

A PARENT-LED EVALUATION OF

Parents and Communities Together

A report by Anthill Collective

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a parent-led evaluation of Parents and Communities Together (PACT), a community-led social support project for parents and children in their early years in South London, run by community organising charity Citizens UK.

The evaluation was led by four Parent Facilitators, parents from the PACT community who were trained and supported to deliver three bilingual evaluation sessions to their peers. A total of 25 parents were engaged across three sessions, using three different evaluation methods:

- /// **Most Significant Change:** where parents shared stories of what they thought was the most important change to them since joining PACT.
- /// **Focus group discussions:** where parents shared what they valued most about PACT and where they thought PACT could improve.
- /// **Ecomapping:** where parents mapped their existing social support networks.

In addition, a rapid evidence review of previous PACT evaluations was conducted to identify existing evidence in which to situate the findings of this evaluation.

Summary of findings

There is good evidence to suggest that PACT has a positive impact on a number of parental and child outcomes, which included:

- /// Increase in parents' social connections and support (very high level of confidence¹)
- /// Improved maternal mental health and wellbeing (very high level of confidence);
- /// Increased parental self-efficacy (high level of confidence);
- /// Improved child social and emotional development (moderate to high level of confidence);
- /// Increased access to local services; (moderate level of confidence)
- /// Increased confidence and leadership (moderate level of confidence)

There are a number of likely associations between these outcomes, such as the increase in social connectedness and improved mental health, or between mental health, parental self-efficacy and access to local services and the improvement in children's social and emotional development.

Parents tended to report a different set of impacts based on how long they had been a member of PACT for. Mums who were with PACT for:

- /// Less than six months were more likely to say their social support network had increased.
- /// More than six months were more likely to say their parenting skills and confidence had improved.
- /// Less than twelve months parents were more likely to say their mental health had improved.
- /// More than twelve months were more likely to say their child's development improved.
- /// More than two years were more likely to say their confidence and leadership had improved.

¹ Confidence levels are based on the strength of the qualitative data generated during this evaluation assessed in relation to the number and quality of previous evaluations that have found similar impacts.

This suggests a 'journey of impact', where, over the course of a parents' time with PACT, one impact, such as an increase in social connections, leads to or contributes to another, such as improved maternal mental health, which contributes to another, such as improved child development over a period of time.

There were also a number of noteworthy benefits of the parent-led approach:

- /// Evaluation activities and sessions were able to be co-designed and tested ahead of time to ensure they were appropriate for participants.
- /// It generated more meaningful insights as parents felt more comfortable sharing stories with their peers
- /// The process was more inclusive and accessible for more parents, bringing in additional languages and allowing a wider range of parents to participate.
- /// It built leadership capacity by developing the skills and confidence of Parent Facilitators, modelling parent leadership for other parents and increasing evaluation capacity within PACT to deliver future parent-led evaluations.
- /// It brought new types of expertise and experience into the evaluation team
- /// It distributed power away from evaluators and towards evaluation participants



Author's acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank the four incredible Parent Facilitators who led the evaluation sessions: Estefania, Helen, Omoyosola and Saran. The evaluation would not have been possible without them. They all brought so much to the process and it was fantastic to see their confidence and skills grow over the project.

I would also like to thank all of the 25 parents, who we had the privilege of hearing from. They gave up their time to join one of the three evaluation sessions and shared with us their personal experiences and stories that are contained within this report.

The Parents and Communities Together (PACT) team has also been amazing. They supported the evaluation by helping organise sessions, recruiting parents to take part in the evaluation, engaging in various parts of the evaluation process and also just being generally helpful and welcoming. Particular thanks goes to Josephine Namusisi Riley for initiating the project and providing feedback on the evaluation plan and final draft, and especially to Layla Meerloo for initiating and managing the project and most of all for all the support, feedback, and organisation given throughout the evaluation.

Thanks also goes to Thomas Barnett for designing this report and to Jonty Dawson and Kat Kemsley for their work producing a film telling the story of PACT parents.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Imogen Moore-Shelley, who was instrumental in setting up PACT and touched many lives in the process.

About the author

Will Bibby is Director and Co-Founder of **Anthill Collective**, a collective of independent social researchers, policy people and service designers working with charities and local public services to create more people-led support.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to outline and discuss the findings of a parent-led evaluation of Parents and Community Together (PACT), a social support project for parents of early years children run by Citizens UK.

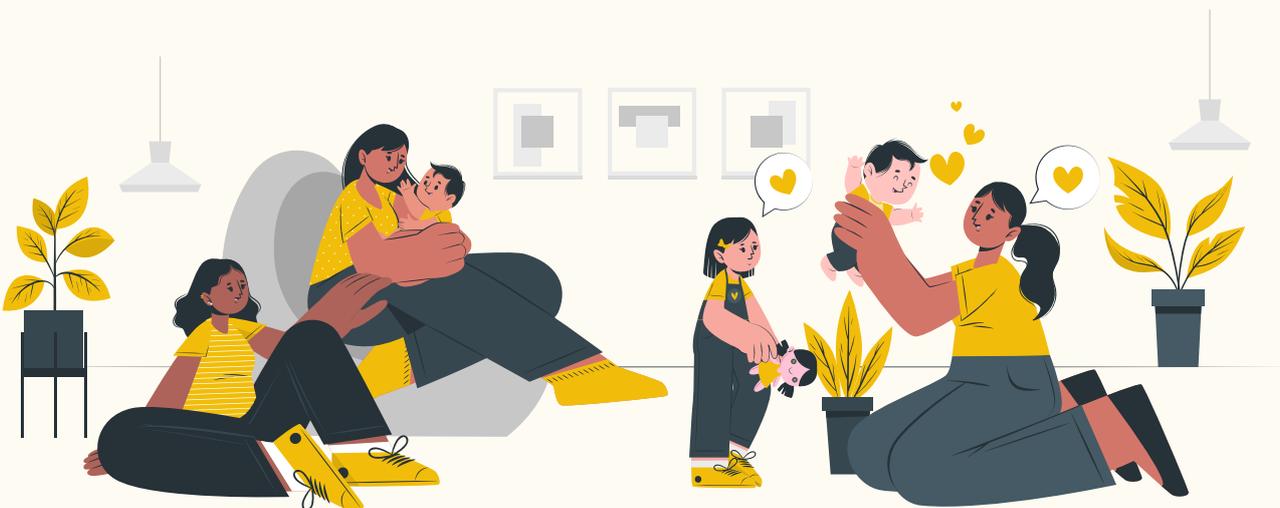
PACT is a community-led social support project that empowers parents. PACT uses a community organising approach to:

- /// promote early years development;
- /// combat social isolation;
- /// support physical and mental health; and,
- /// break down barriers that stop families from accessing health and social services.

PACT runs weekly peer support groups called Mumspace and Espacio Mama (a Spanish language group); workshops and courses on topics ranging from parenting skills, mental health and wellbeing, reading with your child, and healthy cooking; and group activities such as a communal allotment and family summer trips. They work with socially isolated and marginalised women facing economic and social disadvantage from a diverse range of backgrounds in Southwark, South London.

The project is parent-led, which means workshops and activities are co-produced and PACT aims to build parent's capacity through a range of opportunities such as leading group activities, volunteering, developing skills through training and facilitating workshops and listening campaigns with other parents.

PACT has previously had a number of independent external evaluations that have found a range of significant impacts from improved mental health, stronger social support networks, increased parenting confidence, and improvements in child development. These evaluations have largely taken an experimental, quantitative approach, using a range of standardised measures. This evaluation aimed to build on these previous evaluations and fill a gap in the existing evidence about PACT by taking a qualitative approach that focuses on parents' experiences and stories of impact, while developing parent's capacity to lead evaluation activities.



2. EVALUATION AND LEARNING APPROACH

2.1. Evaluation and learning framework

The aim of the evaluation was to generate learning and insights about PACT's impact, as well as areas of strength and areas for improvement - and to do this while working closely with parents.

The key research questions were:

- What do parents think the impact of PACT is for them?
- What do parents value most about PACT and where do they think PACT can improve?

The evaluation used a range of participatory and narrative-based qualitative methods including focus groups, storytelling and ecomaps to generate qualitative data. The evaluation used a novel and participatory parent-led evaluation design, centred around a series of three parent-led, group-based evaluation sessions with PACT parents. The sessions were also designed to be less 'extractive' than other evaluation approaches by providing parents with opportunities to reflect on and process their experiences of PACT, as well give their views on how PACT can improve.

Sessions were led by paid Parent Facilitators, who were women recruited from existing PACT parents (see Annex A for full profiles of Parent Facilitators). Two training sessions were held focusing on the basics of evaluation and the specific exercises, supported by practical step-by-step guides to each exercise. Additional group-based and one-to-one support and coaching was provided by the lead evaluators.

Parent Facilitator profile: Estefania

Estefania joined PACT shortly after her second daughter was born, just over three years ago. "Before joining Espacio Mama, I was really down. At the time, I wasn't ready to be with people," Estefania remembers.

Estefania began coming to Espacio Mama regularly. Soon, she was taking up opportunities to develop her skills and even start leading groups. "My confidence was building," she recalls, "after [completing a] parent leadership course, that helped build my confidence a lot."

Before joining PACT, Estefania said she definitely wouldn't have been able to do something like be a Parent Facilitator. "Delivering the parent leadership course, being a Parent Facilitator, talking to other mums, all helped me a lot to feel valued because before I was thinking I couldn't do it."

See Annex A for Estefania's full profile.

Each evaluation session lasted two hours with 8-9 parents at each session, with a total of 25 parents across all sessions. Each session included parents who had joined at various points, from less than 6 months ago to more than 2 years ago, to maximise the range and breadth of voices and stories captured. To ensure each session was inclusive and as accessible to as many PACT parents as possible, the sessions were bilingual (in both English and Spanish).

2.2. Methodology

i. Rapid evidence review of previous PACT evaluations

A desk-based rapid evidence review of previous evaluations of PACT was conducted to understand existing evidence of impact and identify any gaps. It analysed evaluations to identify which impacts each found, how many evaluations found each impact, and whether these effects were statistically significant.

ii. Most Significant Change method

The evaluation used a simplified version of the Most Significant Change method, which encourages participants to share stories of impact and decide on what the most significant impact has been for them (Davies & Dart 2005). It is an open-ended and participatory research tool to capture what parents think the effect PACT has had on them from their own perspective, without using predetermined indicators. Participants used a story template to help structure and guide their responses, as well as capture stories in a consistent and systematic way. In total, 23 parents completed a story template.

