

Home-Start Aberdeenshire Consortium

Home is where we start from

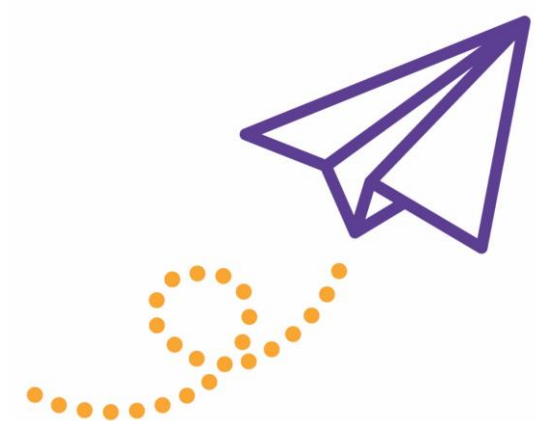
Research Project for Home-Start UK reflecting the families within Aberdeenshire

May 2021

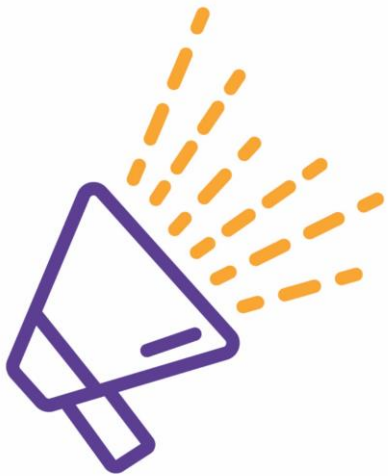


Contents

- **Headline findings**
- **Research method and respondent profile**
- **Experiences of parenting during the pandemic**
- **Experiences with Home-Start in Aberdeenshire**
- **The Future**



Headline Findings (1)



Parents of young children have faced numerous challenges in the past year

- › Approaching 9 out of 10 (87%) say that their experience of parenting during the last year has been more challenging due to the pandemic
- › Isolation was thought to be the biggest challenge for both parents and their children, with parents most likely to cite 'feeling cut off from friends and family' as one of the main challenges they faced (80%). This extended to their child as well, with almost two thirds (63%) of parents finding their child's lack of interaction with other children particularly challenging.

Parents' perceived coping of their child, differs by age of child

- › Most parents of young children feel they have not coped particularly well - over half (51%) gave a score of 0-5/ 10 when rating how well they feel they themselves have coped during the last year
- › In general parents felt that their child aged 0-5 had coped better than they had during the last year, but there is a marked difference by age, with parents of children aged 4 or 5 less likely to believe that their child has coped well

Children's behaviour appears to have changed during the pandemic

- › The majority (74%) of parents with children aged 0-2 have noticed an increase in their child being clingy. Just over half (54%) reported an increase in crying or tantrums above what would be expected
- › However nearly half (42%) reported that their child aged 0-2 was interacting and playing more
- › For children aged 3-5, the majority of parents experienced an increased need for their attention (79%), more tantrums than usual (74%) and an increase in crying or being sad (58%)

Headline Finds (2)

Accessing support from Home-Start has been a lifeline

- › Prior to receiving any support from Home-Start, parents found it difficult to ask for help, with almost half (45%) always or often feeling ashamed to need help
- › Home-Start has helped people feel more comfortable asking for help and has increased their confidence in being a parent
- › (87%) agree that Home-Start has been a lifeline, with a similar proportion (85%) believing that Home-Start provided services or service changes that were helpful during lockdown

Home-Start have provided emotional and practical support

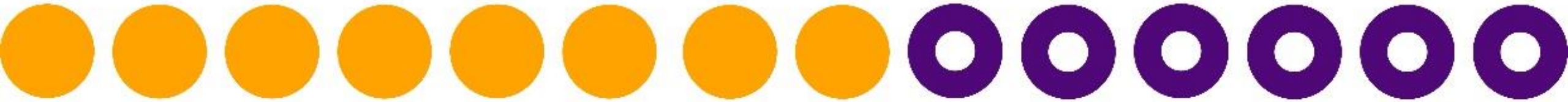
- › (91%) believe that Home-Start has made a positive difference to family life
- › In particular, the support from Home-Start has addressed some of the biggest challenges parents faced, including lessening feelings of isolation (68%) and helping parents cope (61%)
- › The help from Home-Start has also boosted parents' mental health, helping them to feel better in themselves (52%) and giving them confidence (49%) and hope for the future (45%)

Continued support is needed as the UK emerges from lockdown

- › Whilst the majority feel optimistic about the future, (11%) do not feel optimistic
- › Almost 52% are concerned about their own wellbeing or mental health in the year ahead
- › Parents are particularly worried about their children in terms of their social development (69%) and generally not being able to live a 'normal' life, fearing restrictions on days out (62%) and access to facilities such as playgrounds, soft play and parent and baby groups (62%)



Research method and respondent profile



Background and Methodology

‘Home is where we start from’ is a key Home-Start UK positioning report planned for Spring 2021, building on the Babies in Lockdown report in 2020.

The report aims to shine a light on the Home-Start approach, the issues facing families, the work of Local Home-Starts and the voices of families who have been given a lifeline by the work of Home-Start.

The main objective of this research was to gather the experiences of parents with at least one child aged 0-5 years, who have been supported over the past year by Home-Start.

An open invite to an online survey was sent to parents who have received support from a local Home-Start in the last year.

The survey was open from 6th April – 26th April 2021:

- 1238 responses received, from those supported by c.125 local Home-Starts
- 15 minute questionnaire containing a number of free text responses
- Free text responses analysed qualitatively
- Results have not been weighted. This means that the profile of respondents may differ from the profile of those supported by Home-Start across the UK

Commentary notes significant differences* (at the 95% confidence level) by nation, age and other key groups where sample sizes allow

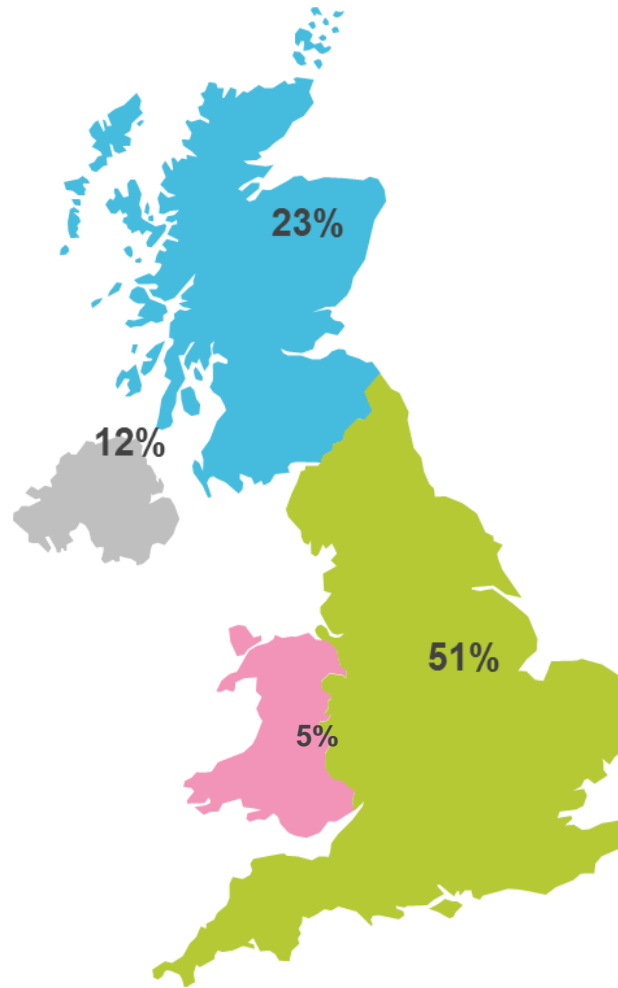
This report shares the findings of the 5 Home-Start schemes which work across Aberdeenshire. Home-Start Deeside, Alford and Strathdon, Home-Start Deveron, Home-Start Garioch, Home-Start Kincardine and Home-Start North East Aberdeenshire.



