

For more information about Sure Start Grove Hill,  
Beechwood and Easterside, contact



Easterside Library  
Easterside  
Middlesbrough  
TS4 3PZ

Telephone: 01642 323 773

Fax: 01642 322 736

# SureStart

Local in Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside

Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside

## First Interim Evaluation

by

The Parent Evaluation Team

and

Tish Traynor and Mike Hughes





# Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction.....	1
Evaluation methodology .....	5
Achievements so far – at a strategic level.....	11
The priority research areas .....	21
An overview of the programme’s activities .....	33
Stakeholder views on the findings of the evaluation.....	47
Conclusion .....	54
Appendices: .....	57
Sure Start’s Aim and Objectives.....	1.
Summary of Participatory Action Research Training.....	2.
Questionnaires in relation to .....	3.
• The crèche	
• Parental participation	
• Speech and language therapy	
List of one-off activities.....	4.
Questionnaires in relation to the activities survey.....	5.

---

---

## Survey of Activities

### Staff Questionnaire

1. What service or activity do you provide for this Sure Start Programme?
2. Name of staff member being interviewed.
3. Which part or parts of the Sure Start catchment area does it cover?
4. How long has it been available for parents/children and young people/users in the area?
5. How frequent is the service or activity?
6. How do people hear about this service?
7. What is the main aim of this specific service or activity?
8. Do you think it is achieving this aim?
9. In what way?
10. Is it over-subscribed or under-subscribed?
11. Do you think this service is making any impact on the parents/children and young people/community?
12. How?
13. Is there anything in particular which helps this service or activity to make a positive impact?
14. Is there anything in particular which hinders this service or activity from making a positive impact?
15. How do you think the service or activity is of value to parents/children and young people/community?
16. How is the service evaluated?
17. Is there anything that could be done to improve this service/activity?
18. Any other comments?

**Thank you**

## Acknowledgements

The production of this report was the work of many people.

First and foremost it was the work of the Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside Sure Start Parent Evaluation Team. The members of the team are:

Joanne Cook  
Sonya Ford  
Michelle Holdsworth  
Leanne Morrissey  
Martine Richardson  
Karen Roddy

Denise Sharkey, the Parent Engagement Co-ordinator, played a major role, as did Tish Traynor and Mike Hughes, the R & D Consultants.

The work was strongly supported and assisted by the staff of the programme, and by the Evaluation Reference Group and the Partnership Board.

Special mention must be made of the Programme Manager, John Keelty, for his strong support, and most of all for his belief in the ability of the parents to conduct this research.

---



**Appendix 5:**

---

## **Questionnaires in relation to the activities survey**

### **Survey of Activities**

#### **User Questionnaire**

- 1 Name of activity or service
- 2 Name (or reference number if preferred) of person being interviewed
- 3 Gender of person being interviewed
- 4 Age of child
- 5 How many children under four years old do you have?
- 6 How long have you used/attended this service or activity?
- 7 How did you hear about it?
- 8 How often do you use/attend the service or activity?
- 9 Do you do this with your child(ren) or use the Sure Start crèche to attend this service?
- 10 How many of your children attend the activity?
- 11 How many of your children attend the crèche while you are taking part in this activity?
- 12 What do you think of this service?
- 13 What is the best thing about this service or activity?
- 14 What is the worst thing about this service or activity?
15. Do you think that this service has made any difference to you?
16. If so, what?
17. Do you think that this service has made any difference to your child(ren)?
18. If so, what?
19. Can you think of anything that would make this service better?
20. Any other comments?

**Thank you**



## Introduction

**Children under four and their families come first** is the vision of Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside.

Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside is a fifth wave (group C) Sure Start Programme, and it is one of a total of five Programmes in Middlesbrough. A summary of the Aim and Objectives of Sure Start is provided in Appendix I.

The Programme received confirmation in October 2002 that their delivery plan was accepted and that they had permission to proceed with implementation.

Evaluation of effectiveness is a requirement of all Sure Start funding. In this paper the first interim evaluation of the Programme is presented.

### Profile of Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside

Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside are three wards located near the centre of Middlesbrough, to the south east of the town's business and commercial centre.

The wards together have a population of 14,760 residents, of whom 736 are children aged under four.

All three wards experience significant levels of deprivation. The following table contains three measures of disadvantage, by all of which Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside are rated as severely deprived.

**Table 1: Deprivation Scores for Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside**

Ward	JSU Deprivation Score	Index of Multiple Deprivation	Child Poverty Index
Grove Hill	7.7	250	253
Beechwood	12.5	91	5
Easterside	6.5	267	333

---

The JSU is the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit, who has devised a composite deprivation indicator wherein zero is the average across the Tees Valley. Any ward with a positive score is more deprived than the average for the sub-region. In Middlesbrough the range of scores for all wards is from -14.3 to +13.1. All three of the Programme's wards record a high level of disadvantage by this measure, with Beechwood the most severely disadvantaged.

The Index of Multiple Disadvantage records the rank for deprivation for each ward in a list of all 8414 English wards. All three wards fall within the 3.2% most severely deprived in England.

In relation to child poverty, Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside rank as the 253rd, fifth and 333rd most severely disadvantaged of the 8414 English wards, that is, in the 4% most disadvantaged.

In Table 2, the percentage of children in the three wards living in low income households is given. A low income household is one which receives any of Working Families Tax Credit, Income Support or Job-Seeker's Allowance.

**Table 2: Proportion of the Area's Children Living in Low Income Households**

Ward	Proportion in Low Income Households
Grove Hill	65%
Beechwood	86%
Easterside	66%

An average of 72% of the three wards' children live in low income households.

The proportion of households in the wards where the main carer of children is a lone parent is high. Details are given in Table 3.

**Table 3: Households with Dependent Children with a Lone Carer**

Ward	Proportion with Dependent Children with a Lone Carer
Grove Hill	39%
Beechwood	52.4%
Easterside	46.8%

Of those households containing dependent children, an average of 44% have as their main carer a lone parent.

