

Family centre service

Speak to us on 0300 123 7572

Register and get started

What's on?

Find your local family centre

Parent survival kit – advice and support

Family Centres Website – New Parents Discovery

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May 2021

What we wanted to know

We wanted to find out how parents of young children use the Family Centres website.

Does it meet their needs?

Do they have any problems using it?

What we did

We devised some tasks based on surveys and interviews with health and family support staff who told us what parents tend to ask them about most often.

We then conducted 1:1 testing sessions with 12 parents from across Hertfordshire. Most had children aged from 4 months to 5 years.

We watched how these parents interacted with the website, and asked them about their experiences using it.

How parents first hear of Family Centres

- Health Visitor - 50%
- Midwife - 33%
- Word of mouth through a neighbour or work contact - 17%

Why parents last used their Family Centre

- Courses - 33%
- Weighing sessions - 25%
- Activities - 17%
- Health - 8%
- Vitamins - 8%
- Food vouchers - 8%

How parents define the Family Centre service

- Council run service providing **advice** and group/sessions for parents and babies.
- Access to people and information, weighing sessions. Service for parents of young children, in local area.
- Quite helpful, friendly, great for meeting other people. Very **supportive**
- Point of contact for **advice** on looking after your baby. Feeding, weighing, social activities.
- **Support** for parents, with your baby/toddler. **Advice** on parenting and to book appointments.
- A **support** service for young families. Offering the same functions as health visitors. As well as **advice** with general issues.
- Hub for local community to access a number of services. From antenatal upwards.
- **Support** for children and families in the first few years of their lives. Physical **support** as well as courses. Also healthcare/developmental checks.
- Publicly funded service that provides gap services between midwife and school within the local area. Good for people who need extra help.
- A great resource to **support** parents of children under 5. For new parents, offering **advice** and **support**.
- **Supporting** families and their children
- **Support** for families and someone who speaks to you very well.

How parents use the Family Centres website

- 25% never use the website
 - 33% rarely use - every few months for events/general updates
 - 33% use it monthly to check baby groups/activities
 - 8% use regularly/weekly as taking new parenting online course
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- Weekly email updates from Family Centres are very helpful for parents, especially for info about weighing sessions and courses. This email reduces the need for parents to come to the website.

Where parents go for information

Health

- NHS - 67%
- Google - 50%
- Health Visitors - 25%
- GP - 17%
- Family - 17%

Parenting

- Google - 42%
- Net mums - 25%
- Start 4 Life - 25%
- Mush app - 17%
- Mumsnet - 17%

Device

- 92% use mobile

Task 1 – Find What’s on/centre info

Success: 60%

Rating: Medium

Satisfied with info: No

Key findings

Parents tend to look for events info on Facebook. Some were frustrated to see the Family Centre site sends them back to Facebook - but note most wouldn't look for events on this site.

Parents want to see what's available before going into Eventbrite.

Issues

Eventbrite - not all know what this is. Those that know don't see why they'd click it before knowing what's on offer.

Get tickets for our bookable events on [Eventbrite](#).

Recommendation

Have event details listed before Eventbrite link so users know what's on offer up front - ideally each listed event would click through to the corresponding section in Eventbrite. (Low)

Task 2 – Find vitamins

Success: 63%

Rating: Hard

Satisfied with info: No

Key finding

Parents would get vitamins info via Google, Facebook, GP or direct contact with Family Centres.

Issues

Search results not obvious ('vitamins' gives 'Timeline' and 'Feeding your baby').

Results **1 - 2** of about **2** results for **vitamins**

[Timeline of information for families](#)

Health and social information for families, from conception to 5.

[Feeding your baby](#)

Support for whichever way you choose to feed your baby

External site - poor trust/confidence in Healthy Start website as not familiar to all.