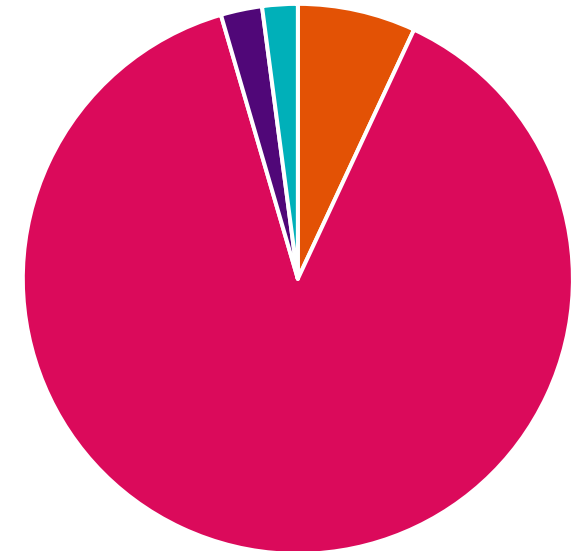
Respondent Profile

1238 Reponses in total across the UK

71 in Aberdeenshire

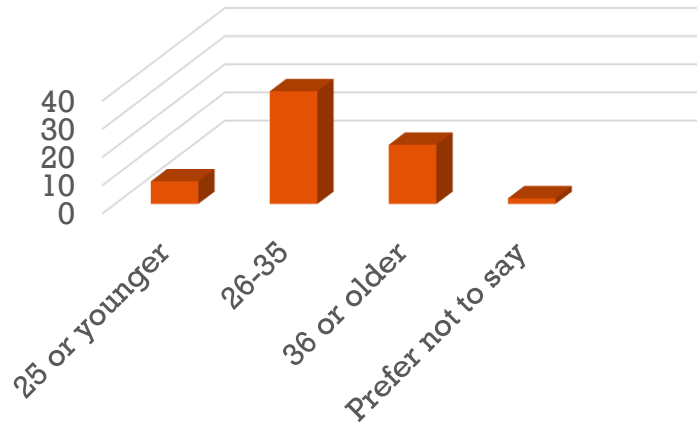


Family Profile



- Pregnant
- Child 0-2
- Child 3-5
- Child over 5

Age of respondent



Respondent Profile Continued

Parenting Situation

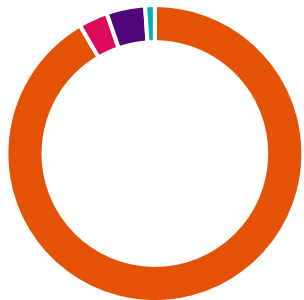


30% lone parent



68% living with a partner

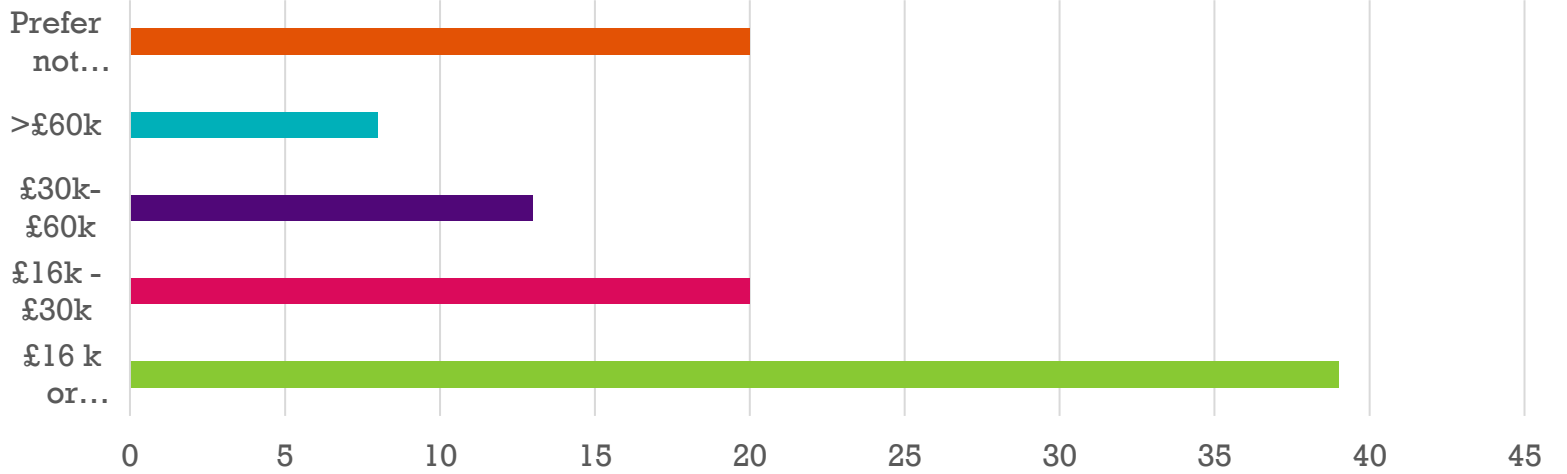
Ethnicity



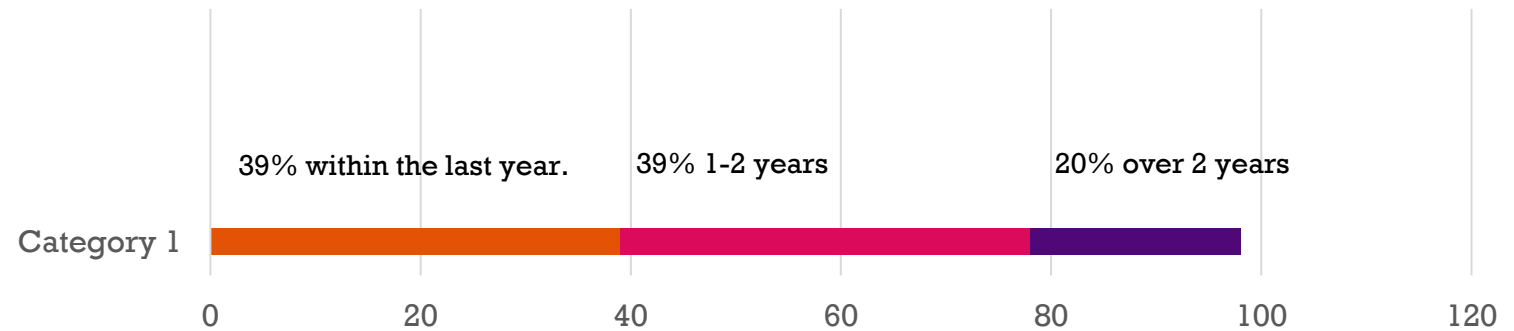
- White
- Mixed
- Asian/Asian British
- Black.Black British

