

## **NATIONAL EVALUATION OF SURE START IMPLEMENTATION MODULE “FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS” AND RESPONSES**

Now that the first round of our national questionnaire has been administered to Sure Start rounds 1 and 2, we have compiled a list of questions asked by programme managers from across the country. I'm sure this list will grow with time as we get feedback from rounds currently participating in the National Survey and then further on down the line with successive Sure Start rounds. We welcome your questions and concerns and we will do our best to address them satisfactorily. As the evaluation study progresses, we will continually update this section to address questions directed not only at the National Survey, but also relating to the case studies and the thematic evaluations. If there is something you would like to see on this website regarding the Implementation module that is not already here, we would encourage you to send us your comments.

**Why is there a National Survey?** In order to understand Sure Start, we must look at it across many programmes, not just one. This is to help us set a context of Sure Start and to find out how differently – or similarly – it is being implemented across the country. Also, it gives all programmes the opportunity to participate in the evaluation.

**The National Survey is all about numbers – how will you understand ‘why’ things happen in Sure Start programmes?** The National Survey is one way of helping us understand a lot of big issues across Sure Start programmes. We will also be doing case studies and themed analyses in order to uncover the realities of Sure Start working. So, while a survey can be limiting, we are going several steps further to ‘put the flesh on the bones’.

**Why is the National Survey so long?** We also regret that the survey is very long. Unfortunately, the length is necessary in order to capture the complexities of each programme across the country. In order to be comprehensive, six programme dimensions are being looked at in this study; 1) management and coordination, 2) access for families to Sure Start provisions and services, 3) community involvement, 4) allocation of resources, 5) quantity of services and 6) relative quality of services. The survey has been designed to address each of these areas, and has thus turned out to be very long. Not only have the NESS team and Sure Start Unit given recommendations and advice to the Implementation team, but many programmes across the country have piloted the survey and given their recommendations as well. We have tried to eliminate every unnecessary question, but if we cut it down any more than we already have, we run the risk of disadvantaging programmes by not being comprehensive enough.

**Can't you get some of this information from the Sure Start Unit (i.e. the monitoring data)?** The first thing to remember is that we are independent from the Sure Start Unit. Certainly, they will share some information with us, and where we can get information, we will use it. But, it will be inevitable that a few questions may duplicate what you send to the Unit in the form of monitoring information. One reason for this may be because the purpose and structure of SS Unit data collection is different from our own. Another is we may need to ask for seemingly duplicated

information because not all sites provide all of the information for one reason or another. We certainly want to minimize information duplication as much as possible and will work towards this end, hopefully with input from you.

**Isn't some of this information is in our Delivery Plans! ?** Yes, that is correct. However, the purpose of this longitudinal implementation study is to capture changes and developments in your programme. What you outlined in your plan may be different today, and we want to understand those changes. We also want to make sure you receive credit for innovating and finding new ways of doing things! That is why we may ask some questions that seem redundant because you've put those in your delivery plans – we only wish to get the most accurate picture to date of your programme!

**Doesn't the NESS team understand what a burden this is for us when we have so much else to do?** We do understand that filling out this survey presents programme staff with a great deal of work to do. And we regret this! All we can say is thank you, and that we appreciate your help in allowing us to draw an overall picture of Sure Start across the country. We hope that in the future, you will feel the evaluation has served a greater purpose – in the form of feedback to programmes AND to the Sure Start Unit; facilitation of network creation among programme evaluators; dissemination of evidence-based practice and, we hope, a mutually beneficial working relationship with our team. We will do our very best to minimize the burden by constantly scrutinizing our survey for ways to make it better for you in future rounds of survey administration.

**Is this a mandatory survey?** Again, we hope that you will come to see this as a useful experience after you begin to see the results and feedback from our study. It is impossible to understand Sure Start in one individual site alone; a national context is absolutely necessary in order to get a broad perspective of the varieties and similarities between and among programmes. For Sure Start to continue, we have to know what Sure Start is all about across the country! Your help in this endeavour is invaluable.

**Our site is only just getting underway! We don't feel prepared to fill out the survey just yet!** We realize that all sites are at different stages of development. This in no way constitutes a disadvantage or problem because the survey is designed to capture the programme development process over the course of 3 years! All we ask is that you do your best in filling out the survey now, and we can re-apply the survey in 6 months time after you have had more time to set things up. We fully expect that programmes will be at different places and we will account for those changes over time in our study.

**Can we give you comments regarding the survey?** Yes, we want to make the survey as user-friendly as possible, and that means making sure that each question is clear and understandable. Where you aren't sure what is being asked, please contact us and we can clarify for you. And in future rounds of the survey administration, we will make appropriate changes and tweaks to make the questions as straightforward as possible. We also want to make sure that each question has a response relevant to every programme – if you feel that your programme does not fit into the designated responses already there, let us know and we can make the appropriate changes for

future surveys. You can let us know by contacting us directly, or even by putting your comments on the survey for us to read.

**When will we learn anything about the results of the survey?** We aim to get results out as soon as possible! The first full report is now on the Sure Start website and the NESS website. This report has been written and published in under year after the first administration of the National Survey to Rounds 1 & 2.