

Report on Consultation on the Health Visiting Service in Wandsworth

Background

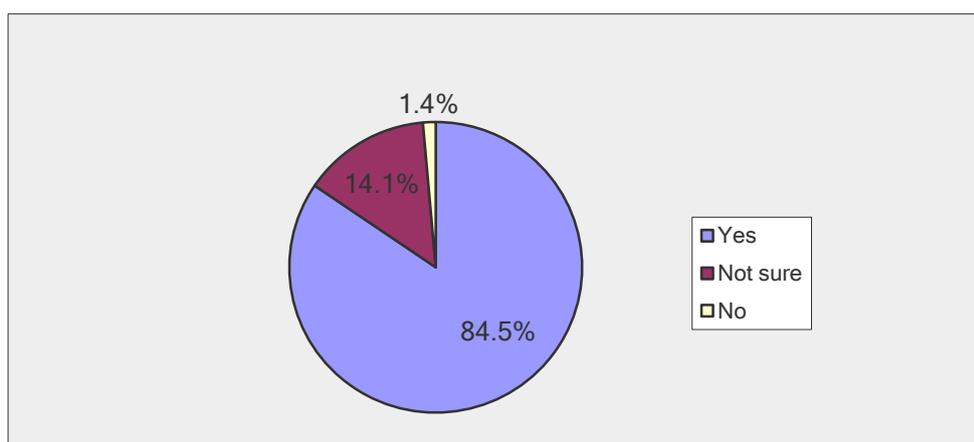
From 1st October 2015 the management of the Health Visiting Service transferred from the NHS to Local Authorities and Healthwatch Wandsworth wanted to give local families the opportunity to share their experiences to shape a service tailored to the needs of the local people.

Overview of the survey

We developed a questionnaire and asked local parents about their Health Visiting experience. Of the 142 respondents, 86 completed the questionnaire during outreach sessions in children's centres, and 56 completed it online, probably as a result of the extensive promotion done via social media. In addition, 8 service users' stories were gathered via posts on local Facebook groups. A mixture of open and closed questions were used, and the questionnaires were all answered by new mothers, and 3 fathers, of a varying age.

Findings

We started off by asking whether the participants understood the role of the Health Visitor and the support they should get from them.

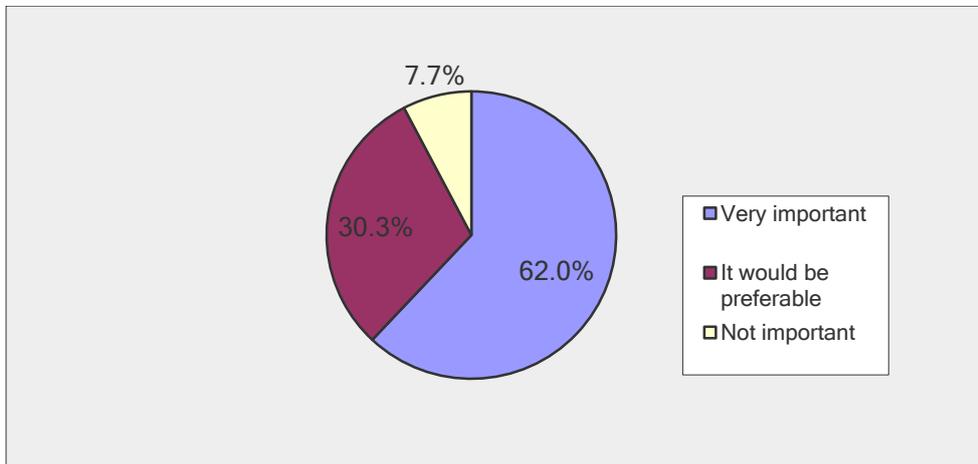


Graph 1: Do you understand the role of a Health Visitor and the kind of support they are supposed to offer to you and to your children?

Encouragingly, Graph 1 shows nearly 85% said they did, but 14.1% were not sure and 1.4% did not know what the Health Visitor role was supposed to be. This has

potential implications for the section of people who did not fully understand the role as it may mean that they do not access the complete service they are able to from their health visitor.

