



Belonging Strategy

Parent and carer survey

Consultation report - December 2020

Bristol City Council



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Written by Erika Hirst and Carolin Peto

1. Key findings

Sense of belonging

- Friends and family play an important part in helping parent/carers and their children have a sense of belonging.
- Being a part of the local community was also central to a sense belonging with many parent/carers talking about the importance of local groups, local shops and local parks.
- Parent/carers wanted to encourage their child to engage in their local area and be a part of their community to help them develop a sense of belonging.
- Teachers and school staff were highlighted in helping parents and children to have a sense of belonging.
- Antisocial behaviour in the local community and isolation/loneliness were raised as the most common negative influences on belonging.

Belonging in your community

- Just under half of the survey respondents do not feel put under pressure by others to be a good parent/carer (47% / 53) but one fifth advised that they do feel this pressure.
- Many parent/carers referred to the local community as a support network which plays a big role in helping them develop their sense of belonging.
- Nearly half of the parents/carers responding to the survey shared that they do feel represented and valued in their community (49% / 55) with only a small proportion stating that they do not (7% / 8).

Support services

- Outdoor spaces and playgrounds play an important role in supporting families and helping to make them feel like they belong.
- Child friendly venues and family activities were also highlighted as important in supporting a sense of belonging.
- Support for parents/carers for mental health and wellbeing was generally rated well with 79% of respondents selecting 'satisfactory' or above.
- Support for physical health was rated higher than mental health support with the majority rating support available in Bristol as 'good' or 'excellent' (54% / 59).
- Many parent/carers advised they were not aware of the mental and physical support available to them in Bristol suggesting better signposting could be necessary.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

'The Belonging Strategy was conceived from a desire to improve inclusion generally in the city and its schools, to support children and young people to look beyond their concept of community and place and 'own' the whole city, to support families to care for their children within their family and to give children the best start in life. (Jacqui Jensen, Executive Director, People Directorate).

The Belonging Strategy contains four pillars, from the Beginning (pre-Birth), Families, Education and Community, and each strand is focusing on how best to create an inclusive, safe and inspiring environment for children and young people to grow up in and to experience a sense of belonging.

Children begin to develop a sense of who they are and where they fit in the world from birth and even prior to birth through the connection mother and growing embryo have. An infant's life depends on the care of its caregivers and social skills can be observed from as early as two weeks, suggesting an innate desire to connect and form social bonds.

The parents' survey was coproduced with young parents (Youth Consultation team) to gain an insight of how parents of young children experience their communities and if they feel they belong. It also explored how babies and small children can be supported from the beginning to develop a sense of belonging.

2.2 Methodology

The survey was made available between 6/10/2020 and 30/11/2020. It was promoted widely through the public health networks, the Bristol Local Offer website, WeareBristol website and other city partner. The survey was also promoted to primary school settings via the Head Teachers bulletin update from the Director of Education and via emails to all internal and external commissioned children and family services.

The online survey and easy read version were available on the Bristol Consultation & Engagement Hub, and alternative formats (braille, large print, audio, British Sign Language (BSL) and translation to other languages) were available on request.

112 completed responses were received from parents and carers.



Social Media

On behalf of BCC Creative Youth Network ran a social media campaign with paid adverts on Facebook and Instagram promoting the survey for parents and carers of children aged 0 – 5 years old. The Youth Consultation team created an advert which ran continuously throughout the live time of the consultation. An average spend of £2 per day was set. The advert targeting parents, expecting parents and carers reached 2724, had 159 click throughs to the survey and cost £17.74 in total.

2.3 Reporting

This report presents survey findings by subject area and follows the format of the questionnaire. A summary of each question is provided and some of the key findings for different groups are included in this analysis, such as single parents and carers.

Where responses are broken down into subgroups the number of respondents is very low. Caution must be used when interpreting these results.

The results are not representative of the whole population but can provide a good insight to the views and experiences of parents / carers in Bristol.

Sums of percentages reported in this document may deviate from the actual total due to rounding. Greater deviations from 100% occur where respondents were able to choose multiple options and percentages are based on the number of respondents.

- 🗨️ Facebook groups of new parents in Bristol
- 🗨️ Activities such as church, rugby
- 🗨️ Responsibility
- 🗨️ Shared beliefs and ethos
- 🗨️ Good relationship with school
- 🗨️ Our street WhatsApp group
- 🗨️ The recreation ground at the end of the road - my children see their friends and neighbours who always stop for a chat or to play
- 🗨️ My child telling me about her classmates and teachers and how happy she feels about them
- 🗨️ Like minded parents

As a parent/carer, are there particular professionals who help with giving you and your child a feeling of belonging?

Response	Count
Teachers/school staff	56
Health professionals	26
Childcare staff	17
Children's centre	13
Breastfeeding support group	7
Noone	5
Clubs/group leaders	4
Shop keepers	2
Family	2
Library staff	1
EHCP group	1

Over half of the survey respondents said teachers and school staff help to give them and their child a feeling of belonging. The second most common response was health professionals such as health visitors, doctors and nurses.

Base: 98 respondents

The survey also asked parent/carers **what could have a negative effect on their sense of belonging**. A wide range of answers were given with the most common response being antisocial behaviour including drug use, groups of youths, and inconsiderate neighbours. The second most common theme was isolation, with comments referring to loneliness and a lack of interaction with friends, family and community.

