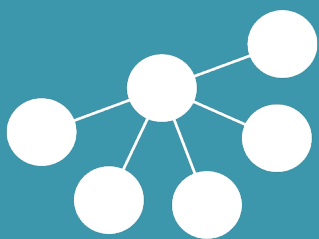




# Rhyme Times and Maternal Mental Health



SHARED INTELLIGENCE



Essex County Council



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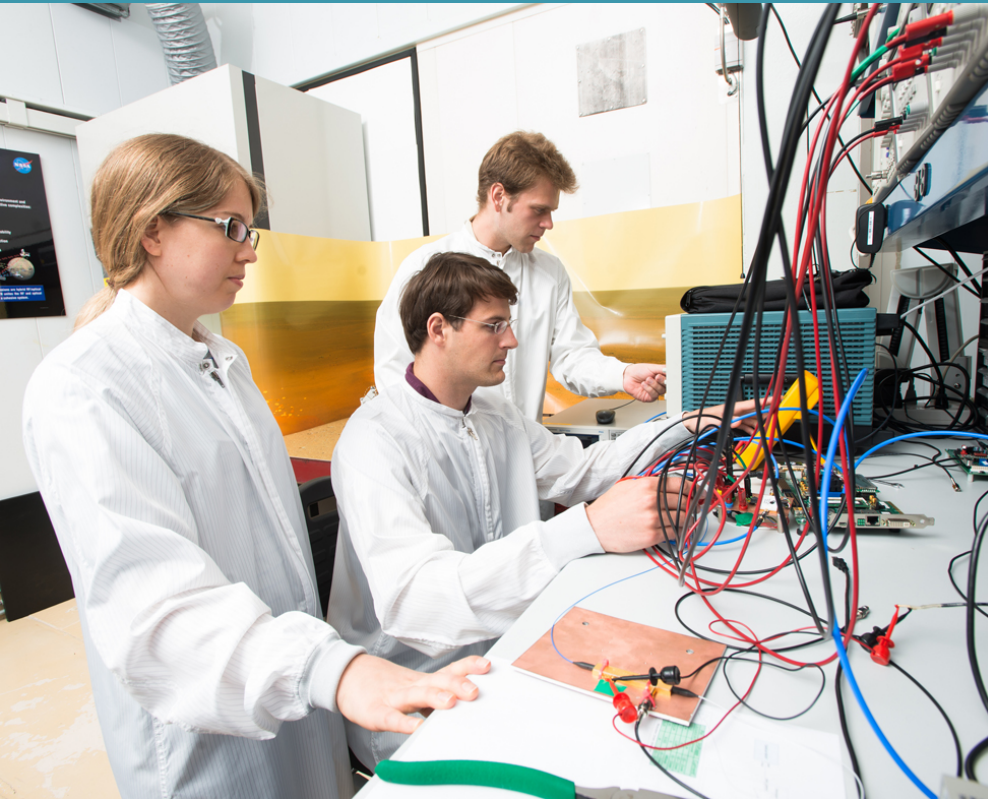
# Rhyme Times

A big platform for a population-scale problem

Maternal mental illness is estimated to affect one in five mothers of children aged 36 months or less

Essex rhyme times reach 4,000-5,000 individual mothers each year, many of whom attend regularly

# Action research within an evidence-based approach



- Systematic observation
- Measurement
- Experimentation
- Testing hypotheses

# Action research within an evidence-based approach

## Three research questions:

1. Do rhyme times have a positive effect on maternal mental health and if so, how and why?
2. What is the reach of these activities and can it be increased?
3. Can a more structured approach to rhyme times be implemented consistently in a public library context?



# Exploring with library staff how to apply evidence

For example:

Synchronous maternal behaviour (synchronised movement, or vocalisation) is associated with increased dopamine which supports human bonding – in other words when mothers sing or mirror actions with their child (i.e. face to face), it helps them bond

*Dopamine in the medial amygdala network mediates human bonding (PDF Download Available)*. Available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313681663\\_Dopamine\\_in\\_the\\_medial\\_amygdala\\_network\\_mediates\\_human\\_bonding](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313681663_Dopamine_in_the_medial_amygdala_network_mediates_human_bonding) [accessed Mar 25 2018]

