**Parent Interview4**

**Date: 14 Dec 2022**

**Duration: 0:15:13**

Interviewer: Preamble  
What we’re interested in is your views and experiences. So I’ll hand over to you.

Parent4: As a single parent, I am struggling. Whatever you are saying, it’s 200% correct. I have to work, so childcare is a really, really big issue for me. I can’t afford childcare because I can’t get any public funds, due to my visa status, I’m not allowed to get any kinds of benefits. And of course, my kids are not entitled to get free meals either.

Interviewer: So they don’t qualify for free school meals?

Parent4: No. So I have to pay for the meals, and also for the travel as well, I need to pay for the travel as well. My son is travelling nearly five miles every day.

Interviewer: To get [to school 0:03:13]?

Parent4: Yes. Unfortunately, we couldn’t secure- He is in secondary school, he couldn’t secure a school which is nearby, which is near to my house, so he has to travel five miles, and I have to pay for it.

And my daughter, she is getting into her secondary school now. She is really scared, I’m really worried about her, I really don’t want to send her to- I think it’s, again, five to six miles from my house.

Interviewer: To a different school to the one your son goes to?

Parent4: To a different school, yes, they are in two different schools in two different [places 0:03:50].

Interviewer: They're not together, even.

Parent4: It’s a nightmare.

Interviewer: Oh dear, that sounds very difficult.

Parent4: Yes.

Interviewer: So I presume your daughter then is about 11, is she, about to go to secondary school?

Parent4: Yes, she is.

Interviewer: And your son is a little bit older, already at secondary school.

Parent4: He is one year, so he is in Year 8 now.

Interviewer: Okay. So have you had experience of using the healthcare service here for your children or yourself while you’ve been here?

Parent4: Yes. I struggled a lot. My son is fine, but my daughter, I think she has a very weak immune system, I guess, she will get infections very quickly. She has a hay fever infection, an allergic kind of thing. To be frank, I struggled a lot. One month ago, she got this infection on her hand, and the GPs are not available to book the appointment.

And every day, I think I took nearly three weeks to get a GP appointment, and she has got a big scar on her hand. Whenever I go to the walk-in centre, they simply say, “No, it’s just normal, it’s healing, it’s in the right direction. You just have to leave it open and it’s going to… She will be alright, it’s not an emergency.” So you have to book the appointment with the GP.

And whenever I go- I live in [ \_\_\_ 0:05:15], it’s really crowded GP, I think. So I was in the queue for more than half an hour and then I ended up without having to-

Interviewer: Sorry, was that on the telephone?

Parent4: It’s not on the telephone, I went to the GP personally, I was in the queue for half an hour or 45 minutes. And then she said, “It’s really busy, I can’t give you an appointment, you can try tomorrow.” That’s what happened. And it’s so, so- It’s not just frustrating, I am so concerned, I am so worried. There are a lot of situations like this.

Interviewer: Sure. And is that the only way you can get an appointment at the GP, by actually going in person?

Parent4: Well, if I go on the telephone, they won’t open the lines for another half an hour. By that time, all the appointments will finish for that day and, again, I have to- So that’s why I tried for one week or two weeks, and then I thought, “Okay, I’ll go the GP-”

Interviewer: Oh, I see, [you don’t want to 0:06:15] phone first, yes.

Parent4: Yes. Even that didn’t work for some time. And whenever I go to the walk-in centre, I used to wait for two to three hours to see a nurse. And she is going to say she won’t give any appointment, she will clean that wound and she will say, “No, it’s okay, she will be alright, it’s not an emergency thing, you have to book an appointment with the GP.”

Interviewer: But you can’t get the appointment at the GP. So have you finally seen the GP about your daughter?

Parent4: After I think nearly four weeks. By the time, it got this big, it’s this big, the patch became like that on her hand. And she got a scratch on this thing as well, so… Finally, finally, I managed to see the GP, so… But the time, it took nearly four weeks, to see the GP. Four weeks of time was really, really- I can’t even express in words.

Interviewer: No, it’s really [Crosstalk 0:07:16].

Parent4: Terrible.

Interviewer: And in those circumstances- Is your GP nearby? Do you need to travel to get there, or can you walk to the GP?

Parent4: To the GP, I have to walk 20 minutes, I think, 20 to 25 minutes.

Interviewer: And what about the walk-in centre, is that walking distance?

Parent4: It’s just nearby, it’s just opposite to the GP, so it’s just the same distance.

Interviewer: And have you had to go to the hospital or dentist or anywhere else?

Parent4: Dentist, yes, they are fine with the dentist. We had only one visit for her, she got extra teeth on the side, incisors or something like that. So she’s fine, it didn’t [ \_\_\_ 0:08:02].

My son got a little pain one day, so I rang a lot of clinics. They said we can’t take new people, new admissions, new patients. And then luckily, I phoned one, which is in the city centre-

Interviewer: And you got to see them?

Parent4: Yes, I managed to get an appointment that day. I have to travel again half an hour from my house, I have to pay for the bus. So if I manage to get an appointment near to my house, I will save some money. But again, I have to pay for the bus tickets.

