

National Evaluation of A Better Start: Learning from Families

We are independent researchers from the University of Sussex.
We want to talk to families who have worked with A Better Start.
Could you help us learn from your experience?

What's happening?

- A Better Start (ABS) is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund to support young children and families in Blackpool, Bradford, Lambeth, Nottingham and Southend.
- The National Lottery Community Fund has asked a team of researchers to carry out a **national evaluation** to find out what kind of difference ABS can make to children and families:
 - The national evaluation is being carried out by five organisations: NatCen Social Research, University of Sussex, RSM Partners, National Children's Bureau and Research in Practice.
 - **Researchers from the University of Sussex are talking to families**, to learn from their experiences.

Who is being asked to take part?

- We want to talk to **25 families of young children** who have used ABS services:
 - We are talking to families with at least one child aged 0-12 months or 24-36 months.
- We want to talk to the child's parent/carer – but other family members can join in too.

If you take part, what would you have to do?

- We would like to talk to you **twice a year over the next four years**.
 - Whenever possible, the same researcher would speak to you each time
- We'd like to:
 - Come to visit you once a year
 - Talk to you by phone or online (e.g., Zoom) 6 months later.
- We want to learn about your experience of ABS services:
 - What's important to you and your family? What makes a difference? What could be better? What else would you like to be done?
- If you agree, we will take notes and make a sound recording of our conversations.
 - If someone wants to join in but doesn't want to be recorded, we will stop the recorder when they are speaking. We will check the recording to make sure we don't include anyone who didn't want to be recorded. If no one wants to be recorded, we will take notes instead.

What happens when we visit?

- We would come to your home – or somewhere else if you want.
- The visit will take about 2 hours, at a time that suits you and the family.
- We want to talk with you and do some activities. These help us learn what's important in your family life:
 - We will give you a camera (to keep) – so you (or anyone who wants to) can take pictures to show what's important to your family.
 - We will bring things for making a map of important people and places.
 - We can go for a walk in the local area so you can show us what matters to you.

What happens when we phone you?

- The phone call will happen six months after the visit.
- It will take about 30 minutes – and we will call at a time that suits you.
- We want to catch up on what has been happening for you and the family.

What happens to the information you provide?

- We'll **write a report each year** and **give talks** about the evaluation. **Any information we use in our reports will be anonymous**, so no-one can tell who said what.
- **Everything you tell us will be confidential.**
- The only exception is if we are worried that someone might not be safe or could be at risk of harm. If that happens, we will try and talk to you first about what to do.

What are the benefits?

- Taking part will not help you directly. We hope that the evaluation will help other families in future, by finding ways to improve services.
- To show our thanks, each family will receive:
 - a £30 voucher when we visit;
 - a £20 voucher for each catch-up phone call.
- This gift voucher is yours to keep, even if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

Are there any difficulties or risks?

- Talking about your family life could bring up difficult feelings. You can skip any questions that make you uncomfortable. If you feel upset in any way, you can take a break, or stop completely.

Do you have to take part?

- No – it is up to you!
- Your decision will not affect any services you receive, from ABS or anyone else.

If you start taking part, can you stop later?

- Yes – it's up to you!
- You can change your mind at any time. You don't have to give a reason.

Who is doing the evaluation?

- A team from the University of Sussex is talking to families - you can see our pictures here!
- You can get in touch at any time.
- We will send newsletters to families who take part, to share what we learn.

To find out more, contact Ali Lacey:

Telephone: 07823 515120

Email: a.lacey@sussex.ac.uk

- You can read more about the national evaluation at www.natcen.ac.uk/abs



Ali Lacey



Janet Boddy



Rebecca Webb



Kate Lester



Gill Hampden-Thompson



Tammy McCann

If you are unhappy about something or want to make a complaint

- Our plans for the work have been approved by the University of Sussex's Social Sciences & Art Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee. It is their job to make sure that studies are safe for the people who take part. If you are not happy about anything to do with this evaluation please contact: c-recss@sussex.ac.uk

How we keep your information safe

- The only people with access to information that is not anonymous are the Sussex team (pictured above); interpreters (if they help with interviews) and transcribers (who type up the sound recordings). All of them will protect your confidentiality.
- We will keep your information for up to five years after the study ends. Everything will be kept securely in line with the law. No personal information will be shared outside the Sussex team.
- If you decide that you don't want us to use your information in the study – that's fine! You can do that up to two months after we have spoken (called or visited).
- The National Lottery Community Fund are exploring the possibility of storing anonymous information – with families' identifying details removed – for other researchers to learn from in the future. When they decide if this is possible, we will let you know. But it's up to you. If you take part in the study, you can still choose **not** to have your information stored for future researchers. You can also change your mind at any time until the end of the study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

