

Changes in the Characteristics of SSLP Areas between 2000/01 and 2003/04

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Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs) are area-based, concentrating on relatively small neighbourhoods. Their aim is to improve the health and well being of young children under 4 years old and their families, so that children have a greater opportunity to flourish when they go to school.

This is a summary of the fourth report from the Local Context Analysis of the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS), which focuses on describing the characteristics of 260 Sure Start local programme areas in Rounds 1 to 4 and on examining change at the community level. The fourth report describes change from the fiscal year 2000/01 to the year 2003/04. At the end of this time period, in March 2004, the SSLPs had been in operation for an average of just over three years.

Key findings

- ▶ There are fewer children aged 0 to 3 living in homes completely dependent on benefits in SSLP areas than there were four years ago (down 3.8% to 40.4%). This was a significantly greater drop than in England as a whole (where the figure fell by 1.2% to 22%).
- ▶ There was also a greater reduction than England in relation to children aged 0 to 17 living in households in receipt of Income Support (a benefit for those with low incomes).
- ▶ There were increases in social service activity in SSLP areas, whereas this showed a downward trend in England. In particular, the rate of Section 47³ enquiries has increased significantly in SSLP areas.
- ▶ There has been a significant reduction in the rate of children aged 0 to 3 years hospitalised for severe injury in SSLP areas (down by 2.1 per 1000 to 13.4), greater than the reduction in England.
- ▶ Provision of childminders, out of school care and crèche places for children aged 0 to 7 years have all increased significantly both in SSLP areas and in England. Full day care provision has remained relatively stable in SSLP area compared to an increase in England.
- ▶ Achievement in Key Stage 2 tests (when children are approximately 11 years old) is higher than 4 years previously for children living in SSLP areas in English and mathematics; all were greater improvements than those seen in England.
- ▶ There was a significant decrease in perinatal mortality (still births and deaths in the first week) in the least deprived SSLP areas. However there was a significant increase in perinatal mortality in areas where a higher proportion of the population (approximately 1 in 4) were from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- ▶ Greater numbers of Area Based Initiatives (ABIs) operating in the SSLP area appeared to be related to some important changes, such as a decrease in the proportion of young mothers, a decrease in infant mortality and an increase in the rate of Section 47 enquiries.

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³ Children thought to have suffered or likely to suffer significant harm

Background

Sure Start services are delivered to children aged 0 to 3 years and to their families through community-based local programmes. A comprehensive national evaluation is assessing the implementation, impact and cost-effectiveness of Sure Start local programmes in Rounds 1 to 4. The Local Context Analysis (LCA) module of the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) describes the local programme areas and document any changes in these communities over six time points. This information is incorporated with other NESS data to find out how the nature of the area influences the effectiveness of Sure Start local programmes to improve the health and well-being of families and young children.

The study addresses the following core questions:

- Have SSLP areas changed between the fiscal years 2000/2001 and 2003/2004?
- What is the relationship between change in SSLP areas and change in England?
- What factors are associated with more or less change in community characteristics?

Methods

Data from a number of national and local sources have been analysed, covering a range of domains: demography (collected by calendar year), school achievement (collected by academic year), poverty and worklessness, child health, child welfare, local services and community disorder (all collected by fiscal year). Sources of data for longitudinal comparison are the same as in previous reports. Data are compared to the period 2000/2001. In the first report of the Local Context Analysis module five different types of SSLP area were identified, defined on the basis of

demographic features. The five types are: the 'least deprived' (in terms of economic deprivation; 54 SSLP areas); the 'most deprived' (29 areas); 'typically deprived' (87 areas); 'ethnically diverse' areas (59 areas); and areas with high proportions of the population from 'Indian subcontinent' background (28 areas). The extent and patterns of change in SSLP areas in Rounds 1 to 4 is reported according to these five types, to clarify which types of SSLP area have changed most and in which ways.