It’s like financially, I’m really stuck at some point, due to my visa restrictions. So many reasons. Sometimes, I feel so worried, frustrated, helpless. Most of the time, I feel helpless.

Interviewer: Sorry to hear that. I totally understand it.

Parent4: Because as a single parent, I have to manage everything. I have to look after the kids, I have to work, I have to look after myself, and then- Many things.

Interviewer: So how do you manage? If you need to work and your children are sick and you need to get to a doctor or a dentist, how are you managing that?

Parent4: I didn’t work for more than six months. I recently started the job, three weeks or four weeks, I think. I just recently started my job. So for the last four weeks, I didn’t get any such situation to face. I don't know how I’m going to face it in the future, I’m so, so, so worried about it.

Interviewer: So if you do need to go yourself to the doctor or hospital, or if you needed to take your children, would you just have to take time off work to do that?

Parent4: It’s full-time work at the minute, but I asked my management, “I’m a single parent, I have to manage.” At the minute, they are giving flex-time, I can work only 30 hours, something like that. But in future, they're going to reassess the situation. They don’t access for longer time.

Interviewer: And would you get paid for time you needed to take off, if you had to take time off to go to the doctor or the hospital, or would that-?

Parent4: Not really, no.

Interviewer: Okay. So one of the things that I guess you’ve not really experienced is if your child is admitted to hospital, or even if you're just there, waiting a long time for appointments. There are lots of costs. So it’s the cost of getting there, if you need to park a car or you need a bus or whatever, or a taxi. And then often, you have to buy food there, and it’s expensive. I don't know whether you’ve had any experience at all of that.

Parent4: I always try to request my kids not to buy a lot of stuff from the shop that I can’t afford, obviously. So I try to cook as much as I can. But they are kids, I can’t stop them. For some situations, I can’t avoid it, so I have to pay for it.

And obviously I am struggling a lot for their good health, so I can’t make them starving. So I have to feed them if they're in a really desperate situation. So yes, that sort of situation.

Interviewer: Hard work, if you're working full-time, and coming in and cooking every night as well, though.

Parent4: Yes.

Interviewer: It’s a lot to do on your own. Is there anything else that you’ve found, around healthcare and what might make it easier for you? I guess having more appointments available is the big thing.

Parent4: Yes, that’s the biggest concern for me. If they can give more priority for the vulnerable people, under 16 kind of people. Because they are kids, they can’t express many things. And if you give more priority, extra priority, for them, while booking the appointments, that’s going to be really, really helpful, especially with the GPs. That’s one thing, I’m more concerned.

The rest of the things, I don’t think we can help for everybody. Financial things, obviously everybody in this world is getting struck at some point of time with these financial things. But personally, I feel like, if we get stuck, extra priority for appointments for the kids, that would be really helpful.

Interviewer: Because it’s not really a cost thing, it’s just the time and inconvenience.

Parent4: Yes. Like compassion, you have to be more- What do you say? More kind to the people, or whatever.

Interviewer: Yes, sure, that makes perfect sense. I don't know really whether there’s anything else that you want to say, [ \_\_\_ 0:13:04]. It’s really helpful, what you’ve said already, and really interesting. And sorry to hear about the difficulties that you’ve had, and I hope you don’t find yourself in a position of needing to take time off work to go to the doctor for yourself or your children.

If there is anything else that you can think of that you want to tell me about, your experiences, or that you think might be interesting, please let me know.

Parent4: I requested with some of the charity people if they can help me to get some free school meals for my kids. It all depends. I will be very happy if my kids can get free school meals.

Interviewer: That would be a big difference. It’s expensive, isn't it, to [pay for lunch every day 0:13:46].

Parent4: It is, yes.

Interviewer: I had no idea that you wouldn’t be able to get free school meals, that seems very unfair.

Parent4: Yes. And of course, another big concern would be the travel expenses. The buses are really, really expensive. For my daughter, I didn’t apply [ \_\_\_ 0:14:06] for her, because her school is very nearby to my house, so I didn’t apply for the \_\_\_. So I have to pay £1.20 for one stop or something. That is so expensive.

Interviewer: A lot of money for one stop.

Parent4: Yes. I am so scared to get them to the city centre or something because, apart from the stop they're going to buy, I have to pay extra for the [ \_\_\_ 0:14:32]. That’s even more expensive. They have to reconsider and they have to reduce it. For the kids, they have to reduce expenses. But obviously it’s not in our hands, it \_\_\_.

Interviewer: It is though. Yes, to have to pay a lot of money just to get to school is hard, isn't it?

Parent4: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Well I shall let you go and see your children and I’ll go and get mine.

Parent4: Yes, that’s fine.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. And I’ll put that voucher in the post for you, so you should get that in the next day or two.

Parent4: Thanks so much.

Interviewer: Thank you very much indeed for your time, lovely to meet you. Take care. Bye for now.

Parent4: Bye.

END AUDIO