

Plain Language Summary

Why did we do this research

Parent carers of disabled children are at risk of poor mental and physical health. Healthy Parent Carers is an online or in-person health promotion programme led by facilitators who are also parent carers.

Health promotion programmes for parent carers need to be easy to access and engage with and their effects need to be measured in ways that matter to parent carers.

What we did

Parent carers helped design and deliver this research.

We interviewed parent carers about their views and experiences. Some had participated in the Healthy Parent Carers programme, but others had not. There were two studies.

Study 1: we asked parent carers how they think about their health and wellbeing. We showed them a questionnaire that is often used to measure mental wellbeing in research and asked what they thought about it.

Study 2: we interviewed parent carers from diverse backgrounds and asked them about what would help them engage with health promotion programmes.

What we found

Study 1: three main themes captured how parent carers thought about health: 'self, identity and beliefs'; 'social connections and support'; and 'health-promoting practices and outcomes.'

Study 2: parent carers from different backgrounds helped identify five ways of making it easier to access and engage with programmes:

- wider ways to advertise.
- making sure people delivering the programme seem trustworthy.
- helping potential participants see this as possibly important for them.
- addressing worries about taking part.
- tailoring the programme to fit different people.

What we learnt

The questionnaires often used for measuring outcomes may not assess mental wellbeing in ways that parent carers think most important.

People designing and evaluating programmes for parent carers need to engage with them from the beginning and think about the needs of people from all types of communities.