Visit [Healthy Start](#) to find out:

Recommendations

Have the keyword 'vitamins' showing in search results. (High)

When linking to Healthy Start, mention it's an NHS site as users trust NHS. (Low)

Task 3 – Find breastfeeding info

Success: 80%

Rating: Easy

Satisfied with info: No

Key findings

Parents would Google, go to Facebook/local support groups, speak to Health Visitor, or contact specialist organisations like La Leche League or KellyMom for breastfeeding information. It wouldn't occur to them to look on the Family Centre site.

Parents prefer text to video. Parents didn't initially notice the breastfeeding video. Most wouldn't watch it.

Issues

Parents feel the information here is too basic - nothing they wouldn't already know.

Recommendations

Have clear links to trusted, well known sources of breastfeeding information e.g. La Leche League or KellyMom as these are sources parents mention and use. (Low)

Task 4 – Book a weighing session

Success: 64%

Rating: Medium

Satisfied with info: No

Key findings

Parents tend to book sessions via Facebook, weekly FC emails, or phone. Not all know Eventbrite.

Issues

Search results for 'weigh' are: 'Introduction to solids', 'Coronavirus updates', 'Health visitors', and 'Timeline' pages.

List of centres in area accordions aren't clickable for more location details:

We also have activities at:

- Bushey Mill Family Centre, Bushey
- Shenley Family Centre, Shenley
- Furzefield Family Centre, Potters Bar
- PB1 Family Centre, Potters Bar
- The Reddings Family Centre, Bushey.

Recommendations

Have session details listed before Eventbrite link so users know what's on offer up front - ideally each listed event would click through to the corresponding section in Eventbrite. (Low)

Add links to lists of Family Centre locations in the accordions on the 'Find your local Family Centre' page so users can click through to find more info about these. (Medium)

Amend language - 'Get tickets for our bookable events on Eventbrite.' Parents feel a weighing session isn't an 'event' and a 'ticket' feels more like you're going to a concert. Suggest something like 'See what's available.' (Low)

Have keywords 'weigh' and 'weighing' showing in search results. (High)

Task 5 – Sign up to join the service

Success: 100%

Rating: Easy

Satisfied with info: Yes

Key finding

All users able to successfully register online.

Issues

Some uncertainty over the difference between 'registration' and 'refer.'

Registration form



Complete this form to access all of the events and activities available at our centres.

Refer to us



If you need more targeted support from us, make a referral. Your family will need to be registered first, though.

Recommendation

Amend wording on the registration page to more clearly show the difference between registering and referring. (Low)

Task 6 – Find sleep support

Success: 18%

Rating: Hard

Satisfied with info: No

Key findings

Parents wouldn't come to this site looking for sleep info. They'd speak to other mums, Family Centre staff, Google and NHS. They don't like being taken to an external site (Family Lives) that they're not familiar with.

Issues

Vague link titles - confusion between 'Parents and mums to be' and 'Healthy happy families' on the Advice and support page.

Poor search results for 'sleep' (shows 'Emotional, mental health, relationship advice' and 'Health Visitors')

Recommendations

Have keyword 'sleep' showing in search results. (High)

Combine/reduce/amend 'Parents and mums to be' and 'Healthy happy families' categories - too many links to choose from, and poor information scent so when looking for 'sleep' not obvious where to go. (Medium)

Remove 'Grown up stuff' section as it's misleading and for adults - doesn't seem appropriate here.

Have keyword 'sleep' showing in search results. (Low)

Rename 'Parenting advice link' on 'Parents and mums to be page' to Family Lives website as it's not immediately obvious this goes to an external site, and surprises parents. (Low)

Parenting advice

Help and advice for parents from familylives.org.uk

Video

Parents of young children prefer text to video as they can read at their own pace and there's no risk of waking baby up due to sound intrusions. Some parents will watch a video but it must be very short (1-2 mins max) and it must be clear up front what the content will be. They will always read the accompanying text first.

For the breastfeeding content below, parents didn't initially notice the video.

