

Parenting Service Report, part of London Borough of Sutton's Family Hubs.

2023-April 2024



PARENTING REPORT

1.0 Introduction

This report is an evaluation of the second year of the parenting service in Sutton and includes all parenting courses offered through family hubs. It will explore the activity, impact, learning and next steps. This report includes data from January 2023 - March 2024. The previous report covered 2022 (January to December). The reporting cycle has been adjusted to align to the financial year.

There is a call for partners to continue to support the programme and secure longer term funding to ensure its sustainability and growth to meet demands.

1.1 Summary

In Year 2 the service has continued to offer evidence-based parenting programmes through Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC) and Circle of Security. This has been spread across the borough.

A variety of other parenting programmes have also been delivered this year to meet the needs of families in the borough: Universal online parenting (Solihull), Time out for Parents- Teens (Care for the family), Time out for Parents - Dad's (Care for the Family), Managing Anger in the Family (care for the Family) Time out for Parents- Autism (Care for the Family) Autism programmes (Adapt 2Learn), Small Change, Big Difference.

Partner agencies have also delivered the Family Links Parenting groups (Home Start) and Early Bird Parenting programme (post diagnosis parenting programme for autism, delivered by Playwise), although their data is not included in this report.

Since January 2023 to date (March 2024), there have been 305 parents who have completed parenting programmes face to face. This is a 163% increase from 2022. In the same period 266 parents have accessed support through the online universal parenting programmes, this is a 34% decrease from 2022.

All Parents attending courses self refer, there is no requirement for them to be involved in statutory services, although this would not be a barrier to parents accessing courses. The increase in demand demonstrates that parents choose to attend the programmes.

The delivery of the EPEC and Care for the Family programmes has predominantly been by 2 full time members of staff (1 started in September 2023) and 1 Bank member of staff. There are 9 Parent group Leaders 4 of which regularly deliver the programmes. Circle of Security is run by trained children's centre staff and Homestart staff.

Over the reporting period, we have been able to deliver 25 face to face courses.

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Funder	Total amount for 2 years (2023-2025)	Delivery component
South West London (ICP)	£75k over 2 years (37.k per year 23-25)	Delivery of EPEC parenting programmes Delivery of parenting programmes for Autism via Adapt2Learn and Care for the Family Staffing for the parenting hub Licence for EPEC Resources for the parenting programmes and engagement work with families.
Public Health	£110k	Universal online parenting programme Delivery of Circle of Security (0-5s) via Homestart and Early Intervention service Management costs for the overarching parenting programme team Training partners to deliver parenting programmes Administrator
Children's Services	£37.5k Per year (23-25) £4500 Reducing Parental Conflict Courses	Reducing parental conflict training Reducing parenting conflict resources Delivery of parenting programmes for Autism via Adapt2Learn and Care for the Family Timeout for Parents - Teens Timeout for Parents- Managing anger in the family Contribution to staffing costs for the parenting offer

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1.2 Background

In Sutton, the delivery of parenting programmes across the borough has historically sat within children's social care.

In 2020, with the development of a Children's Delivery Board, and a [Helping Early Strategy](#) that encouraged a more active and broader partnership for early intervention, there was a joint commitment to invest together in parenting programmes and to enhance the existing offer in Sutton. A new parenting model was jointly invested in by Public Health, South West London ICP and Children's Social Care, which started in December 2021, when roles were fully established.

The primary evidence-based parenting programmes chosen to deliver in Sutton were; Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC), and Circle of Security Parenting (COSP). Both programmes have an evidence base that has been independently verified by the Early Intervention Foundation

EPEC has been developed by parenting specialists at [South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust \(SLaM\)](#), academics at [Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience \(IoPPN\)](#), King's College London and co-produced with parents themselves.

Parenting was chosen by South West London ICP (Previously SWLCCG) to be a key priority for each area in South West London, with EPEC being the chosen evidence-based parenting programme to roll out. Investment was made in each area to support the delivery of EPEC, and the development of a parenting 'hub'. As a result funding was in place for Sutton, Wandsworth and Merton to access the EPEC licence, attend relevant training and recruit staff to deliver and implement parenting programmes.