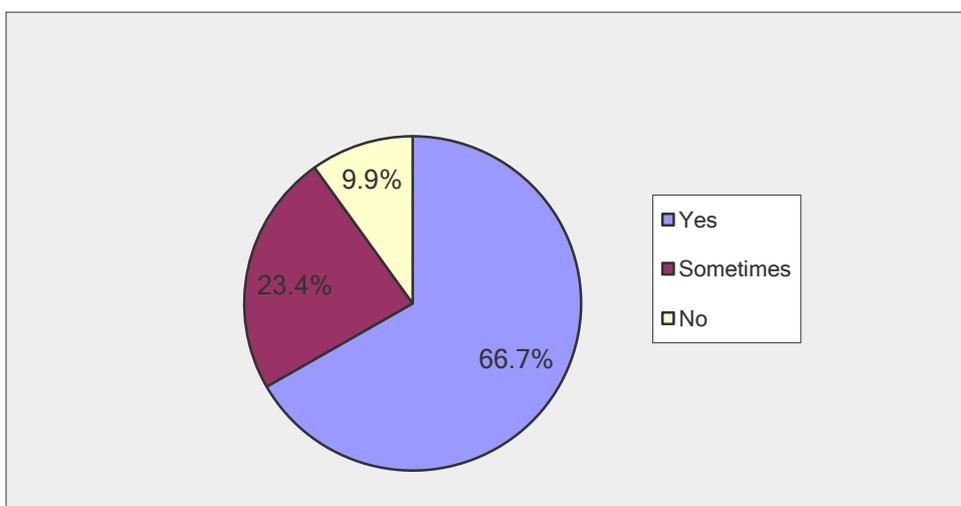
We wanted to find out how important it was that people saw the same Health Visitor and had some continuity with their child's care.



Graph 2: How important is it for you to be able to see the same Health Visitor?

Graph 2 shows 62% of people felt it was very important to see the same Health Visitor with only 7.7% answering that it was not important. This is useful information for the Local Authority who could try to tailor visits to ensure each Health Visitor has their own caseload and see the same families where possible.

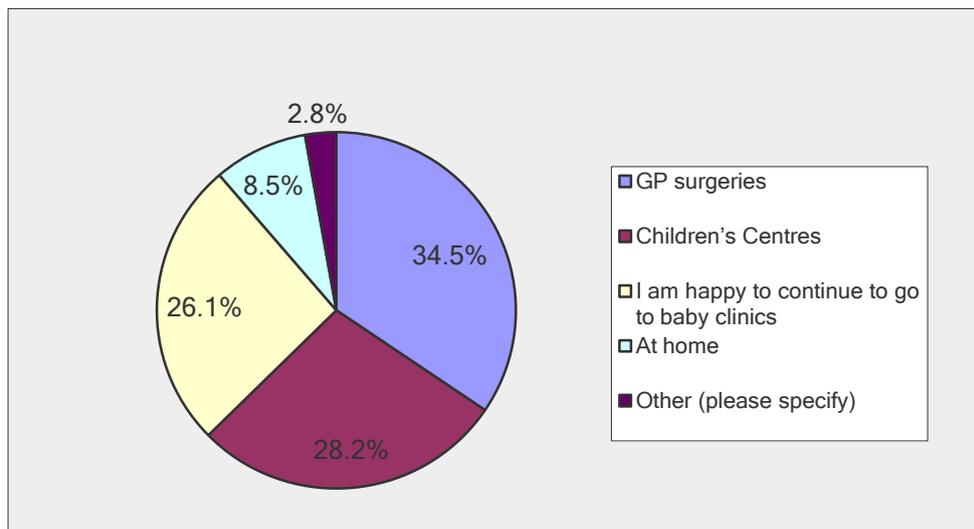
We then wanted to find out a bit more about how easy families found it to access the Health Visiting Service. This information might be particularly relevant to vulnerable families who find it difficult to access the service if they have to travel a long distance, suffer financial difficulties or do not have enough support and help at home.



Graph 3: Do you find it easy to see a Health Visitor in a place and at a time convenient for you?

Graph 3 shows that 66.7% of parents find it easy to see the Health Visitor in a place and at a time convenient for them, however nearly 10% of the participants did not. This might be concerning to the Local Authority as these could include vulnerable sections of society. This should be investigated further to discover the reasons why people found it difficult to see the Health Visitor, whether it was for personal reasons or whether the services need improving.

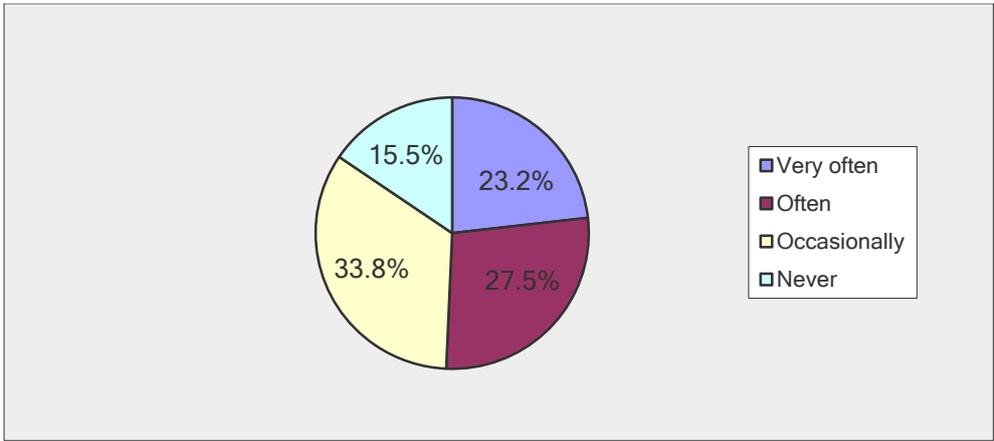
We wanted to find out where the families preferred to see the Health Visitor, giving them a choice of 4 and an “other” box to choose from.



Graph 4: In which of these places would you be happy to see a health visitor?

Graph 4 showed that the most popular option would be to see the Health Visitor in their GP surgery. There was a fairly equal preference between children's centres and baby clinics and 8.5% preferred to be seen at home. When asked to elaborate on the “other” option, 3 participants said they would be happy to see the Health Visitor anywhere and 1 person said it did not matter about the location, just the convenience.

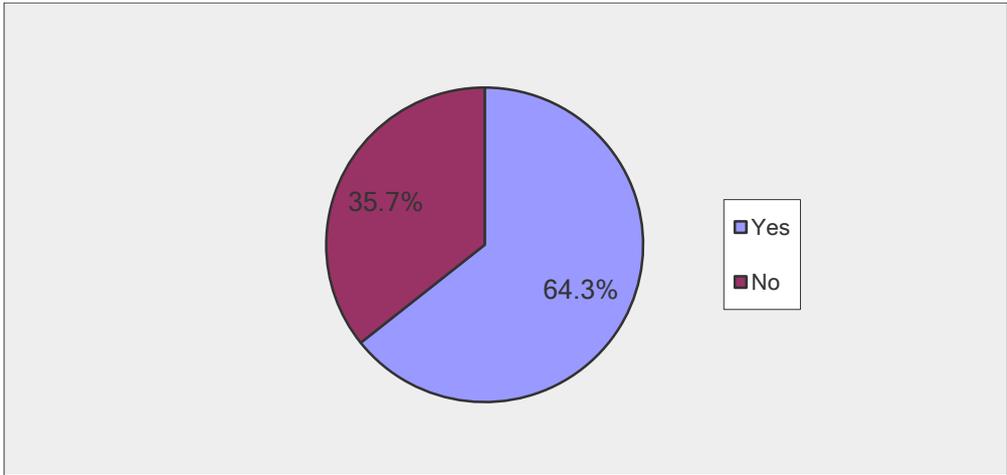
The modernisation of health services might mean that the way in which information is delivered is important to ensure it reaches as many people as possible. We wanted to see the extent to which parents used social media to get information on childhood health issues.



Graph 5: How often do you use social media and on-line forums to obtain information on immunisation and/or common childhood illnesses and problems?

Graph 5 shows that only 15.5% of families never use social media to get information on their child’s illnesses or immunisation requirements. This is important information for the healthcare providers. Information on the internet is largely unregulated and the majority of our participants used the internet to guide the care of their children. It might be important to ensure the Local Authorities provide safe, up-to-date information to the families of the local area and it would be important to promote this to encourage people to use these websites and on-line forums, rather than unregulated, potentially unsafe sites.

It is vital that children are protected from childhood illnesses as much as possible and immunisations are a way of trying to do this. We wanted to find out if the families found it hard to keep to the vaccination schedule with their children.