Desktop

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is a great way to get your baby off to the best start. You may consider breastfeeding your baby as:

- breast milk is the best food your baby can have – it's tailor-made for your baby
- breast milk boosts your baby's ability to fight illness and infection in their first 6 months. Evidence shows that babies who are breastfed are less likely to get diarrhoea and respiratory infections, particularly in the early months
- breastfeeding lowers your risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer
- it's a great way to strengthen the bond between you and your baby
- breastfeeding your baby can help their brain to grow.



No - wouldn't watch - 42%
Maybe - might watch - 33%
Yes - would watch - 25%

Mobile

Breastfeeding

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- it's a great way to strengthen the bond between you and your baby
- breastfeeding your baby can help their brain to grow.

Breastfeeding top tips

Breastfeeding and returning to work

You don't have to stop breastfeeding because you're returning to work. Remember, employers have certain obligations towards breastfeeding women.

[More about breastfeeding and returning to work](#)

More from the NHS and Unicef

[Positioning and attachment - breastfeeding](#)

[Expressing and storing breast milk](#)

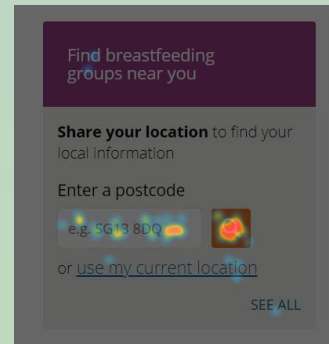


Clicks on Feeding your baby page (18.4.21 – 18.5.21)

5%



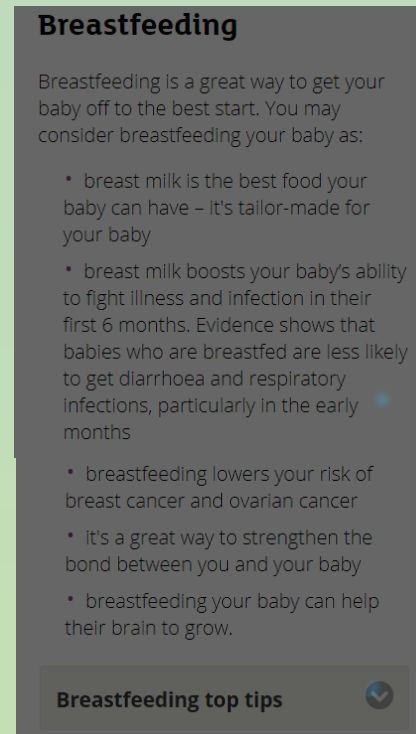
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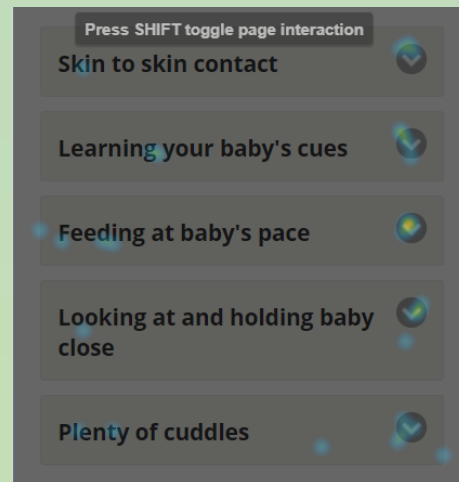
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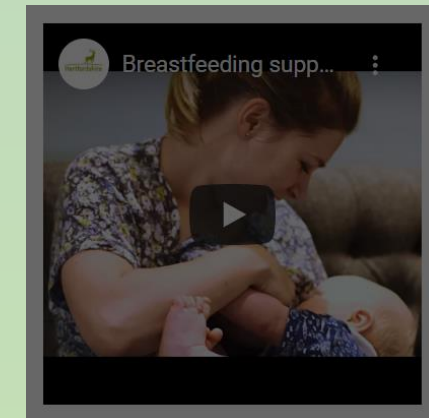
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Trust

Parents place a great deal of trust in the Family Centre service. Most would trust the vetting process if sessions at centres are being run by external organisations.

