction and relationship building with other parents.

The creche also improved access to parenting support and advice. Positive impacts of the creche were evident among children attending the service. These include improved communication skills, confidence, learning and educational outcomes. The flexibility demonstrated by the creche team also supported planning and delivery of ABSS services. Participants also reported that the creche contributed to increased demand and uptake of ABSS services.

Overall, the creche service is effective in its service provision and has had meaningful impact on relevant stakeholders and service users. There is scope for improvement in service provision by building on existing good practices and taking stock of current limitations to enhance service offer and quality of provision.

Recommendations

Four recommendations have emerged from the evaluation of the creche service. These are:

1. **Provide tailored advice to parents and carers to support their children's development and wellbeing.**

Based on research conducted with parents and carers it was evident that the creche has been a source of parenting advice and support. However, service users also shared that advice shared was not always relevant or suited to their needs. Therefore, advice or tips shared on parenting or child development should consider children's behaviour and interaction with staff and other children during creche sessions.

In addition, parents and carers could further benefit from short and targeted discussion sessions on a one-to-one basis with a staff member who is familiar with the individual child. These discussion sessions could allow exchange of views on the child's development in the three prime areas of personal, social and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language.

2. **Create a standardised communication plan with consistent messaging targeted to existing and potential service users.**

Parents and carers shared that the creche provided detailed information on their service offer, however this information was not always consistent across different communication channels. The creche should focus on creating consistent messaging on what the creche offers and who is eligible to use the service across both physical (e.g., bulletin board) and virtual communication (e.g. a creche Facebook page and webpage). The creche should also include in their internal survey to parents and carers questions on what methods of communication best suit parents and carers. In addition, the survey should include questions on whether current service users are aware of existing communication channels and how to signpost interested parents to relevant information.

3. **Expand the availability of the creche service and length of sessions to accommodate the needs of service users.**

There was agreement among all groups who were consulted that, parents and carers as well as ABSS services, would benefit from an increased use of the creche service. While the creche had the potential to run year-round (including during school holidays), availability was determined by delivery schedules of other ABSS services. These typically stopped during school holidays. Under-utilisation of creche support by ABSS services was identified as a

barrier to parents and carers' participation and engagement in ABSS events or training offered during school holidays or after-school hours. Hence, there is scope for extending creche support during these periods in cooperation with ABSS services. To this end, an initial consultation with parents and carers to determine their level of need for the service during school holidays or after-school hours, may be beneficial.

The creche is not currently registered by Ofsted. This means the current length of creche sessions is a maximum of 2 hours. This has been highlighted as a barrier to service users and ABSS service managers. The creche would need to acquire Ofsted registration to address this issue and offer sessions of longer than 2 hours. Further, consultation with Creche leadership suggested there is ambition to register the creche with Ofsted, as this will allow longer creche sessions to be provided. Hence, the creche team should gradually work towards achieving the three key requirements within the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework¹⁰, as well as enhancing creche sessions to incorporate activities and learning in line with the seven major learning areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage¹¹.

4. Create and maintain an inventory of resources available to children attending creche.

Feedback from parents and carers suggested that generally resources were available to children to aid their learning and development during creche sessions. However, toys and other learning materials have gone missing which in turn negatively impacted the experiences of the children attending the creche. Hence, the recommendation is for the creche team to create an inventory of all learning materials that are used by children. This should be checked regularly and used to identify and replace items as needed.

In addition, including a checklist to take stock of toys or learning materials prior to and after each creche session as part of the booking request form, would ensure any missing resources can be retrieved or replaced in a timely manner.

¹⁰ The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a framework that sets the standards for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to five years old in the United Kingdom. It is a statutory framework that all early year's providers must follow. For further information visit: GOV.UK (2018) Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-Ofsted> [Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

¹¹ The seven major learning areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage include: Personal, social and emotional development; Physical development; Communication and language; Mathematics; Literacy; Understanding the world and Expressive arts and design. For further information visit: GOV.UK (2018) Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/childminders-and-childcare-providers-register-with-Ofsted> [Childminders and childcare providers: register with Ofsted - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Annexes



A. Research tools

Focus Group Topic Guides

ABSS Service Staff Focus Group Topic Guide

About this research

RSM is a research company. We have been commissioned by Early Years Alliance (EYA) to conduct an evaluation of the City Family CIC creche service. The aim of the evaluation will be to examine the impact the creche service has had on the children, parents/carers, services and wider system served by it. An evaluation that examines the impact of the creche service will support ABSS in better understanding the overall impact of the programme and enable City Family CIC to understand the impact of the service to date, what is working well and areas for improvement in the future.