The method involved three key steps:

- /// Deciding which type of stories should be collected: through the evaluation design and framework.
- /// The collection of stories: through the evaluation process as outlined above.
- /// Sharing of stories and determining which are the most significant: through a participatory analysis session that was held with the PACT team and Parent Facilitators.

iii. Focus group discussions

Three focus group discussions with 8-9 parents (25 in total) were led by Parent Facilitators and explored parents' experiences of PACT, focusing on what parents valued most about PACT and where PACT could improve. The discussions focused around the key phases of parents' journeys, where parents were encouraged to talk to each other and build on each other's experiences to draw out commonalities and shared experiences, as well as any key differences. See Annex B for a summary of what parents value most about PACT and how they think PACT can improve.

iv. Using ecomaps to assess parents' social support networks

A tool adapted from social work, ecomaps are used to map and visualise someone's social environment upon which they can draw for support. While ecomaps have not typically been used as an evaluation tool previously, several studies have concluded its value as a qualitative research tool (Ray & Street 2004; Bennet & Grant 2016; Manja et al. 2021).

It was decided by the evaluation team to rename this exercise 'Support Maps', to make it easier for parents to understand. Parents were supported individually by Parent Facilitators to identify their top support needs as a parent and write down their existing supportive relationships they can draw on. Parents were then asked to highlight which, if any, of these relationships they feel they developed through PACT. In total, 13 parents completed a Support Map.

Parent Facilitator Profile: Helen

When Helen joined a local MumSpace three years ago, she immediately liked the sense of community in the groups, the environment to connect with other parents, and the mutual support from other parents. Helen gradually took on leadership roles within the community and now mainly volunteers as a family support volunteer at a weekly MumSpace group.

“When I’m volunteering, I’m listening to other parents. Nobody understands you like someone going through the same journey as you”, Helen says.

Before becoming a Parent Facilitator, Helen had the opportunity to take on another parent leadership role, talking to other organisations about PACT’s parent-led approach. Reflecting on the opportunities Helen has had through PACT to learn new skills, Helen says: “Every exposure I’ve had within PACT, although some might be challenging at times, has allowed me to connect more to people and gain some knowledge and confidence.”

See Annex A for Helen’s full profile.

v. Analysis

Data was collected through written worksheets and audio recordings of focus group discussions. Worksheets were digitally written up and translated where necessary, with written transcripts of focus groups discussions produced by Parent Facilitators.

All qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clark 2006), first coded to structure the data and then analysed to generate relevant themes and insights related to the key research questions.

2.3. Limitations and challenges

i. Methodological limitations

Using a qualitative, storytelling approach - where parents shared what they thought the impacts have been for them - means that it is more difficult to attribute impacts to PACT directly. However, as the evaluation was building on previous evaluations that used experimental designs (either with control groups or pre and post comparison groups) this limitation is mitigated to some extent.

ii. Time constraints

Sessions rarely started on time and exercises often took longer than anticipated. This meant that the final exercise (support mapping) was either rushed or on one occasion wasn’t able to take place at all because time ran out. In addition to this, on reflection the design of the sessions was probably too tight in terms of timeframe and either needed to be around 30 minutes longer, or to have dropped one of the exercises.

iii. Sessions were noisy and disrupted

Most parents needed to bring their children to the sessions. While there was a crèche where parents could leave their child for the duration of the sessions, parents understandably often left the sessions periodically to check on their children, or their children would come in looking for their mums. This inevitably caused some disruptions to discussions and exercises and made it difficult to transcribe the audio from focus groups accurately. Some parents also had to leave halfway through and so weren’t able to complete a MSC story or ecomap.

Parent Facilitator Profile: Omoyosola

Omoyosola joined PACT when her daughter was about 3 months old. She arrived in the UK from Nigeria about six months prior and was socially isolated and struggling to make ends meet. “I was living in total isolation, you know, so I was just alone with my daughter, she remembers.”. Nearly five years on, Omoyosola is a leader in the community.

Omoyosola became a PACT volunteer and gradually, as her confidence grew, she began to take on more roles, like becoming a digital champion or a parent ambassador. When it came to taking on the Parent Facilitator role Omoyosola says the experience she gained with PACT made her comfortable to take on the role without feeling shy.

Thinking back, Omoyosola says there was “no way I could have done this before. Before joining PACT my confidence was low. I used to be very outspoken. But when life deals with you, you sort of drop what you think you can do... I was able to develop my confidence and self-esteem and without PACT, I would not have been able to do it.”

See Annex A for the full profile of Omoyosola.

iv. Ecomaps

Only 13 out of 25 participants completed an ecomap/support map. This was largely due to time constraints, which meant in one session this exercise could not be completed. However, a couple of parents did not feel comfortable sharing this level of information.

In addition, most participants only partially completed the exercise, meaning the data generated was largely unusable for the purposes of analysis - see Annex C for a summary of the data collected and an example support map. This suggests that the exercise may have been too complicated and had too many steps to complete within the intended timeframe.

In hindsight, a group evaluation setting may have been the wrong setting for an exercise like this as ecomapping works best when facilitated in a one-to-one context with sufficient time to complete it. It may also work better as a before and after exercise, where PACT staff or volunteers sit down with a new parent to discuss what their existing support network looks like and where they would like additional support (e.g. as part of an induction process), and then do a 6 or 12 month follow up to see whether there has been any change.



Parent Facilitator profile: Saran

Saran found out about PACT just after she gave birth to her son. Saran says that coming to PACT was an “opportunity to improve my English because of being in contact with people again... I was new in the area, I didn’t know anyone. PACT was my first opportunity to socialise with other parents in the area.”

As time went on, Saran gained more confidence in her English and she gradually started taking on small leadership roles in groups, like leading warm up exercises or introducing reflective journaling to her group. During COVID, Saran helped run a listening campaign in South London with Citizens UK. “When the opportunity of the evaluation came up, I thought maybe I could go deeper in the listening and find a new perspective for parents at PACT,” Saran says.

Saran says that the Parent Facilitator role helped with her personal development even more: “It gave me more confidence and I think I learned a lot from that like time management, teamwork, facilitation, public speaking. In the evaluation sessions, it was two hours, we had roles where we were leading a topic we had to prepare. It was so helpful. It was my first time being in a role like that.”

To read a detailed profile of Saran, see Annex A.



3. WHAT HAVE PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS FOUND?

3.1. How has PACT been evaluated to date?

PACT has had a total of six previous independent evaluations, focusing mainly on PACT's core model, as well as several evaluations of specific courses or programmes that PACT delivers, such as Booksharing, Mindful Mamas, or the Family Food Club.

Combined, these evaluations assessed a range of different impacts, including:

- // Mental health and wellbeing
- // Social support
- // Parenting confidence and skills
- // Parent-child relationship
- // Health literacy
- // Child social and emotional development
- // Child language acquisition²
- // Healthy lifestyle behaviours³

Table 1 summarises each previous evaluation's aim and methodologies. Previous evaluations used a number of externally validated measures were used including:

- // General Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)
- // Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9).
- // Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (SWEMWBS)
- // Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (KPCS)
- // Top-5 Questionnaire ⁴
- // Arizona Social Support Interview Schedule (ASSIS)
- // Health literacy - Newest Vital Sign UK version (NVS-UK)
- // Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
- // Communication Development Inventory (CDI)

3.2. Summary of findings from previous evaluations

Taken together, the evaluations found that PACT has a number of statistically significant positive impacts on parental and child outcomes (see **table 2**), including:

i. Improved mental health and wellbeing

Three evaluations found PACT improved maternal mental health, particularly for mothers who are

² This outcome was only assessed for PACT's Booksharing programme.

³ This outcome was only used to assess PACT's Family Food Club project.

⁴ This is a measure devised by the PACT team and comprises five statements perceived as particularly relevant to PACT around social capital and integration and parenting skills and confidence.

experiencing clinical symptoms of anxiety or depression. Another evaluation found that PACT’s Mindful Mamas course improved mental wellbeing.

Table 1. A summary of previous evaluations of PACT

TITLE	FOCUS	METHODOLOGY	EVALUATOR	YEAR
Community organising and community health: piloting an innovative approach to community engagement applied to an early intervention project in south London	Assess the feasibility of the PACT model and exploring effects on wellbeing and social capital	Acceptability of the programme (using Social Support Programme Acceptability Rating Scale), adherence to principles of co-production and community control, and changes in the outcomes of interest were assessed quantitatively in a quasi-experimental design with 15 mothers (using General Health Questionnaire or GHQ-12).	Citizens UK & Institute for Psychiatry, Psychology, & Neuroscience (IPPN), King's College London	2016
Can a community-led intervention offering social support and health education improve maternal health?	Impact evaluation of the PACT model (Mumspace + health education), focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health and wellbeing Health literacy Social capital/support Acceptability & satisfaction with service 	A controlled pre-post experimental design, using validated and standardised measures with a sample of 61 mothers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generalised Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire (GAD-7) Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) Newest Vital Sign UK (NVS-UK) Arizona Social Support Interview Schedule (ASSIS) Social Support Programme Acceptability Rating Scale 	IPPN, King's College London	2016–2018
Evaluation of PACT in new areas: final report of project funded by Nesta (2017-2019)	Impact evaluation of Mumspace on mental health & wellbeing, parental self-efficacy, and social support + Booksharing course on language acquisition and pro-social behaviour. Fidelity to PACT model in new sites funded by Nesta.	A pre-post survey design, using validated and standardised measures with a sample of 80 mothers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GAD-7 PHQ-9 Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (KPCS) ASSIS Booksharing: Communication Development Index (CDI) Self-reported measure of pro-social behaviour 	IPPN, King's College London	2017–2019
PACT's Family Food Club: Insights Report	The impact and delivery of PACT's Family Food Club on healthy lifestyle changes.	A mixed method approach using ethnographic observation, 3 x focus groups, interviews with 30 parents, and a quantitative survey of 26 participants.	The Social Innovation Partnership	2019–2020
PACT Evaluation Summary: Final Report (National Lottery Community Fund)	Impact evaluation of the PACT model (Mumspace + health education) + Booksharing focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health and wellbeing Child development Social capital/support 	A pre-post survey design, using validated and standardised measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GAD-7 PHQ-9 Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Top-5 Questionnaire Booksharing: Communication Development Index (CDI) Self-reported measure of pro-social behaviour 	IPPN, King's College London	2018–2021
Mindful Mamas Evaluation	The effectiveness of the PACT 'Mindful Mamas' course in improving well-being	A pre- and post-course survey of wellbeing of 13 mothers as measured by the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) + qualitative interviews	Department of Women's & Children Health, King's College London	2022

