

# Feedback Report

Rochdale Baby Bubble Partnership  
Surge Funded Project Sept – Dec 2022



**The overall aim of Baby Bubbles is to support the good mental health of every parent, carer and infant in Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale from 0-2 years old.**

### **Background to Baby Bubbles Project**

As part of a funded Greater Manchester Mental Health Surge programme, Baby Bubbles is the collaboration of a range of Voluntary Sector organisations who work with families within the borough, committed to work together to strengthen perinatal support within Heywood, Middleton, Rochdale and Pennines.

The objectives were to establish, co-ordinate and facilitate a number of Social Support Group Sessions across the Rochdale borough for families, to support relationship building and provide informal peer support, working to remove the social isolation and loneliness many have suffered due to COVID 19. Within each voluntary organisation, PIMH Champions and PIMH volunteers were recruited, trained and offered clinical supervision to deliver this support for parents and their babies.

### **Service Delivery**

#### **Home-Start Rochdale Borough Family Support Charity (Lead organisation)**

Offering practical and emotional support for expectant families and those with babies under the age of 2 years. Home-Start provided a range of Baby Bubbles Programmes in all areas of the Rochdale Borough, bringing small groups of parents together to meet, reduce anxieties, make new friends, offer support and reduce isolation. They also provided:

- Meet, greet, introductions
- Reassurance for parents leaving the home with their babies for the first time.
- Refreshments, drinks, toast, and crumpets.
- Practical help with mobile children and small babies to give parents a break.
- Singing and games to promote language development
- Ideas of future places to meet
- Breastfeeding discussions, reassurance, and coping strategies.
- Sharing sleep ideas.

Home Start Rochdale delivered their sessions each Friday morning at venues in each of the Rochdale Boroughs on a rotational basis.

#### **Rochdale Connections Trust**

Rochdale Connections Trust (RCT) hosted their Baby Bubbles sessions in their building based on Drake Street in Rochdale Town Centre twice a week, initially on a Monday and a Friday and then the Friday sessions swapped to Wednesday due to uptake.

Each session had different theme and they were centered it around the needs and requirements of the group that attended on any specific day. For example:

- Sensory play.
- Singing nursery rhymes.
- Making sensory toys for the families to use at home.
- Texture play.
- Food tasting.

- Water play.
- Chatted about the struggles of becoming a pandemic mum and the impacts on the birth.
- Made salt dough hand and footprints which were then decorated for keepsakes.
- Played with musical toys & instruments.
- Discussed how to bond with babies & gave parents tips for communicating with babies.
- Chatted about jabs and made sensory toys for mum to take home.
- Walking down to Rochdale's library to see the Gaia. Families then looked at some books.

## Who attended the sessions?

### Hard to reach families or those who struggle to engage.

**RCT** Supporting 3 Mothers from the BAME Community and one same sex couple, many of these also suffered with mental health issues. Some mums found it a distance to travel, but we did not receive enough referrals from any specific locality to be able to justify relocating.

**HSRB** One dad attended the group, 4 families identified as BAME, 5 families identified as having disability, 2 children identified with health conditions.

### The Rochdale and Oldham Maternity Voices Partnership

The role of the Rochdale and Oldham Maternity Voices Partnership in the Baby Bubbles project was to utilise some of the group sessions to undertake consultation with parents/carers to form a needs analysis for future work and to analyse feedback received from the sessions. They were able to capture feedback and lived experiences from women and fathers, who experienced their antenatal appointments, birth and labour, as well as postnatal care under the covid pandemic conditions.

Many of the findings from each of the Baby Bubbles sessions have been included within this report.

### Beyond Psychology

Provided clinical support for all new PIMH Champions and PIMH Volunteers, to help them reflect on the support provided, think about self-care and reflection of delivering such a service in the future.

6 x 90 minute supervision sessions were planned – 3 for PIMH champions and 3 for PIMH volunteers, one a month for each and some planned face to face.

All Champions used the time well – it was useful to think about how the groups have been run and developed in different locations and reflect on what has made a difference to each group in terms of engagement and feedback. It has also been useful to discuss some compassion focussed therapy ideas and how they bring this into their practice for both themselves and the families they are working with.