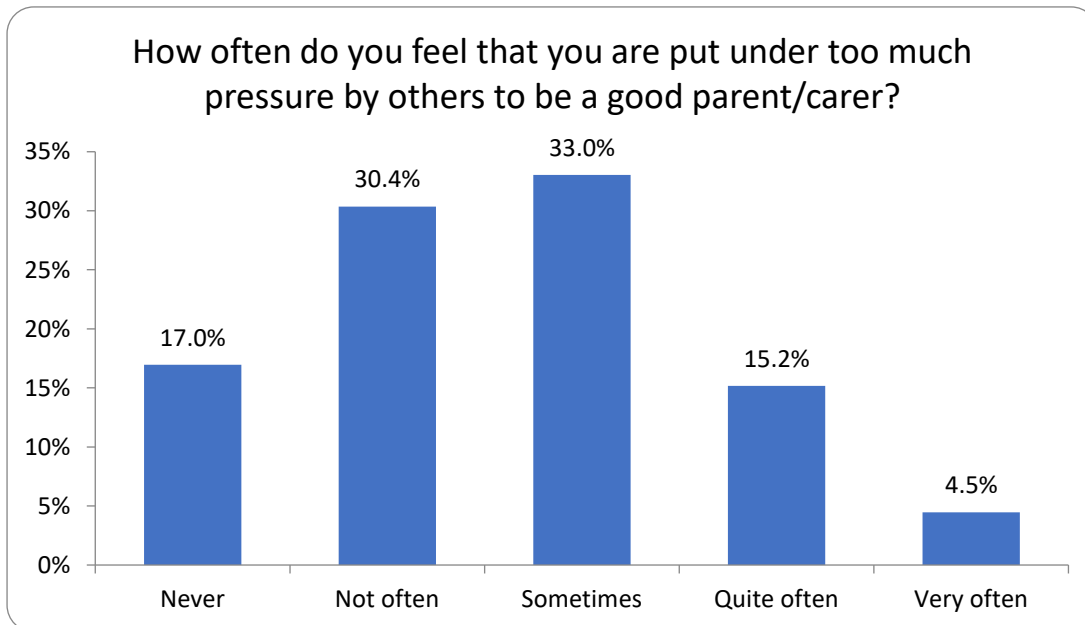
Response	Count
Antisocial behaviour	17
Isolation	14
Coronavirus	13
Safety	13
Financial difficulty	9
Judgement	9
Lack of child friendly spaces/services	8
Discrimination	8
No sense of community	7
No support	6
Unfriendliness	6
Lack of suitable education	4
Uncertainty	3
Closure of local services/facilities	3
Public transport	2
Bexit	2
Social media	2
Poor health	2

Base: 100 respondents

- Feeling judged (especially around breastfeeding), venues which are unwelcoming of children or lacking in facilities e.g. changing tables
- Not feeling safe - seeing aggressive/antisocial behaviour in the local area.
- Not feeling welcome in shops/ cafes with kids.
- Covid: Feelings of isolation, it has been particularly difficult without the availability of free activities such as children's centres, libraries, parks and play groups
- Doctors - not listening to us just because we're young.
- When you hear of things like the wind rush scandal! Cuts to children services
- Lack of diversity among health visitors, nurses, midwives

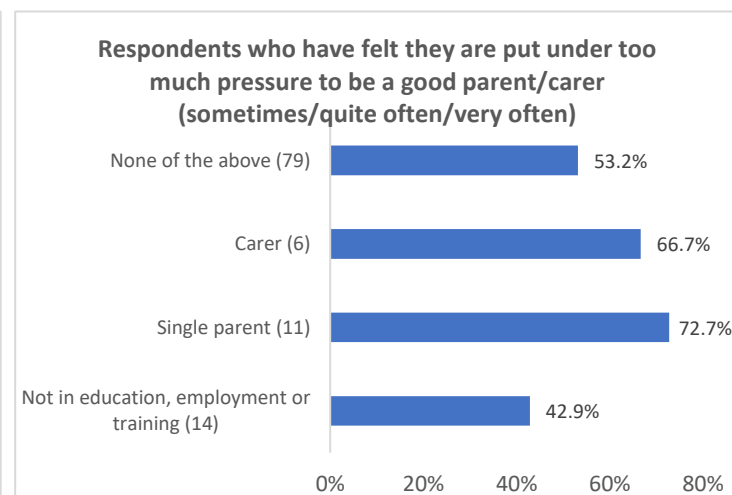
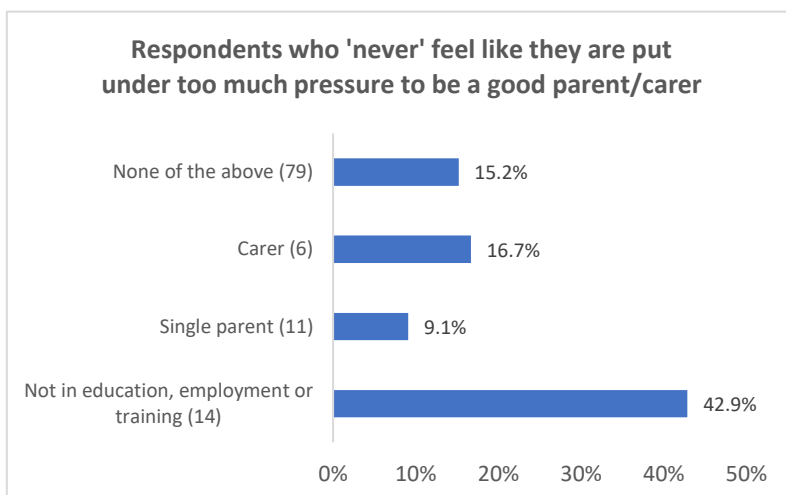
4. Belonging in your community

Just under half of the survey respondents felt that they are 'Never' or 'Not often' put under pressure by others to be a good parent/carer (47%). One fifth of responding parent/carers felt that they are 'Often' put under pressure by others to be a good parent/carer (20%).



Base: 112 respondents

Single parents were less likely to say 'Never' when compared to parents who did not meet any of the additional criteria (none of the above)¹ (9.1% compared to 15.2%).



Base: numbers shown in brackets

¹ Compared to responses of 'none of the above' to question 16. Categories were single parent, carer, not in education, employment or training, living in a non-working household, homeless, living in care, adopted, living in supported housing.