Within Sutton, between 2018 - 2020, we undertook a Children's review which highlighted the need for an investment and coordination of early years work across the borough. This resulted in a commitment to funding for universal and early childhood parenting support. This funded the Circle of Security programme and [Solihull online universal parenting programme](#).

Nationally, there was growing evidence of the impact of parental conflict, in the escalation of need for children and families, that led to statutory support. This resulted in a government led 'reducing parental conflict programme', and grants being released to local authorities to support the development of parental resources and training for staff in parental conflict. Children's Social care were successful in their bids for these grants, which fed into the joint funding for parenting in Sutton.

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EPEC - Early Intervention Foundation description

- EPEC is based on social learning principles that assume that some parenting behaviours inadvertently encourage unwanted child behaviours. Parents therefore learn strategies for discouraging unwanted behaviours and improving positive family interactions.
- In the short term, EPEC aims to provide parents with skills for improving children's behaviour and increasing their confidence in their parenting abilities.
- In the long term, children will be better able to manage their feelings and behaviour

CIRCLE OF SECURITY - Early Intervention Foundation description

- Circle of Security Parenting is a parenting programme for caregivers of children between the ages of 4 months and 6 years. It is a targeted -selective programme delivered in a variety of settings (e.g. children's centres, CAMHS units, fostering and adoption units) and aims to improve children's attachment.
- Circle of Security Parenting is based on attachment theory and aims at helping parents reflect on their own attachment experiences and thus reduce their negative mental attributions to the child's normal attachment -seeking behaviours. Parents are then better able to provide a secure base for their child and their exploratory behaviours, which in turn, improves their child's attachment.

1.3 Basis for early intervention parenting programmes in Sutton

Parenting programmes are a core function of our early intervention in Sutton:

The basis for Parenting programmes

Problems

Demand for targeted early help services is rising.

Parental mental and physical health needs has increased.

Multiple pathways & processes, linked to not being whole family and lack of joined up working

Increased referrals for diagnosis of autism, with push back from Community Paediatricians linked to parenting behaviours

Our input

£225K for 2 years, investing in parenting programmes, online and in person.

Parenting Coordinator, Parenting Support Worker and Parenting Admin

Parent volunteers

Family Hub spaces to run programmes from

Assumptions

Bringing parents together for peer support and informal, consistent advice and guidance will build community capacity

Parent(s) will deliver parenting programmes, once trained to do so.

Parents will feel OK to engage in parenting programmes run by the council and partners

Outputs

Coffee sessions in each PCN area

EPEC & Circle of Security and Time out for Teens delivered

5+ Partners trained to deliver parenting programmes in their own settings

5+ Parents trained to deliver parenting programmes

Universal parenting offer established online

ASD specific parenting programmes run

Outcomes

For parents who engage in the programmes:

Volunteering and employment as a result of engaging

Reduced escalation of need through targeted early help, social care and community paediatrics

Secure attachment for children taking part in Circle of Security

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2.0 The journey of parenting support in Sutton