Feedback from families is that they have had enough of screen based working and formal settings, which has been one of the great things about this project – having said this, some of the parents may benefit from accessing Beyond Psychology commissioned parent workshops (for now online, but aiming to get back to face to face at some point) – there is a new round of these coming up after Easter and our brain and behaviour workshop is great for parents with children between 2-11 years old. These will be promoted to our families with young babies as part of ongoing support.

## Barnardos

Barnardos planned to invite parents with young babies, to attend their SHINE Workshop, which would be presented in Urdu or Punjabi. The sessions were initially put on hold until later in the New Year due to lack of sign up. Advice has been sought from GMCVO about how to reallocate these funds, due to the poor take up of this support service.

## Rochdale Early Attachment Service

4 day Specialist PIMH Training Sessions were delivered by Home-Start PIMH Champion and the Early Attachment Service to recruit 10 new Parent Infant Mental Health Volunteers across Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale (HMR). This training was successful and is being considered for future training across multi agency practitioners. Further local and GM training opportunities were also available for all champions and volunteers involved with each service.

## Challenges

- **Covid Pandemic** – limiting some Baby Bubbles sessions due to local restrictions. People becoming poorly with Covid or isolating as a contact (both staff, volunteers and service users).  
The lockdown itself has been a challenge for families engaging in Baby Bubbles. They reported that they had increased anxiety and especially social anxiety, had experienced social isolation and felt that they “*didn’t know how to parent in front of others*”. This meant that it was really pushing some of the families out of their comfort zones and homes to attend sessions.
- **Raising awareness of the sessions** – Mainly advertised virtually via online platforms, although this worked well we realise that there are some barriers to digital access and also not being able to engage with established groups face to face within the local communities has been a challenge in raising awareness of Baby Bubbles with families whom are seldom heard (eg: LGBTIQ+, Black, Asian and ethnic minority.) Usually sessions such as these could have been advertised via posters also within the community notice boards. Many of the attendees did state that they heard about Baby Bubbles via Social Media.
- **Involving and engaging seldom heard service users** Although the groups were open to all; due to the pandemic and many groups not opening/meeting face to face trusted relationships could not be built in the short period of time.
- **Gathering Feedback** – Some service users did not want to fill in evaluation forms or were worried their feedback could be traced back to them. Some were cautious of commenting also when gathering feedback face to face.
- **Feedback Anonymised** – can’t measure if they attended all sessions or if feedback received is showing a journey (beginning, Middle, End)
- **Lack of Access to social groups during pandemic** – Comments made where that although they found it easier now that more things were re-opening, there were barriers still due to free groups being oversubscribed, and they were so thankful that they could access the Baby Bubbles sessions, as privately run groups were expensive, some sessions were harder to get to and they didn’t feel as confident going to these, and travel costs prevented some from attending social groups in the Borough. So although attending local groups was a challenge, the Baby Bubbles project broke that barrier as they were free, accessible and with trusted organisations.
- **Weather** – due to the time of the year we had some very wet, cold and windy days. We also had to cancel one session due to snow.

- Covid – some mum’s had to get public transport and didn’t feel comfortable after the Omnicrom outbreak. We also had to close our office before Christmas just resulted in a cancelled session.
- Bus fare – some mum’s struggled with bus fare twice a week, ultimately, we encouraged them to attend once a week, if this suited them better.
- Distance – we had one mum who relied on the tram, and she wasn’t comfortable doing it alone so if she didn’t have someone to accompany her she missed sessions.
- Referrals – we didn’t receive as many referrals as we would have liked, however as per the positive comments received some Mum’s appreciated the smaller groups.

## Highlights

### Taken from feedback and consultation with parents who attended.

The honest comments received from attendees of the group informed an insightful view into what it has meant to them to have a baby during the Covid-19 pandemic/lockdown.

The feedback was varied, but mainly highlighted that the attendees journeys had not been a very positive experience for a variety of reasons. This has helped identify gaps in services such as the need for weigh in clinics, the need for Health Visitors to have more of a presence and the need for partners to have been allowed at scans and antenatal appointments and initial inductions of labour- all these points have impacted the parents after the birth.

**Reduce loneliness and isolation:** A common theme around feedback gathered was that attendees enjoyed the opportunity to meet, or be with, other people and have “*adult Conversations*”.