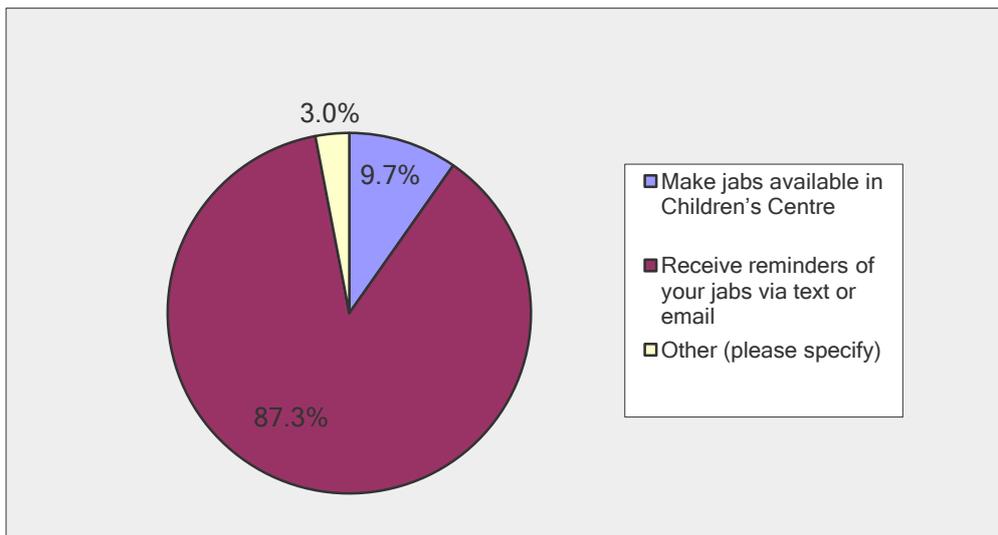


Graph 6: Do you find it easy to remember your child/children’s vaccination schedule?

Graph 6 shows that the majority of people do find it easy to remember their children’s vaccination schedule. However nearly 36% of the participants said they found it difficult. This is another potential area of improvement for the Local

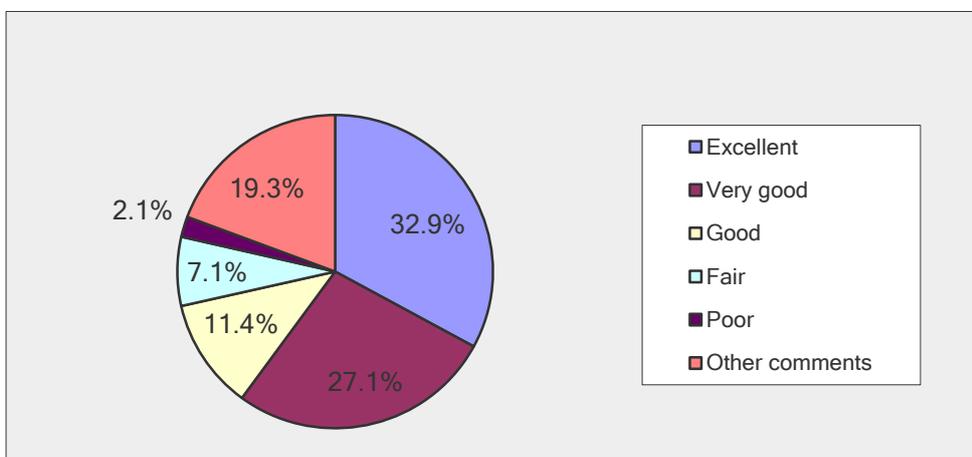
Authority who could increase vaccination attendance by coming up with a way of alerting parents to an upcoming vaccine, or if this is already in place perhaps improvements could be made. This could link to Graph 5 and social media. Perhaps social media could be used to educate parents on the need for remembering vaccines or be a way of reminding them to book their child's immunisations.

Graph 7 explored the ways in which parents might find it easier to remain on schedule for their children's immunisations.



Graph 7: What would make it easier for you to ensure your children's immunisations are up to date?

Graph 7 shows an overwhelming preference by parents for receiving text or email reminders of immunisations. 87.3% said this would make it easier for them to remember. Nearly 10% of parents felt it would be helpful to have the immunisations at the Children's Centre and a small minority made other suggestions such as more information from a specialist or a poster being placed in the GP surgery.