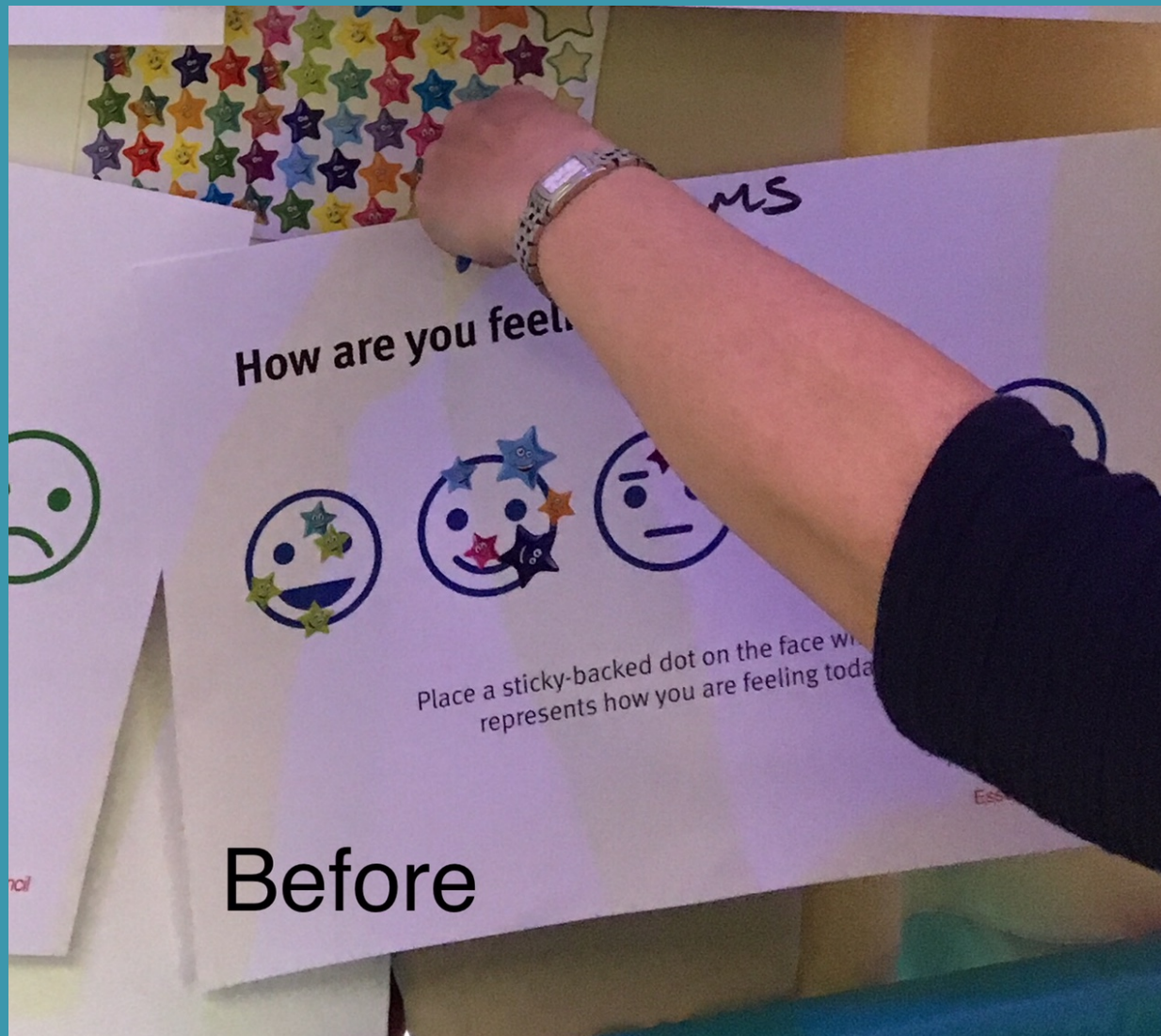
	Modification	Basildon	Brain
RT sessions			Starters
Before session	Recognise achievement of the parent getting to a RT	✓	✓✓
	Buddy up multi-mums with new mums		
Main session	Have parents introduce themselves to their neighbours or other members of the session		✓✓
	Explain parents and children can get up and move around at all times, and put them at ease about the possibility of their child crying	✓✓	✓
	Encourage parents to join in and reassure them that it does not matter if they do not know the rhymes and songs	✓	✓
	Explain that rhyme time benefits both parents and children - children have fun and learn stories, whilst parents have a good time too	✓✓	✓✓
	Introduce what you're going to do at the session	✓	✓
	Welcome song (each branch to choose their own song which is already used/already familiar to visitors)	✓	✓
	Include at least one synchronised <b>face to face</b> song or story (synchronised actions or singing) and explain the reasons for doing this are that parents	✓	✓
	End the session with a goodbye song (own song which is already used/familiar)	✓	✓
	Conclude the session by encouraging parents to sing the songs and rhymes at home	✓✓	✓✓
	Conclude the session by encouraging parents to sing the welcome song at home or on the way to the session	✓✓	
	Point RT participants to the refreshments	✓✓	✓
After session	Interaction with parents: "will we get to see you next week?", "Are you a library member..."	✓	✓✓
	Teas and coffees, or bring your own		✓
	Encourage parents to stay and read children's books aloud after the session		✓✓
Stock, materials and physical resources			
	Have promotional materials visible nearby for other parent activities such as a mini book groups	✓	✓
	Provide materials or suggest resources which will raise mums' confidence in singing and rhyme at the library and at home, eg. TLC card	✓	✓
	Have multiple sets of childrens books so that group reading can be suggested after the session		
	Promote resources which signpost a range of local services that may benefit maternal mental health, including online resources, eg. Leaflets	✓	
Physical setting			
	Make sure the layout enables parents and children to sit together	✓	✓
	If possible have space for parents to informally stay and chat	✓	✓
	Have enough space at the session for refreshments (provided by library or bring your own)	✓✓	✓
	Have a nearby noticeboard/display stand with flyers for activities which might be beneficial to all parents, but in particular mothers with mental he	✓	✓
	If possible make use of furniture and fittings (e.g. shelving, rugs) to define the Rhyme Time space	✓	✓

We wanted to modify the universal rhyme time model NOT create a special mental health rhyme time



Like London underground – where modifications to the universal service provide specific help, but bring benefits for everyone

# Measurement and observation

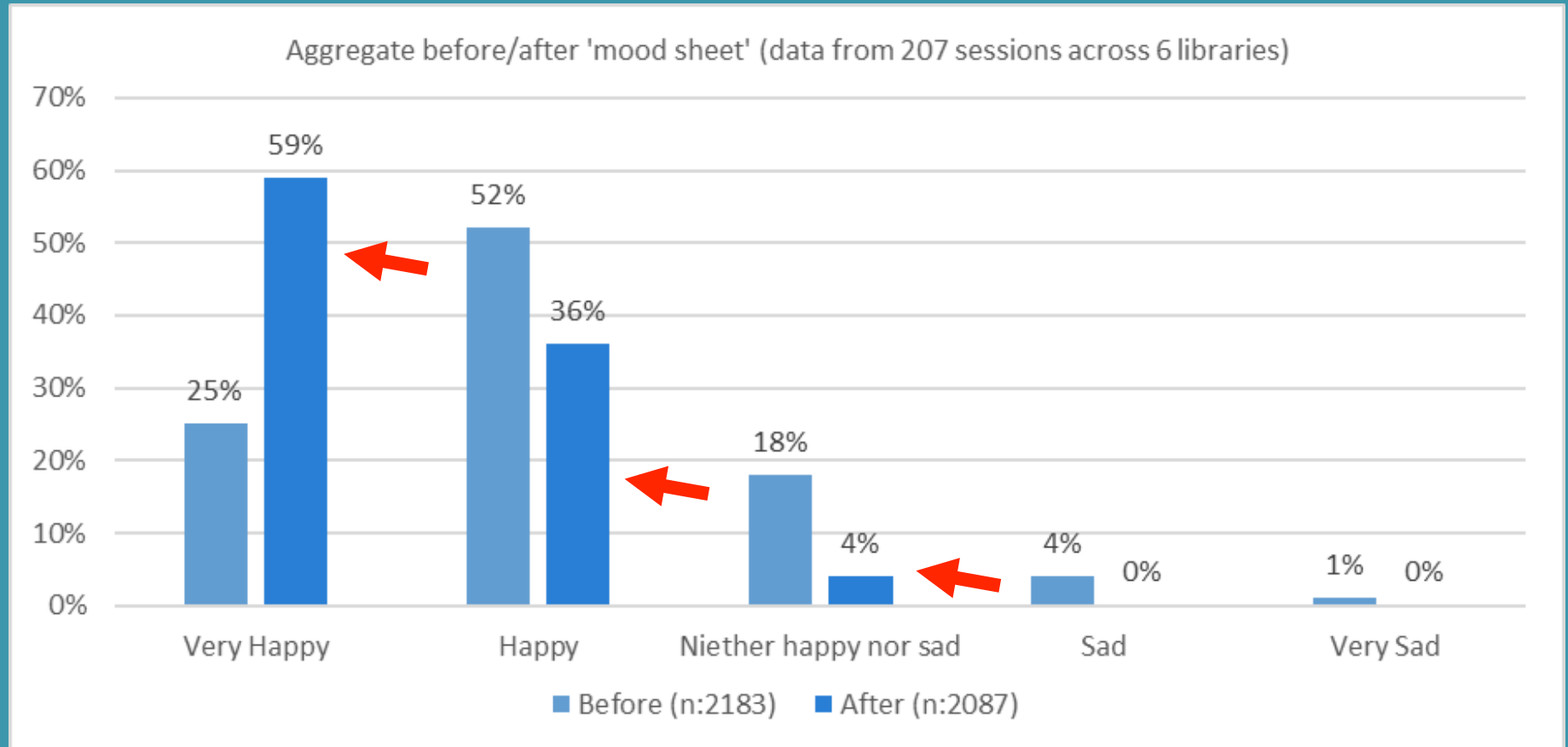




## Findings: Research question 1

Do rhyme times have a positive effect on maternal mental health and if so, how and why?

# Mood charts (Autumn and Summer data: taken before/after each session)



# Post It Wall *“What part of today's Rhyme Time made the most difference to how you feel?”*

The Wheels on the  
Bus as my son  
joined in with me

The warm  
welcome

It makes your mood  
better seeing your  
children interacting  
and singing

Singing together,  
seeing everyone,  
mums and babies -  
and talking to  
people

Singing,  
atmosphere, being  
in a group of  
people

Meeting people  
who are the same  
as me – a new  
mum

Be able to sit down  
for 1/2 hour

# Focus Groups – immediate effect

- feelings of achievement
- enjoyment from social singing and stories
- chance to interact with other mothers
- structure to the day
- seeing your child enjoy themselves
- reassurance as a parent
- respite – a break from ‘one of those days’



# Change Stories – effect over weeks/ months

- reducing anxiety and lifting mood
- improving personal confidence – to go out, take part
- alleviating isolation, boredom, and stress
- social Interaction
- sense of achievement