93% English as a first language

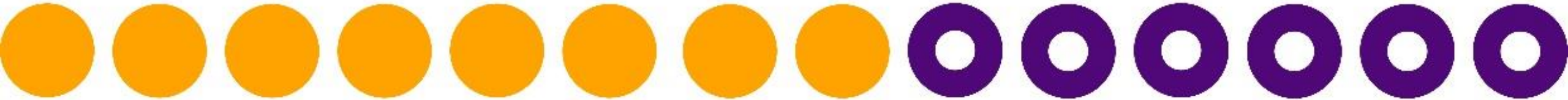
Household Income



Relationship with Home-Start



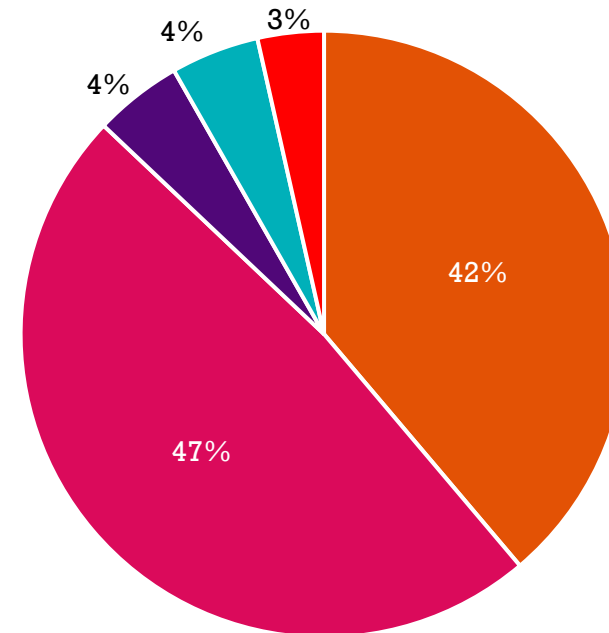
Experiences of parenting during the pandemic



Most parents of children aged 0-5 have found parenting more challenging due to the pandemic

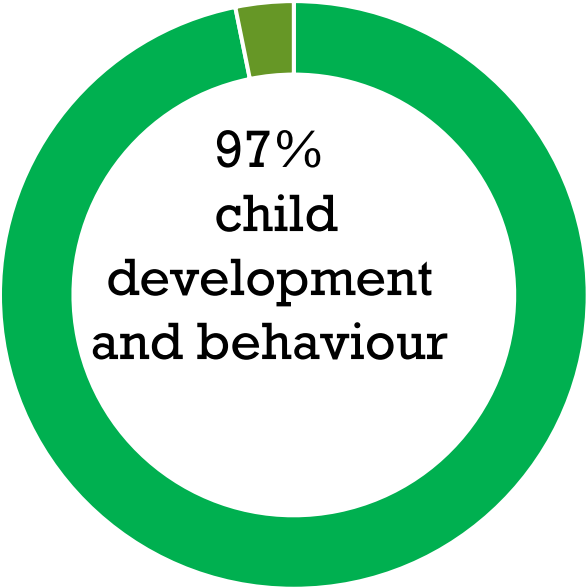
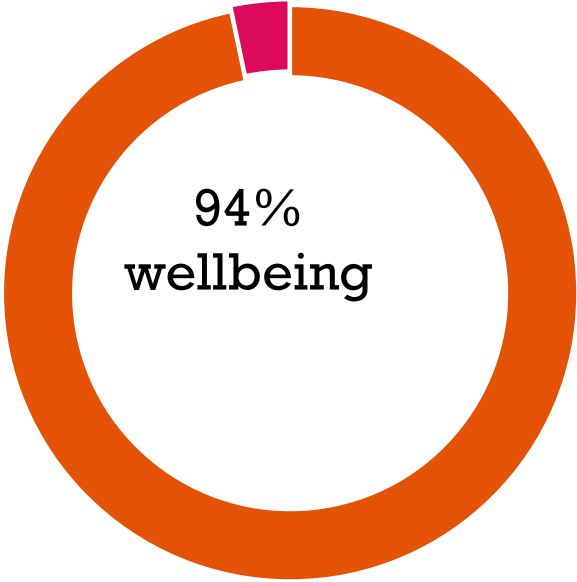
- Almost half (47%) say that their experience of parenting has been much more challenging. A further 42% say it has been more challenging.
- This is particularly the case for those with three or more children (54% have found it much more challenging compared to 41% of those with just one child)

How the pandemic has changed the experience of parenting

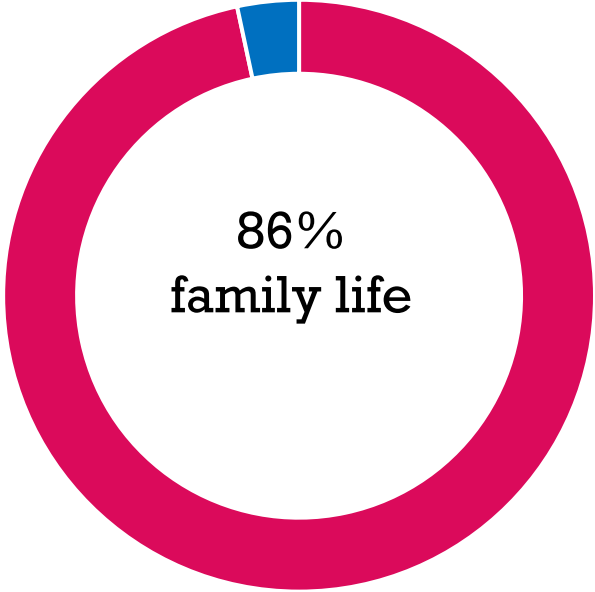
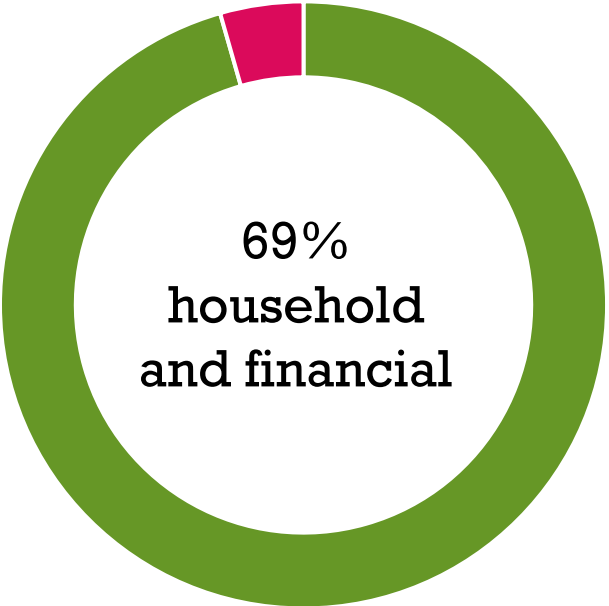