Levels of morbidity and mortality are high in Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside. This is illustrated by the Standardised Mortality Ratios for the

## One-off activities run by the Programme

(....not referred to elsewhere)

Road safety events (Lollipop, lollipop)

Dorman Museum outing (Water safety) and Albert Park

Food for Life (Breastfeeding) Partnership

Dental health sessions

Men's Health Month

Physiotherapy sessions

Domestic Violence Forum

Family fun days

Parent Network meetings

The Mela

Sure Start promotion events

Pat's Puppets

The Snowman

Time for you

Emergency Aid

Visits to Sure Start in Loftus

Fun with food

Asda shopping trip

---

## HOW IS SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY WORKING?

### Questionnaire for speech therapists

1. Sex:                    Male                    Female
2. How long have you been in post?
3. How does your work benefit children?
4. Does your work involve parents helping to benefit their children?  
Yes                    No
5. If yes, in what ways?
6. Do you think that the child gets enough within the session with you?  
Yes                    No
7. Do you think that the child gets enough sessions with you? (Why?)  
Yes                    No
8. Do you have any ideas on things that could be done to improve the speech therapy service?
9. Do you have any other comments?

**Thank you for your time**

---

wards. The SMR figures chosen for Table 4 are for all residents aged under 75, for deaths for all causes.

**Table 4: Standardised Mortality Ratios: all aged under 75, all causes**

Ward	SMR
Grove Hill	182
Beechwood	170
Easterside	155

Taking a score of 100 as the average mortality risk for all under seventy-fives, by this score, the population of Easterside, for example, has a 55% greater risk of early mortality than the English average. The risks are higher for men, and lower for women, which may go some way to explaining why 53% of the population are women, and 47% are men.

Unemployment is high. For example in Beechwood it is running at twice the national average. Forty-five per cent of the population have no formal qualifications.

The following snapshot of the area is taken from the Programme's delivery plan:

- Fewer residents live in owner-occupied house, and more in rented accommodation (predominantly local authority and housing association) than the Middlesbrough average.
- There is a high occupancy rate of property, and the vast majority of the houses have central heating
- While there is high unemployment, there are also some useful employment support schemes
- Prior to Sure Start, there were fluctuating and patchy levels of involvement in community activity; there are some good community resources
- However, there is also significant community disadvantage. For example, there is poor access to cars, and little community child care.
- There is a high level of drug usage and drug dealing, although there are good Drugs Action Team resources in Middlesbrough. A high proportion of residents are aware of drug dealers living and working in the area.
- While within the three wards health is poor, they form part of the Health Action Zone, and draw on resources of
  - o Healthy Homes Project
  - o Healthy Eating Programme
  - o Middlesbrough Teenage Pregnancy Strategy
  - o Adult Education Family Health Course
- There is a high level of teenage pregnancy, though those who live and work in the area participate in a range of relevant health and education measures.

---

## Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside: the overall approach

The vision statement of Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside is as follows:

*Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside is committed to the principle that **children under four and their families come first!***

***First** in the commitment to involve parents and carers as equal partners in the creation of a range of opportunities and services which seek to overcome all kinds of disadvantage.*

***First** in the queue to receive these new preventative and holistic opportunities and services designed to combat all kinds of disadvantage, therefore improving markedly their quality of life.*

*And*

***First** to encourage happy, healthy and fulfilled citizens of the future.*

This vision was formed during the period in which the Programme's development plan was written. The process invited contributions from statutory and voluntary organisations, and from parents and carers. The contributions from each of these stakeholder groups were used and appreciated equally. Extensive consultation took place with those living or working in the area, in order to understand its strengths and shortcomings, and to work out what the vision for the future should be. It was recognised that there could only be so much achieved by the time that the delivery plan had to be submitted. However, it was agreed from an early stage that a participative approach would underpin all aspects of the work throughout the life of the Programme, from development, through delivery, to evaluation. In this way, the Programme would remain sensitive to local need, and retain a sense of community ownership.

It will become evident from later sections of this paper that this approach has been maintained so far, and that it is being further developed. For example, within the governance structures of the Programme, there is equality of representation from organisations (statutory and voluntary) and from parents – on the management board, and on its sub-groups, especially finance and capital. In the Community Chest sub-group, parents are in the majority. How the approach is reflected in operational terms, including in the Programme's evaluation, will form the content of subsequent sections.

---

14. If yes, in what way?

15. Do you have any ideas on how the speech therapy service could be improved to help:

a) Children?

b) Parents?

c) The school?

16. Do you have other comments you would like to make about speech therapy ?

**Thank you for your time**

---

## HOW IS SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY WORKING?

### Questionnaire for teachers

1. Sex:                      Male                      Female
2. At what school do you teach?
3. How long have you worked at the school?
4. Do you find that there is a great need for speech and language therapists in this school?                      Yes                      No
- 4a. Why do you think that?
5. Which age range do you think needs the most support from speech therapy?
6. Do you find that speech and language problems are more common in males or females?
7. Do you think that the children get enough time with the speech therapist in school?                      Yes                      No
8. Do you think that the children have improved in their language since the speech therapist came to the school?                      Yes                      No
9. Do you think that the children are more confident since having speech therapy?                      Yes                      No
10. If yes, in what way?
11. Have there been other improvements ? (E.g. improved ability to relate to other children)
12. What, if any, feedback have you had from parents whose children have had speech therapy?
13. Overall, do you think speech therapy is an important service for school-age children?                      Yes                      No

## Evaluation Methodology

Active parental involvement is key to the effectiveness and sustainability of any Sure Start Programme, where the impact on children and families is intended to be substantial and lasting. As the major stakeholders, both in terms of their numbers and of the intention of the Programme to impact upon them, parents are in the best position to comment upon and to assess how effective the Programme is in its performance and impact on their family lives. The effectiveness (or otherwise) of Programmes such as Sure Start is normally measured through robust evaluation activity into which logically therefore should also be embedded the active participation of local parents.

The Sure Start Unit itself recognises and emphasises the importance of parental and community involvement in evaluation of local Programmes by requiring minimum standards for evaluation within their Management risk assessment.

Various models of evaluating local Sure Start Programmes are being tried and tested across the country. They feature greater or lesser degrees of parental and community involvement, depending on the evaluation approach and the Programme's commitment to active parental and community participation, as opposed to just meeting the required minimum standards of parental and community involvement.

Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside have, in association with research and development consultants, set out a model for local evaluation which reflects the strong commitment within the Programme to an overall approach and culture of working towards parental and community delegated control. This forms a substantial component of their plan for the long term sustainability of the work. The model which has been developed explicitly links in a structural way the two concepts of local evaluation and parental participation.