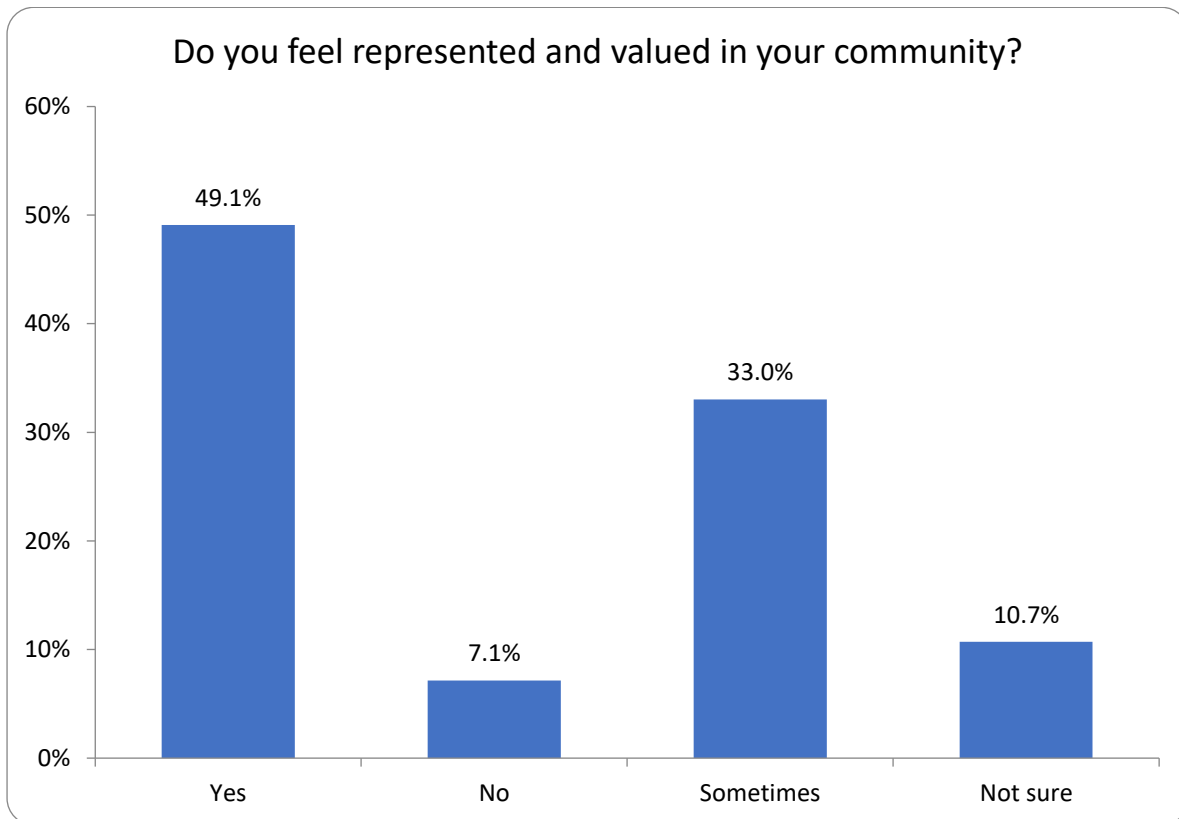
The most common word used to describe community was 'support'. This was followed by 'friendly' and 'help'. This indicates that parents/carers rely on their local community as a support network. We have already seen from previous responses that community plays a big role for many parent/carers in helping them develop their sense of belonging.

What words or phrases best describe community to you?



Base: 110 respondents

Nearly half of the parent/carers responding to the survey shared that they do feel represented and valued in their community (49%) with only a small proportion stating that they do not (7%). However, a third felt that they were only represented and valued some of the time (33%)



Base: 112 respondents

The feedback clearly indicates that not every parent/carer feels represented and valued in their community. Those respondents had an opportunity to tell us what they feel is missing for them. The most common reason given within the 43 received comments was a lack of community (13 people). This meant those parent/carers didn't really know anyone in their local area and didn't feel included in local groups/events. By not really knowing their local community they do not feel they have an opportunity to be represented within in.

Other reasons given included a lack of people in the community with shared views, values and experiences, little engagement from the local authority and few local groups/classes that are accessible/welcoming to individual's needs.

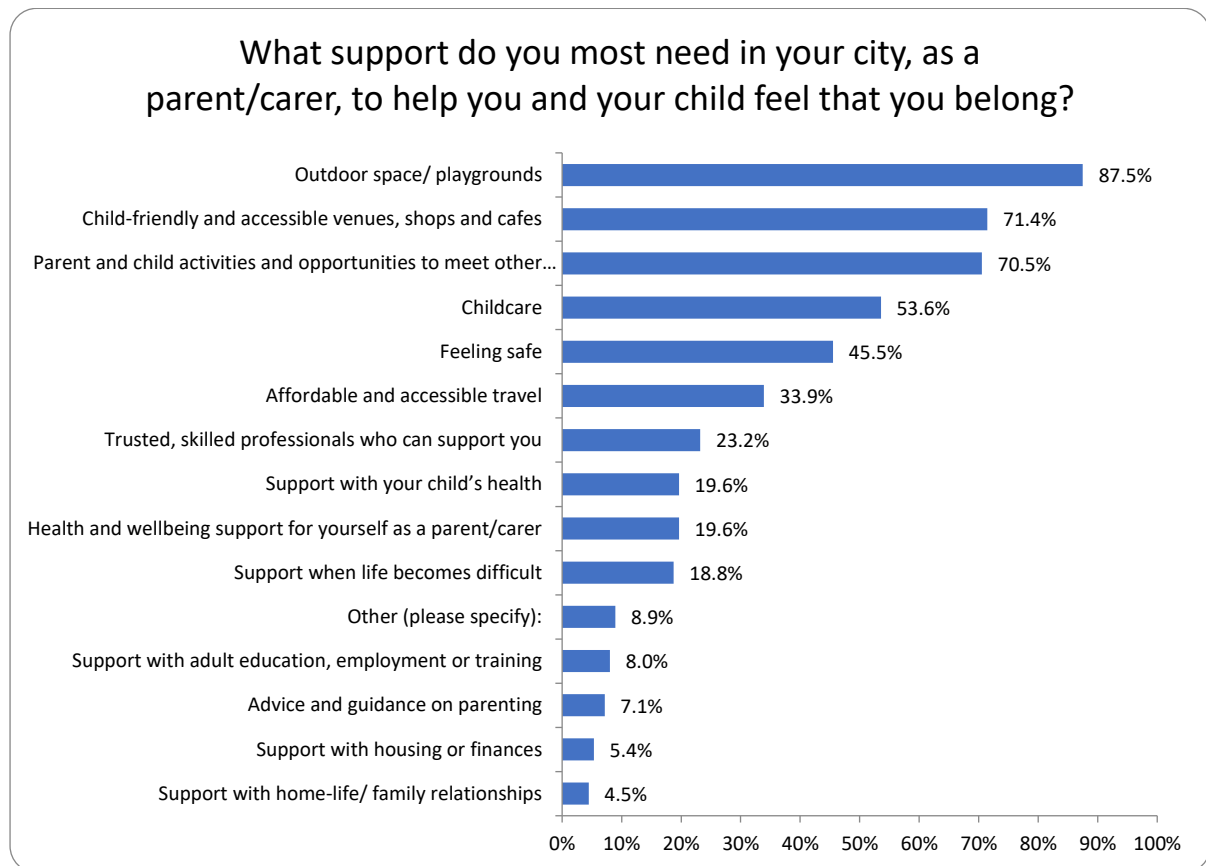
People keep to themselves. There are a lot of elderly neighbours and people who have lived in the area a long time. My child does not attend the local school as they were oversubscribed, so we have no links to families locally. As a single-parent household this is isolating. My child is well supported by her school and has lots of friends there, but this was in the area of our previous home.

