

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS IMPACT MODULE

Programmes have many queries about the work conducted by NESS for the Impact module. We try to convey as many of these answers to programme managers when our interviewers introduce themselves.

When are your interviewers going to be in our area?

We will contact Sure Start programme managers if their area has been identified in the random selection process for inclusion in the Impact study and will let them know that NESS fieldworkers are going to be in the area. Fieldworkers will introduce themselves to programme staff before fieldwork commences and explain procedures.

Will NESS signpost local Sure Start services

No. Interviewers will not be telling families we are connected in any way with Sure Start, we will not be recommending Sure Start local services we will simply be recording responses given by the family and conducting an assessment on the child.

How long will NESS be in our Sure Start area?

We are collecting data during 2002 – 2003 and there may be months when we are not in your area or other months when we are seeing families more intensively.

What information will be fed back to us? When?

We will provide each Sure Start programme with a general update on how many families we have collected data on throughout England and pertinent information we have found so far nationally. Once the data have been collected for 2002 we will provide some information per Sure Start area on the number of parents interviewed, demographic information and developmental indicators of the children. This will therefore be available in 2003.

Why can't you tell us which families NESS are visiting in our SS area?

Our confidentiality agreement states that we will not pass on any details of families to other agencies or organisations. We also had to assure an ethics committee that we do not pass on details of families before we were allowed to conduct this research. When we visit families we agree that all our data will be stored under a family number on our central computer system rather than using family names and addresses. Most families are only willing to take part in the study if they are sure that information about themselves is completely confidential. We understand that it would be useful for Sure Starts to know about families in their area but unfortunately this is not possible.

What are you going to be asking our Sure Start families?

We will ask a variety of questions firstly who lives in the household, who is working in the household and the ages of any children. There is a section for the 9-10 month old babies asking the main carer about antenatal care, pregnancy and the birth and the baby's health since birth. The interview also asks questions about friends and support networks for the carer and there is another section on the use of local services by the family.

Why aren't parents involved in NESS when including parents is a major aim of Sure Start?

We are interviewing 20,000 – 24,000 families for the Impact study and their opinions are essential for understanding the effects of local child service provision. We were unable to include parents as interviewers because all our interviewers were selected due to previous experience with research methods such as laptop interviews and child assessments.

What backgrounds do your fieldworkers have?

All our fieldworkers have degrees or other qualifications in social science, education or related fields and have some experience working with mothers and young children and many have previous interviewing experiences in families' homes. Most fieldworkers have lived in their region for a considerable period of time and therefore are familiar with the area. All fieldworkers have been trained on interview techniques and working with families from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. A number of pilot interviews were conducted whereby fieldworkers were checked to ensure they interviewed consistently and in a sensitive friendly manner. Although a number of fieldworkers come from social work, psychology, teaching backgrounds it was emphasised their role is not to counsel or advise families but to collect data in a professional and respectful way. The Office of National Statistics trained each fieldworker and all fieldworkers have had a police check.

Will your interviewers be sensitive to cultural differences? Will you use translators?

We have recruited fieldworkers who have experience working with ethnically diverse populations and wherever possible who speak additional languages. We are using a telephone translation service that uses 2000 interpreters. Using the language line enables a 3-way conversation with a family member to explain the study and ask if they would like to participate. If families whose first language is not English agree to a home visit, a local translator will accompany the fieldworker to the family home. The translator will be recruited from the region and will be interviewed beforehand to assess their level of translation experience and their suitability to conducting home visits. Wherever possible female translators will be recruited.

Are children with special needs going to be identified before the visit?

When a fieldworker rings the family they will ask the carer about the child, their interests and hobbies and whether the child has any special needs, this will enable the

fieldworker to tailor the child assessment specifically to incorporate the child's needs. In some cases parts of the child assessment may be dropped from the study for example if a child is partially sighted and therefore cannot recognise pictures to name an object.

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