Graph 8: How would you rate your experience with your Health Visitor overall?

We wanted to know, overall, how parents would rate their experience with the Health Visitor. Nearly 33% said they found the experience excellent, and many found the experience very good. However, 9.2% of the parents felt the experience was only fair or poor, which causes some concern and indicates there are areas for improvement in the Health Visiting Service.

Comments (see Appendix A) offered a varying insight into how parents felt their experience was. There were many positive comments praising individuals involved in their child's care although some raised concerns regarding record keeping and not having enough visits.

At the end of the questionnaire we asked parents whether there were any other comments they would like to give on the Health Visiting Service. Many made positive comments about their individual experiences with individual Health Visitors and how approachable they were. Some had helped parents when they felt they really needed it. However, some were disappointed with an impersonal service which gave general advice instead of the specific advice they needed from their Health Visitor. Some were also concerned with Children Centre closures and hoped the remaining ones would continue to stay open. There were concerns that the Health Visiting service, so important to them, was in danger of being reduced or cut altogether.

Conclusions

This survey shows that often this service is very helpful to many families and that they have relied upon it in difficult times following childbirth. However, this questionnaire has also identified some areas which could be improved to provide a better, safer service to children and parents. Regulated online advice forums and reminding parents when their child's immunisations are due were some of the suggestions that came out of this piece of work. It has also shown some inconsistencies in the quality of the provision of the service within the same team and clinics as well as some difficulties with accessing the service.

Overall, it was very encouraging to see the positive comments from people and that the majority of people had had a very good experience with the Health Visiting Service.

Appendix A

Free Text Comments and Service Users' Stories

She's always there and very helpful.
She was interested and went beyond what is required.
More visits when baby is first born and for new mum's.
Can always call if I have questions.
Really good to get reminders of jobs.
Find it very easy to talk to Vickey.
Approachable. easy to contact.
Time keeping can be poor can be kept waiting long time.

I would not be accessing a HV service if I hadn't had Vickey. I never saw my own HV. She called me once and I have never heard from her again. Vickey is not supposed to be my HV but without her I would get no access to HV services. The organisation follow through is poor. There is a need to keep tabs on HV's to ensure that they are doing what they are supposed to be doing.

Felt like a box ticking exercise not personal, not suited to me personally.
More specific info would be good.

More than 2 visits would be good. Difficult to make contact, have to talk to receptionist have to wait to call back. Can be very difficult.

At the beginning the HV was a big help.

Not suitable on this occasion (This Question as always go to GP)

Was great before moved to Queen Mary's then became difficult. Numbers changed etc. and even reception in hospital more unsure

Sometimes feel the HV knowledge is limited, would be good to know what exactly they can offer, outline this more.

More Children's Centres would be nice as lots closed down.

Imp to see HV at Home after home birth.

The health visitors who visited me at home when my children were very young were excellent.

Send this service back to GPs!

I have had a tough road with my twins and the support I received from my HV was crucial to my wellbeing and theirs.

It would be great to have a more structured HV relationship

I was not informed that my health visiting team had changed. I only found out 10 months later when I made a general enquiry

Wandsworth need to ensure that this is a service which is continued to be offered across the Borough in an accessible way - Health Visitors offer an important support network to many parents and can be invaluable in allowing a speedy access to additional services.

Friendly and accessible.

Hands an support. Being available more being see in many places.

Very helpful. HV info your need but can get busy long wait. DWP is good.

Not much involvement ad-hoc basis. They need to be given more info and updates. HV's need more info regarding health updates of baby.

Keep changing HV. Had a great HV at first but she left. Important to have the same Hv also good to have contact details for HV. My first HV made all the difference didn't realise my baby had autism. She identified it and referred me to earls eyes centre.

Took her time didn't leave until I was comfortable and my questions were answered. New development e.g. new immunisation the HV isn't aware of the changes, I had to find out myself at a private clinic

informative

Very approachable. Seemed really concerned. More follow up via text.

The people are approachable. Good advice. Wouldn't be good if it was reduced.

Reliable advice

More efficient, more effort to keep appointment

Very good relationship with. Very well experienced

Warm very good friendly

Individual HV is excellent but system is overvalued

Very friendly

My Health visitor was off site for 2 months and not assigned another one

Found it difficult to communicate with HW as English not good

Health visitor was male - felt uncomfortable around him.