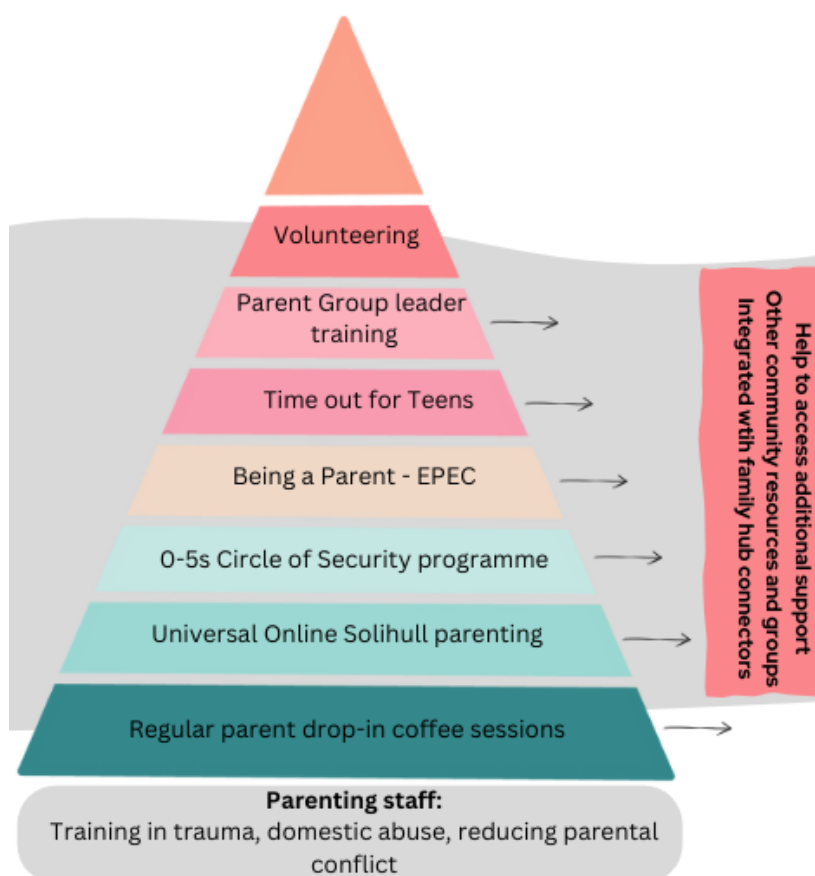
Below describes the developments made to our structure, offer and models for parenting programme support in Sutton.

Then (2020)	Now (2024)
Parents access the programme through referrals, made by social workers or the SPA or education	Self referral only
Whilst these are universal programmes, 100% of parents are either known to social care (Tier 2&3) or have emerging complex needs.	90% of parents attending are not involved with children's social care (Tier 3). This means that most parents are at a Helping early (Tier 1 &2) stage. There is a universal offer
Parenting programmes delivered are Time Out for Parents (primary years) and Time Out for Parents (teenage years). Timeout for parents ASD and ADHD.	There is a varied programme, that now enhances this offer to include the evidence based parenting programme, Empowering Parents Empowering communities (EPEC) and Circle of Security, as well as continuation of the Time Out Programmes.
Parenting programmes are fully funded by Children's Social Care and sit within Children's Social Care.	Joint funding with ICP, Children's Services and Public Health. Sits within Public Health
P/T workers, working dual roles within children's social care and parenting	F/T Parenting coordinator. P/T Parenting support worker (new for 2023). P/T Admin, Bank Staff employed on 0 hours contract.
No online offer	Online offer through Solihull Parenting
Parenting support available for children aged 5+	Included in the parenting offer is now the Circle of Security, an attachment based parenting programme for parents of 0-5s
No opportunity for further development, linking with other services	Train the trainer component within EPEC Ongoing coffee sessions for further support Volunteering opportunities made available with Children's Centres and Parenting Service

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2.1 Our parenting programme model includes:

- Consistent and regular drop-ins for parents to grow peer support networks. There are extensive examples globally of the positive impact of peer support groups to improve health outcomes, particularly for those who do not already access services, or who find it hard to do so.
- Local organisations meeting parents at the coffee support sessions for housing, employment, welfare support, SEND Support, health advice.
- Induction and ongoing training for staff on Trauma, Domestic Abuse, Reducing parental conflict
- Varied programmes to meet the needs of different parents/circumstances and ages of children, delivered with a range of practitioners and organisations.
- Capacity building; enabling local parents and local professionals the opportunity to be trained in and deliver parenting programmes, and also volunteering opportunities linked to Family Hubs, The Volunteer Centre, and Children's Centres.



