

# Counselling Experience in Homeschooling



## Aims/Purpose:

Our research aimed to investigate the experiences of parents of home-schooled children under 16 years of age, in relation to seeking psychotherapeutic services for their children. Our purpose is to inform the counselling profession/practitioners of any issues arising for/affecting this client-group.

## Design or methodology structure:

Our interviews conducted online with three participants were semi-structured, audio-recorded, and transcribed. The resulting data was thematically analysed underpinned by the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 2022).

## Ethical approval:

This was gained by submitting an ethical approval application to our training institution's Ethics Board, which was approved. We conducted our research in line with the BACP Ethical Guidelines for Research in the Counselling Professions (Mitchels, 2019). Participants were offered six no-fee counselling sessions if issues arose for them directly due to their participation in our research.

## What difficulties, if any, have the parents of home-schooled children under 16 years of age experienced in seeking psychotherapeutic services for their children; and can this inform the counselling/psychotherapeutic profession?



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## Research Limitations:

The relatively small participant group may limit generalisability of our findings (McLeod, 2022).

## Conclusions or implications:

Our research indicates that mental health services, in which counselling/psychotherapeutic practitioners play an active role, need to develop greater awareness of the needs of this 'ignored' client-group. Our participants themselves appeared to define their current/future needs in calling for improved youth services, walk-in or parent appointment-based Mental Health Hubs, and improved, more transparent information from healthcare providers.

## Consideration given to issues of equality, diversity and inclusion:

Our research gave voice to the experiences of a minority client-group, which in-and-of-itself gives consideration to issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. Our participants, who met the qualifying research participation criteria, self-selected to contribute; thus, we ensured diversity and equality were inherent in the participant selection process, and the opportunity to be included as a participant - within the scope of our research - was protected.

## Findings:

• **Our participants appeared to face significant challenges when attempting to access psychotherapeutic services for their children. Participants also experienced a systemic lack of information and support from GPs and statutory services; participants' proactive persistence was crucial to their ultimate success in gaining appropriate referral for their children.**

• **It also appeared participants found that their voices and parental expertise in relation to their child's mental/emotional support needs was often disregarded; unless participants were backed by a professional, such as a school representative.**

• **Additionally, it appears participants often received inappropriate referrals to Social Services, due to the shortage of services for neurodivergent children; leaving participants feeling ignored, mistrusted and under immense pressure, which in-turn impacted on their own wellbeing and sound mental health.**

## Reference List:

McLeod, J. (2022). *Doing Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. Sage Publications Limited.  
Mitchels, B. (2019). *Ethical Guidelines for Research in the Counselling Professions*. Lutterworth: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.  
Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. (2022). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE.