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- Around three-quarters (76%) of respondents said that the costs associated with running their baby and toddler group have increased in the last year. Overall, costs increased on average by 20

Baby and toddler groups are a vital part of the early years sector.



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SURVEY RESULTS

while they recognise that their income needs to increase, they are hesitant to pass the rises on to families. "I have deliberately kept my prices the same," one said. "It has meant my take-home pay had reduced to barely anything."

Another respondent said they tried to increase fees, but this negatively affected their income, more than if they kept them the same: "Interestingly, I tried to raise session fees from £8.50 per session to £9 v and the enquiries dropped off significantly. I dropped it back to £8.50 and the enquiries increased again. The cost to parents matters a lot."

However, some groups also highlighted that while they have done their best not to increase prices, the precarious financial situation they are facing has meant that this is now becoming impossible. "After Easter we increased our prices," one respondent said. "Surplus funds that we had from busy months are now running out."



Others indicated that prices may have to increase further in the future in light of continued financial pressures. One respondent said: "Rising costs are definitely an issue. To date, the venues I use have only raised the prices slightly (although this is an hourly increase, so impact is moderate). I suspect that costs will increase further to take account of energy cost increases."

Impact on ser ices

Having access to resources, such as high-chairs, tables and play equipment, is an important part of baby and toddler groups and a key driver not only for attracting families to the group, but also ensuring that they will return week after week. However, a notable proportion of groups are finding it increasingly challenging to ensure they not only have enough equipment, but that items are both high-quality and up-to-date.

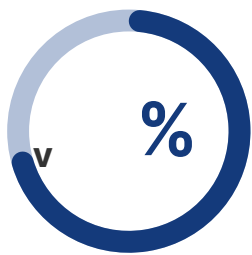
While around six in 10 baby and toddler groups (%) said 57 they have enough resources, almost a third (%) of al32 respondents said that while they have enough, they would like to upgrade them.

More than four in 10 respondents (%) said that they have been unable to buy resources, such as books, toys and equipment, as a result of inflationary pressures.

SURVEY RESULTS

resources up to date. "As we don't pay rent, and leaders pay for the refreshments, all the money collected from parent fees goes back

SURVEY RESULTS



72% of respondents cited attracting new staff and volunteers as a key challenge



and in many instances, grandparents,
often stop volunteering once their

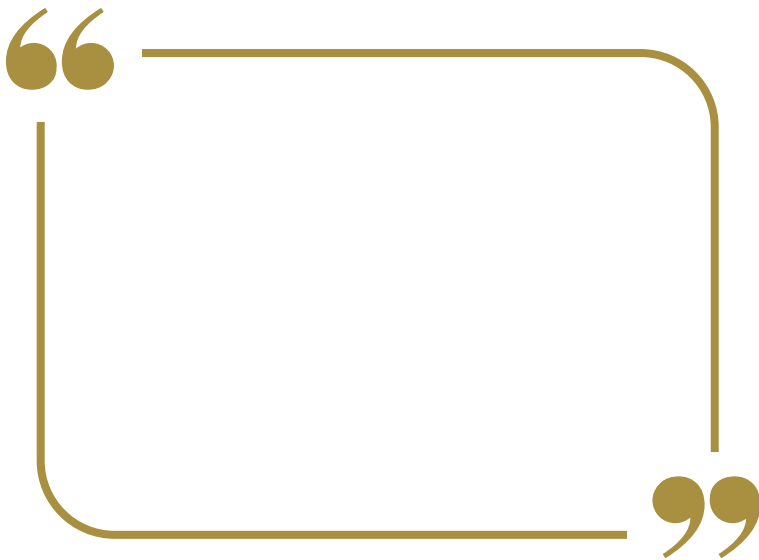
due to mental health issues, including depression. The

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However, despite the range of support groups on offer to families, nearly half () of baby and toddler groups said they still aren't able to offer as much help as they would like.