Access to universal services through the Early Intervention Service. Access to other parenting support in the borough via Cognus, Playwise, Limes and other voluntary sector organisations

3.0 Overview of activity & impact

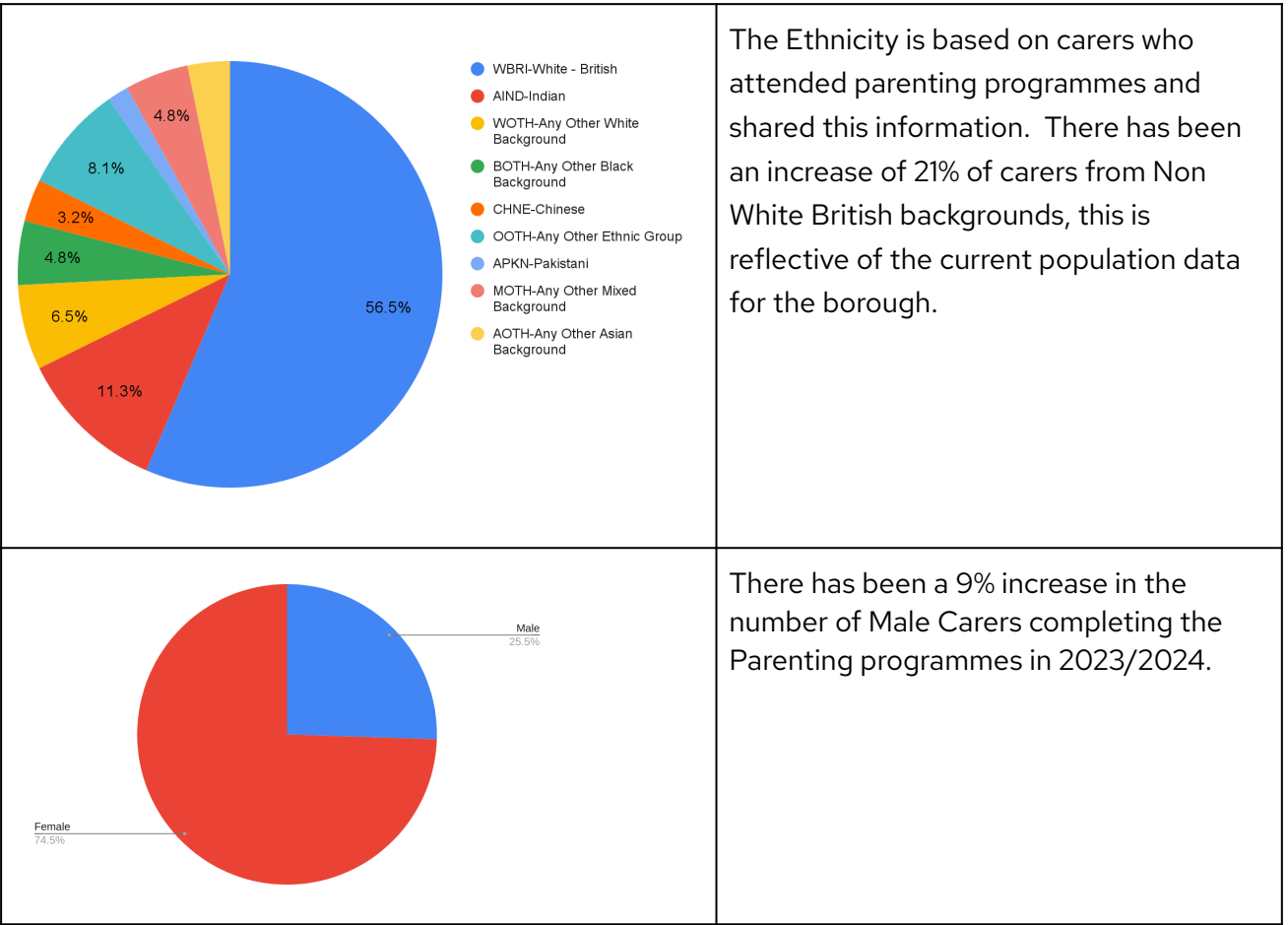
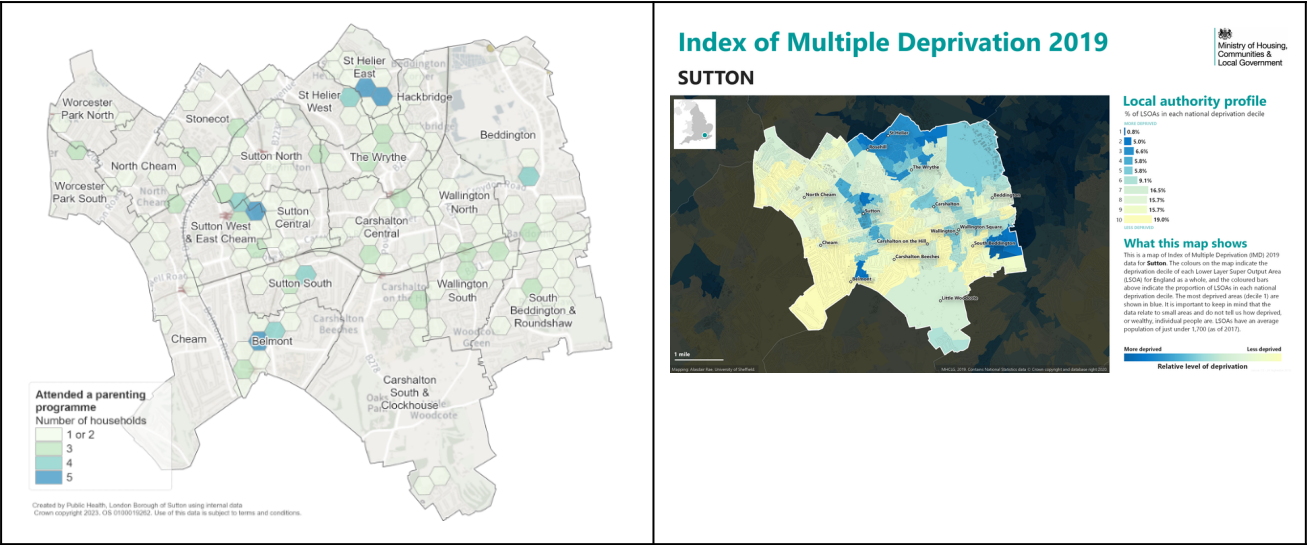
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Overview summary from Jan 2023-2023	2022	2023/2024	Waiting list
Total parenting programmes run face-face	11	25	n/a
Total number of parents engaged through coffee sessions	54	151	n/a
Total number of parents that have completed parenting programmes	114	305	n/a
Total number of parents through EPEC	39	54	21
Total number of parents through Autism Programme (Delivered by Adapt2Learn)	24	80	n/a
Total Number of Parents through Autism Programme (delivered by Parenting Service)		24 (started in January 2024)	46
Total Number of Parents through Time out for Parents Managing Anger	0	38	26
Total Number of Parents through Time out for Dad's	0	18	n/a
Total number of parents through Time Out for Teens	33	29	18
Total number of parents completing Circle of Security (0-5s)	18	39	0
Overall completion rate of face-face courses run in Sutton	82%	85%	n/a
Total number of parents being trained as a Parent Group Leader	11	0	7
Total number of parents that are now volunteering for parenting service	15	15	n/a
Total number of parents completing Universal online parenting support (1st Dec 22)	406	266	n/a
Number of schools attended to promote parenting programmes	6	10	n/a