*“The sessions have helped us get out and about and meet new people”*

*“Enjoyed meeting other parents and just having someone to talk to”*

**Collaborative working:** Baby Bubbles created great cohesion of services that was really beneficial for the project as a whole as it meant sharing of good practice and creating better cohesion for the project. This was a huge benefit to the families involved in Baby Bubbles and ensured better sharing of information, advice or sign posting where needed. Many of the attendees of Baby Bubbles also were not aware of the Rochdale and Oldham Maternity Voices Partnership prior to the sessions, so it has raised awareness of this organisation also.

### We asked the question, “*What have you really enjoyed about the baby bubbles sessions?*”

Service Users liked the fact that Baby Bubbles was an extension of a service that they already had built a connection with and was familiar to them, this helped reduce anxiety and made them feel safe. Quite a few commented that they felt that they found common ground with others at the sessions, finding that they have had similar pregnancy and birthing experiences, anxieties, worries and that it has been good to know that they were not alone in these feelings and experiences. Some attendees came with a friend or relative and that they enjoyed that as having a buddy to come with was less daunting.

One of the most common responses was that attendees had enjoyed their children physically, socially interacting with other children.

The Home Start sessions being in play centres was highlighted as something enjoyed, and also the RCT sessions being in a set place with activities was also highlighted as it was the first time their

children had been in an environment such as that since they were born due to the covid pandemic, or the first time parents had interacted outside their homes since baby was born.

One parent commented that *“it changed my life after the first session...”*

## Other Achievements

**Trusted relationships** -between not only the collaboration of services involved, but with the families involved with the Baby Bubbles project. A comment was made that *“We have set up our own WhatsApp group, and plan to meet up – so happy!”* Another mum had extreme social anxiety when she first attended a Baby Bubbles session, but also said that she had felt that over the number of weeks she has opened up more, allowed her child to interact with other children, allowed other parents within the group to hold her child and this had been a huge milestone for her as she felt she trusted everyone in her group.

## Sharing of Information

Below are ways that the organisations used to successfully engage and information share with service users and also share photographs and quotes from the sessions with consent:

- Twitter Pages
- Instagram Accounts
- Facebook Pages
- Direct Mailing Lists
- Word of Mouth

Attendees of the Baby Bubbles also commented that they found social media helpful for finding help and advice that is shared via RCT, Barnardos and Home Start and also liked to share their attendance of Baby Bubbles sessions to their own social media accounts to show the service in a positive light.

**Increase in awareness of services locally in the Rochdale Borough** Feedback gathered many comments to say that they are now more aware of the services that they can access within the borough, or can be signposted to or get further information from.

**Well-being of Baby Bubbles attendees** The service users came to the sessions with lots of anxiety around the pandemic, parenting, and social gatherings, over the space of the sessions they reported that they had improved well being and commented that Baby Bubbles sessions has been of a huge benefit to them.

**Friendships and relationships built** Baby Bubbles were quite intimate sessions, they were frequent and reliable. As many of the groups were smaller, it ensured that bonds could be formed, and friendships built upon. A question asked was *“What 2 things have you found beneficial from your Baby Bubbles sessions?”*

**The most popular responses were:**

- **Connecting/Meeting**
- **Children interaction**
- **Talking**
- **Reduced anxiety**
- **Being out**

All these responses linked directly with forming a bond within their own Baby Bubbles groups.

## Parent quotes

*"I made a friend directly because of Home Start and strengthened this friendship via Baby Bubbles"*

*"Although I was nervous about coming when you first invited me and my stomach turned, I am so glad I came and got over being so scared to meet others".*

*"I don't like big groups, but this is just nice and now I have sat down and relaxed, it feels nice".*

*"I was so scared of anyone else holding my baby. I am so protective. I'm so glad I pushed myself to come".*

*"Would my partner be welcome to come along as dads often miss out, but I wouldn't want anyone to feel uncomfortable? The dad was fully welcomed by all to join the group and future sessions".*

*"It's honestly changed my life thanks so much for the job you do. It makes me want to help people too".*

A parent disclosed her recent miscarriage and the emotions associated with this. She said she felt safe to share her story with the team.

A parent was delighted to tell us about her up and coming wedding at the end of the session as a good piece of news.