All 43 statements are included in the Appendix I, as these are insightful.

5. Support services

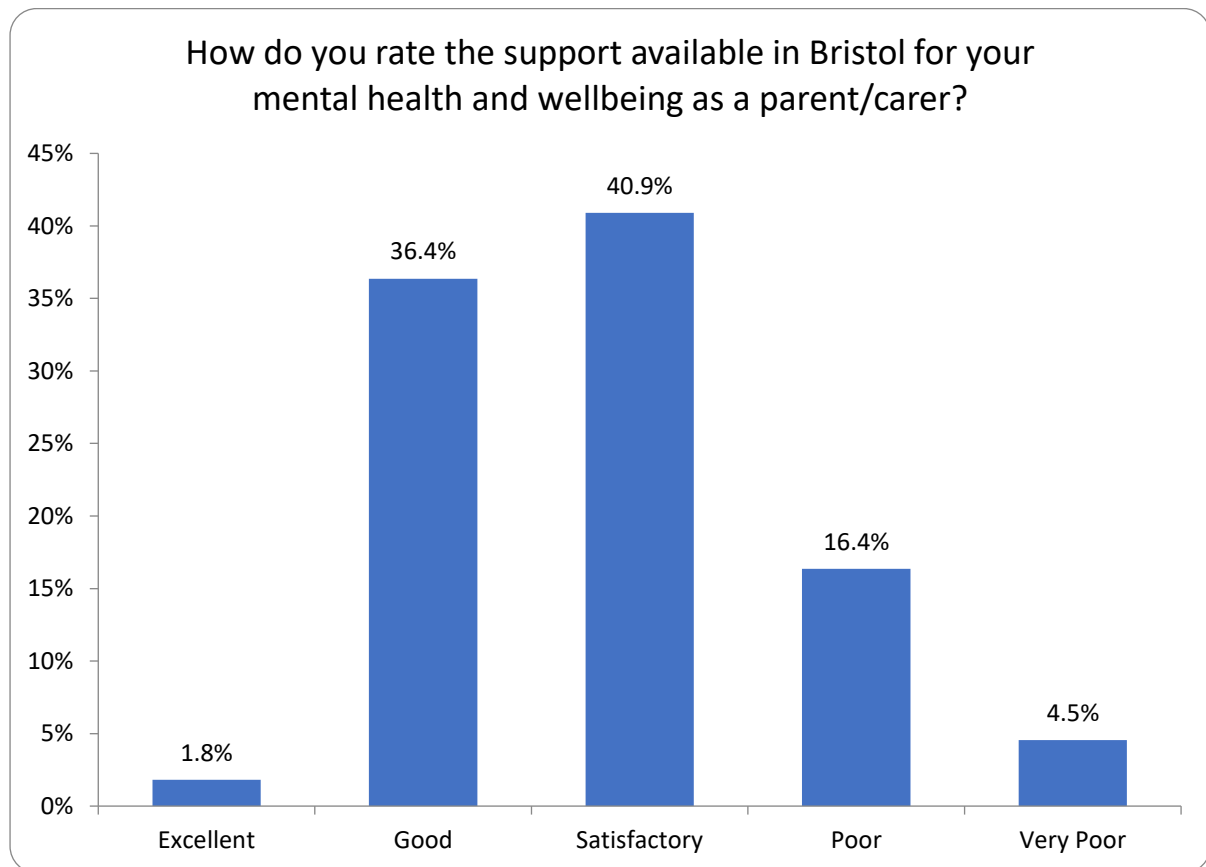
The survey also asked parents and carers about their support needs and their views on mental and physical health support services currently available in Bristol.

Feedback showed that outdoor spaces and playgrounds fulfil an important role in supporting families and helping to make them feel like they belong (88%). Child friendly venues and family activities were also rated highly.



Base: 112 respondents

When asked to rate support available in Bristol for parents and carers for mental health and wellbeing, the largest proportion of respondents answered 'satisfactory' and just over one fifth of respondents find the available support to be 'poor' or 'very poor'.