Introduction

You have been asked to take part in this focus group because you are familiar with the creche service as a service provider of ABSS services. Your feedback will provide a detailed understanding of the impact of the creche service. The findings from this focus group will be used to inform the development of the other research tools for this evaluation and improve the research teams understanding of the creche service.

This focus group will take approximately 90 minutes. All responses will be treated confidentially. Participation is completely voluntary, and you can choose not to answer a question or leave the focus group at any time. We might include quotes from our discussion today anonymously in the report to illustrate key findings. However, these will not be attributed to you as an individual or to your organisation, and any identifiable information will be removed.

1. Does everyone consent to taking part in this focus group?
[Information and consent sheets will be sent to all interviewees in advance]
2. Please describe your current services, roles and your interaction with City Family CIC creche service to date?

Main Questions

Uptake, Retention, and Completion of ABSS Services:

3. How has the Creche service affected the demand for and uptake of the ABSS services that you deliver?

Probe in relation to:

What barriers or enablers contribute to an increase or decrease in uptake.

4. From your perspective, how has the Creche service affected the retention of parents and carers participating in individual ABSS services that are supported by the creche?

Probe in relation to:

Impact of creche service on participant engagement with individual ABSS services.

What would be the impact on retention without the creche service?

Other factors that help retain participants within ABSS services, other than the creche service.

5. What impact has the Creche service had on the completion rates of individual ABSS services that you deliver?

Probe in relation to:

Common barriers to completion and how the Creche service helps to overcome them.

Impact on Parents and Carers:

6. In your opinion, what impact do you think the creche service has had on the parents and carers who participate and use ABSS services that you deliver?

Probe in relation to:

Impact on parents/carers ability to attend ABSS services.

Impact on parents/carers feelings of inclusion within the community and connectedness to other parents.

Impact on parents/carers involvement as volunteers/ parent champions as part of ABSS.

Impact of the parenting advice/ support received.

Interaction with Attending Children:

7. Did ABSS staff members have any interactions with children attending the Creche service? If so, were any outcomes or changes noted in the children attending the creche?

Probe in relation to:

Observed changes in children's behaviour or development.

Notable improvements in children's social or emotional wellbeing.

Staff's role in supporting or enhancing these interactions.

[If not: are you aware of any impact that the creche service has had on the children attending the creche?]

Wider System Impact:

8. Can you describe any noticeable impact of the Creche service on the wider system of services that are delivered to children and families in the early years?

Probe in relation to:

Whether the creche has been used as a model by other services.

Impact on Early Years service accessibility (using the time freed from childcare).

Impact on engagement with public services (because of the trust built through the creche service).

Impact on planning and delivery of Individual ABSS Services:

9. Has the Creche service influenced the planning processes and delivery of the ABSS services that you deliver?

For example:

- Changes in resource allocation, prioritisation, and program structure/content.
- Staff workload and roles.
- Coordination with other services.
- Timing of services.
- Meeting your service goals and objectives

Probe in relation to:

How has the creche service enabled delivery of ABSS services?

How has the creche service enabled planning of ABSS services?

What would be the impact on ABSS service delivery without the creche service?

Improvements for the Creche Service:

10. Based on your experience, what aspects of the Creche service could be improved to better support the needs of children, parents and carers, and ABSS service providers?

Probe in relation to:

Feedback on current service limitations or gaps.

Challenges or barriers when integrating the Creche service with ABSS services you deliver.

Areas of the Creche service to be enhanced.

Actions to be taken (e.g., training and professional development).

Thank interviewee

To be asked after the interview has concluded

1. Each of the three focus groups with parents/carers will centre on a different reason for using the creche to examine a more diverse range of perspectives and understand differences in the range of impacts based on the type of ABSS service attended. These are **a) Inclusion b) Volunteering c) Parenting advice/ support**. In your opinion, what topics would be useful to discuss for each of these areas?
2. We are also intending to develop a short survey for parent and carer participants. Would you be willing to provide support in promoting the survey to parents and carers attending the creche service?

Close interview

Creche Staff Focus Group Topic Guide

About this research

RSM is a research company. We have been commissioned by Early Years Alliance (EYA) to conduct an evaluation of the City Family CIC creche service. The aim of the evaluation will be to examine the impact the creche service has had on the children, parents/carers, services and wider system served by it. An evaluation that examines the impact of the creche service will support ABSS in better understanding the overall impact of the programme and enable City Family CIC to understand the impact of the service to date, what is working well and areas for improvement in the future.