Table 2. Summary of impacts previous evaluations have found

OUTCOME	MEASURE	OBSERVED EFFECT	NUMBER OF STUDIES	STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT	NUMBER OF STUDIES	PEER REVIEWED STUDIES
Maternal mental health	Anxiety (GAD-7) - mums above clinical threshold only	Yes	3	Yes	3	1
	Depression (PHQ-9) - mums above clinical threshold only	Yes	3	Yes	2	1
	Mental wellbeing (SWEMWBS)	Yes	1	No	1	0
Parenting skills and confidence	Karitane Parenting Confidence Scale (KPCS)	Yes	1	No	0	0
	Parenting skills & confidence (Top-5 Questionnaire)	Yes	1	Yes	1	0
	Parent-child relationship (self-report)	Yes	2	No	0	0
Social support	Satisfaction with social support network (ASSIS)	Yes	2	Yes	2	1
	No. of relationships for pregnancy/ childcare support (ASSIS)	Yes	2	Yes	2	1
	No. of relationships for material aid support (ASSIS)	Yes	2	Yes	1	0
	No. of relationships for advice & information (ASSIS)	Yes	2	Yes	2	1
	No. of close friends	Yes	2	Yes	2	1
	Social capital & integration (Top-5 Questionnaire)	Yes	1	Yes	1	0
Access to support services	Health literacy (NVS-UK) - mums with low literacy only	Yes	1	Yes	1	1
	Engagement with groups that public services struggle to engage	Yes	2	NA	NA	1
	Engagement with mothers experiencing mental ill health	Yes	3	NA	NA	1
Early childhood development	Prosocial behaviour (parental self-report)	Yes	2	No	0	0
	Social and emotional development (ASQ)	Yes	1	No	0	0
	Language development (CDI)	Yes	2	Yes	2	0

ii. Stronger social support networks

- Two evaluations found PACT made parents' support networks stronger. Specifically, they found parents had:
 - Increased satisfaction with their social support network
 - An increased number of close friends
 - An increase in relationships for a range of support areas including: pregnancy and childcare support; advice and information; material aid support.
- Another evaluation [reference] found a statistically significant increase in parents' social capital (using the Top-5 questionnaire).

iii. Increased parental self-efficacy

- Two evaluations showed an increase in mother's parenting skills and confidence - with one showing a statistically significant increase.

iv. Better access to information and services

- One evaluation found that PACT improved health literacy of mothers with low levels of literacy.
- Three studies showed that PACT is successful at engaging mothers experiencing mental ill health.
- Two evaluations showed that PACT is successful at engaging women that public services often struggle to reach.

v. Child development

- Two evaluations found that PACT's Booksharing course improved children's language acquisition.
- Two studies showed improvements in child's social and emotional development - but these changes were not statistically significant.



4. WHAT DO PARENTS THINK THE IMPACT OF PACT IS?

Six main areas of impact were described by parents in the Most Significant Change stories and focus group discussions: social connection and support network; mental health and wellbeing; child development; parental self-efficacy; confidence; and access to services.

Table 3 shows that social connection and support, mental health and wellbeing and child development were deemed the most important impacts by parents, with parental self-efficacy also being significant, followed by confidence and leadership and access to local services.

Table 3. Most important changes that PACT caused, according to parents

	SOCIAL CONNECTION & SUPPORT	MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING	CHILD DEVELOPMENT	PARENTAL SELF-EFFICACY	CONFIDENCE & LEADERSHIP	ACCESS TO INFO & SERVICES
NO. OF PARENTS FOR WHOM IS WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGE	6	5	4	3	3	2
NO. OF PARENTS WHO MENTIONED THIS IMPACT	14	15	16	14	11	8

4.1. Social connection and support

Increasing social connections and support was one of the most significant and consistent impacts that mums attributed to PACT.

This is the impact area with the highest number of stories where parents said this was the important change, with 6 out of the 23 stories shared. Additionally, 14 out of the 23 parents mentioned this was an important change for them.

The mums we spoke to consistently shared how they were able to meet other mums and make friends and how important this had been for them.

“The most important thing for me was meeting new mums.”

“I made friends with more mums, with whom I share many things now... The most important change for me personally was to be more sociable, because it’s good to be able to talk to someone else.”

Being able to meet other mums and make friends was also a strong theme in each of the three focus group discussions, where parents attributed this change to PACT and said it was one of the things they valued most about PACT.

“When I go to PACT, I speak to so many mums. Yeah, we have a laugh... it is that time at PACT where I can talk to a lot of people, different personalities, different lifestyles. So that’s really good.”

“It helped me get friends when I started PACT.”

"Where I'm like a first time mum, it's like helping me mix with other mums in my situation."

Mums also shared how PACT has helped them to "get out of the house" and to socialise with other people. Many of the participants said that before joining PACT, they were socially isolated or that they 'felt alone' and that since joining PACT, they've been able to meet other mums and interact with other people.

"Honestly, it has helped me a lot because when I came [to London] there was nobody, no job, I was just alone at home."

"I made lots of friends from different countries. When I was pregnant with my first daughter, I felt isolated."

"The most important change has been to socialise. Now I go out more, I know other places, I go out with other mums to share. Before, I was not sociable. It happened because you knew other mums... through PACT I was able to meet other mums."

"I wasn't able to interact with others since I came into the country. I was always alone with my 4 month old son and always crying and even wanted to return back to my country. By going out of the house and attending PACT sessions, I got involved... and now have the opportunity to go out and interact with others."

In both the Most Important Change stories and the focus group discussions, mums also talked about having a wider support network of peers or "mums in the same situation as them" which created a sense of community which they felt they could go to for support and advice. Parents described PACT as "a local community of parents", a "family" and "like home".

"I have been given the opportunity to meet other mums in my situation, make friends, and come together to discuss important topics. There is a great sense of community and the feeling you can get the support you need if you need it."

"I'm a new mum and want a space where I can come for support and be part of a community."

"The support network outside of the group, like when you have group trips and stuff, and yeah, the sense of community."

"Things that helped were learning off of others and knowing I can ask for advice."



Finding a community of parents

Melanie was sitting in the waiting room of the local midwives centre, waiting to be called in for her appointment. "I was an expectant mother of twins and this was the first time I was going to be a mum as well, so I was a bit nervous," she remembered.

Melanie grew up in Canada and moved to London about 10 years ago. She and her partner often felt isolated and like they lacked a support network close by. As a new mum, Melanie wanted a space where she could come to for support and to be part of a community.

As Melanie scanned the room as she waited, she saw a flyer for a local group for expectant mums run by PACT. She decided to see what it was like and, at the start of the year, attended a course for mums-to-be called Parent University, which helps prepare and support women to become new mums.

Melanie also started going to the weekly MumSpace groups where she was able to meet new mums and make friends. "Parent University was really useful because of all the things it taught me, but MumSpace is my favourite", she said.

"Just knowing there is a space to come to that's very welcoming and inclusive and knowing there's someone to lend a hand with the babies is so amazing," Melanie said.

Even though Melanie isn't always able to make it, she says it really helps just knowing MumSpace is there and that she can go whenever: "I know I won't be judged and having someone reassure me that I can do it or just practically lending a hand," she says.

"I feel part of a local community of parents."

4.2. Mental health and wellbeing

Better mental health and wellbeing was another key impact that PACT members attributed to PACT, and was the most important impact for 5 out of 23 mums. This was also mentioned by 15 of the 23 (65%) mums as an important impact caused by PACT.

"As a result of coming to the group, my mental health has gotten better. For me, the one hour I attend is free of my problems and allows me to just enjoy the moment."

"This is important to me because [PACT] has helped my wellbeing."

Mums talked about 'feeling good' or being happier after coming to PACT and spoke about the future more positively.

"Before finding the group, I felt a bit lost... [Now] it is making the future look more positive".

"Now we keep coming, I feel good and happy."

"I am a work in progress but I am happier now and challenge myself to take my children out alone or with support. I feel that I am going to have a fantastic summer this year as I'm prepared for what's ahead and because of the wonderful support from the PACT team."

"I feel very good after I started coming to PACT."

Several parents also spoke of how coming to PACT and interacting with other mums helps them feel more relaxed and reduces their feelings of stress.

“Coming to the groups relieves me of stress.”

“When I’m going to the mummy’s and baby’s space I don’t want to leave that place, it’s like home. I met a lot of friends... sometimes I even forget to go when it’s time to go. I enjoy it; it relieves me of stress, no it’s really good.”

“It has made me more relaxed to let my child run free so he gets more confidence at the toddler groups and brings his real self, as I suffer with attachment issues.”

A number of mums also talked about positive benefits around attachment and helping to bond with their children.

“[My daughter and I] are happier together because we have time to bond more.”

“I bond more with my daughter now when I come here than at home because I have more children and responsibilities, so it’s nice to have time together.”

Mums often attributed their improvements in their mental health and wellbeing to the support they received within PACT, with two areas being consistently referenced by parents. Firstly, having connection and support from PACT staff and other mums.

“I wasn’t able to interact with others since I came into the country. I was always alone with my 4 month old son by then and always crying and even wanted to return back to my country... [PACT] helps me rediscover myself and now I know that I will be what I want to be with the support of PACT.”

“When I have felt low and like I want to hide away, staff have always checked in on me and reassured me.”

“The care I have received [has been the most important change]. The staff and volunteers listen to me, they make me feel at home, as I’m alone.”

Secondly, mums commonly mentioned how things they learned while at PACT, such as the Mindful Mama’s course, have helped their wellbeing.

“Being in PACT has been a crucial phase in my life, as I learn to know more about myself, like putting myself first, the self-care, and the self-love. Knowing my place as an individual before being a mum. I learnt to be happy.”