- Much more challenging than usual
- More challenging than usual
- No different
- Less challenging than usual
- Much less challenging than usual

Almost all parents have experienced challenges relating to their own wellbeing or their child's development & behaviour



Biggest challenges in the last 12 months (summary)

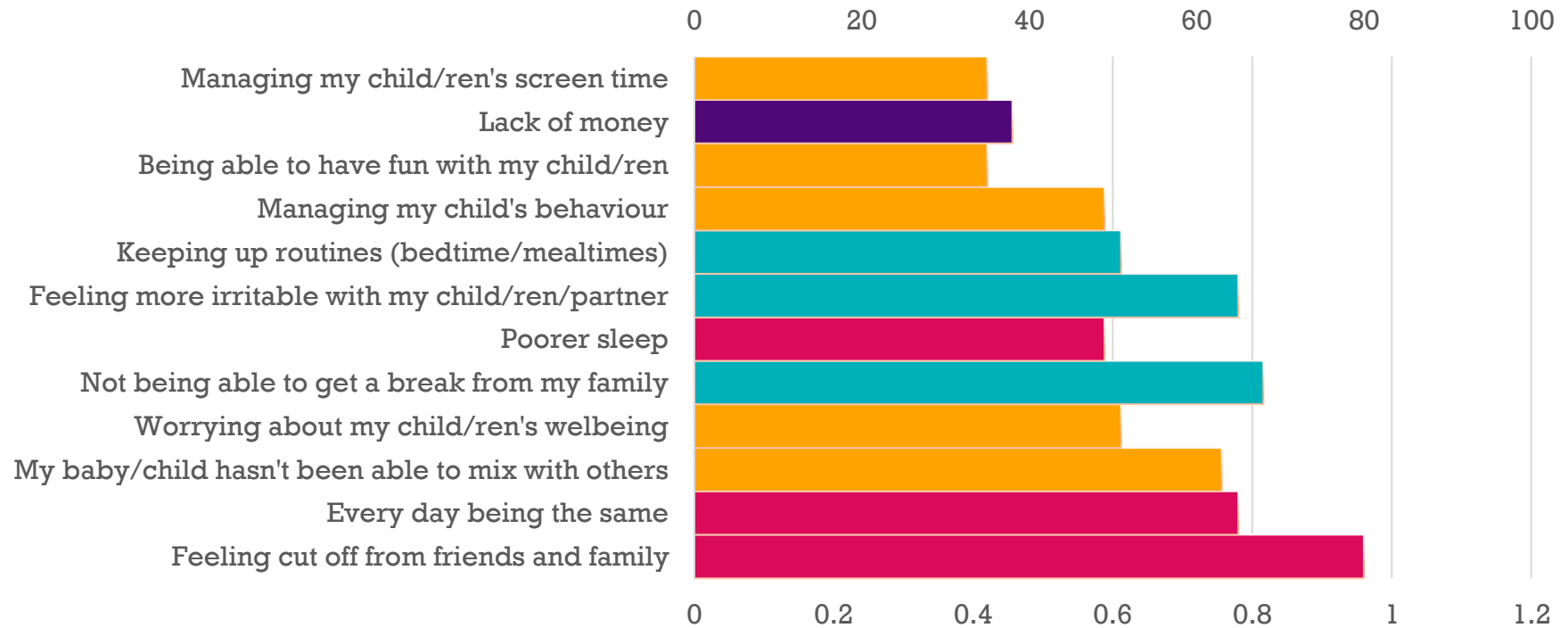


Feeling isolated was the most common challenge parents faced

Parents of children aged 0-2 were more likely to be concerned about their child not being able to mix with other children (72% vs 64% on average)

Parents of 3 or more children found not being able to get a break from their family one of the biggest challenges they faced (66% vs 55% on average)

Biggest challenges in the last 12 months



What have been the biggest challenges that you have faced in the last year? * Displaying all challenges experienced by at least 33% of respondents

A number of key experiences and issues are evident across our respondents

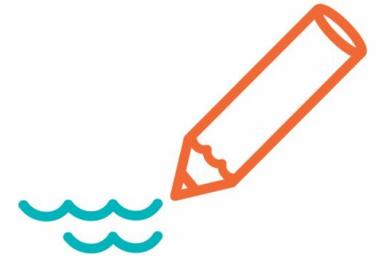


The Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns have acted as a magnifier, exacerbating any existing issues or tensions within each household, including mental health issues

Additionally, the following key themes are evident in terms of the experiences of our respondents during the last year:

- > Lack of socialising
- > Lack of indoor and outdoor space
- > Worries about what my child is missing out on
- > Lack of health care provision or having to fight for access to services
- > The birth and post birth care not being as planned
- > Being together for the whole time with no break from each other (both adults and children, children and children, and adults and adults). For most this creates tensions, for some this has been a predominantly positive experience
- > Feeling judged when you do everyday tasks such as taking children shopping with you as you have no childcare available
- > Additional spending on food and entertainment as the family are at home more

Experiences



“The last 12 months has been the most challenging time in my marriage. My husband has suffered from depression & anxiety which has in turn affected how I feel and how my children feel. We have had to juggle high-pressure jobs with a lack of childcare whilst trying to provide some sort of quality of life to our children. It has been immensely stressful and nearly broke up our marriage. Our children have been affected by it all as they do not have happy, motivated parents. They have depressed, and angry parents who are trying to provide a positive environment for them but failing often. We have never faced anything more challenging as a family before.”

“My child is really stressed with the sound of lots of people talking, he doesn't like there being lots of people in the room. For 6 months he only ever saw mine and his dads face.”

“Giving birth to our baby at the height of the first lockdown miles away from friends and family. Nobody able to visit. Being in hospital alone, having nobody to visit in a prolonged stay in the hospital. No support teams e.g. no infant feeding team, limited health visitor visits and no lactation consultant etc.”

“To begin with, despite antenatal care being absurdly difficult to manage, the first 3 months were wonderful because I had lots more 1:1 time with my child and 'down time for myself to adjust than I would have had in the ordinary world. It was difficult not being able to introduce my new baby to anyone at all and later on as baby needs more entertaining, this has become increasingly hard to manage. The swimming pools being closed has been the worst aspect overall.”

A number of behavioral changes are reported by parents of 0-2s

Whilst some parents found it hard to know what was different because lockdown was all their child has ever known, and some felt their child was too young to be affected by the changes, others reported the following changes in behaviour:

- > Being more clingy
- > Pre-lockdown having engaged with strangers now being scared of strangers
- > Fearful of masked faces
- > Sharing less or refusing to share
- > Delays in walking and speech development (particularly when compared to older siblings)
- > Speaking only to family and being scared to interact with strangers
- > Bored/ lack of activity and sleeping more as a result

Others reported more positive aspects - felt that their own bond with their child had benefitted from the close contact, and that their child's speech had developed more as a result of spending so much time with family. Others reported an increased bond between siblings.