### **The model**

The model for the local evaluation of Sure Start Easterside derives from lessons learned from the Third European Poverty Programme, and from the evidence-based practice reported in the evaluation of Barnardo's Anti-Poverty Strategy 1997-2001 . It works to the definition of evaluation as "telling how and why an initiative works" (Weiss 1995 ), and the essence of this model is stakeholder participation; this means that the evaluation is done by and with the people directly involved in the Programme, that is, the people best placed to assess its impacts and effectiveness. This contrasts with the more traditional approach to evaluation, which is often done for or to the people directly involved, with

---

someone external assessing impacts and effectiveness. (While this approach is also valid, it can dilute, and sometimes forget, ownership of the initiative, which in turn can reduce the commitment to change and improve services and practice.)

The structure of the evaluation is based on strands of two research models:

First, the evaluation is consistent with the Theory of Change approach to evaluating complex community initiatives. Whilst this approach has a long-standing pedigree, it has been updated and revised by Connell and Kubisch. This approach is in essence very simple and straightforward:

When planning an intervention, you will need to:

- Agree with other people what are the goals you all want to achieve.
- Agree on the time scale for achieving them.
- Agree on the methods you will all use to get there.
- Recognise that you may need to adapt your methods and goals as you go along.

It is a positive approach; its principal aim is not to measure success or failure, but to improve planning.

A good Theory of Change follows four guidelines:

- It will be **plausible** – common sense will tell you that it can be done.
- It will be **testable** – explicit enough in its stages to lend itself to observation.
- It will be **doable** – the resources will be there to carry it out.
- It will be **results-responsive** – it will amend its end goal in the light of experience.

It will be evident that the planning framework used by Sure Start lends itself well to this approach. Indeed, much preliminary work has already been done (through the processes of national and local target setting, and the establishment of quarterly and annual milestones). The Theory of Change approach has already informed the evaluation process for other Sure Start Programmes, and is also being used in the evaluation of some Children's Fund Programmes and Health Action Zones.

---

<sup>1</sup> Traynor, T. and Davidson, G. (2001) *Challenging Disadvantage: The final evaluation report of Barnardo's Anti-Poverty Strategy*. Barking: Barnardo's.

<sup>2</sup> Weiss, C.H. (1995) "Nothing as practical as theory: exploring theory-based evaluation for comprehensive community initiatives for children and families". In *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods and Contexts*, Connell J.P., Kubisch, A.C., Schorr, L.B. and Weiss, C.H. (eds.). Washington DC: The Aspen Institute.

<sup>3</sup> See previous footnote.

- 
- |     |   |     |    |
|-----|---|-----|----|
| 14. | Did you find that it worked? (Expand on answer)                                   | Yes | No |
| 15. | Did you feel that your child had enough sessions with the speech therapist?       | Yes | No |
| 16. | Did you find the speech therapist easy to talk to? (Expand on answer)             | Yes | No |
| 17. | Did you notice a difference in your child after the sessions?                     | Yes | No |
| 18. | If yes, what was the difference?  | Yes | No |
| 19. | Did other people notice a difference in your child after the sessions?            | Yes | No |
| 20. | If yes, please give details.  | Yes | No |
| 21. | Do you think that the speech and language service could be improved?              | Yes | No |
| 22. | If yes, please give details of how it could be improved.                          |     |    |
| 23. | Do you have anything else you would like to say about the speech therapy service? |     |    |

**Thank you for your time.**

---

## HOW IS SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY WORKING?

### Questionnaire for parents and carers

- 1 Sex: Male Female
- 2 Are you a: Parent Carer Grandparent Other
- 3 Your Age range: Teens Twenties Thirties Forties +
- 4 Sex and age range of child (children) 0 - 4  
5 - 10  
Other
- 5 Martial status: Living together Single  
Married Other
- 6 Postcode:
- 7 How did you find out about speech therapy?
- 8 Who referred you there?
- 9 Why was your child referred to the speech therapist?
- 9a How old was your child when they were referred?
- 10 How long did you have to wait before attending your first session?
- 11 Did you find the speech therapy service easy and accessible? (Why?)  
Yes No Other (please specify)
- 12 Did you think your child benefited from speech therapy? (Why?)  
Yes No Other
13. Did you have home activity to do? Yes No

---

Set alongside this framework was a **Participatory Action Research** approach, with parents from the Sure Start Programme playing a major part in the survey. The engagement of parents attached to the Programme was seen as vital if the lessons learned from the research were to be fed into practical activity which would help them and their children.

Participatory Action Research is a process whereby community members do research to produce tangible results for change in their own local neighbourhood. It helps them get to know things about their community, and gives the chance to inform professionals so that they are listening to community members.

Participatory Action Research:

- is educative – for those taking part, for the professionals, for the community
- works with individuals as members of the community
- involves action for positive change
- involves local people in local action
- makes everyone part of the change process
- links the research to and with the local community and has a practical purpose to lead to change
- is a cyclical model, not a one-off

A group of parents drawn from the Sure Start Programme received training in Participatory Action Research from an independent Research and Development Consultant

### **Carrying out the evaluation**

Sure Start requires that in a local evaluation the following questions be addressed:

- Is the Sure Start Programme working?
- How well (or not) is it working?
- What helps or hinders the effectiveness of the Programme?
- What impact has the Programme had on children and families?

These questions need to be addressed continually throughout the Programme, and more explicitly at the following points:

- A final evaluation at the end of three years.
- Annual interim reports to inform progress and influence development.
- Less formal feedback throughout the course of each year, as appropriate.

---

The following is a summary of the evaluation activities by which it was intended to obtain answers to the core research questions outlined above:

- In relation to the chosen evaluation priorities....
  - Interviews with all relevant stakeholders – parents, professionals, volunteers
- In relation to all the rest of the Programme’s activities.....
  - Brief interviews with the lead staff member for each activity
  - Brief interviews with one parent who is a user or consumer for each of the activities
  - An analysis of the written records for that activity
- In relation to the strategic direction of the Programme.....
  - An analysis of Programme records – including manager’s reports, minutes of partnership board meetings, reports to Government Office for the risk assessment exercise
  - Interviews with the Programme manager and the evaluation reference group

## **Roles and responsibilities**

Whilst ultimately the Partnership Board are responsible for ensuring that local evaluation is carried out, the day-to-day responsibilities for the Programme’s evaluation were allocated as follows:

### Parents

A group of six to eight parents form the main evaluation team for the Programme. They have been trained in research and evaluation methods, particularly focusing on Participatory Action Research, and are equipped to design and undertake a variety of evaluation methods appropriate to the needs of the Programme and the Sure Start requirements for local evaluation. (For details of the research training see Appendix 2.)

In the training and subsequent evaluation activities they are being supported by the community engagement worker, and an external co-ordinator. Together, the Evaluation Team (the parents), the co-ordinator and the community empowerment worker work out

- the focus of evaluation for the coming year.
- detailed questions, which need to be addressed.

Relating to this focus, they work out

- a schedule for gathering data to provide answers to these questions.
- an allocation of tasks to enable the schedule to be achieved.
- a detailed timetable for the achievement of these tasks so that reports can be delivered punctually.

---

## PARENTAL PARTICIPATION - IS THE PROGRAMME GETTING IT RIGHT?

### Interview schedule for staff members

- 1 Role in the Programme?
- 2 How long have you been involved in the Sure Start Programme?
- 3 Do you think parental participation is important for the Sure Start programme?  
Yes Yes No No
- 4 Why do you think that?
- 5 In what aspects of the programme do you think parents should actively participate? (Why?)
- 6 Are there any aspects of the programme where you think parents should not participate? (Why)
- 7 Do you encourage parental participation in your role in the Programme? (If yes -Why and how? If no – Why Not?  
Yes Yes No No
8. Is there anything, which prevents you from encouraging parental participation in your role in the Programme?
9. Is there anything that could help you to promote more parental participation in the Programme? (If yes what? if no why?)  
Yes Yes No No
10. Do you have any ideas on how the overall Programme could promote more parental participation?
11. Do you think that the Programme is getting it right with parental participation? (In what ways?)  
Yes Yes No No
12. Any other comments?

**Thank you for your time**

---

**DOES THE CRECHE PROVISION MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PROGRAMME?**

**Interview schedule for non-crèche staff members**

- 1 What is your role in the Sure Start Programme?
- 2 Do you know what the Sure Start crèche provides? Yes No  
(If no – why not?)
- 3 Do you make parents aware of the facilities in the crèche? (How?)
- 4 Do you have any difficulties in booking crèche provision when it is needed for your work?  
(If yes what and how often?)
- 5 Is there anything that would make access to the crèche provision easier for your job?  
(What?) E.g. booking system, availability
- 6 Do you think that the facilities provided by the crèche are adequate for the needs of the Programme?
- 7 Can you think of anything that is needed to improve the crèche provision:
  - a) For your work?
  - b) for parents and children?
  - c) for the Sure Start Programme overall?
- 8 Do you have any other comments you want to make about the crèche provision?

**Thank you for your time.**

---

### The Evaluation Reference Group

This represents the perspectives of the key stakeholders, and its membership includes members of the Partnership, representatives from partner agencies, parents, and the Programme manager. The task of the group is to work with the Evaluation Team to address some or all of the following:

- to ensure that Sure Start requirements for local evaluation are met
- a mapping exercise to assure the plausibility of Programme activities relative to the objectives outlined in the delivery plan
- to clarify which activities are evidence-based and which are weak or uncertain in their evidence
- to define whether activities require low monitoring or high profile evaluation
- to agree what needs to be evaluated
- to clarify priorities and questions for thematic evaluation – for example, partnership, or community involvement
- to monitor and review progress of the evaluation – e.g. what is being done? Is it realistic? What is being achieved?
- to review annually the mapping exercise and renegotiate the developments on the basis of findings from the evaluation and from the experience of the stakeholders
- to review questions and priorities for the thematic evaluation
- to sign off the annual evaluation reports
- to steer and oversee the direction of the evaluation

### The Community Engagement Worker

The Community Engagement Worker provides the main support and link between the Evaluation Team and the Programme. It is hoped that in the longer term the community engagement worker will be active in delivering research and evaluation training and development to include other parents.

### The Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator provides initial evaluation training to the Evaluation Team (and to other stakeholders, as appropriate – for example, in relation to Theory of Change), and continued support and co-ordination of the conduct of the evaluation. The co-ordinator also ensures that all of the required areas for evaluation are covered. The ultimate goal, which is reflected in the tone of the co-ordinator's work, is to enable the Evaluation Team to become self-sufficient.

### The research consultant

There are four explicit tasks for the research consultant:

- working initially with the staff group and partner agencies to ensure that their work monitoring systems are in a form which also provides material for evaluation purposes. It is intended through this that duplication of task will be avoided – the systems will support both monitoring and evaluation.

- 
- working with the Programme finance officer to ensure that the Sure Start requirement of evaluating cost-effectiveness is addressed and met.
  - ensuring that the analysis of the material takes place and that the agreed reports are produced. (Stakeholders, particularly the Evaluation Team, will contribute to these activities.)
  - jointly with the co-ordinator, facilitating Theory of Change workshops for key stakeholders.

## **Timescale**

Training of the evaluation team took place from April to June 2003.

Planning and carrying out fieldwork for the first annual report took place from May to October 2003.

The material derived from this fieldwork was analysed in October, and will form the basis for a feedback day for all stakeholders in November 2003. A second discussion day will take place in February 2004, in which the lessons learned from the first evaluation will be applied to planning the work of the year ahead. The evaluation is therefore both summative and formative – it will describe progress made, but its main function will be to inform the further development and enhancement of the Programme, based particularly on the views of its users.





## Achievements so far - at a strategic level

### Partnership

Working in partnership with other agencies began for Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside from the time of the drafting of the delivery plan, and has continued to be a key factor in its operation. Three distinct types of partnership have been in evidence: participation in membership of the partnership board by a number of agencies; joint working by all of the local Sure Start Programmes to secure effective working relationships with relevant resource agencies; and partnerships developed between the Programme itself and a range of agencies within the Programme's area to develop more effective practice.

#### *The partnership board*

At the most strategic level, sound relationships have been developed with those agencies represented on the Programme's partnership board. These are:

- South Tees Acute Trust
- Easterside Partnership
- The Local Education Authority
- South Tees Primary Care Trust
- The Library Service
- Grove Hill Resource Centre
- Sutton Trust
- Advice and Information Service
- Single Regeneration

Also on the Partnership Board are up to 10 parents from the local community. At present nine of these places are taken up. More will be said of this in the section (below) on parental involvement.

In addition to the agency board members serving on the Partnership Board, other important agencies and organisations have been identified to act as advisors, for example, Citizens' Advice Bureau, Lone Parent Advisory Service, Early Years and Child Care, Teenage Pregnancy Service. Representatives are invited to the Partnership Board as and when required, to give their specialist advice.

