

Project Evaluation Report

MUMS AND TOTS

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Mums & Tots Peer-Support Project

End of project evaluation

Project Funder/Sponsor

Asda Foundation, Action Together, GM Perinatal Support

Project Timescale

11th October 2022 to 20 March 2023 (Multiple short-term pilots)

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to engage with parents and children from the South Asian community of Oldham to understand their support and development needs to better inform organizational and project decisions.

Expected Benefits and Outcomes

- Better physical and mental health for children
- Healthier family parent/child relationships
- Increased confidence in both parents and children
- Better mental health and support form mothers/carers
- Increased peer social networking opportunities for a better active community.

Summary of Findings






Prior to the initiation of the Mums & Tots Peer Support Pilot Project, we had found through our research and consultation with our beneficiaries that there was a lack of culturally appropriate and informal support for both mothers/carers and children suffering from adverse effects of the pandemic-lockdown.

Members of the community that were consulting proposed we organize stay and play group activities to help children socialize and develop. After the initial six-weeks pilot, we became acutely aware of the wider needs of both children and the mothers/carers. The second pilot between September-December 2022 was incorporated with staff led peer-support for mothers/carers to address their mental health needs.

At the conclusion of the second pilot at the end of December 2022, we began co-designing with the beneficiaries a third pilot that ran between January-March 2023. Keeping in line with religious and cultural sensitivities and considering the stigma and barriers associated with mental health in BAME communities, we delivered sessions that would help children with their development needs, and mothers/carers with their mental health needs. In addition, we have been able to provide group counselling support from a trained and qualified counsellor.

Upon launch, the project was extremely well received by the community. Throughout the project, we have been able to engage with various sections and ages of the community. We have had sessions attended by children younger than 6 months and adults as old as 65. The project being one of its kind within Oldham, we have had great feedback from both participants and non-participants of the project.

Outputs

		
Sessions	Adult Females	Children
34	45	49
		
Ages Range	% of Main Target	
6 months – 65 years	100%	

Impact

The Mums & Tots Women's Peer-Support project has been an extremely useful platform to use for engaging both children and female members of the BME community of Oldham. While the primary purpose of the project was to provide an informal stay & play group to help relieve some burden off mothers/carers of pandemic-born children, it quickly evolved into a platform for mental health support for women and a development program for children.

There are many parents who joined us who don't engage in any social activity throughout the week otherwise. There were also many parents for whom this was their only sanctuary for comfort, socializing, and peer-support.

Unexpectedly, this project became a very productive platform to carry out steering activities for our organization and its services/activities. The participants were engaged very well in the planning and designing of other current and future projects.

Working within a community and people suffering from multiple deprivations, and long-term health conditions, we hope this is just the beginning of a movement towards a more resilient and healthier community.

Outcomes

- Many parents have started socializing more frequently
- All parents have expressed their keen interest in continuing to attend the regular sessions if continued to benefit themselves and the wider community
- Increased confidence in both parents and children
- Children better able to communicate, socialize and play with other children
- Some of the mothers now attend our weekly Mothers and Daughters sports sessions to keep physically fit

Success Factors

- Captive audience – existing and past beneficiaries, and supplementary school students and parents
- Co-designing with participants during short-term pilots helped to engage with them earlier on in the project
- Providing snacks and drinks helped to create a friendly and informal atmosphere where everyone felt comfortable and became a platform to socialize
- Sessions were delivered by familiar faces
- Venue was centrally located that enabled families to walk to the venue

Recommendations

- Formalise some aspects of the mental health and counselling support with the use of the attending qualified counsellor
- Explore formal children’s development programs such as sensory play, fine motor skills building, etc.
- Partner with other children’s service providers in the area to deliver targeted sessions

Case Study

Mrs. N joined our weekly Mums & Tots sessions in January 2023 after being referred to us by one of her neighbors. After the first session, she continued attending all subsequent sessions and continues to attend regularly. During the sessions, she started making many new friends. At first, she appeared very reserved and hesitant to open up. Over a couple of sessions, it transpired that she has been living in social isolation for many years, detached from the community. For many years, she stopped visiting old friends or attending any social gatherings other than with her immediate family and close friends.

She very quickly made some meaningful relationships with our sessional staff and other mothers. She expressed that these sessions have been the first and only sessions her 1 year old child has attended since being born, and that her own post-natal depression had not helped with the situation. Her anxiety had started to reduce, and she now feels confident to seek support for herself or her child.

While her situation was not very complex, we are thankful that we were able to support her and prevent her from reaching a crisis point.

“I can definitely say that going there once a week has been nourishing for my mental health more than anything. It’s been nice to make new friends with new people; for my child to play with other children.”

- Mrs A Rahman