Behavioural changes (0-2)

“Although he met all his milestones, not socialising has I think slowed down his speech. Just being home with me is limiting his interaction.”

“My child is really stressed with the sound of lots of people talking, he doesn't like there being lots of people in the room. For 6 months he only ever saw mine and his dad's face.”

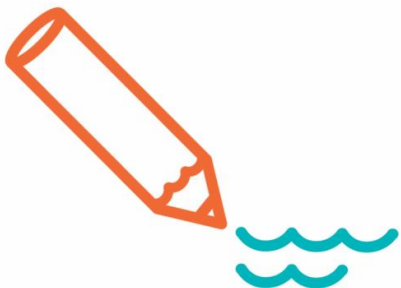
“Slower at speech than expected and not as sociable with any child own age.”

“She hasn't seen any other babies or anyone outside of our house, so she's been crying if anyone looks at her.”

“He is more attached to my phone than my nieces and nephews are and looks to me socially as if to say “where's the people” as almost all our contact with family/friends has been through FaceTime.”

“At 19m old my daughters speech had regressed. She had been counting 1-12 and knew all the animal noises plus a few other bits and over a period of 1-2 months after lockdown she went mute and wouldn't talk and held huge tantrums instead.”

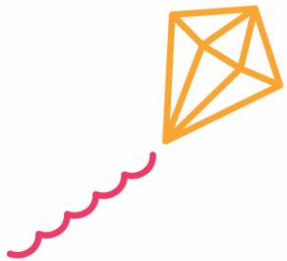
“I believe the cap in social interaction had hindered her development.”



A number of behavioural changes are reported by parents of 3-5s

The changes reported include:

- Being more clingy
- More arguments and conflict between siblings
- Testing / pushing the boundaries more with parents
- More challenging behaviour
- More irritable
- More shy than prior to lockdown
- More dependent on devices and more upset when device batteries go flat!
- Bored more of the time
- Greater separation anxiety
- Scared of the big virus
- Frustrated by the restrictions, missing previous activities, park, play-group, nursery seeing friends
- Repeatedly (sometimes daily) asking when lockdown will end
- Wanting / needing attention around the clock
- Refusing to go outside
- Nervous of masks / strangers
- Concerned about germs/ having clean hands
- Children with SEND or who are ASD or who have S&L difficulties, are struggling with the lack of support
- Children wanting more attention away from other siblings
- Reverting back to “baby talk”
- Increase in bed wetting
- Refusing to play, and wanting screen-time instead
- More physical in the type of play
- Unable to play alone
- Other parents felt their child had benefitted from the close contact with parents and siblings leading to stronger relationships



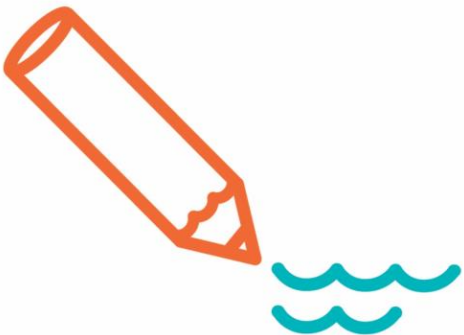
Behavioural changes (3-5)

“Become more difficult, sleeping less, misbehaving more than usual.”

“They have forgotten how to act in public, they have no idea of boundaries out with the home at times! They get frustrated with seeing lots of people out while they are being told to stay home.”

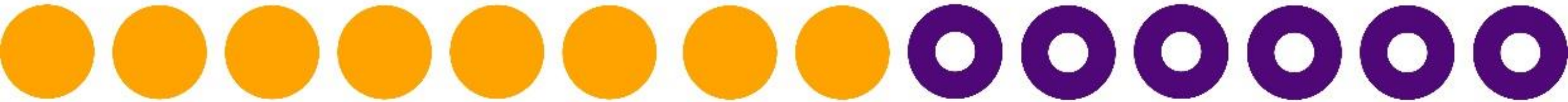
“My child is more clingy. They used to be happy to go to nursery but now don't want to go or are tearful at drop off. They're always asking about the virus and who has it.”

“My now 3 year old (2 when the it all started) used to be bubbly chatty and outgoing. She talked to everyone. Since she is now quiet with others, shy, scared of going out, nervous of others at Playparks it's had a really negative effect on her. She gets bad dreams too and doesn't like to leave the house. She struggled when her sister started school again and was scared of the facemasks in the playground. It's still ongoing.”



Please tell us more about any changes you have noticed in your child/ren aged 3-5 during the pandemic (this might be things they have said, changes in their play or behaviour, or just differences in how they are.

Experiences with Home-Start in Aberdeenshire



51% of parents felt they weren't doing enough for their children

52% of parents with young children do not believe they have coped well over the last year

21% found it easy asking for help

45% of parents felt they were getting it wrong all the time

46% felt judged as a parent

28% felt confident as a parent

45% felt ashamed for needing help as a parent

Thinking about your experiences of parenting before your contact with Home-Start, identify the option which best applies to you.

A number of specific reasons for approaching Home-Start are evident across our sample

The following key themes are evident in terms of causing respondents to seek assistance from Home-Start:

- > Feeling isolated
- > Feeling overwhelmed
- > Needing to talk to someone who is not a family member
- > Moved to a new area and not knowing anyone and having moved away from family
- > Struggling financially
- > Struggling emotionally
- > Mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, feeling down, or self harm
- > An ill partner
- > A specific issue with my child such as baby not sleeping or child being more argumentative
- > Referrals/ suggestions to contact Home-Start were made by GPs, health visitors and therapists.

It is important to note that a combination of issues and circumstances led parents to Home-Start. For many, their written comments show that it was due to a combination of issues that they needed additional help



Reason for approaching Home-Start

"I felt I was struggling as a parent as well as with my own mental health, I knew I needed help to carry out the basics."

"I felt alone and abandoned. This was my first child and I didn't know if I was getting it right or not."

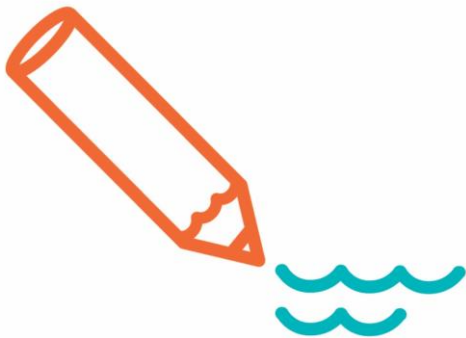
"To get the support emotionally to help me as I worry so much, and struggle with my anxieties and feel low at times."

"I became a carer for my twin granddaughters, I already had a baby of my own, every day felt like a challenge, I could not get out on my own with the 3 babies."

"I was completely suicidal with no family to help nearby and I needed to know there would be a constant in my week."