Introduction

You have been asked to take part in this focus group because you are involved with the delivery of the City Family CIC creche service. Your feedback will provide a detailed understanding of the impact of the creche service. The findings from this focus group will be used to inform the development of the other research tools for this evaluation and improve the research teams understanding of the creche service.

This focus group will take approximately 90 minutes. All responses will be treated confidentially. Participation is completely voluntary, and you can choose not to answer a question or leave the focus group at any time. We might include quotes from our discussion today anonymously in the report to illustrate key findings. However, these will not be attributed to you as an individual or to your organisation, and any identifiable information will be removed.

1. Does everyone consent to taking part in this focus group?
[Information and consent sheets will be sent to all interviewees in advance]
2. Please describe your current role with the City Family CIC creche service?

Main Questions

Planning and delivery of creche sessions:

3. What processes are involved in the planning and delivery of the creche service?
Probe in relation to:
How are individual creche sessions organised?
How is attendance recorded for each creche session?
Are there processes in place for addressing under or over-capacity?
What processes are in place to manage staff absence/ unavailability?
4. What child development activities/ elements of the early years' curriculum are delivered during the creche sessions?
Probe in relation to:
How are these activities/ elements implemented?
Why were these activities chosen in particular?
5. Are there specific processes in place for delivering sessions that include children with special educational needs?
Probe in relation to:
Resourcing sessions involving children with special educational needs.
Planning and delivering activities for children with special educational needs.
What training is provided to staff when working with SEND children?

Impact on children and parents/carers using the creche service:

6. In your opinion, what has been the impact of the creche service on the children attending the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

Impact on children's behaviour or development (e.g., communication skills, physical development, problem solving, confidence etc.).

Impact on children's social or emotional wellbeing.

7. What is the level of engagement between creche staff and parents/carers who use the service for their children?

Probe in relation to:

Is there a need for more/less engagement? If so, why?

How are parents initially engaged by the creche service?

8. In your opinion, what has been the impact of the creche service on parents/carers who use the service for their children?

Probe in relation to:

Impact on parents/carers ability to attend ABSS services.

Impact on parents/carers feelings of inclusion within the community and connectedness to other parents.

Impact of the parenting advice/ support received.

Impact on mental health/ wellbeing.

Strength of the creche service and areas for improvement:

9. From your perspective, what are the main strengths of the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

How have these strengths been identified?

How have these strengths been built upon?

10. What are the main weaknesses of the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

How have these weaknesses been identified?

What actions have been taken to mitigate or resolve these weaknesses?

11. How could the creche service be improved?

Probe in relation to:

Current service limitations or gaps.

Areas of the Creche service to be enhanced.

What actions should be taken to improve the service (e.g., training and professional development).

Thank interviewee

To be asked after the interview has concluded

1. Each of the three focus groups with parents/carers will centre on a different reason for using the creche to examine a more diverse range of perspectives and understand differences in the range of impacts based on the type of ABSS service attended. These are **a) Inclusion b)**

Volunteering c) Parenting advice/ support. In your opinion, what topics would be useful to discuss for each of these reasons?

2. We are also intending to develop a short survey for parent and carer participants. Can you, as the creche staff members, provide support in promoting the survey to parents and carers attending the creche service?

Close interview

Parents and Carers Focus Group Topic Guide

About this research

RSM is a research company. We have been commissioned by Early Years Alliance (EYA) to conduct an evaluation of the City Family CIC creche service. The aim of the evaluation will be to examine the impact the creche service has had on the children, parents/carers, services and wider system served by it. An evaluation that examines the impact of the creche service will support ABSS in better understanding the overall impact of the programme and enable City Family CIC to understand the impact of the service to date, what is working well and areas for improvement in the future.

Introduction

You have been asked to take part in this focus group because your child(ren) previously attended or are currently attending the ABSS/ City Family CIC creche. Your feedback will help provide a detailed understanding of the impact of the creche service. The findings from this focus group will be used to improve the research teams understanding of the creche service. We are specifically asking about your experience with the creche service itself, and not any activities or services that you may have taken part in with the ABSS programme or City Family projects.

This focus group will take approximately 90 minutes. All responses will be treated confidentially. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can choose not to answer a question or leave the focus group at any time. We might include quotes from our discussion today anonymously in the report to illustrate key findings. However, these will not be attributed to you as an individual or to your organisation, and any identifiable information will be removed.