Other orgs running sessions at Family Centres:

Would trust the Family Centre vetting process - 82%

Would check who the orgs are - 18%

Most parents like the NHS logo on health pages for reassurance of a trusted source.

NHS logo:

Very important - 55%,

Useful - 27%

Not important - 18%

Best and worst things about the Family Centres site

Best thing

Home page – clear layout - 45%

Has local info – relevant to users - 36%

Trustworthy advice – ‘safer than Google’ - 18%

Worst thing

Hard to find info – vague link titles, poor search results - 45%

Info too basic – nothing users wouldn't already know - 18%

Lot of scrolling on mobile – wordy and too many links - 18%

Conclusion

- Findings indicate that parents rarely use the site.
- 25% only ever use it to register.
- 33% only use it a few times a year for general updates.
- Courses, weighing sessions, and activities are the main reasons why parents use the Family Centre service.
- Parents tend to look for events info on Facebook
- There's no evidence of need for the site to contain health info – parents refer to the NHS, Google, Health Visitors, GPs and family members.
- Recommendation is to remove/reduce health content and clearly signpost to definitive health sources instead.
- Weekly email updates from Family Centres are very helpful for parents, especially for info about weighing sessions and courses. This email reduces the need for parents to come to the website.
- Parents of young children tend to prefer text to video.
- Parents are very positive about the service – good parenting courses and supportive staff.

Recommendations

- Have keywords 'sleep', 'vitamins', 'weigh', 'weighing' showing in search results (High)
- Add links to lists of Family Centre locations in the accordions on the 'Find your local Family Centre' page so users can click through to find more info about these. (Medium)
- Combine/reduce/amend 'Parents and mums to be' and 'Healthy happy families' categories - too many links to choose from, and poor information scent (Medium)
- When linking to Healthy Start, mention it's an NHS site as users trust NHS (Low)
- Have clear links to trusted, well known sources of breastfeeding information e.g. La Leche League or KellyMom as these are sources parents mention and use (Low)
- Amend language - 'Get tickets for our bookable events on Eventbrite.' Parents feel a weighing session isn't an 'event' and a 'ticket' feels more like you're going to a concert. Suggest something like 'See what's available.' (Low)
- Have event details listed before Eventbrite link (Low)
- Remove 'Grown up stuff' section as it's misleading and for adults (Low)
- Have keyword 'sleep' showing in search results. (Low)
- Rename 'Parenting advice link' on 'Parents and mums to be page' to Family Lives website as it's not immediately obvious this goes to an external site, and surprises parents. (Low)
- Amend wording on the registration page to more clearly show the difference between registering and referring. (Low)

Recent changes in response to user feedback

- **Search bar** now visible by default – it was previously hidden until hamburger selected so most parents weren't aware of it.
- **'Sign up online'** wording now being used on the homepage instead of 'Register and get started.' Parents understood this but felt 'register' was a bit formal.
- **'Advice and support'** wording now being used on the homepage instead of 'Parent Survival Kit.' Parents didn't like 'survival' – felt negative.
- **Hero image** replaced - parents felt previous image looked more like a nursery classroom than a Family Centre.
- **Map removed** and **postcode search added**. Parents told us they expect a postcode search – they don't like maps.
- **Breastfeeding wording** amended so reference to burning calories removed. Parents don't like the suggestion that weight loss is an incentive.
- **Homepage length significantly reduced** with clearer description of what the service offers. Parents tend to use mobile and they don't like scrolling – page previously had lots of white space.

Next steps

- Findings to be shared and discussed with service leads and stakeholders. Are there any concerns or surprises about these findings and recommendations?
- When service and stakeholders are happy to authorise changes, our content team will amend.
- We'll continue to monitor feedback and can also arrange follow up sessions with users to ensure content is meeting needs.