



SESSION

1

Building a strong family

NAME:

CHECKLIST SESSION 1

Building a strong family

Pre-Session planning list

To do	To buy	To prepare	Kids Matter resources
<i>Reminder to message parents</i>	<i>Refreshments</i>	<i>Kettle, mugs, water, spoons, plastic cups, plates</i>	<i>Sort out guest booklets - giving out only session 1, plastic wallet and pens</i>
<i>Double check room is booked</i>	<i>Flowers</i>	<i>Table cloth, napkins & tissues</i>	<i>Group & Crèche register</i>
<i>Sticky labels for names</i>		<i>Pen & paper</i>	<i>Evaluation form links (send out at the end)</i>
<i>Pray! And prompt others to pray for you</i>		<i>Family diagram pg 5</i>	
<i>Crèche room and team booked</i>			

On the day:

- *Prepare tablecloth, snacks and flowers on the main table*
- *Tea and coffee on a separate table*
- *Welcome people as they arrive – be ready to welcome guests up to 15 minutes early*
- *Introduce yourself, and each other, give out name labels*
- *Offer a tea, coffee and water*
- *Check if literacy or language are an issue; reassure parents that you can help if needed*
- *Record attendance and details of guests in accordance with your church/charity GDPR guidelines*

Remember: *Smile, be positive, be ready to share your good and bad experiences of parenting children of this age!*

My goals in facilitating this session:

- Parent/carer feels sufficiently comfortable and welcomed, so that they will come back
- Parent/carer knows who is on their team
- Parent/carer understands the priority of looking after themselves
- Parent/carer understands the core needs of their child that must be met for them to thrive
- Parent/carer complete evaluation forms to create a base line of where they are at in their parenting

As guests arrive, welcome them, provide refreshments, settle children into crèche. Take a register or contact details, keeping in line with your church or organisation's GDPR policy and procedures.



Introductions and ground rules

Welcome! The aim of the group is to meet together for six sessions to talk about our challenges, encouragements and needs as parents, and to share our experiences with each other.

Introduce yourself briefly and explain that you'll be working through these booklets during the programme – one per session, no need to bring them back unless they want to. Booklets are personal and private.

Parenting is HARD; It's one of the most rewarding and difficult jobs we will have. You can't drive a car without being taught but there's no manual for being a parent! We all know what it's like to be raised as a child but we might not have had good experiences of being parented to use as a guide.

The aim of this group is to learn together and support one another. Through our discussions around these booklets we will learn from each other and take away ideas that will help us enjoy being with our children more and meet their needs more effectively.

It's important to remember that we're not trying to become perfect parents, it's okay for us all to be 'good enough parents'.

Confidentiality and group trust

There's no pressure to share anything. Share as much or as little as you feel comfortable with. Whatever we do share, it's important that it doesn't get repeated or talked about outside of the room. Being part of the group means that we all agree to this. Confidentiality is a vital part to us all feeling safe here.

As facilitators, we won't discuss what we talk about with other professionals outside of Kids Matter unless we're concerned about you or your child's safety - and if we felt we had to talk to someone, we would discuss that with you first.

Q: Aside from confidentiality, what other suggestions do you have to make this an enjoyable and safe place to talk and share?

Use open questions to raise ideas if necessary e.g. What do we think about using our mobiles? What should we do if we disagree on something?

At the end of the discussion, summarise and reflect at least 3 ground rules that the group has agreed on and write them down so you can refer back to them if needed.

The topics we will cover over the next six weeks are:

Session 1: Building a strong family

Session 2: Loving our children well

Session 3: Play, encouragement and listening

Session 4: Routines and rewards

Session 5: Family rules and consequences

Session 6: The bigger picture

We will then meet 6 weeks after the final session for a reunion, and then in 3 months time for a booster session!

Today we are going to be looking at **Building a strong family**.

Let's share our names and the ages of our children. This helps us get to know one another and it's also great to see all the different ages of children we have between us. *On paper, make a note of names and ages of the children, you can use stick figures to represent families - do yours first!*

(Not optional) Now let's write down what our hopes are for doing this programme and we will review them at the end of the 6 weeks.