(Note to interviewer: keep the focus of the focus group on the creche service itself, and not the parent experiences of ABSS / City Families)

1. Does everyone consent to taking part in this focus group?
[Information and consent sheets will be sent to all interviewees in advance]
2. Does everyone consent for this focus group to be recorded and transcribed?

Main Questions

General (Note for interviewer: ask all participants)

1. Which ABSS service(s) did you attended/ are currently attending when using the creche service?
2. Please describe your main reason for using the creche service.

Probe in relation to:

Childcare needs

Parent only ABSS service

Inclusion

Volunteering

Parenting advice/support

Inclusion (Note for interviewer: only ask during 'Inclusion' focus group)

3. Do you think the creche service is inclusive and open to all parents/carers who use/attend ABSS services?

Probe in relation to:

Are any particular groups of parents/carers not using the creche service (e.g., ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, fathers or very young parents)?

Why do you think that is? [Explore each group separately]

What are the barriers or challenges to using the creche service for each group?

Do you think anything about the planning and design of the creche service limited their involvement?

Are you aware of any outreach plans or activities that the creche team has used to encourage involvement from these groups? If so, did they work? Why/ why not?

(Note to interviewer: likely that parents will not know/ will not have information to answer this)

What do you think would help encourage more involvement from these groups?

4. From your perspective, are some parents/carers who use ABSS services more willing to use the creche service than others?

Probe in relation to:

Which groups, if any, are benefitting the most from the creche service (e.g., ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, fathers or very young parents)? Why do you think this is the case?

Which groups, if any, are excluded from using the creche service (e.g., ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, fathers or very young parents)? Why do you think this is the case?

5. Do you think the creche service has improved access to ABSS services for parents/carers from different backgrounds across Southend?

Probe in relation to:

Are people from different ages, wards, income levels, ethnicities better able to access ABSS services because of the creche service?

If so, how has the creche service caused that change?

Volunteering (Note for interviewer: only ask during 'Volunteering' focus group)

6. Did the creche service impact your ability to attend your preferred ABSS services?

Probe in relation to:

Ability to attend ABSS meeting/sessions/events more regularly.

Ability to take up new opportunities with the ABSS programme.

7. Has the creche service provided more opportunities for parents/carers to get involved in the design and the delivery of ABSS services?

Probe in relation to:

Do parents have more opportunities to volunteer with ABSS because of having access to the creche service?

Do parents have more opportunities to be involved in co-production due to accessing the creche service? ['Co-production' means everybody, including parents and service providers, working together to create a service, or come to a decision which works for them all.]

Are more parents taking up volunteering and co-production opportunities because they have access to the creche service?

8. How engaged with the ABSS services do you think you would be without the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

How accessible are alternative childcare arrangements that would allow your involvement in ABSS services?

How preferable are these alternative childcare arrangements, compared to the creche service?

Parenting advice/support (Note for interviewer: only ask during 'Parenting advice/support' focus group)

9. Has using the creche service enabled or improved your access to parenting advice/support?

Probe in relation to:

Access to parenting advice/ support from creche staff.

Access to parenting advice/ support from other parents.

10. Has using the creche service impacted your knowledge on how to support your child(ren's) development?

Probe in relation to:

Knowledge in relation to stages of child development (e.g., physical, emotional, social, cognitive development).

Knowledge in relation to the type of support or services that are available for children in Southend.

11. Has using the creche service impacted your confidence in how to support your child(ren)'s development?

Probe in relation to:

Confidence in how to handle different circumstances relating your child(ren) (e.g., your child's interaction with other children, resolving conflict, reinforcing positive behaviour etc.)

(Note for interviewer: following questions to be asked to all participants)

Impact of the creche service

12. Has the creche service had any additional impact on you as a parent/carer of a child(ren) who attend the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

Impact on mental health/ wellbeing

Felling connected with other parents

13. What impact did the creche service have on your child(ren) attending the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

Impact on child(ren's) behaviour or development (e.g., communication skills, physical development, problem solving, confidence etc.).

Impact on child(ren's) social or emotional wellbeing (e.g., managing their emotions, engaging in play or group activities etc.).

Your child(ren's) confidence interacting with other children and adults.

Schedule of creche service provision

14. Does the timing and schedule of the creche service (e.g., term-time provision) enable you to attend your preferred ABSS service(s)?