The current (as at November 2003) Partnership Board were selected by the parents (through informal interviews) as being the most relevant agencies to contribute to the Programme. The term of office is until November 2004, before which time membership will be reviewed.

---

### *Joint working with other Sure Starts*

Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside works closely with the other Middlesbrough Programmes, and with all the South Tees Programmes where appropriate, in order to negotiate services and resources across all the Programmes. There is an acute shortage of certain professionals within the region (and in some cases nationally). The Programmes are working with South Tees Primary Care Trust to secure midwifery and speech and language therapy services, and a process has been developed whereby all Programmes derive a reasonable proportion of the scarce resources. They have also negotiated with Middlesbrough PCT and the Education Action Zone to make use of the package known as BLAST (Boosting Language, Auditory Skills and Training). Furthermore, all of the Sure Start Programmes have contributed to the Middlesbrough Book a Toy Scheme, through the EYDCP.

A second focus of collaboration for the Middlesbrough Sure Start Programmes is the development of policies and codes of conduct. Partly to facilitate this, a strategic policy officer has been appointed to service all the Middlesbrough Sure Start Programmes. An example of the benefit of this post is the co-ordination of the most effective response for the Programmes collectively in looking at the implications for each Programme of developing the Children's Centre initiative. On a slightly wider level, generic Service Level Agreements are being developed by all the South Tees Programmes.

### *Local working partnerships*

Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside sees it as vital that they should work well with other agencies operating within the wards. There are some notable examples of this approach already having been applied in practice:

- Arrangements have been made with Sutton Housing to rent space for office accommodation in Saltersgill, in order to provide an outreach service. Two Sure Start staff are already based there – the health promotion worker and the health co-ordinator
- The Programme is working in partnership with Nunthorpe Nurseries in to develop a neighbourhood nursery in Martonside
- A partnership has been established with three schools to set up a Pathfinder Project – a pilot scheme to develop breakfast clubs and after-school facilities, leading to full wrap-around care
- Negotiations have taken place with SKITTLES, who are developing a self-contained 32-capacity wraparound care facility in a former school nursery building. Agreement was reached for SKITTLES to work closely with Sure Start and local primary schools, to prepare children for full-time education. Children from across the Sure Start catchment area will be accepted in this resource. The Programme has ring-fenced finance to secure six places in this day care facility.

---

## DOES THE CRECHE PROVISION MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PROGRAMME?

### Interview schedule for crèche staff

- 1 What is your role in the crèche?
- 2 How long have you worked in the crèche?
- 3 What is the crèche meant to provide for:
  - a) Parents?
  - b) Children?
  - c) The Sure Start Programme?
- 4 Do you think that the crèche does provide these services for: (If not why not?)
  - a) parents
  - b) Children?
  - c) The Sure Start Programme?
- 5 Is the crèche fully used for all the sessions available? Yes No
- 6 Is the crèche over subscribed at any particular time? (if yes when?)
- 7 Is the crèche under subscribed at any particular time? (if yes when?)
- 8 How would you rate the facilities provided in relation to the demands made upon them?

Very Good	Good	Adequate
Limited	Very limited	
- 9 Is there anything that could make the crèche provision better for:
  - a) parents
  - b) children
  - c) The Sure Start Programme?
- 10 Is there anything that others could do to help the crèche provision be improved?
  - a) Parents
  - b) other staff members
  - c) Sure Start management
- 11 Any other comments?

**Thank you for your time**

---

12 Is there anything that would make access easier for you? (What?)

13 Are you satisfied with the service given by the crèche? E.g. (circle)

child safety

staff friendliness

equipment

space

toys

toileting

availability

venue

number of staff

Other (specify)

14 Do you think your child benefits from going into the crèche?

Yes

No

(If yes in what way?)

15 Do you have any views on what could be done to make the crèche better for:

a) You?

b) Your child (children)

c) The Sure Start programme?

16 Any other comments?

**Thank you for your time.**

- 
- Jointly with six local schools, a Head Teachers' Forum has been developed; this in turn has led to the setting up of a practitioners' forum, which is developing packages for schools to prepare parents and children for early learning experiences
  - Close working relationships have been developed with the area Social Services Department staff; this includes the formalising of communication links and clarifying roles and responsibilities. The contact person from Social Services is invited to attend Partnership Board meetings, and the Programme manager and health co-ordinator attend local Social Services team meetings, particularly those concerned with family allocation covering the catchment area
  - A local partnership has been developed with key health visitors, from which the health drop ins were established; in turn, this has enabled other agencies to provide their services in a more accessible format and venue – for example, community physiotherapy, speech and language service, women's support network, women's aid and community dental health.

Other partnerships will be developed in due course, in accordance with the evolutionary nature of the Programme, as the Programme responds to and reflects local need.

### **Parental involvement**

From the outset, a cornerstone of the Programme's approach has been the involvement of local parents in all aspects of the work. This was asserted within the vision statement, which highlighted .....

*the commitment to involve parents and carers as equal partners in the creation of a range of opportunities and services which seek to overcome all kinds of disadvantage.*

So far, the practical application of this vision has resulted in the presence of parents in a number of key points in the Programme. Most importantly, it has been agreed that up to ten parents should be members of the Partnership Board. At present, there are nine parents on the board.

Parents selected, by interview, the agencies who would be members of the Partnership Board. They have participated in the recruitment and selection of all Programme staff.

Parents also participate in the following:

- The Capital Sub-Group
- The Finance Sub-Group
- The Recruitment and Selection Sub-Group
- The Community Chest Panel (where they are in a majority)
- Food for Life (breastfeeding) Partnership
- Middlesbrough Domestic Violence Forum

---

A Community Network, or Parents' Forum, has been established, in which other parents have the opportunity to receive feedback from parents who are active in the Programme's governance, and to feed in ideas, comments and suggestions.

Parents have taken part in away days in which key policies have been worked out: the Programme's constitution, complaints policy, and the child protection policy.

Parents are driving and actually carrying out the evaluation of the Programme.

An indication of the parent power in this Programme can be seen in the recorded minutes of the Partnership Board in May 2003, which highlight that no decisions could be made because no parents attended the meeting.

As a cross-cutting theme throughout the Programme, parent participation was highlighted by the parent evaluation team as a priority area for evaluation, and is illustrated in more detail in a later chapter which deals exclusively with this issue.