"No professional support. I've not physically seen my health visitor."

"To give my family a better chance at life with a little nudge from homestart volunteer who is just like a family member gave me the courage to start making life better for us all!"

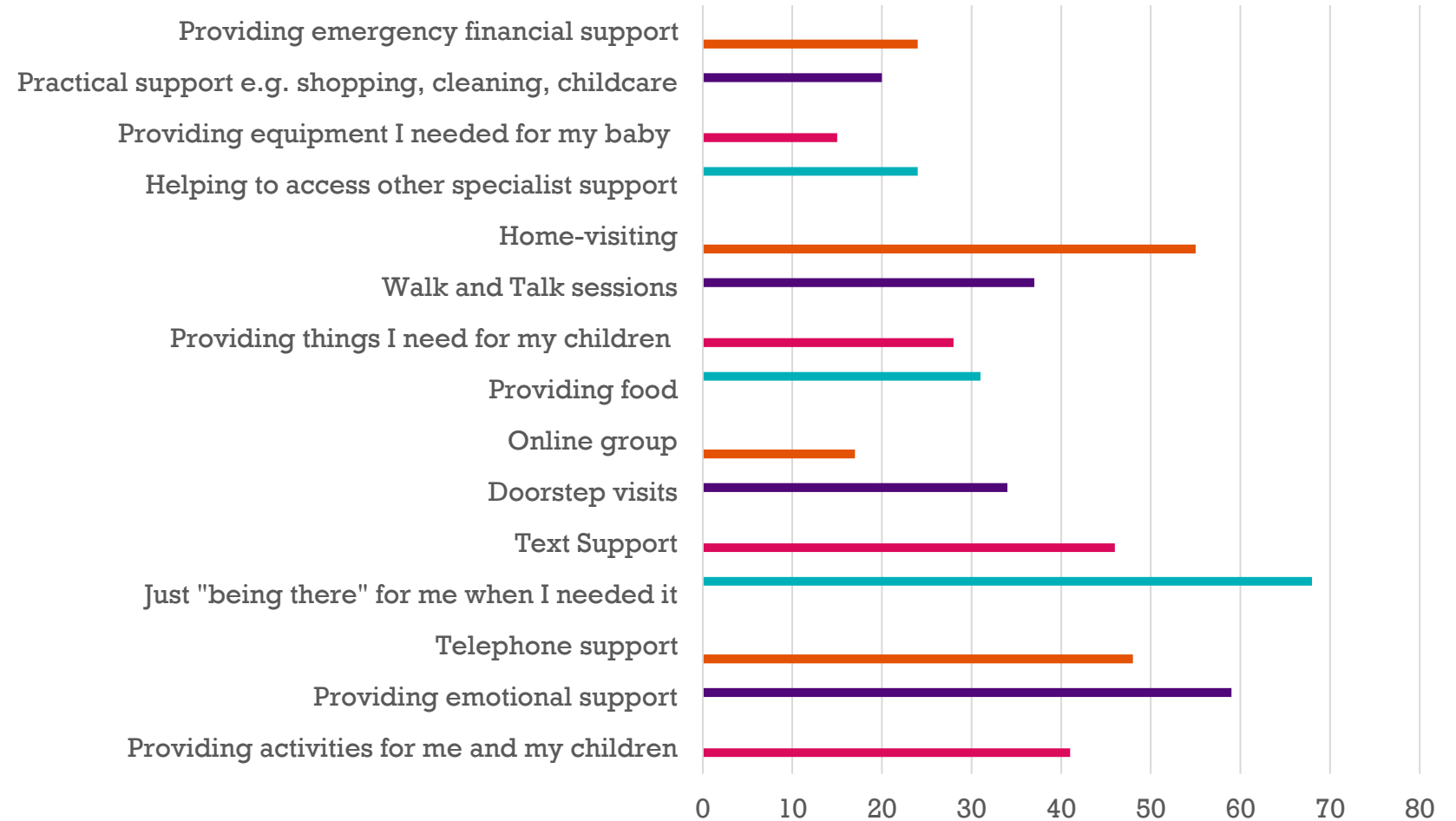


Thinking about why you were in touch with Home-Start, please complete the following sentence.....please tell us as much or as little as you want to. "The main reason I wanted support from Home-Start was....."

Home-Start have supported parents in many different ways

- Type of support provided includes emotional as well as practical support
- Type of support received varied by nation/ region, relationship status, household income and according to the age of the child/ children, reflecting the individual needs of parents

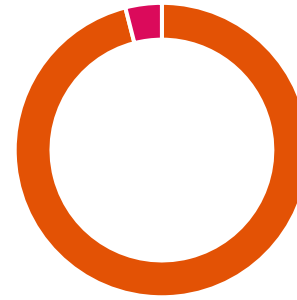
Support received from Home-Start in the last year



*In which of the following ways have you been supported by your local Home-Start, in the last year? * Displaying support received by at least 15% of respondents*

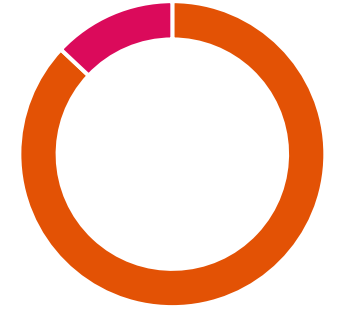
Support from Home-Start is highly thought of and considered to be a lifeline

I felt like I was listened to



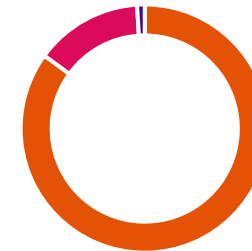
■ Agree ■ Neither/Nor

Home-Start has been a lifeline for me



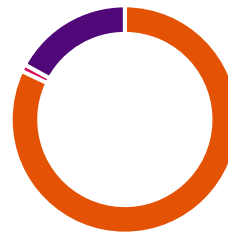
■ Agree

Home-Start provided services that were helpful during COVID-19 lockdown



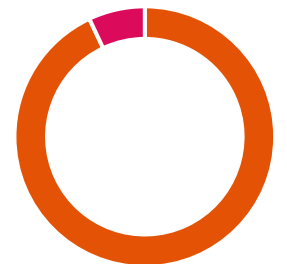
■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Neither/Nor

Getting support from a volunteer, instead of a professional, helped me feel more comfortable accepting support