Main Findings

Demography

There was no change in the average number of births or the birth rate in SSLP areas, but births to lone mothers⁴ were significantly higher in 2003 than in 2000, in both SSLP areas and in England. The proportion of births to young mothers (under 18 years) has not changed significantly in SSLP areas or in England. However, those SSLP areas with a high number of ABIs operating in them saw a reduction in the proportion of young mothers.

Poverty and Worklessness

Less economic deprivation is being experienced in SSLP areas than four years ago. The proportion of young children in SSLP areas in 'workless' households⁵ was significantly lower in 2003/04 than it was in 2000/01, representing a significantly greater reduction than in England overall (see Table 1). The proportion of children aged 4 to 17 in Income Support households is also significantly lower in SSLP areas in 2003/04 than in 2000/01, compared to a small increase in England (see Table 1). The reductions are significant in all types of SSLP area, but greatest in the most deprived areas.

⁴Registered solely in the mother's name, or registered jointly where the parents live at different addresses

⁵Households dependent on means-tested benefits

Table 1: Change between 2000/01 and 2003/04 in children experiencing poverty and worklessness in SSLP areas and in England

	SSLP Average 2003/4	Range in 2003/4	Change from 2000/1	England Average 2003/4	England change from 2000/1
% 0 to 3 year olds in workless households	40	13-68	- 3.8*	22	-1.2
% 0 to 3 year olds in households receiving income support	37	11-69	- 1.8*	20	+1.5
% 4 to 17 year olds in households receiving income support	34	8-69	+1.5*	17	- 0.7

Source: DWP 2001, 2004

* Change significantly different to England change

Table 2: Change in rates of emergency hospitalisations of 0 to 3 year olds between 2000/01 to 2003/04 in SSLP areas and in England

Per 1,000 0 to 3 year olds	SSLP Average 2003/4	Range in 2003/4	Change from 2000/1	England Average 2003/4	England change from 2000/1
Severe Injury	13	0-69	- 2.1*	10	- 0.3
Gastroenteritis	13	0-76	- 0.3	10	+0.7
Lower Respiratory infection	25	1-66	+ 0.5*	20	+ 1.6

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics 2001, 2004, DWP 2001, 2004

* Change significantly different to England change

Child Health

There was no overall change in the rate of infants born with low birth weight (less than 2500 grams), either in SSLP areas or in England. The rate of low birth weight⁶ has decreased most in SSLP areas where there are several other Area Based Initiatives (ABIs) in the area⁷. Similarly, whilst there has been no change overall in infant mortality (death during the first year of life) in SSLP areas, it has decreased when there are several other ABIs in the SSLP area, whereas it has increased when there are none

The rate of emergency hospitalisations of children aged 0 to 3 years for severe injury was significantly lower in SSLP areas in 2003/04 than in 2000/01, a significantly greater decrease than in England (see Table 2). The largest reductions were in Yorkshire and the Humber and South West regions. Emergency hospitalisations for lower respiratory infections and for gastroenteritis have not changed significantly, in SSLP areas or in England.

There has been a significant decrease (of 0.1%) in SSLP areas in children aged 0 to 3 years in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA)⁸ but an increase (of 0.7%) in children aged 4 to 17 years receiving DLA, significantly greater than the increase in England.

The percentage of school aged children identified with minor special educational needs has increased in SSLP areas between 2002/03 and 2003/04, increasing by a similar amount in England. There was no change in the percentage of children with more significant special needs (i.e. necessitating a 'statement' of SEN).

Child Welfare

There were significant increases in the rate of Section 47 enquiries in SSLP areas for children under 5 and for children under 16 year olds, significantly greater than the increase in England (see Tables 3 and 4). The rate for both age groups has risen more in areas where there are a larger number of other ABIs.

⁶ Infant weight and mortality data are collected by calendar year.

⁷ This indicator is based on data indicating the precise area covered by ABIs, available for the following eight initiatives: Aim Higher, Education Action Zones and Excellence in Cities; Children's Fund; On Track; Early Excellence Centres; Health Action Zones; Neighbourhood Nurseries; Neighbourhood Renewal; New Deal for Communities

⁸ Paid to anyone aged 3 years or over that has severe difficulty walking, or aged 5 years or over and needs help getting around

The rate of new registrations of under 16s on the Child Protection register has also risen significantly, compared with a minimal increase in England. This may be due to better or earlier identification of families needing support.

