

Interview Topic Guide – Parent Carer Interview (Parent carers)

Study title: Support for Parent Carers in England (SPaCE) study

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This interview aims to explore the experiences of parent carers' access to services and support for mental health problems. It may be experiences you've had personally or discussed with friends or family members about their experiences. The focus of this work is specifically on the support and services available to parents rather than their children. There will be questions about things that have made it easier and things that have made it harder to access care, and any recommendations you may have to improve access to effective mental health services for parent carers. We are interested in hearing about experiences of health and social care services in England, such as services or referrals within the NHS or social care, as well as support accessed in other ways such as through your child's school, a charity or a community organisation.

Your participation in the study and all data collected will be kept confidential unless there are any safeguarding concerns about which we are duty-bound to respond.

Demographics

Researchers will cross check surveys before interviews to ascertain participant specific demographics, including: primary role and location and any relevant information which may help to inform the interview (for example, reported contacts with services and areas of good practice).

Research topic guides

1. Accessing care and support for mental health

- a. Do you consider yourself to be/identify as a parent carer? (Prompt: when did you start to identify as a parent carer?)
- b. During the time you have been a parent carer, have you ever had a conversation, or has the topic of your own mental health ever come up with a health, social care, or other professional ?
 - i. Prompt: This can include any professionals/services that you are seeing for your child's needs.
- c. Could you tell me how that conversation came about?
 - i. *(If the parent carer sought help)* – What did you expect, or hope would happen? How did you feel about the conversation?
 - ii. *(If the professional brought up the topic)* - Did it happen during a conversation or consultation about your child, or was it during an appointment or contact for yourself ? How did you feel about the conversation?
- d. Can you tell us a bit more about what happened next?

- i. Prompts: Were you offered treatment/prescription, referred or signposted anywhere? How long did it take to receive support/treatment? Did you end up having treatment?
- ii. How did you feel about this/the process?
 1. Prompts: Was it helpful? (Prompts: what was helpful about it? If not why was that, what would have made it better?)
- e. Are there any other times when you have talked about your mental health with a health or social care professional? (To help probe around the variety of potential opportunity points at which need and support could be identified & addressed. If yes, repeat c and d above)
- f. *(If not covered above)* Have any of the professionals involved in caring for your child ever asked you about your own mental health? (Depending on answer, cover points above about what happened, and how did they feel about it)
- g. *(if not covered above)* Please tell us about your experiences of accessing (or trying to access) mental health care via your GP/health visitor/practice nurse.
 - i. Was it helpful? (Prompts: what was helpful about it?)
 - ii. If it was unhelpful, why was that? What would have made it better?
 - iii. Did you have any problems accessing mental health care? (If yes: Were there any reasons which stopped you accessing it (prompt: if response is about caring responsibility – what about this specifically?))
- h. Is there anything about being a parent carer that makes it harder to access or engage care and support (e.g., therapy)? (Prompts: (if not covered in response) is there anything about the system that makes it harder for parent carers to access mental health support? Is there anything about being a parent carer that makes it harder to seek/ask for help?)
- i. What would make it easier for you to access care?

2. Information and resources to support parent carers?

- a. What kinds of support do parent carers/you need for their mental health problems? (Prompts: Is the support that parent carers need likely to be different in any way?)
- b. Do you have preferences for any particular types of treatment or support (e.g. group versus individual? Online vs face-to-face?)
- c. Do you have a preferred method for being able to get the information and help you need? (Prompts: videos, website links, social media, signposting to services, meetings, word of mouth)
- d. Where do you go, or advise others to go, to look for information on sources of support?

3. Reflection/Close

- a. In an ideal world, where a service existed that met all of your mental health needs, could you describe what it would be like?) (Prompts: what would it look like, who would deliver it, and how would you find out about it?)
- b. Do you think that professionals should routinely ask parent carers about their own mental health? (Prompts: How/in what way/when? (for example, as part of a checklist when doing a referral/at every appointment) why/why not? which professionals might be best placed to do this? (Prompt: would you have any concerns or reasons why you might not feel comfortable talking to a professional?))
- c. If you spoke to a parent carer who needed to access mental health care what advice would you give to them?
- d. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about this topic?
- e. Do you have any messages for government about this topic?
- f. Next steps: Explain how they can find out research findings. When they are likely to be available. Further sources of information and support (website, signposting for mental health support)