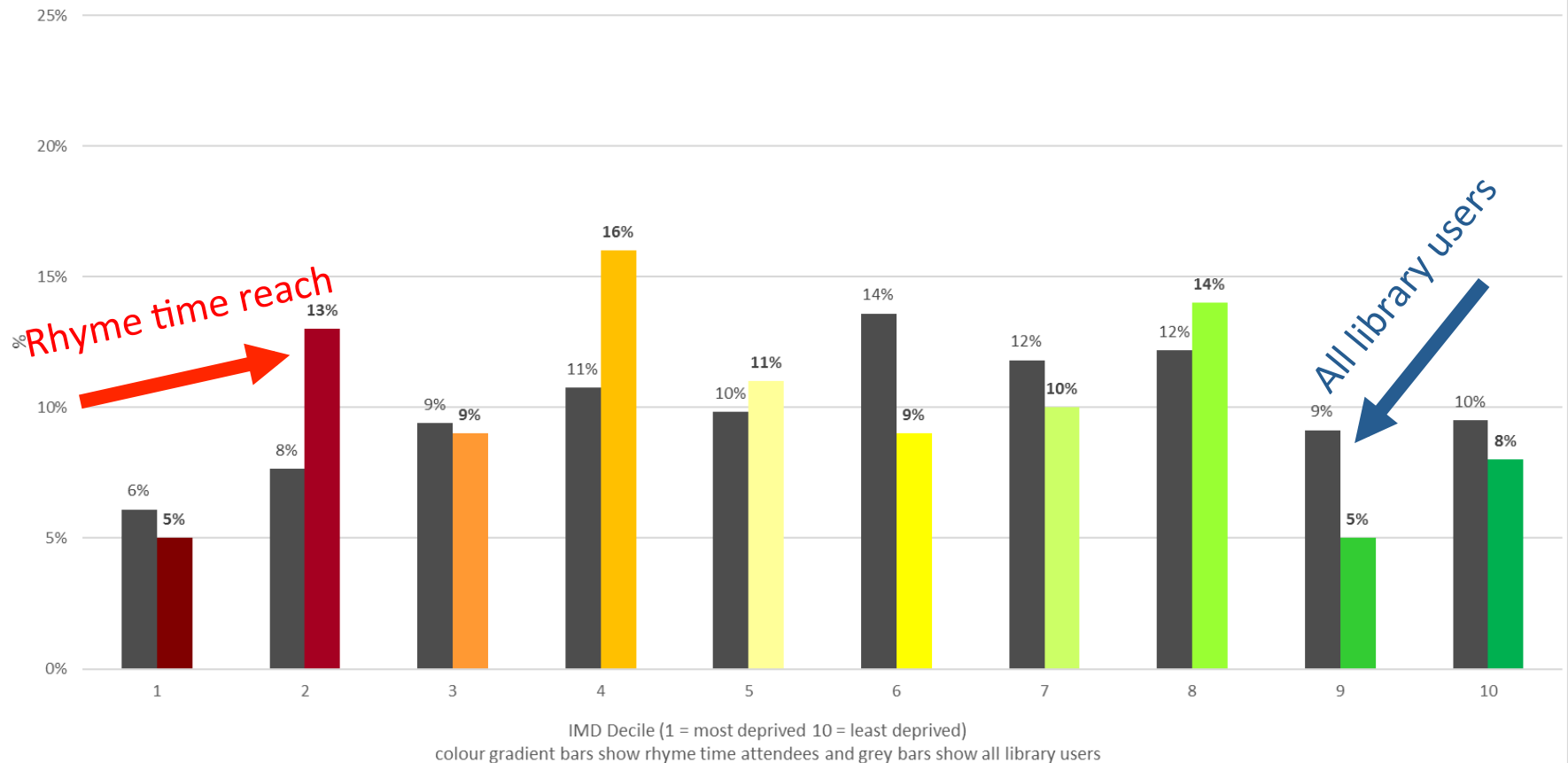
## Findings: Research question 2

What is the reach of these activities and can it be increased?

# Rhyme times reach across the socioeconomic spectrum (in fact reach more of the neediest)

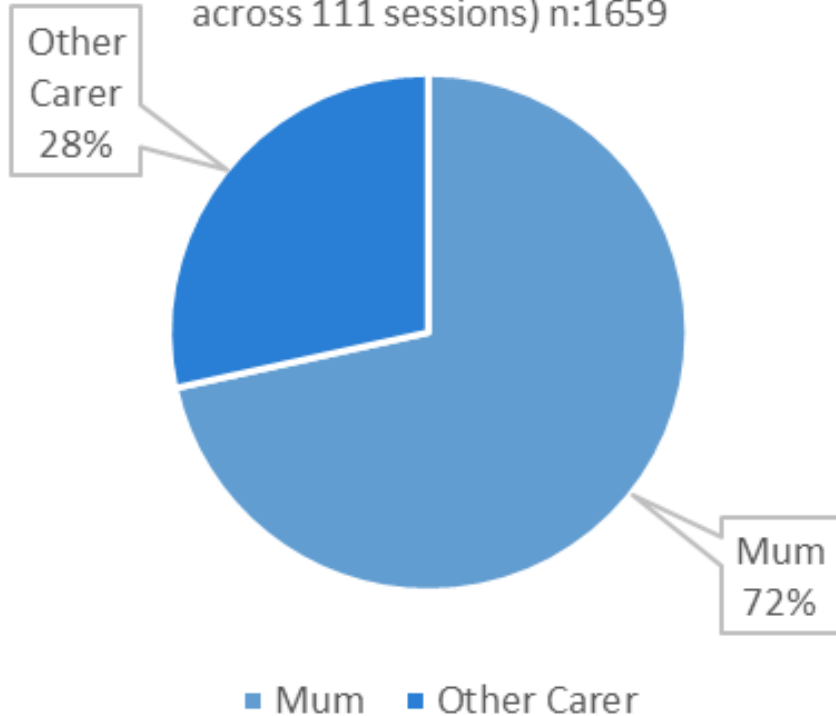
Socioeconomic status of rhyme time attendees versus all library users within the catchment of the eight branches involved

(showing scores for 17,028 unique postcodes for all library users, and for 550 mothers attending rhyme time)

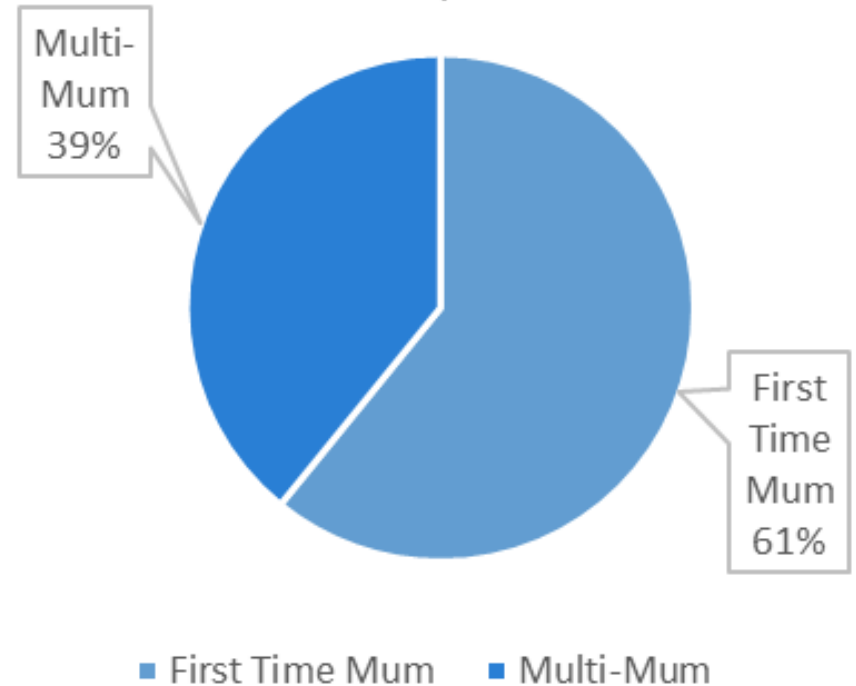


# Rhyme times reach mums, and first time mums

Mums v other carers attending RT (data from sign-in sheets from 8 libraries across 111 sessions) n:1659



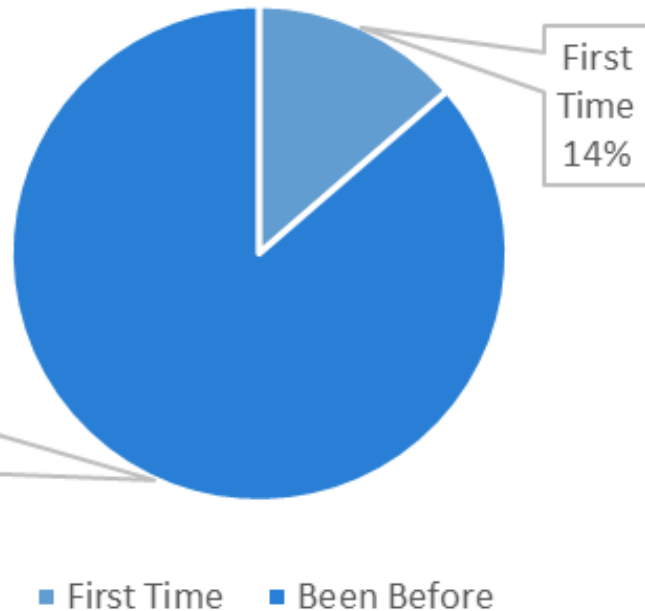
First Time Mum v Multi Mum (data from sign-in sheets from 8 libraries across 111 sessions) n:1201