“I also get involved in workshops and courses like Mindful Mamas... which have improved my confidence and wellbeing.”

Of note was the number of parents who shared personal struggles or felt comfortable speaking openly about their mental health, suggesting a possible reduction in stigma around mental health within the PACT community.

Work in progress: a journey of growth

Faduma joined PACT during the first lockdown. One of the parents who volunteers with PACT had referred her to the Parent University course and she attended online.

After lockdown had lifted, Faduma found out about the MumSpace groups and started coming along each week. "I felt welcome", recalled Faduma, "I have always been made to feel seen and staff and volunteers are always approachable." She also attended Mindful Mama's, a short course run by PACT focused on parental wellbeing.

Faduma says the most important change for her is that this support helped give her strength and the ability to cope better: "I managed to participate in group activities that I perhaps wouldn't have felt comfortable doing in the past... When I have felt low and like I want to hide away, staff have always checked in on me and reassured me," Faduma said.

Last year was Faduma's first summer holidays as a single mum and she wasn't sure how she would cope taking three children on day trips other than the local park. "PACT made it possible for me by arranging affordable trips and by also reassuring me that 'I was not alone' and they would support me on the trips," she says.

Faduma is feeling a lot more positive about this summer now. She describes herself as growing and on a journey, but says she is feeling happier and more positive about the future:

"I am a work in progress but I am now happier and challenge myself to take my children out alone or with support. I feel that I am going to have a fantastic summer this year as I'm prepared for what's ahead and because of the wonderful support from the PACT team."

4.3. Child development

Four parents said that improvements to their child's development was the most important change that occurred since joining PACT, with 16 out of 23 parents mentioning a positive impact on their child's development, the highest proportion of any impact area.

"My son's development has gotten better as a result of coming to the group."

"After I started to go there, to the workshops, to Espacio mama I noticed that not only was my daughter doing better in her development, she also knows how to play more."

Children's social and emotional skills was the main area of child development that was mentioned by mums, with mums describing how their children were now sharing with others, being more independent, or able to play with others since coming to PACT.

"[PACT] has helped my children with their social skills."

"Seeing my son's socialising skills improve has been the most important change as he was born during COVID and we spent lots of time indoors. He did not see or play or socialise with other children at all."

"My son is used to staying in a crèche now and is more confident when I leave him on by himself now."

"The most important change has been to see my daughter's social development because previously she spent lots of time at home for many reasons, such as the weather, she was still small, my recovery after the caesarean section, etc."

"The fact that I can see my daughter share with other kids is why it's important."

Parents also spoke about how they thought that PACT had helped get their children ready to go to nursery.

"The groups have helped my children prepare for nursery, improving their social skills and gaining a bit of independence."

"The baby groups... helped my son to be more confident and open and socialise and get ready for nursery."

"I will feel more comfortable knowing my child will be more prepared for nursery after attending the group sessions and developing the social skills he needs and being used to being around other people and children."

The most commonly cited factor that parents attributed to their child's improved development was the opportunity for their children to play and socialise with other babies and children their age.

"I see that my son is also happy to participate in the groups. He's friendly and sharing and this is all because of PACT's groups."

"The biggest impact is having... my baby playing with others."

"Before finding the group, I felt a bit lost and didn't know how to get my daughter involved with any groups or to meet kids. Now, I feel she has the opportunity to socialise and play without having to spend any money, which was a worry for me because of the cost of a lot of groups."

Parents also mentioned learning about various aspects of being a parent as an important factor in supporting their child's development.

"Learning about bonding with my baby, feeding, and understanding his needs. This was important for his growth and wellbeing."

"All the information given to me along the way has a vast impact on his development."



Helping prepare children for nursery

Sarah has been coming to PACT for over five years. Sarah had recently moved to the area in 2018 and she remembers going to a barbeque at the local church where she lived. “We met one of the ladies that works for PACT there, who informed me of the MumSpace sessions held every week” she says.

From then on, Sarah says she attended the sessions every week, first with her one year old daughter, and now today with her two year old son.

Over the years, Sarah says she has been given the opportunity to meet other mums in her situation, make friends, and come together to discuss important topics. “There’s a great sense of community and the feeling you can get the support you need if you need it,” Sarah says.

But the most important change Sarah has experienced is on her children’s development. “The groups have helped my children prepare for nursery, improving their social skills and gaining a bit of independence,” Sarah says.

Sarah says that the group sessions with other mums and babies have been very beneficial, especially when there are important or helpful topics to discuss, like health, wellbeing, or children’s emotional and social development.

“I have learnt a lot about dealing with my child’s emotions, how to deal with tantrums, speech and language, fussy eating,” explains Sarah, “all the information given to me along the way has a vast impact on his development.”

Explaining why this was so important to her, Sarah said: “I feel more comfortable knowing my child will be more prepared for nursery after attending the group sessions and developing the social skills he needs and being used to being around other people and children.”

4.4. Parental self-efficacy

Many parents described an increase in their belief in their abilities as a parent (i.e. self-efficacy). For three mums this was the most important impact, while it was mentioned by 14 out of 23 (61%).

Many parents spoke of how, in their own words, the support from PACT had helped them become a better parent.

“My most important change was becoming a better mum.”

“For me, it’s helped me to be a better parent and get a better understanding of my kids and myself.”

“PACT has also helped me with being a better parent. For example, by making time for myself that I learnt in the Mindful Mama course.”

A common theme parents often mentioned was that their confidence as a parent or and parenting skills and abilities grew as a result of coming to PACT.

“I gained more confidence as a new mum.”

“I was a mum for the first time at the age of 16 years old and my second child at 17 years old and I realised that I was a girl playing at being a mother. But not today, I am more mature and I’m

| enjoying this stage.”

When talking about this impact, parents consistently attributed getting new information and learning new things about being a parent as a key benefit that they got from PACT.

“I learnt a lot of things about being a parent, like: self-care; how to develop baby memories; tools for parenting; baby safety.”

“Learning about bonding with my baby, feeding, and understanding his needs... was important for [my son's] growth and wellbeing.”

“I have found the group sessions to be very beneficial when there are important or helpful topics to discuss... I have learnt a lot about dealing with my child's emotions, how to deal with tantrums, speech and language, fussy eating.”

“Things that helped were... finding out a lot of information I wouldn't have known about without PACT and learning to let [my son] do his own thing, which has made him even more confident.”

“Parent University was really useful, because of all the things it taught me.”

“I take things I learn [at PACT] home and I tell other mums. “

Learning about what to do as a new mum

Alice was looking online for a group she could take her son where we could interact with other babies his age as well as meet some other mums herself.

She'd just given birth to her first child and wasn't feeling very confident about what to do. She came across PACT's website and saw all the different groups and activities they offered and saw they had courses for new mums.

Shortly after, Alice started coming along to a range of different groups and activities such as MumSpace, various workshops on different topics about being a parent, and Mindful Mamas, which Alice says was “nice for me to have my own time”.

Alice says that for her, the most important impact was that it helped give her the knowledge and confidence to be a good mum by learning about “a lot of information I wouldn't have known about without PACT”.

“[It was] learning about what to do as a new mum,” Alice said. “Specifically, learning about bonding with my baby, feeding, and understanding his needs. This was important for his growth and wellbeing.”

Alice says that she was also given the opportunity to help facilitate a Mumspace session: “this was amazing for me, my confidence and my progression.”

As a result, Alice says, she is now more confident as a parent and that's also having an impact on her son.

“My son is used to staying in a crèche now, and is more confident when I leave him on by himself now,” she says. “I gained more confidence as a new mum.”

4.5. Confidence and leadership

A key part of the PACT model is that it is parent-led and aims to build the confidence of parents to become local leaders and many parents shared how their confidence had improved since being part of PACT.

This was the most important impact for 3 out of the 23 women, and was mentioned by just under half of all women, or 11 in total (48%), with some parents talking about gaining the confidence to lead groups or workshops with other parents.

"PACT helped with their talks, workshops and activities. Today I can help and advise other mums who are in my situation that I was before so that they feel more secure. I feel super good now, happy with my evolution."

"Before I was very afraid and I had too many insecurities. Now I feel more secure and I know that I can achieve everything I set my mind to."

"PACT has impacted my life. I have improved my confidence talking to people."

"I also get involved in workshops and courses which have improved my confidence..."

For many women, an important change was an increase in their social confidence, enabling them to participate where previously they might not have and increasing their ability to communicate and interact with others.

"I'm not so shy around new people now and I feel more confident to speak to new people."

"I have managed to participate in group activities that I perhaps wouldn't have felt comfortable to do in the past."

Confidence in language abilities was an important component of this for a number of participants as PACT supports women from dozens of different backgrounds and cultures and for whom English isn't their first language.

"PACT increased my confidence and the ability to communicate with others. When I first joined the group, I didn't have confidence as I thought that my English was bad... but Kate and Mena [PACT Staff members] told me that not everyone speaks perfectly and that I need to just try my best to interact. This increased my confidence to interact... I feel so much more confident."

Finally, having the opportunity to lead sessions or facilitate workshops was identified by several mums as playing a key role in building their confidence and leadership abilities.

"I was also given the chance to help host a session, this was amazing for me, my confidence and my progression."

"It was important [for me] to facilitate the workshop to get back my confidence [that I had] with the career before I had a baby."

This is particularly pronounced in the stories of the four parent facilitators, who all started off as local mums who attended PACT to lead the evaluation process with their peers.

"I feel so much more confident"

Gabriella has come a long way in her four years as a member of PACT. Since then, she's made lots of new friends and has gained the confidence to plan to take up studies in the future. But when Gabriella first joined PACT, she was new to the country, felt socially isolated and lacked the confidence to interact with others.

"When I was pregnant with my first daughter, I felt isolated. I spoke with my midwife about this and she advised me to join PACT both for the baby and for myself to make friends," Gabriella explained.

Soon after Gabriella had her daughter, she joined PACT and was able to get support and information. She recalls: "the PACT staff were very welcoming and suggested I come to the baby group for under ones." Gabriella then attended the group regularly and says she was able to learn a lot from the group.

Looking back, Gabriella now says that "PACT increased my confidence and my ability to communicate with others", as well as helping with her English as she attended an ESOL course at PACT.