My hopes for doing the Kids Matter programme are:

Q: Who feels comfortable sharing their hopes for the programme?
Write on paper 'Hopes' to be used again in Session 6 - include your own hopes too!

Now let's look at what we think family is and how to strengthen it.

 **What is family?**

Q: What does the word 'family' mean to you?
*Lead with your own example.
Encourage everyone to contribute; think about all different kinds of families, including significant friends and community members as well as direct family members.*

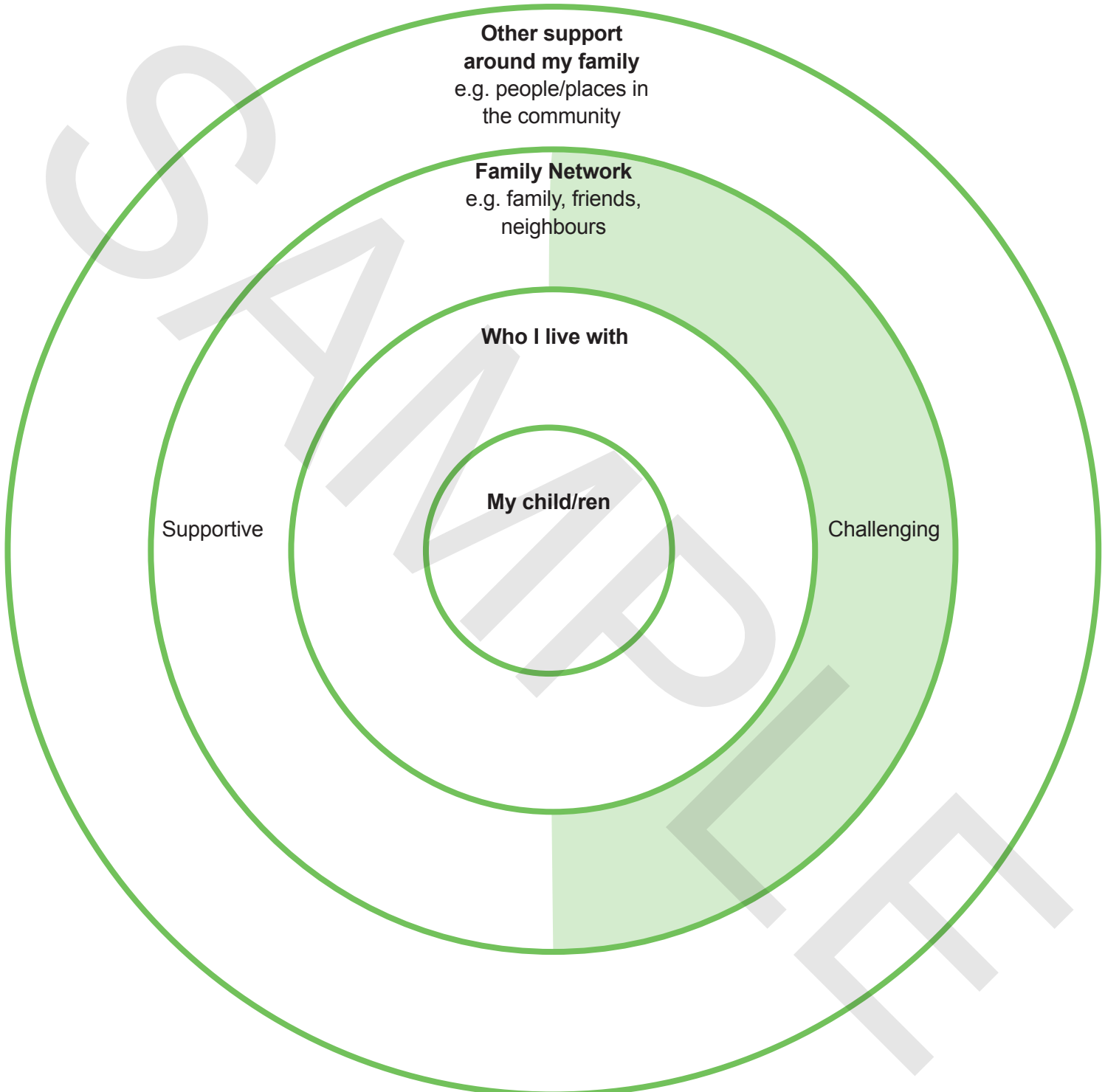
All our families will look different. We're all here because we want the best for our children. A strong and loving family is important for our children as it gives them a feeling of belonging. Let's think together about how we can strengthen our families.