Many highlighted that they would like their group to be able to offer professional support, such as access to health visitors or midwives, but this is often a challenge. A number said that health visitors used to offer support to the group, but spending cutbacks have meant this is no longer the case.



One explained that overall families are finding professional support difficult to access: "It would be so good to have a place where mums – especially new mums – could come and have the opportunity to speak to health visitors or midwives in an informal setting along with other support services. All this seems very hard for mums to access now in person."

The staffing challenges faced by baby and toddler groups have also had a negative impact on their ability to support families as much as they would like to.

One respondent explained: "If we had more volunteers, we would be in a better position to understand the needs of individual families."

Another said: "We have few volunteers who are usually tied up in managing crafts, supervising the door for safety and setting up for refreshments which doesn't leave time to sit and talk to carers."

Notably, many voiced their frustration given that they are unable to offer long-term practical support to families.

One said: "What can we offer? Nothing, except someone to talk to. We can't pay their bills, magic money out of thin air or solve the challenges of all families with and without children. Nobody can do anything that will help and that's why everyone is so overwhelmed and miserable."



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Despite the valuable service they offer to both children and families, the future is very uncertain for the baby and toddler group sector, with future closures a significant concern.

One in five () respondents described the closure of their group in the next 12 months is either 'somewhat' or 'very likely', with the majority citing the combination of staffing challenges and rising costs as a catalyst for this.

A number of respondents also highlighted a lack of government support and awareness of the value of baby and toddler groups. One said: "I really think the government need to realise how vital toddler groups are for child development and parent mental health and therefore support them [through] grants"

Another described baby and toddler groups as "hidden treasures", pointing to the "lack of recognition by decision makers and others about value [that] volunteer-run toddler groups offer to under-fives, their families and the community."

conclusion

Baby and toddler groups are a lifeline for families. They provide an opportunity for children to socialise, learn and play while offering much-needed support for parents and carers, which has become even more crucial in recent years. However, it's clear that they are facing significant challenges which urgently need addressing if groups are both able to remain open and thrive long into the future

conclusion

As such, it is vital

appendix: full findings

Do you currently own: work for or volunteer for a baby and toddler group or class?

Yes: 91%

No: 9%

How would you best describe your role at your baby and toddler group(s)?

Owner: 19%

Manager: 8%

Group leader: 47%

Session leader: 10%

Assistant / support staff: 8%

Administrator: 1%

Other: 6%

Are you paid for your role at your baby and toddler group or do you work on a voluntary basis?

Paid: 42%

Voluntary: 58%

Do you have a child/grandchild or other relative's child who attends your baby and toddler group?

Yes: 26%

No: 74%

When does the group operate?

Term-time-only: 81%

All-year-round: 15%

Other: 4%

How long has your group been operating?

Less than a year: 9%

1-2 years: 13%

3-5 years: 12%

6-10 years: 15%

11-15 years: 7%

16 – 20 years: 7%

More than 20 years: 37%

appendix: full findings

How often do you hold sessions?

More than once a week: 33%

Weekly: 59%

Fortnightly: 3%

Monthly: 0%

Ad hoc: 0%

Other: 4%

What is the maximum number of children that can attend your group per session?

0-10: 6%

11-20: 31%

21-30: 35%

More than 30: 29%

Which of the following ages of children attend your baby and toddler group? Please select all that apply.

Under-ones: 94%

One-year-olds: 94%

Two-years-olds: 96%

Three-year-olds: 90%

Four-year-olds: 68%

Five-year-olds: 14%

Over-fives: 3%

On a typical session, are the number of places you offer filled?

Yes – but we do not have a waiting list: 38%

Yes – and we have a waiting list: 17%

No – we often have spare places: 45%

How do you cover the costs of running the group? Please select all that apply.

Parent fees: 69%

Funding from government/local authority: 4%

Personal loan: 0%

Business/community loan: 1%

Charity grants: 12%

Loan from family/friends: 0%

Donations from family/friends: 5%



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