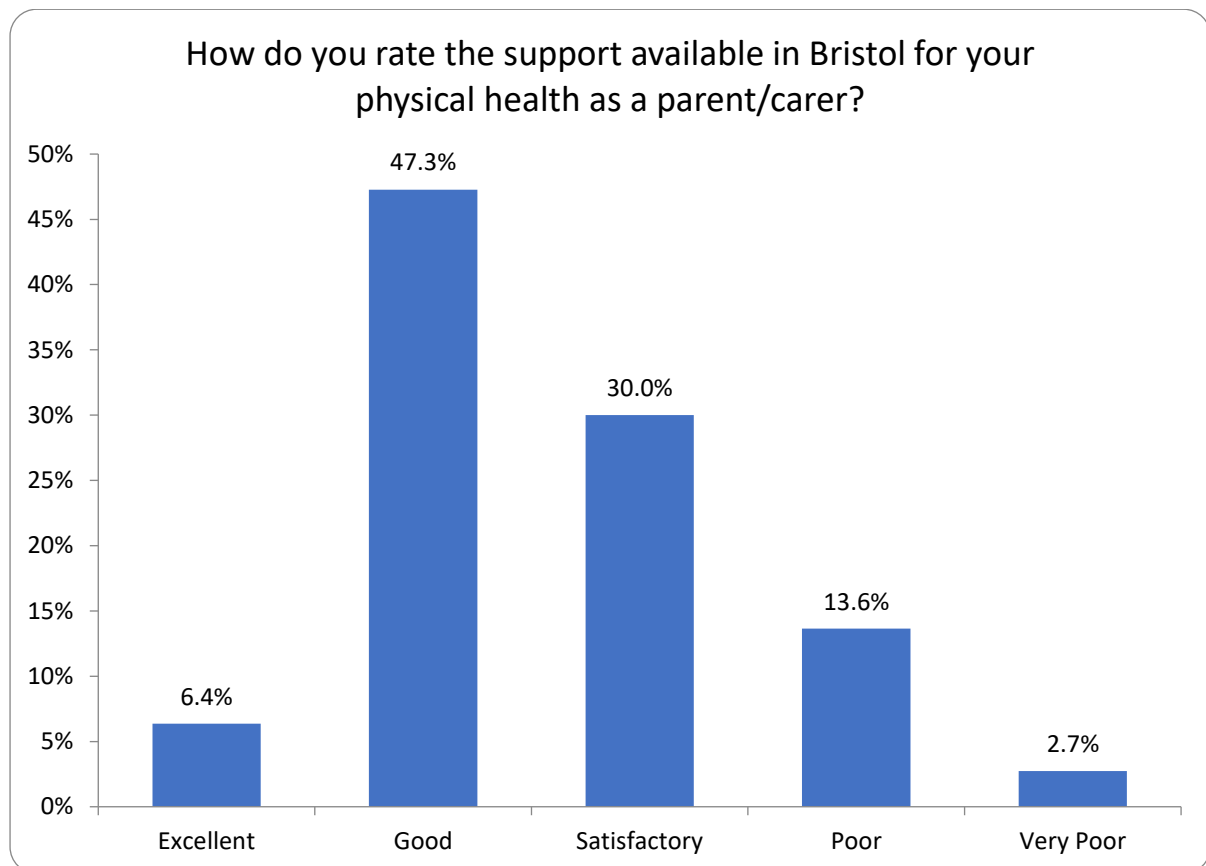
Base: 110 respondents

Those who were rating the support available for mental health and wellbeing as 'satisfactory' or less were asked what would help to make the support available better for them. The most common suggestion was to provide better signposting to available services (13 people) and a further 10 respondents advised they could not respond properly to this question as they were not aware of the support available.

Other suggestions included increasing the range of services available (12 people), ensuring services are accessible for all by making it easier to apply for help without a GP appointment, making sure the times are suitable for families and providing local services (11 people), making help more affordable (7 people) and providing training for health visitors and other medical professionals to offer advice and support (4 people).

I feel like a lot of it is there but it's not readily available or talked about. Mental health issues are becoming more common and as much as everyone says it, they are not (and should not be) taboo anymore. Being clearer about what help and support is available and more open about who can access it should be the minimum.

Support for physical health was generally rated higher than mental health support with over half of the parent/carers rating support available in Bristol as 'good' or 'excellent'.



Base: 110 respondents

As with mental health the main problem raised with physical health support was a lack of signposting and parents/carers were therefore not aware of the support available to them (15 people).

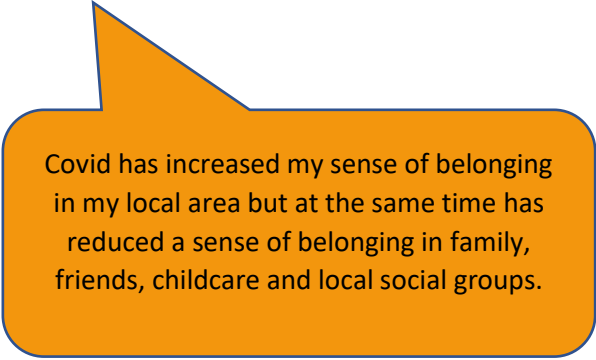
8 respondents suggested that support for physical health could be improve by making it more accessible/suitable for families by considering opening hours, expanding on the types of support services offered and considering the locations of services to ensure they are easily accessible from local communities.

Further suggested improvements included reducing waiting times, providing more bike routes and outdoor exercise facilities to make pursuing an active lifestyle easier and more funding from the council to support physical health support services.

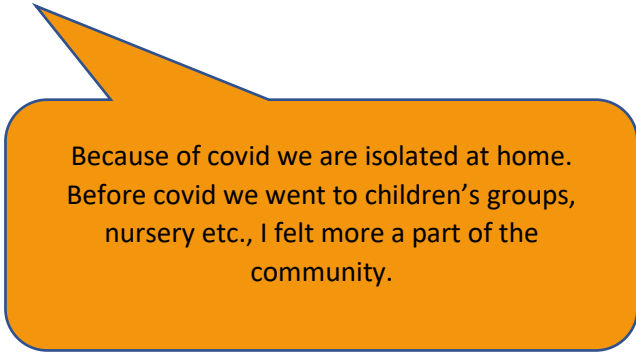
Beyond my GP practice, which is excellent, I don't know what further support there is for my physical health as a parent/carer. I can walk, run and cycle for physical exercise when I can fit this around childcare and work and beyond this, I need to pay for private exercise sessions/classes. More opportunities for parents/carers to exercise with childcare provided alongside to allow this would be good.