■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Neither/Nor

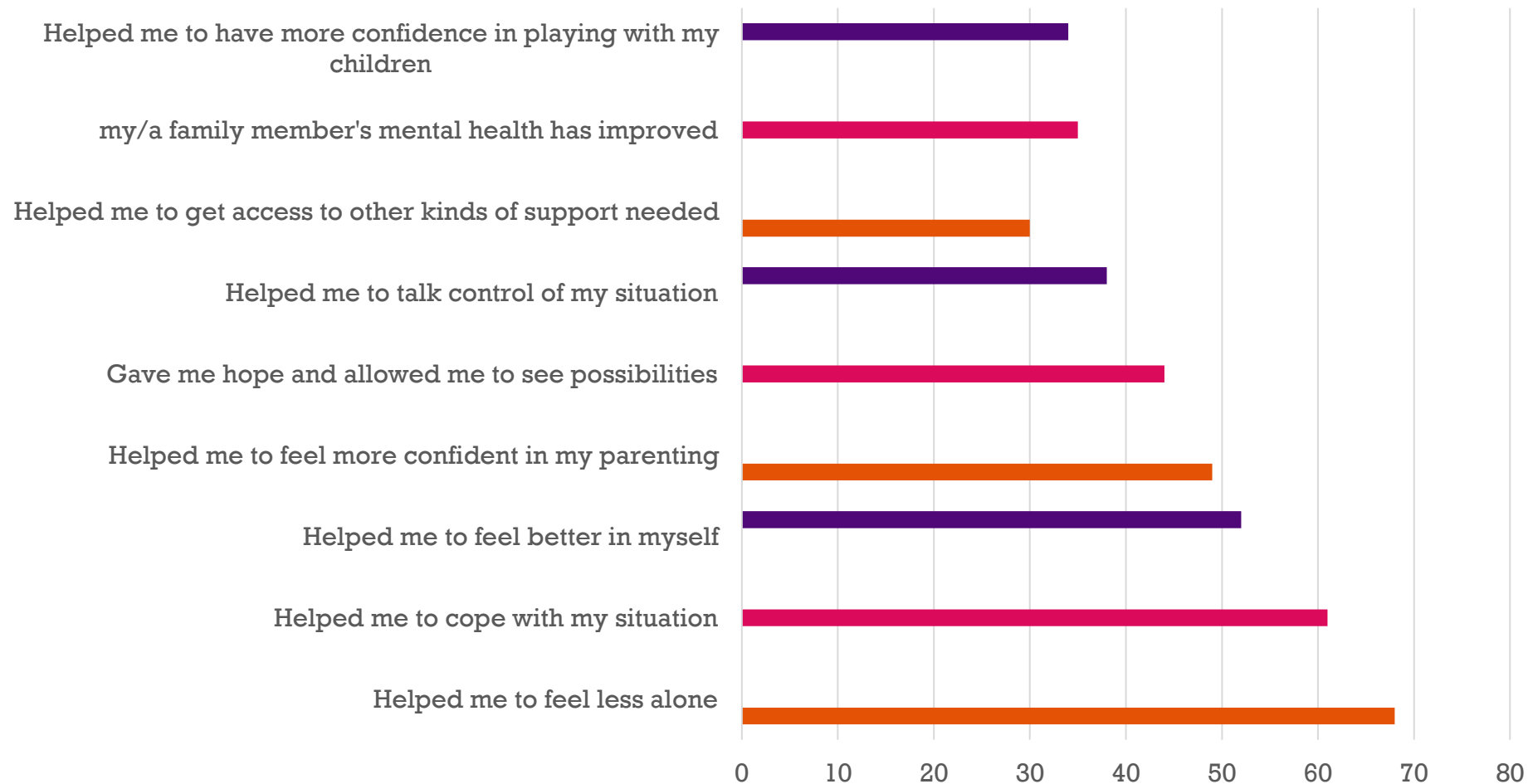
Home-Start made a positive difference to me and my family



■ Agree ■ Disagree

Support from Home-Start has lessened feelings of loneliness and helped people cope

Impact of support from Home-Start during the last year

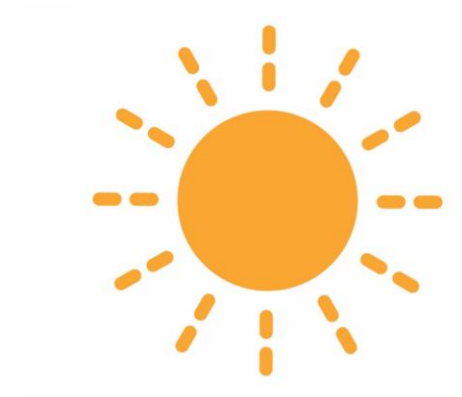


*Thinking now about the impact of what you received from Home-Start during the last year....
Which, if any, of the following apply to your family's situation as a direct result of what your local Home-Start provided*

A number of themes about the nature of the experience of support emerge from the additional information respondents provided

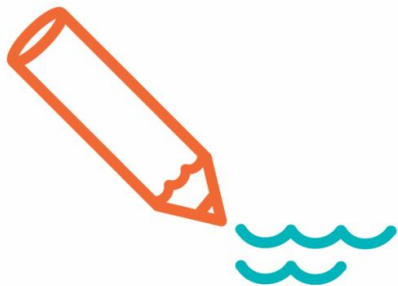
Key themes:

- > Restoring or giving confidence
- > Just being there to chat
- > Helped/ enabled us to get through the last 12 months – especially with mental health and financial issues
- > Personal support – just having someone non-judgmental to talk to
- > Practical support – accessing services
- > Practical support – activities for the children
- > Practical tips and guidance
- > Making me feel listened to
- > Kind volunteers
- > Support for a parent of a child with a disability from a volunteer who is the parent of a child with a disability

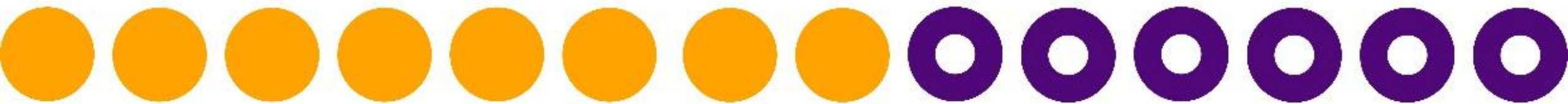


Home-Start experiences

- *“They are fantastic and very approachable to talk about anything and always giving superb idea to keep kids busy.”*
- *“I would be completely lost without Home-Start and having them there just means the absolute world to me and has been a life line.”*
- *“If I wasn’t referred to Home-Start when I was I don’t know where my family would be! My mental health was so bad and as a family we felt we didn’t belong and couldn’t cope with anything! But we now see our future being so much better than it was! Already we have made amazing bonds with home-start staff who are just like family to us.”*
- *”They were there when no one else was. The volunteers, the staff. I felt totally supported. I wish the other services were as supportive. I felt safe with my volunteer. The risk assessments and precautions carried out before visits reassured me we would be safe.”*
- *“In the months following the birth I was completely suicidal. I felt a failure and could not do anything right. Rather than be admitted to the mother and baby unit my parents moved my husband, baby and I in with them miles away. I couldn’t dream of coming back up to our actual home if it wasn’t for the support of my Home-Start volunteer. I will never forget the support I have received from Home-Start and I will endeavour to advocate for them for years to come.”*
- *“Home-Start is amazing! I don’t think they could do more to help anyone, they go above and beyond to help and support families!”*
- *“My volunteer understands and is non-judgmental, reassuring me I am a good parent.”*
- *“I really appreciate the volunteer we were paired up with she is perfect for us.”*