Table 3: Change in child welfare indicators between 2000/01 and 2003/04 for under 16 year olds in SSLP areas and England

Per 10,000 under 16 years old	SSLP Average 2003/4	Range in 2003/4	Change from 2000/1	England Average 2003/4	England change from 2000/1
Referrals (N = 186 SSLPs**)	832	41-2071	+70.0	547	-
Section 47 enquiries (N = 160 SSLPs**)	128	0-645	+39.9*	69	+6.7
On Child Protection Register (CPR) (N = 200 SSLPs**)	57	0-439	+3.7	25	-0.3
Registration on CPR in the year (N = 195 SSLPs**)	63	0-588	+11.5*	30	+0.7
Looked after children (N = 191 SSLPs**)	94	0-767	+10.9	58	+0.3

Source: Social Service departments 2001, 2004

* Change significantly different to England change

** Data on each indicator from Social Services were not available for all SSLP areas.

Table 4: Change in child welfare indicators between 2000/01 and 2003/04 for under 5 year olds in SSLP areas and England

Per 10,000 under 5 years old	SSLP Average 2003/4	Range in 2003/4	Change from 2000/1	England Average 2003/4	England change from 2000/1
Referrals (N = 186 SSLPs**)	935	29-2353	+45.3	n/a***	-
Section 47 enquiries (N = 160 SSLPs**)	159	0-800	+57.4	n/a***	-
On Child Protection Register (CPR) (N = 200 SSLPs**)	81	0-595	+1.1	38	-0.8
Registration on CPR in the year (N = 195 SSLPs**)	100	0-741	+81.4*	49	+7.1
Looked after children (N = 191 SSLPs**)	79	0-1558	+18.9	43	+1.5

Source: Social Service departments 2001, 2004

* Change significantly different to England change

** Data on each indicator from Social Services were not available for all SSLP areas.

*** England data for children under 5 years not available for this indicator

Childcare and Health Services

There has been a significant increase in SSLP areas in the numbers of childminders, out of school care, crèches and places for 0 to 7 year olds in all those settings. There has also been a significant reduction in the number of sessional day care providers and places and no significant change in the provision of full day care places (see Table 5). These changes largely reflect changes in England, apart from the reduction in sessional places, which was greater in SSLP areas.

Table 5: Change in places at childcare providers per 1,000 0 to 7 year olds between 2000/01 and 2003/04 in SSLP areas and England

Data on the numbers of GP surgeries and Child

Per 1,000 children 0 to 7 years old	SSLP Average 2003/4	Range in 2003/4	Change from 2000/1	England Average 2003/4	England change from 2000/1
Childminders	84	0-121	+2.3	72	+4.2
Full day care	51	0-322	+3.3	69	+16.2
Sessional day care	24	0-209	-5.4*	61	-2.6
Out of school care	37	0-208	+4.2	73	+6.0
Crèches	13	0-143	+3.1	9	-1.1

Source: Ofsted 2001, 2004

* Change significantly different to England change

Health clinics was compared between 2002 and 2004. It appears that some restructuring of local provision may have been taking place. GPs surgeries show a trend towards smaller numbers of practices, which would be consistent with the grouping together of small local practices into larger groups, whilst there has been an increase in the number of Child Health clinics in SSLP areas.

School Achievement

In line with changes in England, educational achievement in SSLP areas at Key Stage 1⁹ in writing was lower in 2003/04 than previously (for SSLP areas the percentage achieving level 2 or above fell by 6.9 to 71.6%). There was little change in achievement in reading, comprehension or mathematics.

Improvement in achievement at Key Stage 2¹⁰ in English and mathematics in SSLP areas, was greater than improvements in England. For

example, in Key Stage 2 English, the percentage achieving level 4 or above has increased by 4.7% to 66.3% (in England it increased by 2.8% to 77.4%).