2020 has been a difficult year for most due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite not asking related questions in this specific survey, respondents shared some of their experiences where appropriate.

Parent/carers are missing early years' settings and access to community groups as well as wider family networks, which they consider important for their children to develop a sense of belonging. Respondents shared that their sense of belonging has reduced to those communities as result of corona virus.



Covid has increased my sense of belonging in my local area but at the same time has reduced a sense of belonging in family, friends, childcare and local social groups.



Because of covid we are isolated at home. Before covid we went to children's groups, nursery etc., I felt more a part of the community.

One parent was making it clear that they need the city to provide opportunities to meet other parents and activities to do during covid:



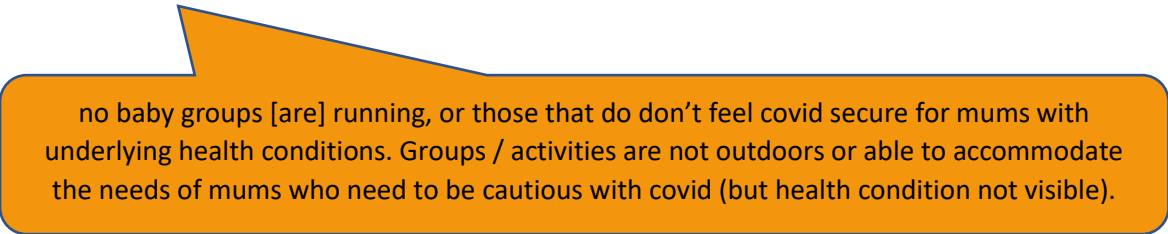
Things to do with a baby during covid I don't know anyone with a baby.

One parent told us support for them could be improved



if the health visitor checked in on me and my baby. I had no contact at all since covid.

One mother with baby shared that she feels isolated partly due to covid as either



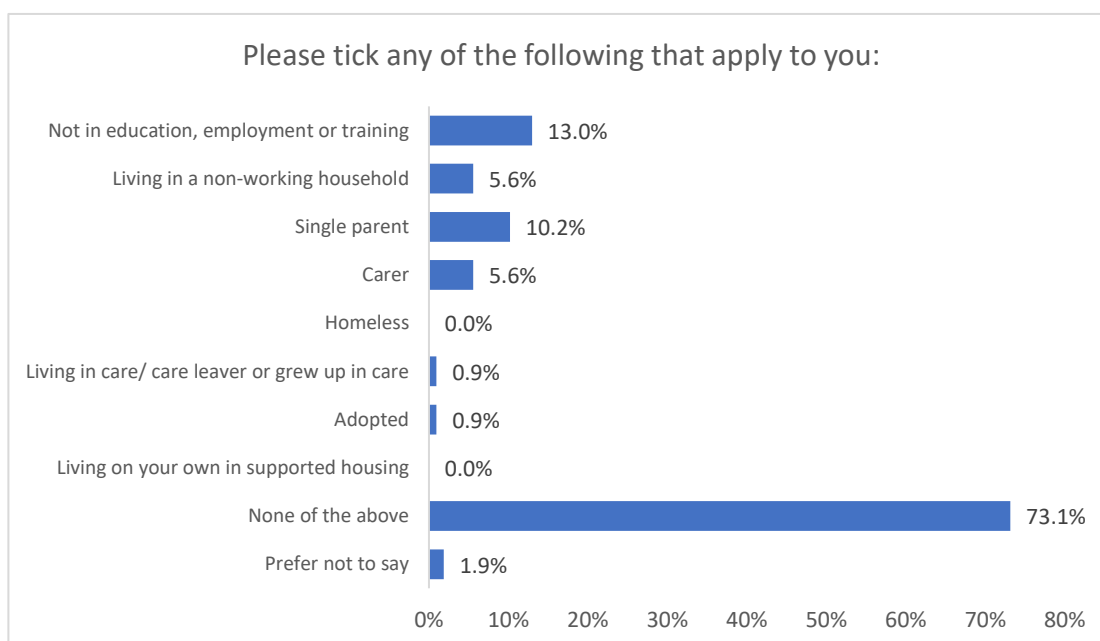
no baby groups [are] running, or those that do don't feel covid secure for mums with underlying health conditions. Groups / activities are not outdoors or able to accommodate the needs of mums who need to be cautious with covid (but health condition not visible).

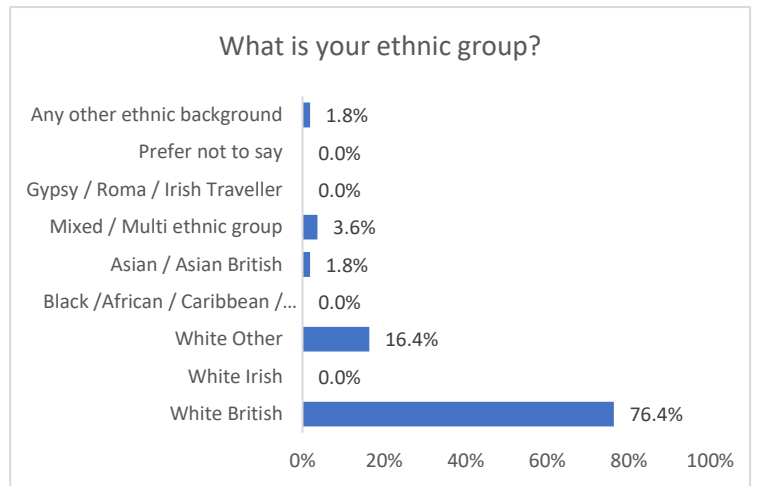
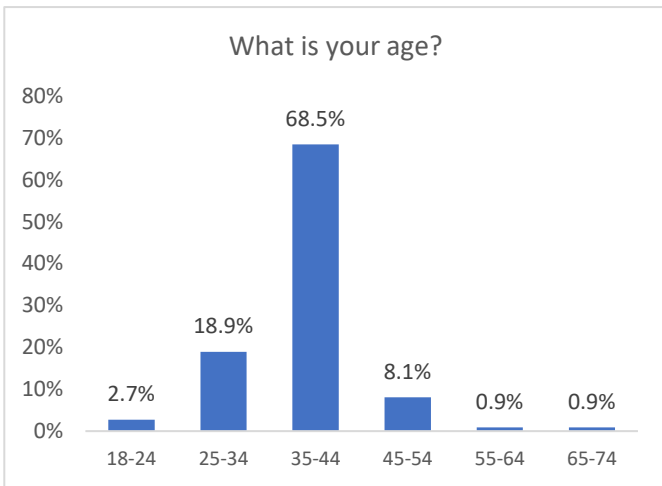
This parent also highlighted that she is a working mum and that there are no baby groups running on weekends which she could access.