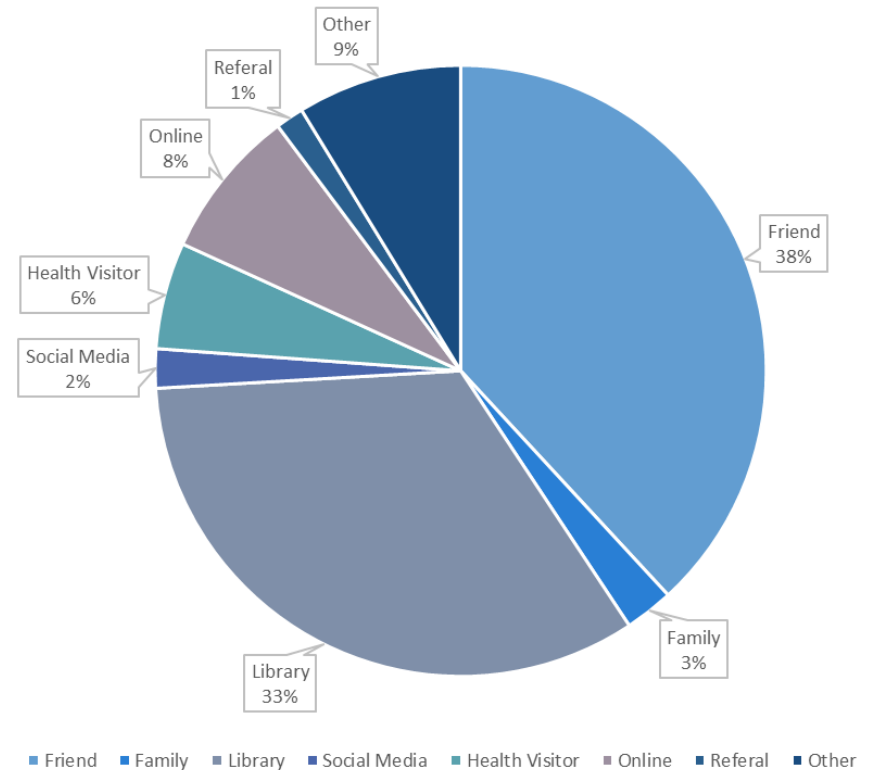


# One in six attendees in each session are new Friends, family, and via library is how they find out

Split of repeat RT attendees v first timers  
(mums only data from 8 libraries across  
111 sessions) n:1208



How did you find out about the Rhyme Time? (mothers only data from 111 sessions across 8 libraries) n:1204



## Findings: Research question 3

Can a more structured approach to rhyme times be implemented **consistently** in a public library context?

# Findings: Research question 3

Yes

# Why and how?

- Frontline staff were **consistent** in applying the modifications because they felt they owned the project - because they were involved with the creation of the modifications
- Knowledge of MMH “we looked at mothers differently – who was that mum we didn’t recognise, or the one sat quietly?”
- Realising we could do something



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	If possible make use of furniture and fittings (e.g. shelving, rugs) to define the Rhyme Time space	✓	✓

*“We used to look at rhyme times from a child’s point of view, but it has showed us just how phenomenal it is for mums”*

*“We looked at mothers differently – who was that mum we didn’t recognise, or the one sat quietly?”*

Essex Libraries staff

# What next?

- Scale-up in Essex through new rhyme time training pack, alongside awareness training about maternal mental health
- Link up with other research into early years literacy, singing, and maternal mental health e.g. Royal College of Music
- Spread the word - Next Library, ASCEL, SCL

# Recommendations

For other library services

- Take this work and discuss with staff
- Decide if this approach helps the library service contribute to local priorities
- Decide what data to collect and what success would look like
- Provide staff with basic awareness training in mental health (incl maternal mental health)
- Consider a larger (e.g. sub regional) model

# Recommendations

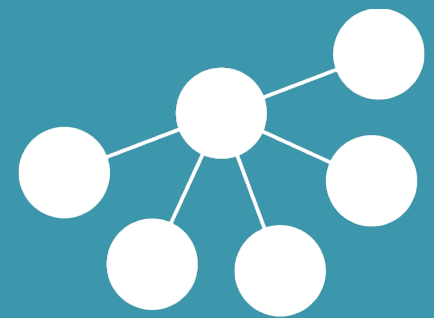
For national organisations:

- Taskforce – explore links between this approach and national strategy for maternal mental health
- SCL and CILIP– help disseminate the findings and tools, incorporate in sector learning
- ASCEL – link these findings to work on ‘Quality’ of CYP activities
- ACE – build on this research through existing investment in library and literacy NPOs, and research into music, MH, and early years
- DCMS – include in the Govt’s mental health and wellbeing evidence review

# Replicating the approach

- Use the tools:
  - Evidence review
  - List of modifications
  - Measurement tools
- Share the quick guide summary
- Apply similar approach to different problems





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