Looking at our families

We're now going to think about our own family situations and our wider community, whether that is positive or more challenging. Please fill in the inner circle with your children's names. In the next circle fill in who lives with you at home. In the next circle fill in your family network (e.g. child's other parent if separated, extended family, friends, neighbours, school, social services, wider family etc). In the outside circle fill in organisations, groups, community things that support your family. Use the shaded areas to reflect whether the relationships are positive or challenging. Prepare yours in advance and show the group before they begin. Once everyone has finished, invite guests to briefly share their circles.



Underline everyone who helps you parent your child. This is your core parenting team.

Every family has good things and things that are a challenge or a struggle. It's helpful to focus on the positives, especially when things are hard.

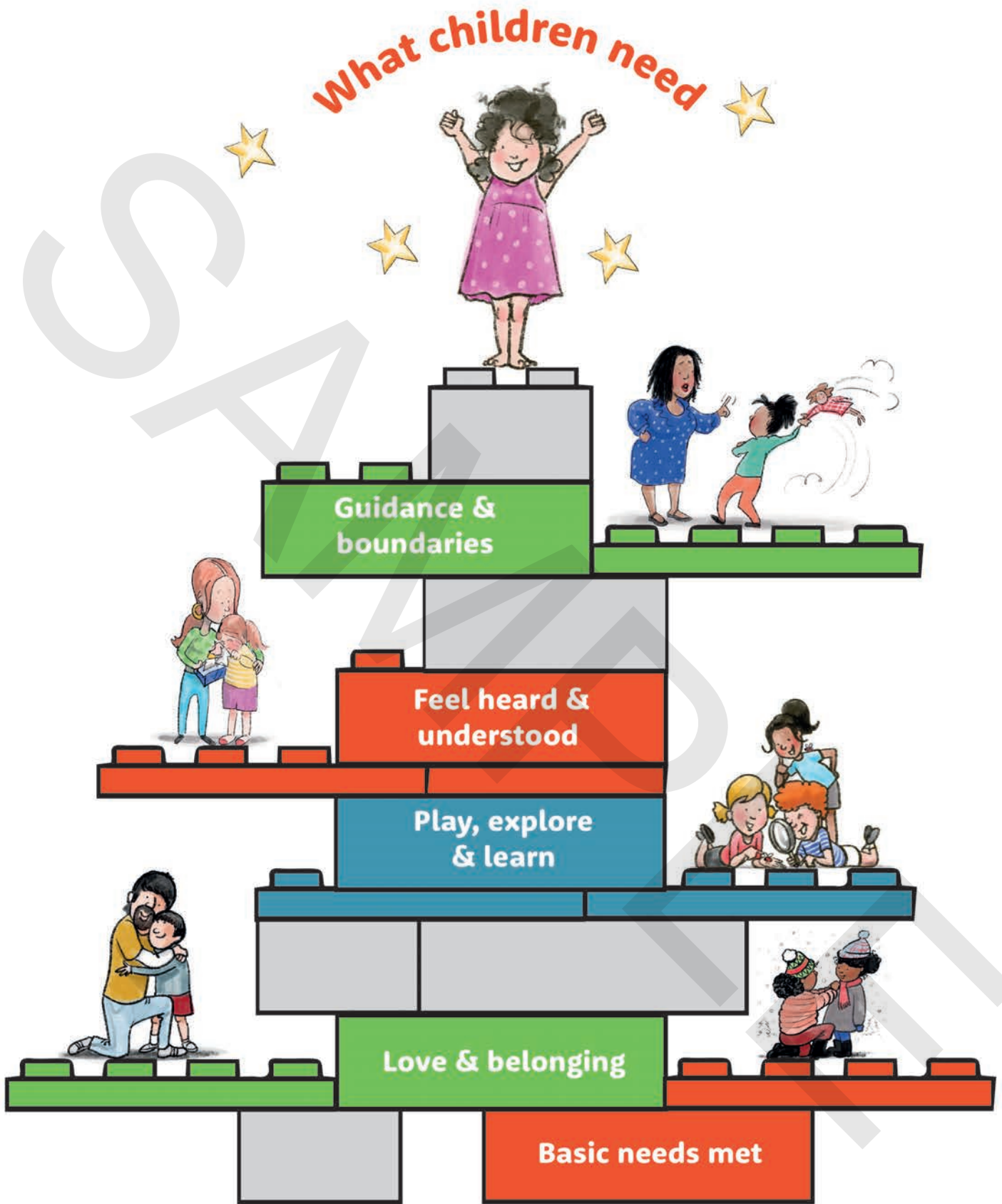
Q: What's one positive or fun thing you enjoy about your family?