## Positive outcomes reported during consultation with parents

- Reduced isolation & loneliness
- Parents & babies made new friends
- Families built their own peer support network
- Increase parent's confidence
- Advice and reassurance to parents
- Reduced parents' anxieties
- Improved parent and babies' mental health
- Play opportunities & socialization for babies
- Our baby bubbles support group allowed pandemic mum's to meet and share stories with other mums. We wanted to give mums a boost so tried to give them keepsakes and small gifts after each session, this was especially important for the more vulnerable women we worked with as they were quite isolated or on lower income so had less access to toys. Bearing in mind who we were working with, we also showed mum's how to make sensory toys from household items to show them that spending quality time bonding and having fun didn't need to cost a lot and helped with a babies brain development.
- We wanted to foster an environment where mum's felt safe to share their concerns, struggles and issues and would be supported. In order to do this, we chose volunteers who were experienced mums and foster careers who had children of their own to bring to the group, this made mum's feel at ease within the group and able to trust them with advice.
- Mum's reported they felt less alone, more confident with their parenting, better about themselves and knew where they could reach out to for help and support.

## Feedback consultation

See appendix 1 – Pie Chart total responses for Home Start (Lead project)

**Word Bubble** – The below word bubble highlights key words found within the feedback question: “What have you found beneficial of attending the Baby Bubbles sessions?”



## Conclusion

In such a short space of time the Baby Bubbles Partnership has built connections with organisations, groups and service users from across the four Rochdale boroughs.

With the Social Media Channels now being used more from service users across the Rochdale Borough, and many commenting that is how they heard about the group, this can strengthen the engagement of Baby Bubbles sessions further and ensure a wider reach and is a way to keep service users informed. Baby Bubbles must also be mindful of reaching those who do not engage digitally via social media platforms and potentially provide an alternative for example posters in the local community centres across the borough and make use of local resources such as Rochdale Online and local press events pages to raise awareness of the sessions. With community groups opening more widely now that restrictions are lessening, Baby Bubbles sessions could be advertised within the community wider via posters or flyers.

The attendees of the sessions had children ranging from a few weeks old (DOB 09.2021) to just over 19 months old (DOB 03.2019) although there were some slightly older children in attendance ad hoc. They also had a varied experience of pregnancy, birth and postnatal dependent on which timeline of the pandemic they had been pregnant/given birth within. This was mainly highlighted that the fact partners had not been allowed to appointments at some stages of the pandemic, the mums felt they had needed more family support – Initial lockdown had prevented visitors not only to the hospitals but to home addresses after birth so vital first weeks were very lonely, lack of service involvement such as Health Visitors, inductions – rules changing, Not able to attend weigh in/community clinics, better contact (mainly via face to face) with doctors, midwives, consultants. Overwhelming responses were around mental health and well being, with many not knowing about services such as



the Early Attachment Service or the PIMH Team (Parent Infant Mental Health) service locally that you can self refer to.

Another positive came from a family who had both given up smoking during the mums pregnancy. They commented that they were both social smokers, and as they could not go out anywhere to be social it had had a huge impact in them being able to stop. This they have maintained.

To ensure that as many responses as possible were received, a Survey Monkey feedback form was created to give participants the option to send in additional comments after the sessions. This was shared to all attendees from Home Start and Rochdale Connections Trust.

In order to ensure that families are reached within Middleton and The Pennines areas, where the lowest uptake of participant were from, the group moving forward need to look at how those families can receive more information around Baby Bubbles and ensure attendance potentially looking at venues or wider reach advertisement.

The Covid Pandemic impacted greatly on the overall maternity experiences the service users had that we gathered feedback from but said that Baby Bubbles had helped them in some way.

Many of the service users have commented that they found Baby Bubbles sessions to be helpful for a number of reasons. Each service had their own expertise also in certain topics and one positive was that many of the families found out further information around health and well being, or were signposted to other local services that may be of benefit to that particular family. This has enhanced their knowledge of what else they can access locally.