"When I first joined the group," Gabriella said, "I didn't have confidence as I thought that my English was bad and everyone was able to talk well. But [staff members] Kate and Mena told me that not everyone speaks perfectly and that I need to just try my best to interact. This increased my confidence to give it my best and interact. I feel my English is improving and I feel so much more confident."

Gabriella says that learning English with the help of the ESOL course and attending the groups at PACT was very important in growing her confidence as, in her words, "it allows me to interact more, I can use it in my studies in the future and [it] will also allow me to help my kids as they grow."

4.6. Access to services

The final key impact that parents described was an increase in information about and access to local public and community services, ranging from health services, housing advice and support, legal support, local nurseries, and food vouchers.

For two women, this was the important impact they experienced as a result of being part of PACT, and it was mentioned by 8 women in total (35%).

"The people there share information with you. There are some things you don't know, when you get there they will tell you, 'did you do this?' 'Do you know about this?' They are so friendly."

Access to information about health services and being connected to health professionals was a commonly mentioned theme.

"I really appreciate how connected they are. They brought in a health visitor, they brought in someone from the pharmacy to talk about Vitamin D, so I like that they're not just pulling figures or information from the internet, they've got professionals to speak to us about things."

"I spoke with my midwife about this and she advised me to join PACT after I have my baby. Soon after I had her, I joined PACT and was able to get support and information... I was able to learn a lot from the group and also the health visitor that was coming to the group."

Information, advice and support around housing was another service that was mentioned a number of times, and for the women who mentioned it, it was often the most important impact for them.

"I have a difficult housing situation, which I think PACT may be able to help with, plus the support with food vouchers. This could be a huge help to me and take a lot of stress off my shoulders. I am very grateful I have found this group."

"Since being involved in PACT... I found out some things [about housing] that I didn't know before. With the information I received I was able to get the council to update my position for bidding on their system..."

A final area that was often mentioned by parents was access to a range of local community support, such as other community groups or access to Rose Vouchers, a local scheme that helps families on low income buy fresh fruit and vegetables.

"Getting the Rose Vouchers has also helped when it comes to buying fruit and veg."

"[PACT] gave me information, for example, about vouchers and nursery for my daughter. That is a great help to me."

"I learned more information about groups in the local area. I didn't know of this group... before coming to Mumspace."

Helping mums access local information and services

Amara is a mum of four who lives in a small, overcrowded 2 bedroom flat in South London. Amara heard about a MumSpace group at the local church from someone she knew a couple of years ago. She decided to take her daughter along one day and says that "we've been going there every or most Tuesday since then because my daughter really enjoys it."

Since then, Amara has attended a range of workshops on different topics, where PACT often brings in professionals from other services in the local area to share information and advice.

The most important impact for Amara has been finding out important information about housing from one of these workshops, delivered with a local action group called Housing Action Southwark & Lambeth, where she was able to get support to engage the council about her housing situation.

Amara told us:

"I found out some things that I didn't know before. With the information I received I was able to get the council to update my position for bidding on their system. They were already supposed to have moved me up to band 2 after I contacted the MP but they had me at band 4! If I hadn't come to the groups, I wouldn't have known this."

Amara explained why this was so important to her:

"I have four children and have been bidding for housing for 15 years and getting nowhere. I am in a 2 bedroom flat and have changed my front room into a bedroom for my 14 year old son who has autism along with his 13 year old sister. This is a problem but it's like the council don't care."

"Since moving up from Band 4 to Band 2, I have noticed that I'm not as far from the top of the bidding list as I was before but I still feel like I should have been moved already."

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Link between social connection and mental health

The data suggests there is a link between parents who said their social support network had improved and parents that said their mental health or wellbeing had got better since coming to PACT.

For example, nearly two thirds of mums (9 out of 14) who said they had better social connections and support as a result of being part of PACT, also said that PACT improved their mental health. In addition, many mums explicitly referenced how making connections with other mums had helped their wellbeing.

"I wasn't able to interact with others since I came into the country. I was always alone with my 4 month old son and always crying and even wanted to return back to my country. By going out of the house and attending PACT sessions, I got involved... and now have the opportunity to go out and interact with others."

"I made lots of friends from different countries. When I was pregnant with my first daughter, I felt isolated."

The link between social connection and mental health is now widely established in the academic literature, with studies finding that better social connectedness is associated with lower risks of depression and anxiety (Weziak-Bialowolska et al. 2022) and that social connectedness was a strong and consistent predictor of mental health (Saeri et al. 2018).

A study into social isolation and loneliness among migrant mothers with children aged 0-5 years found that "migrant mother's experiences of social isolation and loneliness are intricately linked to their status as migrants and mothers" (Lim et al. 2022), which is particularly relevant in the context of PACT as they work with a high proportion of migrant women in South London.

The context of COVID recovery is also particularly significant as several studies showed that linking stress and social isolation to negative outcomes for mothers and infants and the COVID-19 pandemic exposed mothers to social isolation during the pre- and post-natal periods (Venta, Bick & Bichelli 2021).

Interestingly, parents who had only recently joined PACT seemed more likely to say that PACT increased their social support network, than those who had been a member of PACT for a while. For example, 6 out of 7 parents who have been with PACT for less than 6 months reported an increase in their social connections and support network, compared with 8 out of 16 for mums who've been with PACT for more than 6 months.

This doesn't necessarily mean that parents who have been with PACT for more than six months haven't experienced an increase in their social connections - previous evaluations found statistically significant increases. But, given that they were asked to share what their most important change has been, it may be that either doesn't seem as important now because the lack of connection is not as acute anymore or that they've experienced other, more significant impacts since then. What it does seem to show though is the most immediate effect of joining PACT - and possibly foundational one given its plausible link with mental health - is supporting mums to make social connections and expand their support network.

5.2. Link between confidence and mental health

Another likely link between reported outcomes is between an increase in confidence and improved mental health and wellbeing.

For example, 7 out of 11 mums who reported an increase in their confidence also said PACT had improved their mental health, with a number of parents either explicitly making this link or talking about being more confident in relation to their mental health.

"I also get involved in workshops and courses like Mindful Mamas... which have improved my confidence and wellbeing."

"I have managed to participate in group activities that I perhaps wouldn't have felt comfortable to do in the past. When I have felt low and like I want to hide away, staff have always checked in on me and reassured me."

"I am happier now and challenge myself to take my children out alone or with support. I feel that I am going to have a fantastic summer this year as I'm prepared for what's ahead."

The link between confidence and mental health is also well established, with low levels of confidence and self-esteem associated with poor mental health, in particular depression and anxiety (Fu et al. 2005; Fieker et. al 2016; Benwell et al. 2022). While previous evaluations of PACT have not looked specifically at confidence, they have found statistically significant improvements in mothers' mental health, specifically for those showing clinical symptoms of depression and anxiety.

5.3. Link between maternal outcomes and child development

The impact which was most frequently mentioned by parents was improvements in their child's development, and in particular on their child's social and emotional development.

This is interesting because previous evaluations have largely focused on the impact on parents themselves. One recent evaluation (Brown 2021) assessed the impact of PACT on children's social and emotional development, using the ASQ measure, but found no statistically significant improvement⁵. However, that study only looked across a 6 month time period from when parents joined. The findings from this evaluation suggests that impacts on child development may take longer time to take effect. For example, 10 out of 12 (83%) mothers who joined PACT one year or more ago, reported an increase in their child's development, whereas for mothers who joined less than a year ago, only 6 out of 11 (54%) said that an improvement in their child's development was an important change.

Given the likely mechanisms involved that would result in PACT contributing to improvements in child development, namely improved maternal wellbeing, increased parental self-efficacy, and increased access to information and services, this aligns with what one might expect to see as these outcomes first need to develop in order to have an impact on child development.

For example, 12 out of 15 mums (80%) who said PACT improved their mental health, also reported improvements in their child's development; 10 out of 14 mums (71%) who said PACT increase their confidence as a parent (i.e. self-efficacy), also reported improvements in their child's development;

⁵ It is also worth noting that two previous evaluations (Brown & Burnley, 2019; Brown et al. 2020) have found statistically significant improvements to children's language acquisition, though this was specifically related to PACT's booksharing course, a more focused and structured language intervention, supporting parents to read to their children.

while 5 out of 8 (63%) people with better access to information and services reported improvements in their child's development as well.

Evidence from the wider literature supports this as well, showing that parents are the most important influence on early childhood development. For example, an evidence review looking at the key factors affecting early childhood development found increasing evidence that "parental involvement in early learning has a greater impact on children's wellbeing and achievement than any other factor" – more than parental occupation, education or income (Axford 2019).

The importance of maternal mental health in supporting child development is well established - so much so that the Education Policy Institute has stated that it is "increasingly clear that maternal mental health is one of the most crucial determinants of a child's mental health". For example, one study found evidence that "poor maternal mental health during pregnancy or up to 15 months from childbirth has adverse health consequences for their offspring" (Ahamd et al. 2021), while another found that "poor mental health in pregnancy may have lasting impacts on children," finding negative impacts on children's psychological and socio-emotional skills in early childhood (von Hinke, Rice & Tominey 2022). Another study has found that in the first years of life, better maternal mental health was shown to weaken the negative association between socio-economic status and child mental health as well as child cognitive ability (Smith, Kievit & Astle 2022).

There is also strong evidence on the link between parental self-efficacy and good early child development. In particular, multiple studies have found that high levels of parental self-efficacy is associated with greater social and emotional development among children (Li et al., 2010; Steca et al., 2010; Albanese et al., 2019).

Similarly, evidence shows the importance of access to services on child development, with studies showing the importance of health visiting on child development (Cowley et al. 2013; Parent-Infant Foundation 2022) or accessing high quality early education such as nursery (Axford 2019).

There may also be a potential link between increasing social connections for mums and improved child development - at least insofar as it reduces social isolation. We found that 10 of out 14 (71%) mums who said PACT increased their social support network also reported improvements in their child's development as a result of PACT.

A meta-analysis of maternal mental health and adverse child outcomes, (Goodman et al. 2011) showed that social isolation and loneliness among mothers is associated with adverse child outcomes, while another meta-analysis (Nowland et al. 2021) exploring the impact and experience of loneliness in parenthood found "evidence that parental loneliness has direct and intergenerational impacts on parent and child mental health."