Give an example to lead the way: low key, small, positive everyday event e.g. dancing in the kitchen

Things that I like about my family are:

.....

Let's think about what our children need as this will inform all our discussions.





What do children need?

Q: Although all children are different, what do you think children need to thrive? *Once parents have shared some ideas, talk through each step together:*



Basic needs met. It is difficult for children to thrive if they are ill, tired, hungry, cold or feel unsafe at home or at school. Clothing, food, warmth, housing, sleep: these are some of the basic needs which children have.

Q: Were any of these a concern for you when you were growing up?

Q: What do we think the impact on our children is if these basic needs are not met?



Love & belonging. Children need to be loved by at least one adult who cares for them. They need to know that they will be loved even if they make mistakes. A loving bond between a child and carer helps the child to trust, develop self-esteem, show kindness, and build friendships.

Q: What do you enjoy doing with your children?

(Make the link how this strengthens the bond between you and your child)

Q: How do our children respond when we spend quality time with them?

We will spend more time on this later today.



Play, explore & learn. Children need to play and explore, it's their job! Children can play alone, with adults, with friends and with siblings. Lots of playing helps a child grow, develop and learn all about the world.

We will talk about this in Session 3.



Feel heard & understood. Children need to feel heard and understood by important adults in their lives. When children are listened to they feel valued and important to us.

Q: How do we show our children that they are important to us?

Q: What helps children feel understood?

We will talk more about how important listening is in Session 3.



Guidance & boundaries. Children need to have guidance from us as they grow up. Clear boundaries along with regular routines help children know what to expect which helps them feel secure.

We will discuss this in more detail in Sessions 4 & 5.

These five building blocks are key to strengthening our relationship with our children and helping them to thrive in life. It's not possible to protect them from all of life's difficulties but having a strong relationship with us helps children to **build resilience**, cope when things don't go their way and recover from any disappointments.

“Resilience” means the ability to recover from difficult things that happen to us. For our children, these could be little everyday things like losing a game or arguing with friends up to much bigger life events such as parents separating or a relative dying.



Looking after ourselves

Meeting all our children's needs can be tough and we can face plenty of pressures and stresses. Pressures come from all sorts of places. They can be things which impact our levels of energy or patience or distract us with worries and concerns.

Group brainstorm on paper - write 'Pressures and Stress' and note down guest's answers.

Q: What pressures do we face as parents?

Pressures on us as we parent

(Use as back-up, or for suggestions)

Mental health

Financial

(Be curious, ask open questions to find out what is needed)

Employment

(Be curious, ask open questions to find out what would change if employment situations changed/improved)

Relationships

Remembering to eat well

Not enough sleep

Health worries for us or others

Ill health or additional needs of our child

Isolation



These pressures are common for all of us at different times, in varying degrees. They can have an impact on how we feel, on our relationships, and how we parent.