Probe in relation to:

Why is the term-time provision an enabler/ not an enabler

If not an enabler, what other timing of service provision would be more suitable?

Is the timing of the service made convenient for you?

Strength of the creche service and areas for improvement

15. From your perspective, what are the main strengths of the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

Ease of use, well-advertised, length of sessions, benefits to you and your child(ren), availability.

16. What are the main weaknesses of the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

Useability of the creche service, level of knowledge about availability of the creche service, length of sessions, accessibility, availability of places.

17. What improvements would you like to see made to the creche service in the future?

Probe in relation to:

Current service limitations or gaps.

Areas of the Creche service to be enhanced.

Activities delivered to attending children.

Thank interviewee

To be asked after the interview has concluded

1. We are intending to develop a short survey for parent and carer using the creche service. Would you be willing to complete the survey and encourage other parents to do so when the links are distributed?

Close interview

Leadership Team Interview Topic Guide

About this research

RSM is a research company. We have been commissioned by Early Years Alliance (EYA) to conduct an evaluation of the City Family CIC creche service. The aim of the evaluation will be to examine the impact the creche service has had on the children, parents/carers, services and wider system served by it. An evaluation that examines the impact of the creche service will support ABSS in better understanding the overall impact of the programme and enable City Family CIC to understand the impact of the service to date, what is working well and areas for improvement in the future.

Introduction

You have been asked to take part in this interview because you have a leadership role in the management of the creche service. Your feedback will provide a detailed understanding of the anticipated impact of the creche service and how the evaluation can and should measure these. The findings from the interview will be used to inform the development of the other research tools for this evaluation and improve the research teams understanding of the creche service.

This interview will take approximately 45 – 60 minutes. Your responses will be treated confidentially. The analysis and reports will only provide summaries of information, disguising any details which may reveal your identity or the identity of people you speak about. In situations where information in the report may potentially identify an organisation (only where it is appropriate to do so), we will provide draft text to the participant for approval and make sure their right to privacy is protected.

2. Do you consent to taking part in this interview? [Information and consent sheets will be sent to all interviewees in advance]
3. Please describe your current role and your involvement with City Family CIC creche service to date?
4. What are the main **objectives** of the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

What are the objectives in relation to child development outcomes?

What are the objectives in relation to the learning and education activities delivered by the creche staff?

Have these objectives changed or been adjusted since the creche service started?

5. In your opinion, what has been the **impact** of the creche service to date?

Probe in relation to:

*Impact on the **children who regularly attend** the creche service*

*Impact on **parents/carers and families** who use the creche service to allow them to access the ABSS services*

*Impact on **individual service providers** when planning and delivering ABSS services*

*Impact on the **system of services** provided to early years children and families in Southend*

6. What **measurement** of the creche services impact has taken place so far, if any?

Probe in relation to:

Are there any indicators to measure the impact of the creche service on parents/carers?

Is there any existing evidence to measure the impact of the creche service on parents/carers?

Have there been any changes to how the creche service delivers its activities resulting from these measurements?

7. From your perspective, what are the **main strengths** of the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

How have these strengths been identified?

Do you plan to build upon these strengths in the future?

What are the main weaknesses of the creche service?

8. Are there any plans to **improve or change** the creche service in the future?

If yes,

Probe in relation to:

What are the areas for improvement?

Description of the planned actions/ activities

If no,

Probe in relation to:

What are the reasons for having no plans for improvement?

9. Each of the three focus groups with parents/carers will centre on a different reason for using the creche to examine a more diverse range of perspectives and understand differences in the range of impacts based on the type of ABSS service attended. These are **a) Inclusion b) Volunteering c) Parenting advice/ support**. In your opinion, which topic(s) would be useful when discussing each area?

Thank interviewee.

To be asked after the interview has concluded

1. We have requested that ABSS/City Family CIC support the research team in identifying participants for the interviews and focus groups with stakeholders (ABSS/City Family CIC staff, ABSS services), ABSS service managers and parents and carers who use the creche services. Do you consent to receiving email communications requesting details of interviewees from the above groups?
 - a. For the parents and carer focus groups, to help with the scheduling of the focus groups, it would be appreciated if City Families CIC could provide us with an idea of suitable times to hold focus groups i.e. when is most suitable for parents and carers.
2. We are also intending to develop a short survey for parent and carer participants. Can City Family CIC provide support in distributing the survey to parents and carers attending the creche service?

Close interview.