It is important to note that for all of the potential associations discussed above, the sample sizes are too small to determine whether they are statistically correlated, and therefore they represent descriptions of possible patterns and associations only.

5.4. A journey of impacts

One finding that is particularly striking is that parents often described a journey of impact or change, where new mums may have been socially isolated, had poor mental health, or lacked confidence as a parent and through the support they received at PACT, grew and developed over time.

"I am a work in progress but I am happier now and challenge myself to take my children out alone or with support."

"Being in PACT has been a crucial phase in my life. As I learn to know more about myself... Knowing my place as an individual before being a mum. I learnt to be happy."

"I was a mum for the first time at the age of 16 years old and my second child at 17 years old and I realised that I was a girl playing at being a mother. But not today, I am more mature and I'm enjoying this stage."

"Today I can help, advise other mums who are in my situation that I was before so that they feel more secure. I feel super good now, happy with my evolution."

What is particularly interesting about this is when we look at the differences in impacts that parents shared, depending on when they joined PACT - see table 4 below. This also tells a story of a journey of impact, with certain impacts appearing to take longer to emerge or requiring 'foundational' outcomes - such as with social connectedness and mental health or parental self-efficacy and child development.

Table 4. Frequency of different impacts based on length of PACT membership

AGE RANGES	NUMBER OF PARENTS	SOCIAL CONNECTION	MENTAL HEALTH	PARENTAL SELF-EFFICACY	ACCESS TO SERVICES	CHILD DEVELOPMENT	CONFIDENCE & LEADERSHIP
0-6 months	7	6	5	3	2	4	2
6-12 months	4	1	3	3	2	2	2
1-2 years	4	3	3	2	1	4	1
2 years+	8	4	4	6	3	6	6

Table 4 shows that:

6 out of 7 parents (86%) who have been with PACT for less than 6 months reported an increase in their social connections and support network, compared with 8 out of 16 (50%) for mums who've been with PACT for more than 6 months.

10 out of 12 (83%) mums who have been with PACT for more than a year said their child's development improved as a result of coming to PACT, compared to 6 out of 11 for mums (54%) with PACT less than a year.

8 out of 11 (73%) mums who have been with PACT less than a year reported an increase in their mental health, compared to 7 out of 12 (58%) who had been with PACT over a year.

11 out of 16 mums (69%) who have been with PACT for more than six months said their skills and confidence as a parent (i.e. self-efficacy) improved. This increases to 6 out of 8 (75%) for mums who

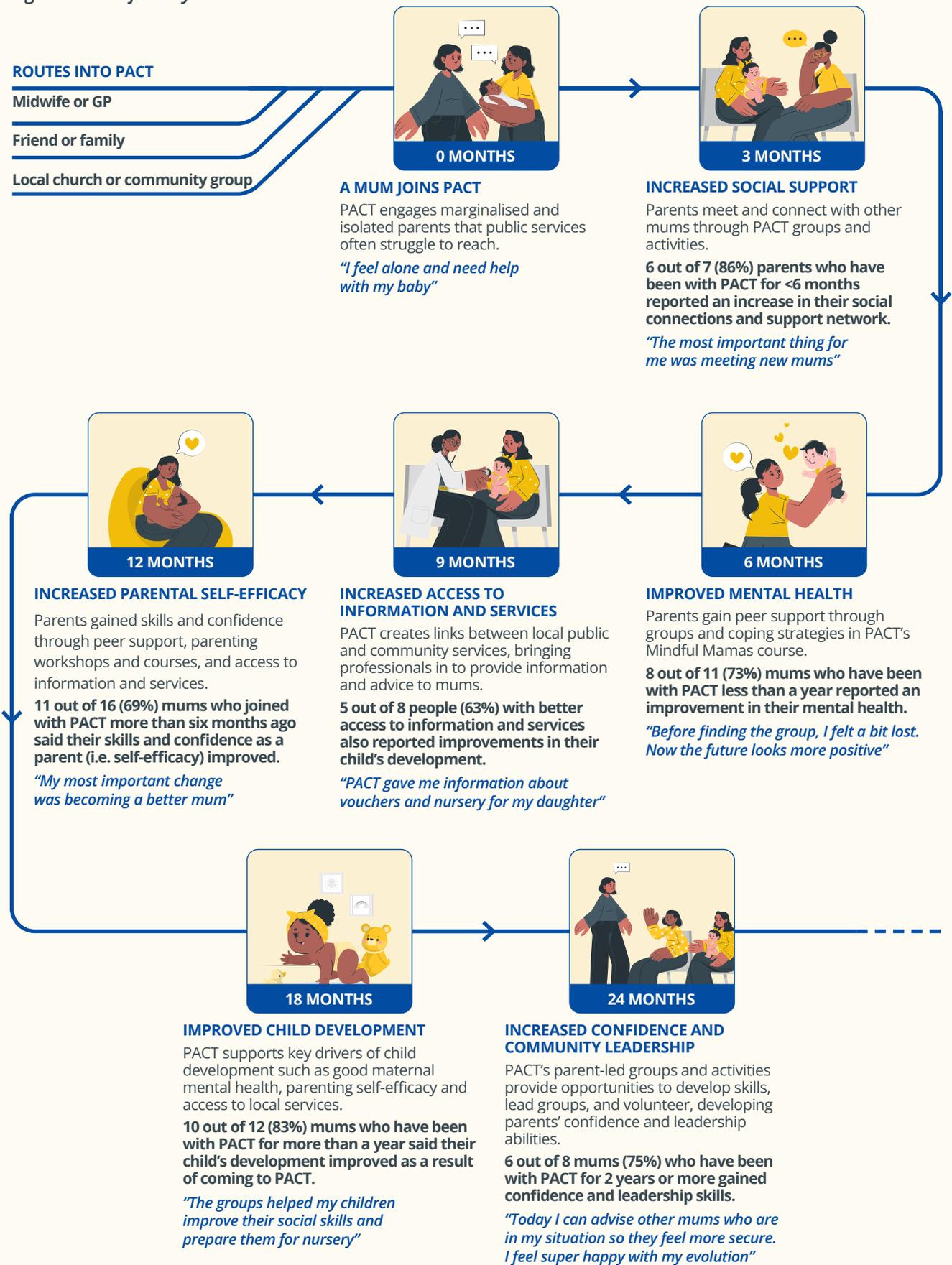
have been with PACT for more than 2 years and drops to only 3 out of 7 (43%) mums who have been with PACT for less than six months.

6 out of 8 (75%) mums who have been with PACT for 2 years or more gained confidence and leadership skills; while only 5 out of 15 mums who joined PACT less than two years ago said their confidence and leadership had increased (33%).

There was no observable difference in when mums joined PACT and whether they reported an increase in access to information and services.



Figure 1: PACT journey



A picture then emerges (see figure 1) where increasing social connections and support appears to be an early and foundational outcome. Mums' mental health then starts to improve and they grow in their confidence as a parent as they learn new skills. This in turn, alongside an increasing access to information and services, supports an improvement in their child's social development. Finally, parents' confidence increases over time, often resulting in them taking leadership roles within groups or volunteering.

This is, of course, a somewhat speculative picture given the small sample size and there is likely no typical journey for a parent. Nonetheless, taking the potential pattern outlined in table 4, parents' frequent descriptions of a journey or story of growth, combined with evidenced associations between the various impacts described, there is good reason to think this picture represents a valid model.

5.5. Benefits and challenges of the parent-led peer evaluation process

There were a number of benefits of taking a peer evaluation approach, such as:

i. The ability to co-design and test the evaluation activities and sessions.

This allowed us to learn about whether evaluation sessions and methods were appropriate for parents, enabling us to adapt and tailor exercises as needed. These included methodological issues such as what questions to ask during the focus group discussion or simplifying language used in various exercises to practical aspects such as how to welcome parents to the session or where to host the crèche.

ii. Generating more meaningful insights

Parent facilitators were able to connect with participants as peers, and in many cases, use their existing relationship and trust with participants, to make participants feel comfortable and welcome. This meant the parents were more comfortable to share their experiences and stories, and to go into more detail, which in turn generated more meaningful insights.

iii. More inclusive and accessible

Between the parent facilitators, the evaluation team was able to communicate in six different languages. Every session was delivered in both English and Spanish, and on two other occasions parent facilitators were able to support participants in additional languages. This made the evaluation process more inclusive and accessible for a wider range of parents, who are often missed out. Making the process both fairer and more inclusive, but also more representative of a wide range of voices and experiences.

iv. Capacity building and leadership

A core part of the aims of PACT and Citizens UK is building community capacity and leadership. The evaluation process trained four PACT members in basic evaluation skills and supported them to lead evaluation sessions, building leadership abilities of the women involved, modelling parent leadership for other parents, and building capacity within PACT to deliver future parent-led evaluations.

v. Bringing new types of expertise and experience into the evaluation team.

For example, during focus group discussions, parent facilitators were able to ask more specific and

salient follow up questions, as they had direct experience of, and as such greater knowledge, of the specific groups or activities participants were referring to.

vi. It distributed power away from evaluators and towards evaluation participants

The previous points are also utilitarian benefits of this parent facilitator/peer evaluation model, but a more inherent benefit is the equitability of involving users in the evaluation process, distributing power and enabling more meaningful participation of users in the evaluation of their support.

There were also a number of challenges of this approach, which included:

i. It is more resource intensive - at least initially.

The evaluation team consisted of the four Parent Facilitators and a lead evaluator. A recruitment process to fill the Parent Facilitators roles was needed, followed by a number of training workshops. As Parent Facilitators were learning new skills and gaining experience and confidence as they went, additional support was provided. This took the form of producing bespoke step-by-step guides to each evaluation exercise, facilitating group reflective discussions, providing 121 coaching, and giving supervision during and feedback after sessions.

All this meant that the evaluation team was larger than it may have been otherwise, and involved additional resource requirements to provide training, support, supervision and coaching. However, this can also be seen as an investment in evaluation capacity, where in the future it may actually require less resource.

ii. Lack of experience

Research and evaluation specialists often have decades of experience in the field, whereas peer evaluators may have little to no experience of conducting research or evaluation activities. There is therefore a trade-off that needs to be made between using qualified and experienced researchers and evaluators and using peer evaluators, who lack experience but bring a range of other benefits. This lack of experience may also potentially limit what is possible in terms of methodology - leading simpler and easier to implement methods to be preferred.



6. CONCLUSION

There is good evidence to suggest that PACT has a positive impact on a number of parental and child outcomes, including social connectedness and support; maternal mental health and wellbeing; parental self-efficacy; child social and emotional development; increased access to local services; and increased confidence and leadership.

There are a number of likely associations and links between these outcomes, such as the increase in social connectedness and improved mental health, or mental health, parental self-efficacy and access to local services and improvement in children's social and emotional development.

This suggested a journey of impact, where one impact leads to or contributes to another after a period of time. This idea is supported by parents' descriptions of their time with PACT as a journey, using phrases such as 'work in progress' or going 'through an evolution' and observed differences in which outcomes parents felt were most important based on how long they had been a member of PACT for.

The findings with the highest levels of confidence are:

- There is a very high level of confidence that PACT increased social connections and support networks for parents who take part in PACT. This was the most important impact for 6 out of the 23 women (the highest scoring), and was mentioned by 14 out of 23 mums (61%). Three previous evaluations of PACT found statistically significant improvements in parents' social support networks.
- There is a very high level of confidence that PACT improves the mental health and wellbeing of parents - particularly for parents with low mental health and wellbeing. Three previous evaluations found statistically significant improvements in mental health among mums who were above clinical levels of depression and anxiety. A separate evaluation of Mindful Mamas, found parents' mental wellbeing increased after completing the course.
- There is a high level of confidence that PACT increases parental self-efficacy. This was the most important impact for 3 out of the 23 women, and was mentioned by 14 (61%). Two previous evaluations found that PACT improved parenting skills and confidence - one of which found statistically significant results for English-speaking mothers.

Findings with a good level of confidence are:

- There is a moderate to high level of confidence in the finding that PACT improves children's social and emotional development. This was the most frequently cited impact, mentioned by 70% of all parents, and the most important impact for 4 parents. However, only one previous evaluation has looked at social and emotional child development and observed an improvement but this was not statistically significant. However, this only focused on the first six months' of a parent's journey, while this evaluation suggests impacts on child development may take longer than that.
- There is a moderate level of confidence that PACT increases access to local services. This was the most important impact for 2 out of the 23 women, and was mentioned by 8 (35%), including accessing information and support related to housing and healthcare. One previous evaluation found an increase in health literacy for those with low levels of literacy - i.e. the ability to obtain, understand, and use healthcare information, make decisions and access support. Significantly,

two previous evaluations found that PACT is successful at engaging women who public services often struggle to reach and thus are more likely to lack access to services.

- There is a moderate level of confidence that PACT increases the confidence of parents, which often leads to improvements in their leadership abilities. This was the most important impact for 3 out of the 23 women, and was mentioned by 11 (48%). Previous evaluations have not specifically explored the impact on women's confidence or leadership skills.



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ANNEX A: PARENT FACILITATOR PROFILES

Parent Facilitator profile: Estefania

Estefania is a mum of two little girls aged six and four. She grew up near the beach in the south of Spain but moved to London 8 years ago now. Estefania joined PACT shortly after her second daughter was born, just over three years ago. Estefania says that back then she was feeling really low and it was a really difficult period for her.

“Before joining Espacio Mama, I was really down. At the time, I wasn’t ready to be with people,” Estefania remembers.

She joined a Whatsapp group with other mums from Espacio Mama, PACT’s Spanish language parent group, and then after a while, started joining and doing different trips. Then someone told her about PACT’s Mindful Mama’s course, which had a big impact on Estefania’s wellbeing.

“After they told me about mindfulness, I didn’t stop. Because honestly, that saved me. It helped empower me. After that, everything came.”

Estefania began coming to Espacio Mama regularly and then started taking up opportunities to develop her skills and even start leading groups - like when she attended and helped deliver a course on parent leadership with other parents and PACT volunteers.

“My confidence was building,” she recalls. “Mindfulness gave me a lot of confidence, especially in my English. And then after the parent leadership course, because I also delivered part of it, that helped build my confidence a lot.”

Before joining PACT, Estefania said she definitely wouldn’t have been able to do something like be a Parent Facilitator. But after the parent leadership course, Estefania had the confidence to apply for the role.

“It’s not only the skills you develop. It’s how you feel when you are doing it. Because when I started, I couldn’t even talk in the job interviews I did. I was really insecure. It was really bad. So this helped me a lot to improve my English, improve my confidence, I know to organise myself better, I have more skills.”

Estefania is now continuing in her leadership roles within PACT and now has the confidence to apply and interview for jobs again.

“Delivering the parent leadership course, being a Parent Facilitator, talking to other mums, all helped me a lot to feel valued because before I was thinking I couldn’t do it.”

Parent Facilitator profile: Helen

When her friend told Helen about PACT, she was sceptical. Helen has five children, has lived in three countries and has been to her fair share of baby groups.

"I needed a community type of feeling because that's what I was missing. But most of the groups focused on the child. I used to go for my kids but I didn't feel like I belonged", Helen said of the previous groups she had been to.

But her friend was persistent. Helen finally relented and went along to a MumSpace group with her. Helen immediately liked the sense of community in the groups, the environment to connect with other parents, and the mutual support from other parents.

Helen gradually took on leadership roles within the community and now mainly volunteers as a family support volunteer at a weekly MumSpace group. She enjoys supporting other parents, saying "I give as much as I receive from parents."

"When I'm volunteering, I'm listening to other parents. Nobody understands you like someone going through the same journey as you", Helen says.

"I enjoy the sense of community. That was what was missing in my parenting journey, an environment where I feel more nurtured as a parent. I wish I had an extended family in the area you know, but I don't. But I have PACT!"

Before becoming a Parent Facilitator, Helen had the opportunity to take on another parent leadership role, talking to other organisations about PACT's parent-led approach, sharing what makes it work and helping them think about how they could make it work for their context.

"I saw not only myself, but everyone else that did journey with me, becoming more confident over time," Helen says.

When Helen heard about the evaluation, she felt comfortable because of her experience of being in front of people and sharing and presenting. "It gave me more confidence to take that role, because I'd done that before. So that skill was something I thought I could bring to that evaluation."

As a result, and with the training, information and support provided through the evaluation, Helen says she felt "confident and fully prepared" to support other parents to share their experiences. "I was with people that wanted me to grow. I felt at ease and also felt like they are people that could challenge me if need be", Helen said.

Reflecting on the opportunities Helen has had through PACT to learn new skills and confidence, Helen says:

"Every exposure I've had within PACT, although some might be challenging at times, has allowed me to connect more to people and gain some knowledge and confidence."

Parent Facilitator profile: Omoyosola

Omoyosola joined PACT when her daughter was about 3 months old. She arrived in the UK from Nigeria about six months prior and was struggling to make ends meet.

"I was really struggling to feed myself and feed my daughter," Omoyosola remembers. She was introduced to PACT by another local charity, and was helped with extra support like baby clothes and a buggy through PACT's baby bank.

After this, Omoyosola was introduced to the MumSpace groups, where she met other mums from her home country.

"I was living in total isolation, you know, so I was just alone with my daughter. Meeting those ladies that day, I had not laughed in a very long time, and we laughed and made jokes and connected."

Omoyosola describes how people would call and check in on her so even if she couldn't come to the group, helping "lift me up and out of the isolation", she remembers.

"Those ladies I met on that day are people I still call my friends today. PACT gave me that gift of friendship, which I would not trade for anything."

One day, one of the Parent Organisers at PACT saw how Omoyosola was interacting with the other mums and suggested she became a parent leader. "I was like 'leader'", she says, "I told her, 'oh I'm not sure' but she was so insistent and encouraging." Nearly five years on, Omoyosola is a leader in the community.

Omoyosola became a PACT volunteer and gradually, as her confidence grew, she began to take on more roles, like becoming a digital champion, a parent ambassador, or supporting Citizen UK's South London listening campaign with other parents.

"That's where I started from," Omoyosola said about that conversation with the Parent Organiser, "to so many more volunteering and facilitation opportunities. My confidence started to grow and I was able to talk to more parents without being shy because my public speaking was really bad. But with PACT and the confidence I was getting I was able to start improving my public speaking and facilitation skills."

When it came to taking on the Parent Facilitator role Omoyosola says the experience she gained with PACT made her comfortable to take on the role without feeling shy.

"They always support you and still offer more opportunities to build your skills and confidence - there's no right or wrong way, English isn't a barrier. You're just made to feel comfortable and like you can do it."

Thinking back, Omoyosola says there was "no way I could have done this before. Before joining PACT my confidence was low. I used to be very outspoken. But when life deals with you, you sort of drop what you think you can do. Even sharing my own personal experience with others was really hard for me."

"I was able to develop my confidence and self-esteem and without PACT, I would not have been able to do it. They helped me to develop personally."

Parent Facilitator profile: Saran

After moving to London seven years ago, Saran was finding learning English difficult because of her isolation. Saran, a mum of three originally from the Cote d'Ivoire, went to university in France. When she moved to London when her first daughter was only one, she started an ESOL course. But when her second daughter was born, she had to stop to focus on parenting.

One month before giving birth to her son, Saran moved to Southwark. She found out about PACT through a staff member who gave her a leaflet. Coming to PACT was an "opportunity to improve my English because of being in contact with people again," Saran says.

"I was new in the area, I didn't know anyone. PACT was my first opportunity to socialise with other parents in the area."

Saran started PACT's Parent University course and after completing that, she joined a weekly MumSpace group. Saran says her favourite thing about PACT was how safe and welcoming it felt:

"It's like a family. When I came, I was alone, I didn't know people in the area. It was a space where I felt very safe, met people and got to have conversations."

As time went on, Saran gained more confidence in her English and she gradually started taking on small leadership roles in groups, like leading warm up exercise or breathing sessions or introducing reflective journaling to her group.

"In PACT, we have a space to practise, and share experiences, and build our capacity," Saran said of this time.

During COVID, Saran helped run a listening campaign in South London with Citizens UK. As Saran says, it was "an opportunity to listen to parents and ask them how they were feeling about COVID, what their anxieties were, and give them an ear and someone listen to them."