I always found my health visitor very friendly

Left numerous messages to receive 1 year check baby now 19 months and not had it!

Service as new born was great but got worse after few months.

Not really needed them to give information but their advice has been fair.

Health visitors don't seem to be much knowledgeable after a few months. Don't encourage things beyond that point

Previous HV was not concerned about my welfare follow ups not good for me or my needs. So started coming to children's center

I wasn't sure what support they were supposed to offer me very unreachable

Continuity very important

Health professionals of families who have worries and concerns about their children, maybe they should have more contact with families especially when there are issues

I found the health visitors brilliant with my first child but not really involved at all with my second who had health problems and I could have really done with help but with a toddler it's difficult to go to find a health visitor

I had a bad experience with GP

They provide excellent + service need in communication

Great all info and suggest additional sources of info.

It would be helpful if the HV gave more info eg. what to do after the appointment

Wasn't helpful, not give help when requested when asked for help with specific child need didn't help.

good service so far

Baby clinics great place for info

Good

Good communication important

Sometimes too relaxed in terms of communication.

Very helpful and advice invaluable supports great

Everyone good

C-Section only 2 visits after section would have prepared more visits @home

It would be devastating to lose this service. I found it vital and it also tied in well with the visits from the community midwives.

My daughter is in nursery 5 days per week. There is no link between this and the health visitors which is a shame. I think it would be far more efficient to make use of nurseries

I found the HV team were good at offering advice on when to see the GP on the occasions the twins were poorly.

The service needs improvement

We belong to Tudor Lodge HV team and Elisabeth is amazing, she is very caring and understanding. I had others HV too but to be honest I found them very judgmental and not helpful at all but I have been very lucky we saw Elisabeth on most of the visits.

Please move this service back to being provided via GPs!

Please look after our HVs, so they can look after the families who rely upon their support.

My main concern is with the general assessments eg the 2 year check. I do not find these teams very user friendly, either for organising logistics or the actual appointments which are too generic and do not seem able to flex for a child that is clearly developmentally above average. This seems to lead to a wasted effort and use of resources which then also feels like a waste of my time.

They have erased my children's records, got important information factually incorrect & availability is pretty poor

Understanding and incredibly efficient. Empathetic and thorough. Honest and kind.

Only seen my health visitor twice. See different HV team at weight clinics even though I use the weighting centre closest to my house.

Good availability and approach efficient

I had contact with HVs in the first few months when my babies were born. They were very nice and professional, but ultimately I didn't find their advice (about feeding), particularly helpful.

Don't feel they add anything to the information I already have. The one that visited me after my twins were born was rude and insensitive.

No follow up for mood assessment after birth. Inaccurate advice and information regarding vaccinations

Would have liked to see her more often

A health professional who offers a supportive ear when babies are young and is able to use professional knowledge and experience rather than use of a google search engine which offers none of the reassurance that a medical professional can offer

I had PND and a child action plan. HV was very supportive, made accessing services easy
Never see her and she doesn't contact me

I felt she didn't understand. my child who was autistic

Some of the HVs I have seen were excellent. The others were patronising and dismissive.

Poor because the queues were overly long and some of the advice I received was unhelpful. I eventually only used the service for weighing. Length was measured incorrectly and data was sometimes plotted incorrectly.

very supportive good advice

I always feel that they can be a bit patronising.

I'm a mum of twins and the HV came to my house several times to begin with for weighing. This made a massive difference to me as I'd had a c section, lost a large amount of blood, lived in first floor flat (and was unable to get myself and babies out of the flat unaided)

One visitor called one hour after her expected time to tell me she couldn't park!

My health visitor is lovely and her team is kind

My HV never responded to phone calls, gave advice that followed "trendy" facts rather than good old common sense, had no concept of different children and their record keeping was appalling. I was phoned up every month for six months to tell me off because my children had apparently never had any childhood vaccinations (not true, they just kept losing records).

Some HV are completely uninformed about breastfeeding and give terrible advice

Feel very fortunate to have had continuity and the same fantastic, supportive HV (Vicky Piggot) for all 4 children

After moving address, the new HV does not make contact.