Essentially parental presence is evident in virtually all aspects of the Programme's functioning – their presence is presumed, and taken as a given in many instances. Practical support backs this up: timing of meetings, crèche provision, transport and refreshments.

### **Staffing**

Recruitment of staff began in July 2002, to contribute to the development of early services, and has continued since that time. An early appointment was that of the community engagement co-ordinator, so that the momentum could be maintained of engaging parents in the process of drawing up the delivery plan.

The following diagram provides a summary of the staffing structure of the Programme:

Appendix 3:

# Questionnaires in relation to the evaluation's priority areas

## DOES THE CRECHE PROVISION MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PROGRAMME?

### Interview schedule for parents

- 1 Male                      Female
- 2 Are you a:              Parent                      Carer                      Grandparent              Other
- 3 Age range:              Teens                      Twenties                      Thirties                      Forties
- 4 Martial status:                      Living together                      Single  
Married                      Other
- 5 Postcode:
- 6 How long have you used the crèche?
- 7 How many children do you take to the crèche?
- 8 What is the age of the child/children?
- 9 How often do you use the crèche?

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Friday
AM					
PM					

- 10 Why do you use the crèche?
- 11 Do you have any difficulties with accessing the crèche? (Circle – if other specify what)  
time of session                      transport                      cost  
availability                      venue                      other

---

## **Session 6**

- Organising fieldwork
- Collating findings
- Analysing findings

### **Themes used throughout:**

- Building confidence
- Building skills
- Lots of comfort breaks
- Laughter
- Nice food
- Social interaction

### **Methods used:**

- Drawing
- Small groupwork in practical activity
- Large group discussion
- As little direct "teaching" as possible

<b>Programme Manager</b>			
<b>Outreach and Home Visiting Community Health</b>	<b>Early Years and Childcare</b>	<b>Support for Parents and Families</b>	<b>Programme Support</b>
Health Co-ordinator and Deputy Manager	Childcare Services Co-ordinator	Community Engagement Co-ordinator	Admin Officer
Community Development Worker - Health Promotion <i>Midwifery Services</i>	Speech and Language Therapy Services Resource Assistant - Libraries (0.6 FTE)	Community Activities Officer (FT)	P.A.to Programme Manager (0.6 FTE)
Home Visitors (2 x 0.5 FTE) Welfare Rights Worker <i>Support Activities</i>	Creche Workers (2 x 0.7 FTE)	Community Development Worker - Dads	Finance Manager (0.5 FTE)
			<i>Modern Apprentice</i>
			<i>Monitoring and Evaluation Capital Programme</i>

From the diagram it will be evident that there are three distinct strands of service provision: health, early years and childcare, and community support.

On the whole, recruitment has been highly successful. The exception to this has been the question of health workers. Mention has already been made of the national and regional shortage of certain staff groups. This has impacted on the Programme's ability to recruit health visitors, midwives and speech and language therapists. As mentioned previously, this is being dealt with in conjunction with all the Sure Start Programmes in Middlesbrough, and across South Tees where appropriate.

As a result of discussion and negotiation for speech and language therapy, this Sure Start Programme, along with the others in Middlesbrough, has access to a Speech and Language Co-ordinator, and dedicated speech therapists and speech and language assistants who provide time on a weekly basis. Similarly with the midwifery services, the Programme can access the midwifery facilitator, dedicated midwifery time and health care assistant time. The remit for these specialist services is now being developed to address the local requirements and complement the existing health activities in each Programme.

In the light of closer examination of the needs of the area, some posts have been created which were not in the delivery plan, namely:

- Community Development Worker (Dads)
- Community Development Worker (Health Promotion)
- Welfare Rights Worker
- Physiotherapist (10 hours per week)
- Sessional crèche and community workers particularly to cope with extra demands during summer activities

---

Lack of premises has not been allowed to hold up the recruitment process. Staff is occupying temporary premises where necessary, until the capital Programme is implemented.

Systems have also been put in place to ensure sound staff supervision and support, with one:one feedback sessions, using the line management structures and return-to-work interviews with the Programme manager after sickness leave.

### **Capital development**

Most of this section is derived from extracts from the Programme Manager's Capital Strategy Update Report of May 2003.

Capital developments for the Programme are overseen by a Capital Sub-Group, which includes a number of parents. In devising the Capital Strategy, the rationale is based upon the following premise – that wherever a parent/carer lives within the Programme Area they will be within pram pushing distance of a Sure Start facility. At these outlets, parents/carers will be able to access the generic Sure Start services. The Capital Strategy also encompasses the three main pillars of education; health and employment related training, which underpin Sure Start. To realise these aims, it is envisaged that each Sure Start outlet will have the following particular specialism:-

Grove Hill – job related training and business support

Beechwood – education

Easterside – health and care

An assessment of current community resources, informed by ongoing consultation with parents/carers, [including a series of visits by parents/carers to other local Sure Start Programmes] and the Steering Group has confirmed the viability of the following venues. It has been agreed that structural additions to these buildings have the greatest potential to serve the Programme's accommodation needs, and provide a lasting investment to neighbourhood facilities. Currently, building works and acquisitions include:

#### ***Grove Hill Resource Centre, Bishopton Road:***

Negotiations are now complete to establish a Sure Start outlet within the present Grove Hill Resource Centre. It has been agreed that Sure Start will manage the crèche facility and the former IT suite, whose use will be changed to suit the needs of the Sure Start Programme. A major advantage of further developing this site will be the integrated nature of service delivery within the Resource Centre, including the ability for the Programme to hire training rooms, IT facilities and the purpose-built health suite. Discussions are also underway with the Youth and Community Service with a view to

**Appendix 2:**

---

# **A Summary of the Participatory Action Research Training**

## **Familiarisation session:**

- With each other
- With Sure Start
- With Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside
- Evaluation, what is it?
- Evaluation of Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside

## **Session 2**

- What needs to be evaluated?
- Why do people evaluate?
- Why do you want to evaluate?
- Everyday skills used in evaluation research
- What skills do you think you have?

## **Session 3**

- What do researchers do?
- Process of outlining the design of research and evaluation
- Levels of evaluation for activities in Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside
- Choosing your research or evaluation topic

## **Session 4**

- Designing your research or evaluation study
- Clarifying the main research question
- Research methods
- Choosing a research method
- Access and ethics in research

## **Session 5**

- Types of questions
- Defining questions
- Devising questionnaires
- Sampling



---

looking at the site as a whole, which includes the only day nursery in the Grove Hill area.