Q: How might these pressures affect us and our relationships?

Aim to draw out impacts such as arguments, tension, getting frustrated or losing our temper, being tearful, having lack of confidence.

We can have less patience and have more conflict with others in the family when we feel under pressure. This is important to recognise, and we will talk more about this in a later session. Let's take some time now to think about looking after ourselves.

Read out this statement:

We're all here because we want to parent our children as best we can. However, it's very important that we think about our own needs as parents as well.

In order for us to look after our children and our adult relationships well, we also need to look after ourselves.

Q: What does it mean to look after ourselves?

Q: How much time would you say you spend on looking after yourself?

It is important to take time for ourselves alongside looking after our family. Keeping ourselves as healthy and as happy as possible will enable us to be best parents we can be. When we understand ourselves well it can help us to understand our children. When we are feeling mentally and physically well, we are better equipped to cope with pressures facing us.

Communicate that a balance is needed: not neglecting your child or yourself.

Q: What would help you to be the best parent you can be?

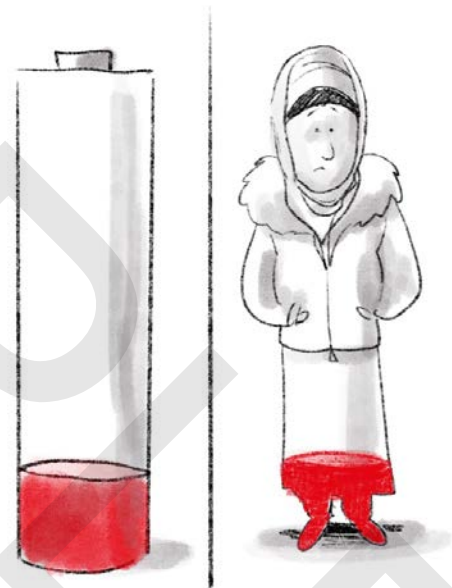
Q: What's available to help you?

(Refer back to the list of 'pressures' above. Share together examples of any local resources that you know of, specific to each context e.g. friendly toddler group, local exercise classes, free debt advice, benefits advice, counsellors, dads football groups...)

If our battery runs low it will be much harder to be the best parent. Doing things that we enjoy is part of looking after ourselves well and helps us to recharge.

Q: What did you enjoy doing before having children? (Can you think of 3 things?) Lead with your own example.

Q: Which of those could you make time for this week?



What can I do that I will really enjoy this week?

.....

Evaluations...

Kids Matter loves feedback! We use digital evaluations to measure if the programme is successful at improving parental confidence and well being.

To do this, we would like you to fill in a couple of forms online. The forms have questions about how you feel about your parenting and also your overall well-being. We would love you to be as honest as possible. This is not about being perfect parents!

I will not be looking at your answers and nor will anyone else other than the Kids Matter research team who will put everyone's data together. Your names and postcodes are used only to match your answers up with your answers at the end of the programme when we repeat the forms to see if there has been any change. The reason for doing these forms is so Kids Matter can learn if taking part in this programme helps you feel more confident as a parent and if that helps your children do better as well. If filling in the forms raises any concerns for you then we are here to talk anything through.

Let me know if anyone needs any help with the language or would like me to just read the questions to them. I'm going to send you a link which will take you straight to the forms.

First, choose which session you are on (this is Session 1), then fill out your name and postcode and answer all the questions and keep clicking **OK** and **NEXT** until you get to **DONE**, once clicked it will say '**Thank you for completing the survey**'.

*Send out the **evaluation form links** by email, text or WhatsApp and wait while people complete the forms. This usually takes about 10-15 minutes. If anyone wants to complete the forms outside of the group, agree that they will complete within 2 days and send a group reminder after this point if anyone hasn't completed the form.*

Thank you so much for doing that – we will do the same forms again in session 6 and at our Booster.

Now let's sum up what we've covered today.



Summing up...