6. Profile of survey respondents

	% of respondents	Count of respondents
Age		
11-15	0.0%	0
16-17	0.0%	0
18-24	2.7%	3
25-34	18.9%	21
35-44	68.5%	76
45-54	8.1%	9
55-64	0.9%	1
65-74	0.9%	1
75-84	0.0%	0
85 +	0.0%	0
Prefer not to say	0.0%	0
Disability		
Yes	7.3%	8
No	89.1%	98
Prefer not to say	3.6%	4
Gender		
Female	94.6%	105
Male	5.4%	6
Prefer not say	0.0%	0
Other	0.0%	0
Gender reassignment		
Yes	0.0%	0
No	100.0%	111
Prefer not to say	0.0%	0
Ethnicity		
White British	76.4%	84
White Irish	0.0%	0
White Other	16.4%	18
Black /African / Caribbean / Black British	0.0%	0
Asian / Asian British	1.8%	2
Mixed / Multi ethnic group	3.6%	4
Gypsy / Roma / Irish Traveller	0.0%	0
Prefer not to say	0.0%	0
Any other ethnic background	1.8%	2

	% of respondents	Count of respondents
Sexual orientation		
Bisexual	3.6%	4
Gay Man	0.9%	1
Gay Woman / Lesbian	0.9%	1
Heterosexual / Straight	90.9%	100
Prefer not to say	3.6%	4
Other	0.0%	0
Religion		
No Religion	65.8%	73
Buddhist	1.8%	2
Christian	27.0%	30
Hindu	0.0%	0
Jewish	0.0%	0
Muslim	0.0%	0
Pagan	2.7%	3
Sikh	0.0%	0
Prefer not to say	1.8%	2
Other	0.9%	1
Asylum seeker / refugee		
Yes	0.0%	0
No	100.0%	110
Prefer not to say	0.0%	0
Any of the following?		
Not in education, employment or training	13.0%	14
Living in a non-working household	5.6%	6
Single parent	10.2%	11
Carer	5.6%	6
Homeless	0.0%	0
Living in care/ care leaver or grew up in care	0.9%	1
Adopted	0.9%	1
Living on your own in supported housing	0.0%	0
None of the above	73.1%	79
Prefer not to say	1.9%	2





7. How will this report be used?

This report and feedback from parent/carers will influence the development of the BCC Belonging Strategy which in turn will influence wider One City plans. Data and comments will be considered in the 'Beginning' section but will also influence other areas of the Strategy setting out plans for 'Community' and 'Family'.

The Belonging Strategy is due to be published in early 2021.

How can I keep track?

You can always find the latest consultation and engagement surveys online at www.bristol.gov.uk/consultationhub where you can also sign up to receive automated email notifications about consultations and engagements.

Appendix I

'Please tell us things that you can do as a parent/carer to help your child grow up with a feeling of belonging?'

- Love
- Tell them their family story
- Continuity of place and people
- Talk about where we live
- Take them to groups
- Unconditional love from parents and wider family
- Explore and understand the local area
- Keeping in touch with family
- Attention
- Attend weekly activities
- Always listen to their viewpoints
- Raise them as part of a church
- Interaction with family, friends.
- Provide regular opportunities to engage with others and develop relationships, e.g. attending local weekly group
- Become more integrated
- Get involved with pre school
- Outside shared spaces
- Know Neighbours
- Give them confidence
- Provide environment to thrive
- Advocate for her rights
- Share memories like photos
- Experiences
- Create local connections
- Get out in the community
- Celebrate cultural events
- Set example
- Nurture
- Cuddles
- Talk about family history
- We have pictures of all my relatives in Spain
- Read about emotions and talk through/provide space to learn
- Give loads of support
- Explore our city Bristol and surroundings
- Reassurance
- Give choices
- Nurture her friendships
- Eat dinner together every day and talk about our day
- Show physical and verbal affection
- Safety
- Regular contact with extended family
- Tell them their own story and memories from early childhood
- Building emotional intelligence

- 🕒 Listen and respond to their needs
- 🕒 Model being a good person
- 🕒 Provide strong attachments (relationships)
- 🕒 Good education
- 🕒 Your time
- 🕒 Help alleviate the trauma from unsuitable school place
- 🕒 Engage them in local civic/political life
- 🕒 Raise them with morals
- 🕒 Family routines
- 🕒 Accept them
- 🕒 Confidence building
- 🕒 Have a map of the world, and of UK and of Bristol on the wall in the loo to help them locate us
- 🕒 Gardening
- 🕒 Teach good manners
- 🕒 Give them Choices as well as boundaries
- 🕒 Encourage and facilitate friendship
- 🕒 Make them feel welcome / provide a sense of home
- 🕒 Bring them up close to wider circle of friends
- 🕒 Accept them as they are
- 🕒 Fight for vegan options in cricket clubs and other groups
- 🕒 Make them a valued member of the family
- 🕒 Involving child in daily home life activities e.g. tidying up, cooking, gardening
- 🕒 Role modelling kindness, meaningful relationships with others & sense of community
- 🕒 Values of life and religion believe
- 🕒 Images around us that represent us
- 🕒 Take interest in what they are doing
- 🕒 Explicit conversations about belonging
- 🕒 Calm home

'If you don't feel you are represented or valued please tell us what is missing for you?'

