

IMPLEMENTATION MODULE OF THE NATIONAL EVALUATION OF SURE START

The aim of this module is to paint a comprehensive picture of the *process* and *components* of the first 260 Sure Start programmes across England, which will ultimately link together programme activity and outcomes for individual users and communities. The following page sets out an overview of objectives, dimensions and components of the Implementation Module. Links are provided at the end for practical issues, timetables and contact information.

Objectives

A variety of objectives have been set out by the Implementation team in order to focus the study and provide links with other elements of the National Evaluation.

Specific objectives include:

- Describing the full range of approaches to service design and delivery.
- Producing a systematic analysis of local programmes.
- Constructing alternative assessments of programme "quality".
- Informing the Impact Evaluation on programme sampling.
- Assessing the extent to which implementation conforms with programme specifications.

Dimensions

Six dimensions of local programme design and delivery will be explored by the Implementation study through a holistic approach, to be described below.

Those dimensions include:

- Management and coordination.
- Access for families to Sure Start provisions and services.
- Community involvement.
- Allocation of resources.
- Quantity of services provided by the programme.
- "Relative" quality of services provided by the programme.

Components/Methods

The study has three main components and will employ both quantitative and qualitative styles of data collection and analysis in order to achieve a wide range of detail and richness of context. The dimensions above will be explored in each component.

Those components consist of:

- The National Survey: Three annual waves of a National Survey of all 260 Sure Start programmes. A document search of all relevant texts (e.g. delivery plans, revised miniplans)

produced by local programmes and partner agencies will be done in conjunction with the National Survey. Analysis of the survey is intended to produce insight into significant characteristics of programme implementation. The results will later be used to select 150 programmes for inclusion in the cross sectional investigation of the Impact Evaluation.

- Case Studies: An in-depth qualitative study of 26 programmes across England. These programmes will be chosen on a variety of specific programme and community characteristics. This part of the Implementation Evaluation is essential for exploring dimensions not easily accessible by the National Survey. Methods of data collection will include face-to-face interviews and focus groups with parents, community members, programme staff and partner/local agencies; full service review; structured observation; and document analysis. These elements in the case study will be repeated twice at 18-month intervals in order to examine change over time.

- Finally, a series of themed evaluations over the duration of the National Evaluation will address specific issues and problems that arise in all or a substantial portion of local programmes. They will explore issues of over-arching concern that cannot be adequately addressed within an individual programme. The selection of themes will be data-driven by the survey and the case studies. Examples of likely themes are: "Setting Up Sure Start"; "Minority Ethnic Communities and Sure Start"; "Child Protection and Sure Start"; "Sure Start in Rural Areas".

Practical Issues

Timetable

The first "wave" of the National Survey was posted or emailed to rounds 1 and 2 programme managers on August 1, 2001. The second application will be in September 2002 and the third and final application in September 2003. Rounds 3 & 4 programme managers will receive the first survey in January 2003, the second in January 2004 and the final in January

2005.

The first 16 case studies from Rounds 1 & 2 have been chosen and fieldwork is to commence in

July 2002. They will be re-visited 18 months after the completion of the work in their site. The

final 10 case studies from Rounds 3 & 4 will be chosen at approximately 6 months after they have completed the National Survey.