Today we have looked at:

- What children need
- What is family
- Our own family and our parenting team
- Pressures on us as parents
- Importance of looking after ourselves



One thing I am going to do differently in my family this week is:

Q: As a goal, what is one thing you would like to do differently this week?

Q: Would anyone like to share their goal for the week?

Q: What was it like being in this group for you today?

Note down positives on post-it notes. (Be sure to respond positively to each person and reflect on anything you noticed about how they participated today; include your own feedback too.)

Next week we will be looking at our parenting styles and how to show love more effectively to our children.

At the end of the session:

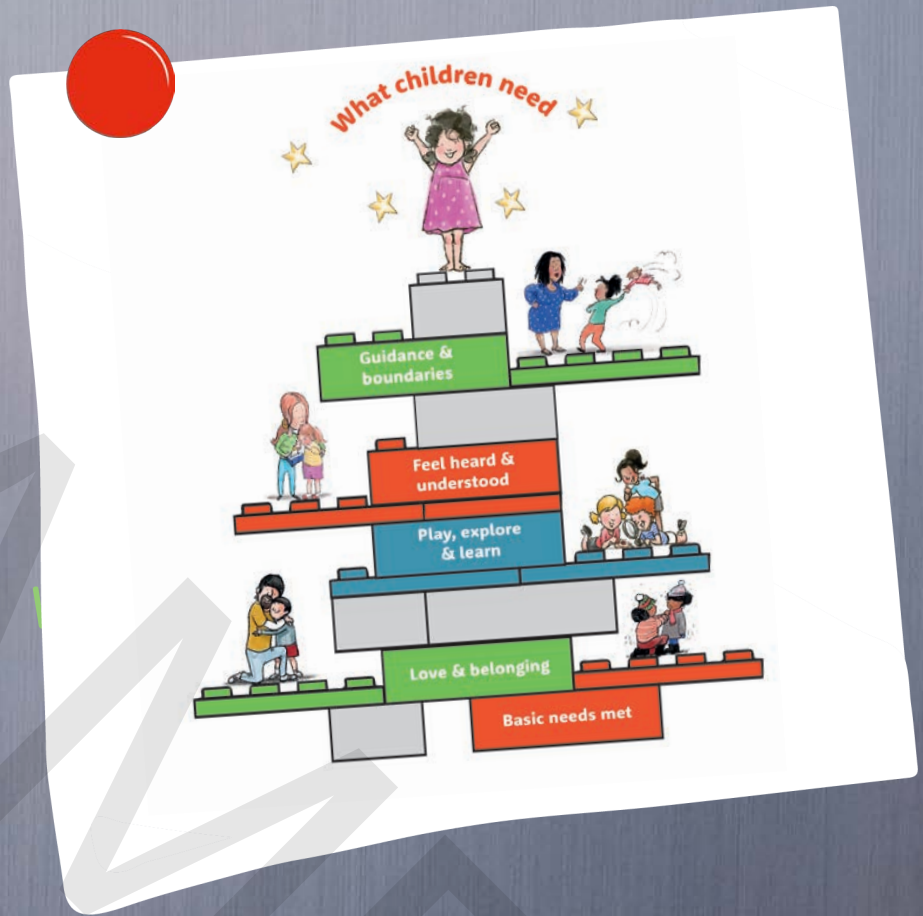
- *Look at Top Tips*
- *Make sure you've recorded attendance and details in line with your church/organisation's GDPR policy*
- *Seek consent from everyone to set up a WhatsApp Group to use for chat and group reminders*
- *Encourage them all to come back and thank them for their contribution today*
- *Offer food to them all to take away*
- *Don't rush off! Be available for anyone who wants to chat*

After the session:

- *Record any great quotes/stories*
- *Send a message to anyone who didn't make the session*
- *Fill in the portal on Beacon*



What is family?



MY FAMILY IS THE BEST PLACE FOR MY CHILDREN TO FEEL LOVED

- Make time to build and strengthen positive relationships around me
- Look after myself so I can look after my children well
- Focus on positive things in my family
- Get support/help when I need it

Remember: No-one can be a perfect parent, we are aiming for 'good enough'!