Stakeholder Interview Topic Guide

About this research

RSM is a research company. We have been commissioned by Early Years Alliance (EYA) to conduct an evaluation of the City Family CIC creche service. The aim of the evaluation will be to examine the impact the creche service has had on the children, parents/carers, services and the wider system served by it. An evaluation that examines the impact of the creche service will support ABSS in better understanding the overall impact of the programme. It will enable City Family CIC to understand the impact of the service to date, what is working well and areas for improvement in the future.

Introduction

You have been asked to take part in this interview as a key stakeholder of the Creche service. Your feedback will help to develop a picture of the service, the impact the service has had and how it could be improved in the future.

This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Your responses will be treated confidentially. The analysis and reports will only provide summaries of information, disguising any details which may reveal your identity or the identity of people you speak about. In situations where information in the report may potentially identify you or your organisation (only where it is appropriate to do so), we will provide draft text to you for approval and make sure your right to privacy is protected.

1. Do you consent to taking part in this interview [Information sheets will be sent to all interviewees in advance]?

Interviewer start recording and reconfirm consent

2. Please describe your current role and your involvement with [ABSS or City Family CIC creche service] to date?

3. What is the extent of your **interaction** with the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

Interaction with creche staff and/or leadership team

Interaction with children who attend the creche service

4. To what extent are you involved in **planning** and **design** of the creche service/ sessions?

Note to interviewer: ask Question 3 only if involvement is cited as extensive.

5. What informed the **design** and **implementation** of the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

What best practice approaches informed the design of the creche service?

What contextual factors were considered when designing the creche service?

How was the creche service originally implemented? How does this differ from the current design?

Has the implementation of the creche service changed over time? What was the reason for these changes?

6. In your opinion what are the main **objectives** of the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

What are the objectives in relation to the ABSS services that you deliver?

What are the objectives in relation to parents/ carers who use the service?

What are the objectives in relation to child development outcomes?

7. What has been the impact of the creche service on the delivery of **ABSS services**?

Probe in relation to:

Impact on demand for/ take-up/ use of ABSS services.

Impact on the retention and completion rates of ABSS services.

Impact on the planning activities for ABSS services (i.e. enabling services to run).

8. What has been the **impact** on the **parents/carers** who use the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

Impact on parents/carers ability to attend ABSS services.

Impact on parents/carers feelings of inclusion within the community and connectedness to other parents.

Impact on parents/carers involvement as volunteers/ parent champions as part of ABSS.

Impact of the parenting advice/ support received.

9. In your opinion, what has been the **impact** of the creche service on the **children** who attend the service?

Probe in relation to:

The impact on child developmental outcomes.

The impact on learning and educational outcomes.

10. What **impact** has the creche service had on the **wider system** of services delivered to early years children and families?

If low/ no impact is cited, probe in relation to:

Reason(s) for lack of impact on wider system of early years children and family services.

What barriers are present (if any).

11. From your perspective, what are the **main strengths** of the creche service?

Probe in relation to:

How have these strengths been identified?

Are there plans to build upon these strengths?

What are the main weaknesses of the creche service? Are there plans to address these weaknesses?

12. How could the creche service be **improved or changed** in the future?

Note: ask if not addressed in Q.9.

Probe in relation to:

What are the areas for improvement?

If yes, what are the timescales on these improvements?

13. Each of the three focus groups with parents/carers will focus on a different reason for using the creche to examine a more diverse range of perspectives and understand differences in the range of impacts based on the type of ABSS service attended. These are **a) Inclusion b)**

Volunteering c) Parenting advice/ support. In your opinion, what topics would be useful to discuss for each of these areas?

Thank interviewee

To be asked after the interview has concluded

1. We are intending to engage parents/carers who used the creche service, through the three focus groups mentioned earlier. Can we ask for your support in identifying parents/carers who would be willing to be involved in these focus groups?
2. We are also intending to develop a short survey for parent and carer participants. Can [ABSS/ City Family CIC] provide support in promoting the survey to parents and carers using the creche service?

Close interview.

Parents and Carers Survey Questionnaire

About the evaluation

Early Years Alliance (EYA) have appointed [RSM](#) to conduct an evaluation of the City Family CIC creche service. The aim of the evaluation will be to examine the impact that the creche service has had on the children, parents/carers, services, and the wider system served by it. An evaluation that examines the impact of the creche service will support ABSS in better understanding the overall impact of the programme. It will also enable City Family CIC to understand the impact of the service to date, what is working well and areas for improvement in the future.

You have been invited to do this survey because your child(ren) previously attended or are currently attending the ABSS/ City Family CIC creche. Your answers will help us to understand what impact the City Family CIC Creche service has had on service users.

The survey will take less than 15 minutes to complete. You can **save your answers at any time** and finish the survey later.

Before you decide whether to take part, it is important you understand why the research is being carried out, what it will involve and how your privacy will be protected. Please take your time to read the privacy notice.

Please note that:

1. Questions marked with an * are mandatory.
2. If you wish to change your answers at any point, you must click on the checkmark again to unselect it.

Consent

(Question 1) – Mandatory question

By completing this questionnaire, I am agreeing to take part in this research. I have read the privacy notice. I understand my data will be held securely, that this is an anonymous survey and that once I have submitted my responses there is no way to remove them. I understand that when the information collected is no longer required for this project, RSM will follow official procedures to dispose of my data. *

Please select to confirm

Use of the creche service

(Question 2) – Mandatory question

Which option below accurately describes your use of the creche service?

- I have used the creche service in the past.
- I am currently using the creche service.
- I have not used the creche service. – **Go to close page**

(Question 3) – Mandatory question

On average, how often does/did your child(ren) attend the creche service during the time when you engaged in the creche service?

- Once per week
- Multiple times a week

- Once per two weeks
- Once per month
- Once per two months
- Whenever needed

(Question 4) – Mandatory question

What was your peak usage of the creche service during the time when you engaged in the creche service?

- Once per week
- Multiple times a week
- Once per two weeks
- Once per month
- Once per two months
- Whenever needed

Use of ABSS services

(Question 5) – Mandatory, multiple-choice question with open text

Which ABSS service(s) did you attend when using the creche service?

1. ABSS Governance Support
2. Chaos and Calm
3. Early Maths Matters
4. Engagement activity led by Southend Association of Voluntary Services (SAVS)
5. Peer Support Workers for SCN
6. Safe Steps (IDVA)
7. Your Family
8. Welcome to the UK
9. Work Skills
10. Other, please specify:

Impact of the creche service

(Question 6) – Mandatory question

We would like to ask you about the impact of the creche service on you as a parent/carer and your child(ren) in the following question. Please select one answer for each statement.

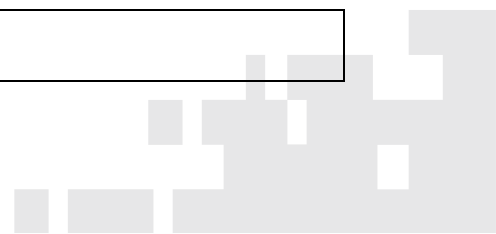
Please scroll to the right to see all available options.

	Significantly improved	Moderately improved	Somewhat improved	Slightly improved	No change	Negatively affected
How did using the creche service impact your ability to attend ABSS services?						

<p>How did using the creche service impact your feelings of inclusion within the community and connectedness with other parents/carers?</p>						
<p>How did using the creche service impact your access to the parenting advice/ support you received?</p>						
<p>Have you noticed any differences in your child(ren) since attending the creche service in relation to their development (e.g., <i>communication skills, physical development, problem solving, confidence etc.</i>)?</p>						
<p>Have you noticed any differences in your child(ren)s social and emotional wellbeing since they started attending the creche service (e.g., <i>managing their emotions, engaging in play or group activities etc.</i>)?</p>						

(Question 7) – Not mandatory question with open text

Could you further explain your answers for the previous question on the impact of the creche service on you or your child(ren)?



Timing of the creche service

(Question 8) – Mandatory question with open text

Does the current length of the creche sessions meet your childcare needs?

- Yes, the current length of creche sessions meet my childcare needs.
- No, I prefer longer creche sessions to meet my childcare needs. – **Go to Question 9**
- No, I prefer shorter creche sessions to meet my childcare needs. – **Go to Question 9**

(Question 9) – Mandatory question with open text

Please specify an ideal length of time for creche sessions:

(Question 10) – Mandatory, multiple-choice question with open text

Does the timing of the creche service (i.e., term-time schedule) enable you to attend your preferred ABSS service?

- Yes, the term-time schedule allows me to attend ABSS service.
- I prefer to have out-of-term (school holiday) creche service.
- I prefer to have creche service before and after school.
- I prefer to have creche service on the weekend.
- Other timing(s), please specify:

Strengths and weaknesses of the creche service

(Question 11) – Mandatory question

Are you aware of anything that encourages or prevents parents/carers from using the creche service?