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3.1 Participant data

In 2023 and 2024 the number of locations the courses have been run has expanded, this has meant we have seen an increase in families accessing the service across the borough. with higher numbers coming from areas of deprivation:



3.2 Case study

A married couple attended and completed the 'Being a Parent' course. Once the group finished, it was evident that this family required ongoing support.

Their main issues were:

- Parental mental health
- Child's ongoing challenging behaviour
- Financial difficulties
- Parental conflict

The parenting service completed a referral to the Early Help Service which was accepted. Work was completed to address the issues listed above. At the time of closure, things had improved. However, after a few weeks the situation once again escalated.

The parenting service re-referred the family for Early Help support due to ongoing parental mental health and parental conflict.

When offered the service, the family declined as they felt they would repeat the work they had already completed. They agreed to engage with the parenting service and family hubs.

The support that was offered through the Parenting Service included the following:

- A place on the 'Being a Parent' course for both parents. They attended and completed the programme.
- Referral to the Welfare Reform team for financial advice and support. This helped the family greatly and alleviated some of the financial issues at that time.
- A referral to the Family Hub Connector for support around food vouchers and household support funding applications.
- Unfortunately, the mother's health deteriorated significantly and she was hospitalised for some time. The father had to care for the children full time as well as holding down a job and visiting his wife.
- We made a referral to the Sutton Carers Centre so that Dad could get some additional support in his role as a carer.
- We made a referral to Sutton Uplift for the father whose own emotional wellbeing was affected by the situation they were in at the time. He was encouraged to seek support from his GP which he did.
- Once mum was discharged from hospital, we arranged ongoing TAC meetings to ensure that all professionals were fully aware of the situation and able to support and safeguard the family. Professionals included the parenting service, education, cognus therapy service and the adult mental health coordinator.
- We supported the mother to claim the personal independent payment due to her ongoing health conditions.
- Due to the family circumstances, the parents made the hard decision to end their relationship but agreed to continue to access support from the parenting service to help them with the

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co-parenting of the children with a view to keeping the children at the centre.

- We liaised with housing and the mental health team to ensure that mum was housed in safe and appropriate accommodation due to her health needs.
- We provided a safe space for the parents to come along together to discuss their feelings, emotions and frustrations in a safe space. This significantly helped to reduce the risk of ongoing parental conflict.
- The youngest child received therapy from Cognus. This included joint sessions with the child and each parent. He also meets regularly with the pastoral lead to check how he is feeling.
- The oldest child (a teenager) was offered some sessions to provide him with a safe space to talk about his feelings around the breakdown of his parents relationship. Information was provided regarding therapy from Off the Record.
- The oldest child received specialist support from the Education Welfare Practitioner in school.
- The children's schools put in a lot of emotional support for both children and their parents.

The current situation:

- Since the parents decided to end their relationship, they individually feel much better and are now able to co-parent with much less support than they required previously. At times, the situation can escalate. However, both parents know who to contact and this means the situation is rectified or diffused.
- Mum's mental health is now stable and she receives ongoing support from her care coordinator and GP.
- She has settled in her new home. Mum has regular contact with her children.
- She attends the parent/carer coffee/information sessions when she can.
- Mum became a volunteer for the parenting service and she has supported families at local events and parent coffee mornings.
- The children are slowly adapting to their family situation and receive ongoing support via their schools and parenting service if needed. This is an ongoing process.
- Dad attends the dads' chat, chill and connect' mens group. This makes him feel less isolated and his own experience is helping other men in the group.
- Dad is now considering becoming a parent volunteer for our service. He would be an asset.
- Mum became a volunteer for the parenting service and she has supported families at local events and parent coffee mornings.
- Mum is now able to access part time work.
- Both parents have worked extremely hard to get to where they are now. At times, it has been very stressful for both parties but with support and guidance, they have managed a very difficult situation extremely well.
- As in any family, arguments and disagreements will happen. However, this family knows who to contact if they need any additional support. This will stop situations from escalating.
- It has been a real pleasure to work with this lovely family and we wish them well for the future.

3.3 Supporting Fathers and Male Carers.

In 2023 the Parenting service were asked if they could facilitate programmes at HMP Highdown. The service delivered the Time out for Dad's Programme. The service worked with Care for the Family to adapt the programme, for Fathers who were not in regular contact with their children, without impacting its integrity. Two programmes have been delivered in the prison to 18 men. All Men who signed up for the programme completed it apart from one. The final session of the programme was linked to the Family Day in the prison so the children and partners could attend to hear about the programme. Partners were keen to share the positive changes in behaviour they had experienced from their partners in prison and how it had a positive impact on their children.

The Co-ordinator from the prison stated that the programme *'has given participants hope, encouragement and the determination to continue to be good fathers whilst in custody. It is easy to let distance be a barrier between the participants and their children, but the programme gave them a chance to explore other ways of staying connected and playing a key role in their children's lives.'* One Participant shared *'prior to the course I was at a very low part of my life. I had failed, failed at being the most important thing in my life, a Dad. I was giving myself all the excuses and reasons to stop and give up...On top of all the lessons, skills I have learnt and now applied I can say I have reconnected with my daughter and am fighting to stay in her life and play a positive role despite where I am.'*

The fathers have asked for a regular Fathers group to allow them to revisit elements of the course and continue to share ways to continue to connect with their children. This will be facilitated by the Parenting service.

In addition to this a bi weekly Male Carers group meets in the evenings in the community. The Male Carers group has guest speakers and Parent and Carers have reported valuing knowing more about what services are available. The men have also reported valuing having a space to share experiences and build trusting relationships with others.

'The team that oversees this specific father group is exceptional, displaying utmost professionalism and warranting unwavering support. Participating in this group not only allows me to share valuable insights into my situation, offering perspective, but also provides me with the opportunity to contribute in my own way by supporting other fathers confronting similar challenges. The chance to exchange experiences and extend support within this group is genuinely invaluable.'

3.4 Additional outcomes for families through informal information and advice groups

A critical part of the parenting programme model in Sutton is the additional support that parents can access through the support of the parenting team and Family Hub Connectors at the Coffee Advice and Information Sessions. These run regularly alongside parenting programmes, running once a fortnight in Carshalton, Central Sutton and Wallington, plus additional evening groups and a specific Male Carers evening group. Guest speakers are regularly invited to attend and speak to parents and carers this has included:

- SIASS
- Cognus
- Well being Practitioners, CAMHS
- Peer Support Worker, South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust
- Welfare reform team
- Oral Health Team
- Encompass
- Sutton Volunteer Centre
- Sutton Health Watch

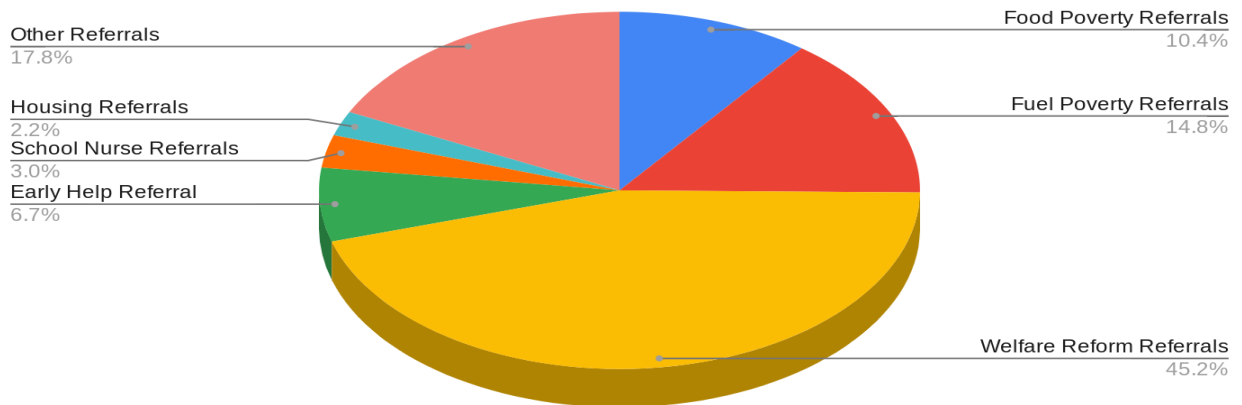
Feedback from partners continues to be positive

'While there were joys and sorrows shared by those in attendance, we could see the relief on parents' faces as they felt listened to and cared for by their peers and the family hub connectors. These coffee mornings are a much needed place of nurture for parents, which in turn supports family resilience and better outcomes for children across the borough.' SIASS feedback.