Although the rate is lower than that for England, the percentage of young people obtaining five or more GCSEs¹¹ grade A*-C increased significantly in schools with pupils from SSLP areas (by 1.9% to 34.8%), compared to a lesser increase in England (by 1% to 53.6%).

Child benefits paid to youngsters at 17 indicated that more were staying on in full time education in SSLP areas than in 2001/02 (an increase of 13.4% to 72.3%). This was greater than the increase in England (bringing the rate closer to that of England, 73.1% following an increase of 2.2%).

Community Disorder

Permanent exclusions from primary and secondary schools have not changed. Unauthorised absences from primary schools have dropped by around half (it decreased by 0.67 to 0.66 – as a percentage of half days missed), compared to no change in England. However, unauthorised absences from secondary schools have risen (by 0.37 to 1.66) more so than in England (a rise of 0.1 to 1.1).

Crimes involving violence against the person, criminal damage and drug offences have increased in SSLP areas between 2000/1 and 2003/4 with a lesser increase in England as a whole (up by between 3 and 10 per 1000 of the population). However, vehicle crime has reduced significantly over the same time period in SSLP areas (down by 2.9 to 19.8 per 1000 in the population), a significantly greater change than in England (where the rate decreased by 1.8 to 18.9 per 1000).

⁹ Standardised tests taken at seven years

¹⁰ Standardised tests taken at eleven years

¹¹ General Certificate of Secondary Education standardised examinations taken at 16 years

Conclusions

Some encouraging changes have taken place between 2000/01 and 2003/04 in SSLP areas.

There have been reductions in rates of young children being hospitalised for severe injury and increases in Section 47 enquiries and registrations on the Child Protection Register, all of which may be related to better or earlier identification of need. These findings may be an indication of an increasing impact of joined-up working and multi-agency working in the areas. In particular they may represent enhanced inter-agency collaboration to identify and support families.

Related to this is the importance of SSLPs working alongside other ABIs. The presence of several other ABIs in a SSLP area appears to be an important factor for positive change, such as a decrease in the proportion of young mothers, a decrease in infant mortality and an increase in the rate of Section 47 enquiries. It may be that a 'critical mass' of initiatives is necessary in order to first instigate and then sustain marked change in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, it must be noted that the most deprived areas are likely to have the most ABIs, and also the most extreme levels of problem, as a result they are more likely to improve than those areas that are already 'average'.

It is likely that initiatives and agencies will need to work together to plan the best way that comprehensive investment in the most deprived areas is used, in order to effect change at the level of the community. This is important as services are being planned to meet the Children's Centre agenda.

It is encouraging that fewer young children are experiencing the highest levels of family poverty, there are more childcare places and more families have easy access to a child health clinic. Older children in the area are achieving at a higher level academically and more are staying on at school.

These changes should improve the quality of life for families in the SSLP areas and the increased childcare may allow some parents to take up employment opportunities.

The picture is not totally positive for these areas however; there is more violent crime and levels of worklessness in SSLP areas remain much higher than in England. Whilst the reasons for this are unlikely to be directly related to SSLPs, it needs to be borne in mind that SSLP areas remain challenging areas to live and work.

Clearly the indicators pertaining to older children such as achievement at Key Stages 1 will become more relevant in subsequent years, when more Sure Start 'graduates' move into the school system. Furthermore, the trends and findings will continue to be increasingly robust as the long term picture of SSLP areas is built upon. This report has found some preliminary associations between change and different types of SSLP area, and in future work other aspects of the areas will be examined in order to explore why the context of some areas changes more or less than others.

Further information

Further copies of this summary are available from:

DfES Publications, PO Box 5050,
Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham,
NG15 0DJ; Tel 0845 6022260;
Email: dfes@prolog.uk.com

Quote reference NESS/2006/SF/016

Copies of the full report of 'Changes in the Characteristics of SSLP areas 2000/1 and 2003/4' is available on the Sure Start website www.surestart.gov.uk or from the above address.

Quote reference NESS/2006/FR/016

Further information about the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) can be found at www.ness.bbk.ac.uk

ISBN 1 84478 741 9

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