In summary, extra facilities will include

- Secure outside play area for 0-4 year olds
- Adaptation/extension to provide a wet play area
- Internal adaptations/extension to extend use for childcare
- Private clinic room/family support/counselling
- Adaptations to provide office accommodation

### ***Martonside Sure Start Centre, Beechwood***

Planning permission has been granted to build a Sure Start Centre as part of a holistic renewal of local health and early year's services. This includes an increase in the capacity of the local GP Surgery and an eighty-five place Neighbourhood Nursery initiative funded day nursery. This Neighbourhood Nursery facility will be attached to the Sure Start facility. When the nursery is established at Martonside, parents will be helped to access places by the Programme subsidising 30% for 10 places where parents are in receipt of Working Families Tax Credit.

A major advantage of siting a Sure Start outlet here would be the integrated nature of service delivery with regard to childcare and the shared health facilities through the GP and Dental Surgeries. A site visit of local parents/carers took place in August 2002 and, at the local Beechwood Community Council meeting held on 4 September 2002, the proposal received the overwhelming endorsement of local residents and local parents/carers present.

The centre will have state of the art facilities including a crèche, sensory room, parent craft room, two consulting rooms, an informal lounge, kitchen and covered play and learn area. It is anticipated that the building will be completed by March 2004.

Middlesbrough Council as the accountable body will hold a thirty-year lease at a peppercorn rental on behalf of Sure Start. As part of the agreement for the ten-year life of Sure Start, it is implicit that the facilities will also be available for all local families with children under four for the remaining twenty years of the lease.

### ***Easterside Day Centre, Broughton Avenue***

The third venue for the delivery of Sure Start services will be within the Easterside shopping precinct on Broughton Avenue. Discussions have narrowed the options down to Easterside Day Centre.

---

Negotiations are presently underway with the property owners, Tees and North Yorkshire NHS Trust, and Middlesbrough Council, acting on behalf of Sure Start, to purchase the former Day Centre. Although not complete, these negotiations are well advanced and agreement regarding the purchase price is imminent. Running parallel to these negotiations, consultation with local parents/carers has been ongoing.

Middlesbrough Council Architects have been commissioned, working with local parents/carers, to design the interior of the building. This includes the roofing of the present open courtyard to create a state of the art children's play and learn area.

At this stage, it is envisaged that a fully refurbished and modernised Sure Start Centre will open by the end of 2004.

A key part of this Easterside development will be the provision (by SKITTLES) of a fifty-place nursery for children 0 – 4 years of age, funded jointly with the Easterside Community Schools Pathfinder pilot, to be based within St Thomas More Primary School.

In summary, extra facilities will include:-

- Secure outside play area for 0-4 year olds
- Meeting/training rooms.
- Internal adaptations/extension to extend use for childcare
- Shared kitchen area for nutrition/cookery courses
- Private clinic room/family support/counselling
- Adaptations to provide office accommodation.

### ***William Sutton Trust Community House***

As part of the ongoing development of the Programme, a Sure Start outreach office was opened on 14 April 2003 in the new William Sutton Community House, Collin Avenue, Saltersgill. Negotiations for this outreach facility commenced as a direct result of local parent/carer representation for a Sure Start presence on this particular housing estate within the Programme area. This outreach office will accommodate the Programme's Health Co-ordinator and the Community Development Worker [Health Promotion]. Longer term, when the main Sure Start facilities are open, this office will be used as an outreach facility for Sure Start members of staff to deliver estate based activities across the main themes of education, health and employment.

### ***Easterside Library***

Since May 2002, the Programme's Administrative base has been sited within an office within Easterside Library. It is envisaged that the Admin Team will stay at this location until the former Easterside Day Centre, mentioned above, has been purchased and refurbished.

Appendix 1:

---

## Sure Start's Aim and Objectives

The Aim and Objectives for Sure Start's Fifth Wave are:

**Aim:** to work with parents-to-be, parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children – particularly those who are disadvantaged – so that they can flourish at home and when they get to school, and thereby break the cycle of disadvantage for the current generation of young children.

**Objective 1: improving social and emotional development**

*In particular, by supporting early bonding between parents and their children, helping families to function and by enabling the early identification and support of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties*

**Objective 2: improving health**

*In particular, by supporting parents in caring for their children to promote healthy development before and after birth*

**Objective 3: improving children's ability to learn**

*In particular, by encouraging high quality environments and childcare that promote early learning, provide stimulating and enjoyable play, improve language skills and ensure early identification and support of children with special needs*

**Objective 4: strengthening families and communities**

*In particular, by involving families in building the community's capacity to sustain the Programme and thereby create pathways out of poverty*



---

Until the Programme has developed all of its own premises, staff are accessing local community venues and resources on an interim basis, so that activities can be run and the Programme developed.

### **Governance, policy and procedures**

A working constitution for the Partnership Board and other policies were developed in the course of a planning away-day (attended by parents). These were subsequently agreed by the Partnership Board (on 5th March 2003).

A Complaints Policy has been drafted, and this will be considered at the Board meeting of August 2003.

The process of drafting policies includes parental participation in formulating them, with subsequent verification by the Partnership Board (which also includes parent representatives). Policies currently going through this process are:

- Equal Opportunities
- Child Protection
- Health and Safety

Robust recording, monitoring and administrative systems have been developed and are regularly reviewed and enhanced – for example registration under Data Protection Act, and registration forms for the Programmes. Financial systems and procedures have been devised with clear levels of devolved authority.

For monitoring purposes (for the requirements of the Children and Young People's Unit), the software Soft Smart is being used.

It is intended by the Programme manager that further policies and procedures will be drafted as needed, to support a sound management and practice infrastructure.

At the time of writing this first evaluation report, the Programme had just been subjected to its first Risk Assessment by Government Office North East. The outcome was very positive, with a low risk assessment. The only area which merited attention was in relation to finance. This was subsequently and quickly rectified by means of the Finance Officer sharing information with the Partnership Board to assure overall financial probity.