I'm always curious about the term 'Health visitor' as I was only visited once the day after returning home from hospital and once to get my stitches removed. All other appointments I had to take the twins to a medical centre, albeit 5 mins away, but that could be miles when dealing with new borns. Then the procedure was to sit and wait, sometimes an hour+ to see the next free HV or whatever they're called. I didn't go regularly as the effort was too great in the early days. Usually if I had a question outside of standard weight or growth they would reluctantly answer and nearly always refer me to speak to my doctor. There was little twin experience there either. It all seemed pointless. I myself used wtc and various forums to gain any knowledge. My local area is Tooting and my twins are now 3.5 years but I hope things have progressed since their birth. I'm not sure what care others had, whether this was the norm. I did expect more

Weirdly I had a completely different experience from a friend at the same health centre with the same age twins. I had the twin specialist (at least I'm sure that's what she was) HV and a nursery nurse who used to visit me at home. The nursery nurse was lovely and would come to me whenever I wanted them weighed as she knew it was hard to get to the clinic. This may be because mine were very premature and so I got on their radar, and I was also discharged from a different hospital so perhaps they sent better paperwork. Not sure but on the whole a good experience even if the HV was slightly bonkers.

I am also in the same area as (respondents above). Not sure if it is because I was a midwife so they reckoned I could cope but I saw one locum health visitor at home for about 30 minutes then no contact for 3 months. I did attempt a couple of trips to the clinic but the queue was always so long I never waited. I got friends to weigh them from time to time then discovered faylands childrens centre where there was usually no queue and friendly Hv and nurse

My twins were very prem, so we had the neonatal outreach time visit us for 8 or so weeks then when I was discharged to the community I struggled to get them their to be weighed. Any questions I asked they didn't really answer basically sorry to say but I found them to be a glorified weighing service out of the whole team there was one HV that gave some meaningful advice but I only saw her once. I find the gp the best place for answers

The hospital didn't forward notes to the ward in charge of my area so had to call around to get entered into the system. I had no idea what to expect in terms of care. Hv came 4 days later and scared me quite a bit with all her questions. The assessment she completed felt like an inquisition and made me quite uncomfortable. Hormones may have blurred my view of the situation. She came back again a couple of days later and was more chatty and friendly I felt. She send a community midwife (I think that's her role or community nurse!?) around after a couple of weeks who did baby massage with me for 2 weeks (home visits!!). She's lovely and I joined her class then instead of home visits and also went to see her mainly at the clinic for weighing and chatting. The questions I asked her were very basic I.e concerning nappy rash, tummy aches etc but I did like the fact that she knew us and I could see her most times I visited the clinic

I was really impressed with the support i got from the HV, they (and it was the same one) came to my house quite a few times to weigh my twins. It made a big difference to me. I also used the HV team with questions about random baby health related queries when I wasn't sure if I needed to see the GP. They usually gave me quite helpful advice but some were better than others.

Wandsworth were amazing compared to Kingston and Sutton! I am on paper a high risk case (3 under 4, no family close and one child with a lot of special needs). No one has called or checked on me! Even after hospital admissions (Wandsworth was on the phone hours after my son was out of hospital).

Received a call from a Health visitor about the 2-year-old developmental review. After taking quite a lot of time to find a date suitable for both, I was told that in was not compulsory. I then took time off work to take my daughter there, who just ran around all the time and didn't want to engage with the HV so I left

Appendix B

List of Children's Centre and Baby Clinics Visited and Online Forums Used to Promote the Survey

- Children's Centre and baby clinics
- Southmead Centre for Children & Families, Southfields
- Yvonne Carr Children's Centre, Nine Elms
- Smallwood Children's Centre, Tooting
- The Bridge Community Centre, Stay & Play, Battersea
- York Gardens Children's Centre, Clapham Junction
- Putney Vale Baby Clinic
- Roehampton Lane, Baby Clinic

- Enhanced Children's Centre (Monday stay and play)
- Parents Forum for Enhanced Children's Centre (Wednesday)
- Enhanced Children's Centre (Friday session)
- Somerset Nursery and Children's Centre, Battersea
- Lennox Community Play session
- Eastwood Nursery & Children Centre, Roehampton

Online forums:

Facebook

- Wandsworth Twins' Club Facebook Page
- Tooting Parents' Network Facebook Group
- SW18 Mums' Network Facebook Group

Twitter

Several individuals and organisations advertised the survey to their followers on twitter, including Tooting baby, Mumsnet Wandsworth, Made4mums, Furzedown Tweets, Go Earlsfield.