- Yes, I am.
- No, I don't know about this. – **Go to Question 26**

(Question 12) – Mandatory question

In your opinion, is the **advertising used to promote the creche service** (e.g., flyers, social media) a strength (i.e. what encourages parents/carers) or weakness (i.e. what prevents parents/carers) of the creche service?

- Strength
- Weakness
- Neither strength nor weakness

(Question 13) – Not mandatory question with open text

Please explain your answer:



(Question 14) – Mandatory question

In your opinion, is **the session length and the timing of creche service** (*i.e., term-time schedule*) a strength or weakness of the creche service?

- Strength
- Weakness
- Neither strength nor weakness

(Question 15) – Not mandatory question with open text

Please explain your answer:

(Question 16) – Mandatory question

In your opinion, is **physical location of creche sessions** a strength or weakness of the creche service?

- Strength
- Weakness
- Neither strength nor weakness

(Question 17) – Not mandatory question with open text

Please explain your answer:

(Question 18) – Mandatory question

In your opinion, is **interaction with other parents** a strength or weakness of the creche service?

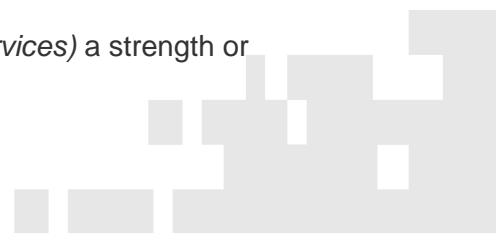
- Strength
- Weakness
- Neither strength nor weakness

(Question 19) – Not mandatory question with open text

Please explain your answer:

(Question 20) – Mandatory question

In your opinion, is **communication** (*e.g., updates on events, ABSS services*) a strength or weakness of the creche service?



- Strength
- Weakness
- Neither strength nor weakness

(Question 21) – Not mandatory question with open text

Please explain your answer:

(Question 22) – Mandatory question

In your opinion, is **childcare resources/advice/support** a strength or weakness of the creche service?

- Strength
- Weakness
- Neither strength nor weakness

(Question 23) – Not mandatory question with open text

Please explain your answer:

(Question 24) – Mandatory question

In your opinion, is **safety and security of children** (*i.e., safe environment, regulations*) a strength or weakness of the creche service?

- Strength
- Weakness
- Neither strength nor weakness

(Question 25) – Not mandatory question with open text

Please explain your answer:

(Question 26) – Mandatory, multiple-choice question with open text

What improvements would you like to see made to the creche service? *Please select all that apply:*

- Increased length of creche sessions
- Increased quality of creche service
- Better advertisement of the creche service to increase awareness of the service
- Clearer information about what the service offers
- Clearer information about who could access the service



- Increased accessibility of the creche service in terms of the physical location where sessions are held
- More timing options of the creche service
- Safer environment
- No improvements needed
- Others, please specify:

Recommending the creche service

(Question 27) – Mandatory question with open text

Have you recommended the City Family CIC creche service to any other parents/carers?

- Yes. No. I can't remember.

(Question 28) – Not mandatory question with open text

Please indicate why you recommended or decided not to recommend the creche service:

Thank you for completing this survey.

(Question 29) – Mandatory question with open text

Postcode

Please enter your full postcode.

*This information will be used to confirm which ABSS ward you live in. It will be held securely and will not be used to identify you in any way. When the information collected from this survey is no longer required for this project, RSM will follow official procedures to dispose of your data. **

Close page

Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey.



B. Creche Booking Request Form

Date/s required:	
Times session is required: <i>Session time only- Please do NOT include set up and de-rig times</i>	
Partner/ Facilitator requesting booking:	
Contact details of facilitator requesting booking:	
Venue for delivery: <i>Please include specific room details</i>	
Training/ Course/ Session to be supported:	
Initial number of children estimated to attend: <i>These numbers will need to be confirmed with a minimum of 3 working days before delivery date, update below</i>	
Number of children confirmed: <i>Confirm with a <u>minimum</u> of 3 working days of session delivery</i>	
Additional needs of children confirmed: <i>Include: Diagnosed SEN, additional needs, allergies</i>	
<i>Business use only:</i>	
<i>Date of creche confirmation:</i>	
<i>Number of staff allocated:</i>	
<i>Has a risk assessment been completed for the venue:</i> <i>Date completed, initial or reviewed?</i> <i>If not, arrange new assessment</i>	



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