

Parents' information needs and information sources about parenting issues

Louise Guillaume and Peter A Bath

Department of Information Studies
University of Sheffield, Sheffield, S10 2TN, UK
E-mail: {[l.r.guillaume](mailto:l.r.guillaume@sheffield.ac.uk)}{[p.a.bath](mailto:p.a.bath@sheffield.ac.uk)}@sheffield.ac.uk
Phone: (+44) (0)114 222 26 82 Fax: (+44) (0)114 278 03 00

As part of a wider research study, seventeen semi-structured interviews were carried out with parents in a northern city in the UK. Parents were asked about their information needs, preferred information sources, areas in which they felt they needed more information and their attitudes towards different information sources in relation to parenting

On becoming a parent, parents experienced increased information needs, which were often difficult to meet. They often supplemented official information with information from other parents and written sources of information. Parents had extensive information needs relating to their children's health and welfare as well as about schooling and pregnancy. Parents' information needs and views on sources were highly individualistic, but the study found scepticism towards specific information sources e.g. parents had mixed views about the health visitor, who was viewed as accessible but not providing the information parents wanted. General Practitioners and written sources of information were popular but parents were most complimentary about the information provided to them by other parents. Parents emphasised a preference for oral information, possibly because they could interact with the source of the information, rather than being a passive recipient.

The source of the information was frequently more important to parents than the format. If parents' information needs are to be met then it is essential that they trust the information that they receive. There are two factors in this, belief that the information is correct and trust that the source will provide accurate information with the correct motivation. Parents' reliance on other parents as an information source highlights the importance that parents place on both interpersonal information and prior experience.

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