- 🕒 The generation of the ppl where we live are lovely but closed in their worldview and as a immigrant and a woman I can see these differences laid stark in the way I parent and see the world.
- 🕒 Because I have two children at such a young age, I'm not valued as much as I would be if I was middle aged. Just because I'm young doesn't mean I can't do the same or an even better job than most.
- 🕒 Not really had much experience with community
- 🕒 I have been living here for just about 2 years. We are a family of immigrants. Atm, for various reasons, we lack anything resembling a community.
- 🕒 Bilingual children's support
- 🕒 Not enough effort made to show what is open/closed/available during these crazy times. I feel as though I go into an internet black hole trying to figure it out.

- Lack of engagement from Marvin Reeves with the Jubilee Pool closing makes me feel that we are not valued in this area. Children's Centres need to be properly funded and expanded to ensure the needs of the community are being met
- Because I am and always have been a working mum. I often feel in between worlds, not enough time to be fully incorporated into work life and sometimes feeling excluded from a lot of social support because I have to rush off to work after toddler groups. I don't think this is anyone's fault as I love both being a mum and working, however, I was in a position where I never had maternity leave because my contracts ended right before babies were born, so I ended up finding another job 3 months and 5 weeks after having them. I sometimes wonder how much stronger my social network would be, had I been able to just spend that first year without juggling it all. Luckily I have an incredible husband who is more supportive than I could have ever dreamt off and a strong family bond (although they are not local), so it isn't that I feel terribly excluded, I just don't know anyone who was in a similar situation. Also, I am just glad I have a job now.
- Bedminster (where we live) is increasingly full of wealthy people who pay lip service to community but who don't care about the place or other residents who don't fit into their mold. I'm not poor but I feel completely excluded sometimes.
- There's a lack of training in medical professionals about vegan diets and how healthy it really is.
- Lack of investment in local high streets and parks
- "Vegan food in schools without fighting the meals service to get it. School is helpful but meal providers make it more difficult than it should be. My parents' group has over 250 vegan families in Bristol.
- Breastfeeding support in children's centres being minimised and lactation consultants should be available to all more readily. Ilminster avenue cc had a great parenting group, just a drop in and sit and chat .bf and bottle support but It changed as council said they didn't offer enough talks. The talks from outside providers were every week and ruined it and ppl got to know less friends. Sitting and chatting as new mum should be valued in itself. "
- I feel valued by my friends, family and colleagues but maybe not so much on the neighbourly side of things
- Isolated in part due to covid restrictions, in part as I'm a working mum so in 'normal times' it's hard to meet mums. No groups seem to run on weekends. I don't know many people in this city. The weekends can feel long. No baby groups running, those that do don't feel covid secure for mums with underlying health conditions. I get left out of a lot - by friends and by groups / activities not being outdoors or able to accommodate the needs of mums who need to be cautious with covid (but health condition not visible). Underlying health condition also restricts ability to join in when things are on (groups / summer fetes etc)
- The community feeling
- I don't feel part of a community. We live an area which is classed as deprived we own our own house; we both work we know a couple of the neighbours in our street and we know a few parents from Childs school. The community we belong to is our church but don't feel there is a sense of community in the area we live in. When I was growing up in this area there were street parties and school fetes etc but none of this now. All of our Childs outside of school activities are done outside of our local area.
- I feel represented but not particularly valued as I am relatively unknown in my community
- Been hard to become part of local groups and only in year 1. There were plans for a street party which has to be abandoned but I think next year will be better. A few friends have observed when visiting Brislington is very white and I would like my daughter to be able to access more Latin community so when Bristol feels more open this will be better. However, the local high street is great and shopkeepers so welcoming. The local pub (the Langton) has been amazing at

- fostering a sense of belonging for us during Covid and so glad it's there. We could do more to actually support the community but have felt too stretched to take on extra things right now
- Lack of value placed on stay at home parents
 - "Only one Welsh group in the city who struggle to meet up.
 - The breastfeeding group has been closed, and my baby is now weaning so I won't return if they're open.
 - We cycle a lot, but a lot of cars aggressively overtake our 4 year old on his bike. Cars also aggressively overtake our baby bike trailer. It makes us feel intimidating"
 - "Lack of community involvement through communication and services
 - For example - the lane that connects our road to the local park is riddled with dog poo (same offender) making it inaccessible- but how do we report this and tackle it? "
 - Don't know any other single parents by choice locally or any lesbian single parents
 - "My local councillors have been stripped of power by the mayoral system
 - My and my neighbours' views on equality of access and mobility for children, the disabled and other vulnerable road users are ignored by the mayor and his policy advisor/chief of staff
 - Outsourcing public services through fixed contracts has left me feeling disenfranchised when those services are of a poor quality and fail to meet local people's needs
 - Children's groups or activities they don't have to be paid etc for example it could be activities in the park etc treasure hunt
 - People who are educated but more working class, less middle class.
 - I am unusual in being the mother of a very visibly different and disabled child. I feel I have to work harder to seem like everybody else and that very few people have an insight into how different and hard life can be at times.
 - "I am not sure how I would be represented or valued in my community, it's an odd question!
 - Because of covid we are isolated at home.
 - Before covid we went to children's groups, nursery etc., I felt more a part of the community."
 - Don't feel like there is any community
 - People keep to themselves. There are a lot of elderly neighbours and people who have lived in the area a long time. My child does not attend the local school as they were oversubscribed, so we have no links to families locally. As a single-parent household this is isolating. My child is well supported by her school and has lots of friends there, but this was in the area of our previous home.
 - "Easy to get isolated. More parenting workshops
 - Nowhere to go with my child without being judged
 - The Children's Centre are amazing at offering universal support with no stigmatisation of users. Sometimes I feel that other groups in the community only exist for certain types of family and then I feel uncomfortable.
 - More affordable childcare opportunities
 - "I don't feel that many people know how to treat others well and have a very selfish nature. Also, many people are ignorant.
 - I have been to groups before but find that the organisers aren't particularly great at getting involved or encouraging positive behaviour or friendships to form. "