From that experience, and the training and support she received from PACT, Saran felt confident in her listening skills and was ready when the Parent Facilitator role was advertised.

"When the opportunity of the evaluation came up, I thought maybe I could go deeper in the listening and find a new perspective for parents at PACT."

Saran says the Parent Facilitator role, where she helped organise, plan and lead the sessions, helped with her personal development even more: "It gave me more confidence and I think I learned a lot from that like time management, teamwork, facilitation, public speaking. In the evaluation sessions, it was two hours, we had roles where we were leading a topic we had to prepare. It was so helpful. It was my first time being in a role like that."

Saran has now just successfully finished a qualification in health and social care, and without PACT she isn't sure if it would have been possible: "PACT was an opportunity to grow and develop, to improve my English, and to have my own goals."

ANNEX B: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

A total of 25 parents across three focus group discussions shared their views about what they value most about PACT and where they think PACT can improve. Below is a summary of the key findings (see table for table 5 for breakdown of findings).

The top things that mums value most about PACT are:

Meeting other mums

This was frequently mentioned by mums with there being broad agreement about this in all three groups. Mums appreciated PACT providing lots of opportunities to meet other mums, from weekly groups, to workshops, to group trips. Mums mentioned valuing meeting people from different backgrounds, interacting with people with similar experiences of being a mum, and being able to get out of the house and have a laugh with other parents.

"When I go to PACT, I speak to so many mums. We have a laugh, sometimes we don't, it depends on the day really... But it is that time where I can talk to a lot of people, different personalities, different lifestyles. So that's really good."

"Honestly, it has helped me a lot because when I came there was nobody, no job, I was just alone at home."

"Like where I'm like a first time mum, it's like helping me mix with other mums in my situation."

Mumspace and baby groups

PACT's weekly groups are very popular with all the mums we spoke to, being brought up in all of the focus group discussions and widespread agreement about the value of these groups. Things that parents mentioned valuing about these groups included being with other parents and not focusing solely on their kids, having a space where their kids can play with other kids their age, and having time to bond with their kids.

"I like the toddler group and I went to baby groups so my child can interact with children his own age 'cos his got an older brother, so I think him is reacting to the same age like other children and then that had a bunch of other toys and seeing him use the other toys, he showed you how fast they can be."

"I like the baby group, too. The space there... 'cause it's not a lot of space at home to play, so, yeah, it's just really good just for him to run—like run around a bit and explore."

Learning about being a parent

In each of the three focus groups, parents spoke about how they really valued learning new things since coming to PACT through information, workshops, and courses like Parent University. Mums valued the wide range of different topics they could learn about. Topics parents mentioned they particularly enjoyed include: mental health, such as coping strategies for stress; breastfeeding child

development and behaviour; sleep routines; baby bonding; and what could improve in your area.

“That is very important because I said ‘wow I did not know this or I did not know that’ and they have clarified many things that we did not know”

“I am delighted, very happy because it has helped me to have information about many things that I did not have”

Everyone is welcoming and friendly

Another commonly mentioned aspect that mums really valued was how welcoming and friendly the environment is, which came up in every focus group. Mums specifically mentioned how helpful and friendly parent volunteers, as well as PACT staff are. Some mums said this was a key reason that made them want to keep coming to PACT, with other mums comparing this to other baby groups they have been to, where they didn't feel as welcomed or they belonged.

“What I value most at PACT, the volunteers are approachable, so helpful. Because it's very daunting when you are mum, and it's also daunting coming to a new place and you don't know these people.”

“I think that the people who work there are very friendly and that makes you wanna come back.”

The top areas where mums think PACT could improve are:

Better communication about what's going on

This was a common theme in all focus groups, and in two of the groups was the topic that provoked the most discussion. There was broad agreement that there could be a better way to keep up to date about what's going on and what's coming up, as many parents felt like they missed out on information or opportunities. During discussions it also became clear that many parents, especially newer mums, weren't aware of all of the activities and opportunities available through PACT.

The three main suggestions were to improve communication were: a regular newsletter with what's going on could be shared with parents at the groups; a single WhatsApp could be created for all mums where only PACT staff could share (to stop it from having too many notifications); and using Instagram and Facebook accounts to share activities that are coming up.

“There's lots of whatsapp groups but I find that sometimes I miss information that is being shared on another Whatsapp group that I am not a part of. So they could actually streamline it to, like, have a whole PACT Whatsapp group or even like a newsletter once every so often that lets you know what's coming up, so you can't miss out.”

“I know they have Instagram and Facebook, I just don't think they use it to the best they can because they do share that we have done this, we have done that, which is nice. But again, I do think it's a missed opportunity to let us know what is going to be happening. So they could say in 2 weeks' time, we're going to do this.”

“I got given the leaflet [when I joined] but it didn't have any of this in there. And also it said like the front page had different things listed, and then it said see page 2 for more information, but there was nothing there.”

Weekly sessions should be longer

Every group agreed that it would be good if weekly group sessions could be longer and that introducing a 'snack time' might also help. Parents shared that by the time they arrived and got settled, they felt like the time was almost up. There was a consensus of around 30-60 minutes more for each session, especially sessions that only lasted one hour.

"I think the Mumspace, the timing. Before you know the time is gone. If they can increase it maybe 1 hour more."

"I was late last time and I think I spent most of the time out of the room with my daughter eating an apple. Because you are not allowed to eat in there, and she wanted to eat the whole time. So we didn't really get to play. So I agree snack time and extra time would be great."

More groups and activities

Lots of parents wanted more opportunities to come to PACT and learn, either through more weekly groups on different days or more workshops on particular topics, largely reflecting how much parents value these activities in the first place. Some suggestions for additional sessions included: fussy eaters, cooking together or sharing recipes; baby yoga; English courses with crèche, or sessions on how to prepare to go back to work.

"I don't know if it is appropriate to have something like a parent university... on what the options are on when you go back to work. What are local play schemes, crèches, finding good childminders for people that want to go back to work? How could they go about it?"

"Another group on another day, yeah more groups. Like we have got one baby group, one toddler group, and Wednesday is like a coffee morning, so like maybe another toddler group?"

More group trips together

As with the above suggestion, this also reflects the value that parents get from group trips - as it was also one of the things they value most about PACT. This was mentioned in each of the focus groups, though it didn't provoke as much discussion as other areas. The discussions focus mainly on parents feeling like they missed out on opportunities when they couldn't make it or grouping together to make trips more affordable.

"I couldn't go on the trip last year, so if there was maybe another trip each year, so people can go if they can't make the other one."

"Definitely I would like to see more trips, like for example I like Kidzonia, I haven't taken my kids ever because it is so expensive, but if you apply for groups it is cheaper. And if you do it through PACT, maybe we have to pay £5 each, or something like that. Trips, to maybe a nature based thing, so you know like trips, with a lot of groups, like a big group of people that would be lovely."

Table 5. Summary of findings from focus group discussions

WHAT DO PARENTS VALUE MOST ABOUT PACT?		
THEME	WHAT PARENTS VALUED	HOW MANY GROUPS MENTIONED IT
PACT groups and activities	MumSpace and baby groups	3
	Learning skills and knowledge about being a parent	3
	Group trips and excursions	2
	Mindful Mamas courses	2
Welcoming environment	Everyone is welcoming and friendly	3
	Helpful and friendly parent volunteers	3
	Helpful and friendly PACT staff	2
Community and connection	Meeting other mums	3
	Wider sense of community	2
	Supportive place to come and be	2
Practical support	Getting practical information and help	2
	Access to other services	2
	Crèche	1

HOW DO PARENTS THINK PACT COULD IMPROVE?		
THEME	AREA OF IMPROVEMENT	HOW MANY GROUPS MENTIONED IT
PACT groups and activities	Longer sessions for weekly MumSpace and baby groups	3
	More groups and activities (i.e. higher frequency)	3
	More group trips and excursions	3
	More support for dads	1
	More dynamic group atmosphere (for Friday group only)	1
Communication	Better communication about what's going on	3
	More and better information for new mums	2
Practical support	More links to services	2
	Introducing snack time or food in groups	1
	Providing access to more vouchers	1
Community and connection	Facilitating more interaction and sharing between mums	2

ANNEX C: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM ECOMAPPING

Summary of key findings

1. Every mum mentioned PACT as part of their support network

- /// Parents support networks range from 5 people to 14 - though this may not be a comprehensive or accurate picture.
- /// Three mums included supportive relationships they attributed to PACT - though many mums did not attribute any other part of their support network to PACT.
- /// Parents did not break down relationships within PACT - they just put 'PACT' as a catch all.

2. Parents mentioned a wide range of support needs, with childcare, financial support and housing the three biggest parenting support needs.

- /// Childcare was the biggest area where parents said they need support, with 9 out of 13 parents listing this, followed by financial support (8), housing (6), advice and information (5), and finding work (5).
- /// See table 6 for a full breakdown of parenting needs.

Table 6. Top parenting needs mentioned by PACT parents

PARENTING NEED	NUMBER OF PARENTS (#)	PROPORTION OF PARENTS (%)
Childcare	9	69.2
Financial support	8	61.5
Support with housing	6	46.2
Advice & information (e.g. about nursery)	6	46.2
Finding work	5	38.5
Practical support (e.g. cooking, housework)	3	23.1
Education or training	3	23.1
Healthcare	2	15.4
Additional support for children (e.g. with SEND)	2	15.4
Emotional support	2	15.4
Sleep	2	15.4
Extracurricular activities	1	7.7

3. A relatively low number of parents completed the exercise

- /// Only 13 out of 25 mums completed a support map. See figure 2 for an example Support Map.
- /// This was largely due to time constraints.
- /// But also some mums didn't feel comfortable sharing this kind of information.

4. The exercise may have been too complicated to do within the timeframe

- /// There were lots of steps involved and not all were completed.
- /// Ecomapping needs relatively heavy facilitation and a 121 setting may have allowed for this to be done more effectively.
- /// The time constraints meant it often felt rushed and not all the steps were completed, such as indicating which relationships were developed through PACT or spending enough time to list all supportive relationships.

Thank you for reading this report.

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This report was produced by **Anthill Collective**, a collective of independent social researchers, policy experts and service designers helping organisations create citizen-centred policies and services.

If you would like to get in touch about anything, please contact us at:

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Bibby', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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