The future



About half of respondents feel optimistic about the future for their family

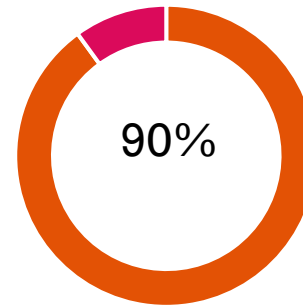
Those with higher household incomes tend to feel more optimistic

Optimism is higher amongst those who believe they coped well during the pandemic

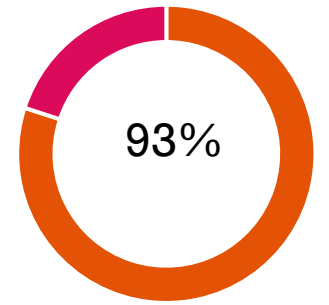
However almost all are concerned about the health and wellbeing of themselves and their family

Main worried/concerns for the year ahead (summary)

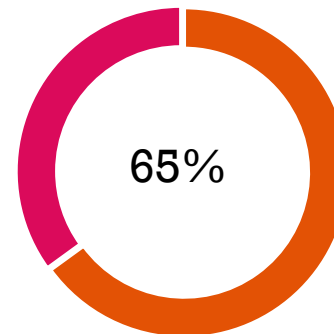
Worried about COVID19



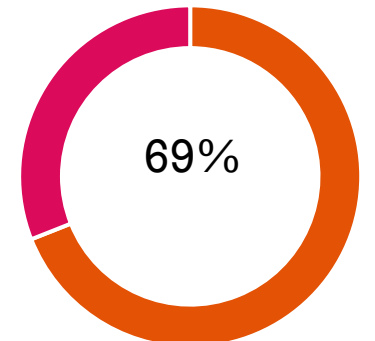
Health and wellbeing



Financial and other worries



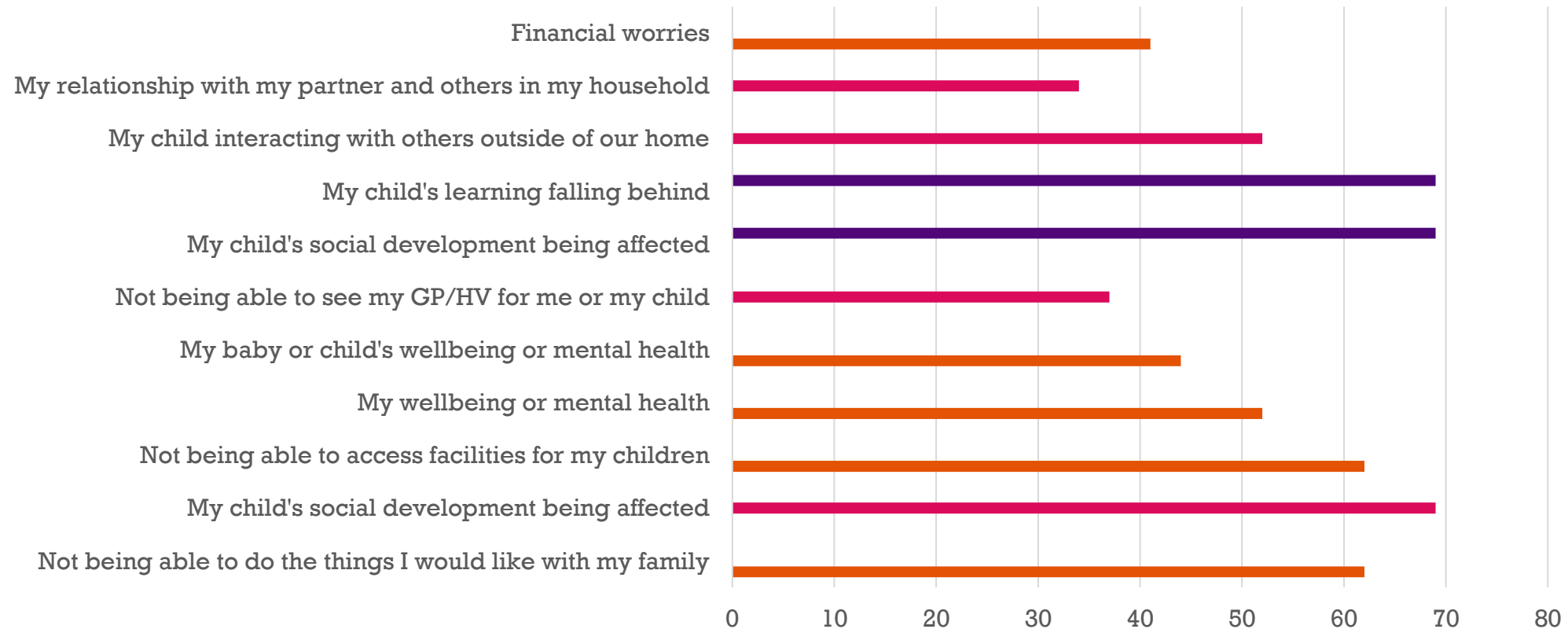
Relationships



Most concerns are focused on children's development and wellbeing

- › Generally we see that parents place concerns about their child ahead of worries about themselves, although over half (57%) are concerned about their own mental health
- › Parents' own mental health was the most common concern amongst those who felt that they have not coped well over the last year (72% cited this as a key concern)

Main concerns/worries for the year ahead

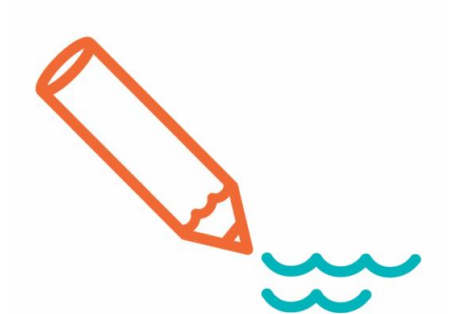


Looking forward to the year ahead, what would you say are your main concerns? What are the things that worry you? (prompted list)

* Displaying all concerns experienced by at least 35% of respondents

A number of suggestions for future services were made

- > “I’m not sure there are any new specific services required but I feel an increase in the number of present services and support staff is likely to be needed.”
- > “Meet ups with the families together when it's safe to do so would be good.”
- > “Parenting skills classes.”
- > “Over 5’s would be nice.”
- > “More groups as there are gaps in our local communities.”
- > “I feel face-to -face contact is most beneficial to me personally so opportunities to meet and be around others are vital to me. Organised outdoor events or activities for families.”
- > “Group walk and talks.”
- > “Dads only provision.”
- > “Confidence building and community support for new parents who are yet to experience going out and mixing with others and going places with a new baby.”



Can you think of any new services that may be needed for families? Or are there any new ways of delivering services that would be helpful?

Overall, my mental health is stable but nowhere near flourishing. It is impossible to overstate the necessity of being around other mums with young children. Whether to ask advice, vent frustrations, take pleasure in watching our kids play together, or simply have someone else to hand the baby to for a few minutes, we need that time in close proximity to other mums. Young children are intensely demanding on every resource we have - be that time, mental or emotional energy, strength, patience - you name it, they claim it.

Home-Start was amazing from start to finish. They were there when no one else was. The volunteers, the staff. I felt totally supported.