The responses around our question *“What could have been done to make your experience better”* where also very similar and we now need to look at how we can feed this back to the specific services to ensure that users voice is heard and changes can be made based on this:

- Actually listened (midwives)
- Not made assumptions on what people need/want (Midwives)
- Prevention of isolation during pregnancy
- Apps maybe (development)
- Socially distanced/online baby groups maybe (development via surestarts?)
- Been more in the loop (Comms)
- Being listened to (staff)
- Better Hospital service
- Involve both parents (appointments)
- Make father feel welcome
- Felt that as a younger mum (22) made to feel didn't know what was talking about (staff)
- More awareness of induction and given the confidence to challenge services
- Continuity of services (midwifery teams)
- Suffered birth trauma
- Midwife listening
- Keeping to appointments
- Knowing who to complain to about staff and services

## Outputs

- 1) 33 new group support sessions have been delivered for expectant parents and families with children aged 0-2yrs by the end of December 2021.
- 3) 10 new PIMH VCSE Champions completed their induction and training to deliver informal group support sessions for parents and their babies across HMR.

## Outcomes

- 1) 30 parents and their 16 children reported improved mental health and increased social network amongst marginalised groups by December 2021.
- 2) 10 PIMH champions recruited and trained to support families and organisations across the borough by December 2021.
- 3) Improved collaboration between 6 VCSE members of the partnership, with identified opportunities for sustainability by the end of the project.

## Projection from Jan 2022

- Rochdale Connections Trust will continue to deliver Baby Bubbles sessions alongside awareness and information raising of Alcohol Foetal Spectrum Disorder
- Home Start Rochdale will continue to deliver Baby Bubbles sessions for the remainder of 2022 throughout the borough.

Report written by Donna Arden McKenna CEO Home-Start Rochdale and Bury

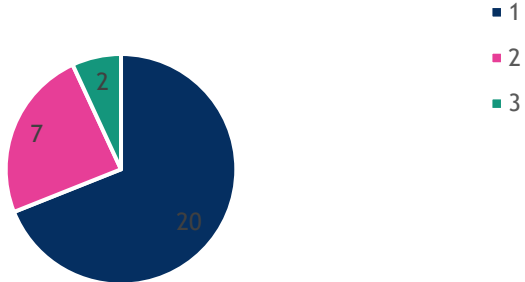
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## Appendix 1 – Feedback responses

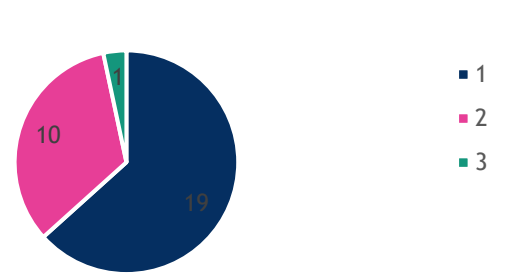
### Baby Bubbles Home Start

Borough: <b>MIDDLETON, ROCHDALE, LITTLEBOROUGH, HEYWOOD</b>				
<b>Overall feedback from Rochdale Home Start Host (October – December 2021)</b>				
<b>After Coming to Baby Bubbles:</b>	<b>Yes, a great deal</b>	<b>A Little</b>	<b>Not At All</b>	<b>Total</b>
I feel less alone	20	7	2	30 responses
I feel more confident as a person	19	10	1	
I feel better about myself	18	12	0	
I know where I can get help if I need it	22	7	0	

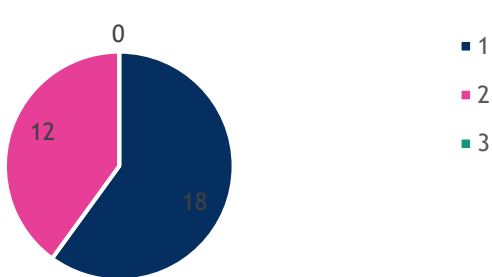
After attending Baby Bubbles I feel less alone



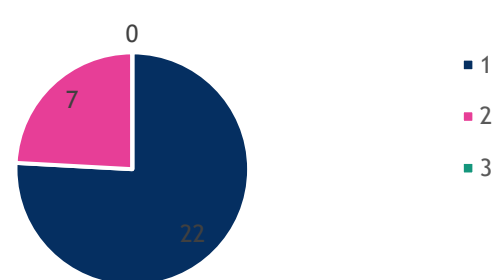
After attending Baby Bubbles I feel more confident as a person



After attending Baby Bubbles I feel better about myself



After Baby Bubbles I know where I can get help if I need it



1 - Yes a great deal  
2- A little  
3- Not at all