'I find these sessions to be very informative and have enabled me to connect with community organisations and raise awareness of SWLSTG Carer Peer Support Services available for parents/carers. Working alongside this group I have to date received thirteen referrals, these parents have received 1:1 peer support to help them manage their mental health and wellbeing, these sessions are now held in a meeting room in Sutton Library, making peer support accessible to families.'
Peer Support Worker SWLSTG Carer Peer Support Service

Family Hub connectors attend the information sessions and provide access to other services. Similar to last year onwards referrals are predominantly related to the cost of living increases. The key issues for families attending the parenting advice, Information sessions are supporting children with SEND, Mental Health difficulties for both parents and children and the cost of living crisis.

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3.4 Learning

As the service has continued to grow over its second year of delivery we have identified a number of areas for learning and reflection.

1. Advocacy for some of the parents has been part of the work for the parenting coordinator. This has involved attending Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings, calling for advice from Cognus, escalating referrals and concerns linked to school placements, transport to school etc. This has resulted in positive outcomes for the family. The advocacy work does take time and is difficult to balance with the delivery of programmes.
2. The increased support for children with SEND or emerging needs
3. Parents with mental health needs are common in the coffee mornings and we are seeing the peer support provide practical and emotional support to help prevent escalation.
4. Cost of living is having a significant impact on families' well being.

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4.0 Next steps

Targets for 2024

1. Continued funding beyond 24/25 to ensure consistency and sustainability of service
2. Increased funding to meet demands for Adolescents and SEND needs.
3. Increase availability of Parenting Programmes in Cheam and South Sutton Areas
4. Increase number of Parent Group Leaders, no PGL training took place in 2023, due to low take up.
5. Based on 2023/2024, we would expect to see numbers for 2024/2025 remain the same. If an increase in targets are required additional staffing and funding would be required. If additional funding was secured we would expect targets as follows

Activity	2023/2024	2024/25 target *with additional funding
Total number of parents engaged through coffee sessions	151	200
Total number of parents that have completed parenting programmes	305	400
Total number of parents through EPEC	54	100
Total number of parents through ASD Programme (Delivered by Adapt2Learn)	80	120
Total number of parents through Time Out for Teens	29	60
Total number of parents completing Circle of Security (0-5s)	39	45
Total completing Solihull online	206	500

Activity	2023	Target 2024/25
Total number of parents being trained as a Parent Group Leader	0	8
Total number of parents that are now volunteering	15	25

Conclusion

Using evidence-based parenting programmes gives us the confidence of longer-term outcomes as a result of the programmes, linked to children's attachment for 0-5s and longer term positive behaviours, confidence and development for children and families, for children aged 5+. This means we can have confidence in the longer term outcomes for the families that have taken part in EPEC and Circle of Security, as well as any family that has a successful claim via the Supporting Families framework.

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The components of our developed model of parenting support in Sutton is critical to our success. We can evidence that the impact of the programmes prevents escalation and builds family and community resilience. Our waiting lists demonstrate that Families have a desire to take part in programmes however in order to meet demand the service requires increased investment to help grow the number of Volunteers and families accessing the services.

Recommendations

1. Joint commitment for ongoing funding arrangements to continue. Length of time to be discussed with partners.
2. Explore opportunities to expand team and delivery of programmes to prevent escalation.

References:

1. Supporting Families Framework overview - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-families-2021-to-2022-and-beyond/supporting-families-2021-22-and-beyond>
2. Evidence base for Circle of Security - <https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/circle-of-security-model/research/>
3. Evidence base for EPEC- <https://www.bmj.com/content/344/bmj.e1107.full>
- <https://www.cpcs.org.uk/epec/epec-published-evidence/>