---

## **Promoting the Programme**

Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside is promoted at both strategic and operational levels, in the following ways:

- Through the newsletter, which provides information on events and activities run by the Programme. It is published four times a year, and is devised by the community newsletter group, consisting principally of parents. Each household in the Sure Start area receives a copy. It is also available in public outlets such as libraries.
- The Community Chest extends the influence of the Programme, since the grants made have an impact on all the families who make use of the facilities of the recipient groups.
- Bounty Packs and Bookstart Packs are given to parents at the time of their child's birth and at subsequent health visitor checks respectively.
- Information packs are given to all newly registered families, and all information and stationery contains the local Sure Start logo. A local press is used for the preparation of this printed material.
- The Programme, jointly with Abingdon Sure Start, contributed to the Middlesbrough Mela. Whenever possible, the Programme is promoted at events where there is the opportunity for a display to be set up.
- Periodically, staff literally walk the streets of the area, making contact with local people, and through this outreach activity they advise them of events and facilities.
- The activities themselves quite often offer the chance to raise the profile of the Programme, especially when they are held outside the Programme's premises.
- A monthly Diary of Events is provided to all health visitors to promote discussion of the Programme's activities, and encourage the take-up of services in the course of health visitors' contact with local families.

---

### **What impact has the Programme had on children and families?**

Differences made to the lives of parents and children represent a theme which pervades the whole of this report. Such differences have been achieved both by the individual activities and by the Programme overall. For example, parents feel that they are getting more opportunities to develop as individuals and as parents. They have grown in self-esteem, and have improved their abilities and skills. Children have improved in confidence, behaviour, speech and play, and they are interacting better with each other and with adults. With the emphasis within the Programme on parental participation, parents feel that they are valued as people, and they can make choices which change things within the Programme and within their own lives.

### **Final note**

The Programme has achieved much, but to develop further, careful consideration needs to be given to adequate resourcing. This will enhance the realisation of the vision that ***Children under four and their families come first.***

---

### **How well (or not) is it working?**

Given the short period which has elapsed since approval of the Delivery Plan was given, the Programme has developed rapidly in creating its infrastructure, proceeding with the capital Programme (which is already at an advanced stage), and establishing a large number of its core activities.

At an activities level, the Programme is working well, and although issues and problems about current provision have been identified through the evaluation, the issues are around the need to extend current activities as much as the development of new ones.

It is evident from some of the parents' comments that the Programme has been well received within the area, particularly because the Programme is being developed as promised, it does what it says it will do, and develops services in accordance with what parents say they want and need for themselves and for their children.

Staff and parents acknowledge that there is room for improvement, and will jointly work towards resolving these issues, together with the Programme management and Partnership Board. They will begin this process at the Planning Day in February 2004.

### **What helps?**

- Having an inclusive and collaborative approach.
- Having a real commitment to working in partnership with other agencies.
- Having a real commitment to working in partnership with parents.
- The commitment of staff to listening to parents.
- The culture within the Programme of working to fulfil the vision of children and families coming first.
- The transparency of the Programme. Nothing is concealed, and all stakeholders are well-informed about the Programme.
- In terms of being valued for their contribution, no distinction is evident between parents and staff.

### **What hinders?**

- In relation to parental participation, to the crèche, to the other activities and also to the overall Programme, suggestions have already been highlighted in the relevant sections, and in the chapter on stakeholder feedback.
- In relation to the activities, areas have been highlighted as needing to be improved. They have not posed significant hindrances to development, but their resolution would enhance the Programme's performance. This is particularly relevant to the issue of increasing the resources of the staff and crèche.

## **Achievements so far - at a strategic level**

### **Priority areas for evaluation**

The parent evaluation team chose three areas of work within the Programme for a more in-depth evaluation exercise. The three areas were: crèche provision, parental participation and speech and language therapy. These three areas were seen as important to them and to the Programme. Crèche provision and parental participation are particularly crucial components of the Programme, since both are necessary to support and enable other activities to happen effectively. Speech and language therapy is also very important in this Programme because of the high number of children being referred.

These three topics also formed the subjects used by the parent evaluation team in going through the entire process of designing and undertaking a research and evaluation study within their training, from identifying the main research question, designing the questionnaires, carrying out the fieldwork, to collating and analysing the data.

The findings from evaluating the crèche provision and parental participation are given in detail below.

In relation to speech and language therapy, whilst parents themselves decided that speech and language therapy was a priority for them, that they wanted to look into, within the Programme at that point no services had yet been set up. They therefore decided that they would still interview parents whose children had been referred for speech and language therapy, to try to get information on what was needed for service development within the Programme.

However, the point in time when they tried to access parents, and tried to access the schools, was only two weeks before the end of term before the summer holidays. So whilst head teachers were very enthusiastic about someone coming to interview them, at that point it didn't actually happen to any great extent, because of the timing, and one or two misunderstandings about appointments. However, it still remains a high priority to look into Speech and language therapy, partly what's needed, and partly what's available. Now within Middlesbrough all the Sure Starts have contributed to funding a speech and language therapy co-ordinator, Therapists and Assistants, so that the Programmes actually share that resource amongst all the Programmes. In due course this will lend itself to being evaluated, at a later date. It remains a priority area for parents, as several of the parents have had their children referred for speech and language therapy. When the baseline data was assembled for the delivery plan, the proportion of the area's children with speech and language difficulties was assessed as around 25%. However, when the Sure Start speech and language staff were doing their measurement of children, they put the figure as high as 50%. So speech and language therapy

---

is a very high priority for everyone. The findings of the limited interviews that were undertaken (three teachers and two parents) are summarised briefly later in this chapter.

(Copies of the interview schedules for all three priority areas can be found in Appendix 3)

### **The crèche: does the crèche provision meet the needs of the Programme?**

In evaluating the crèche provision, interviews were carried out by parents from the evaluation team. Parents accessing the crèche, crèche staff and non-crèche staff within the Sure Start Programme were interviewed.

#### ***Parents' views***

The majority of the 16 mothers who were interviewed are in their thirties, four are in their twenties, and one in her forties. No teenage mothers were interviewed, though this does not mean that none access the crèche facilities. Nine of the 16 are single parents, and seven are married. During the month in which the interviews took place (September 2003), a total of 26 families made use of the crèche.

#### *Use and access*

Some of the parents had been accessing the crèche for more than a year; others had only begun using it recently. The highest number of mothers (11) took only one child to the crèche, but four took two children at the same time, and one mother required three places in the crèche. There was a greater demand for crèche places for children aged two to four (for 18 children), whilst children aged up to two accounted for only three places. The crèche capacity is currently 12.

Mothers required access to the crèche at different and mixed times, as and when needed, to enable them to attend meetings, or engage in activities and training courses, or in one instance because there is no childminder available.

Access to the crèche in terms of times of sessions and venue did not pose any difficulty for 14 of the parents, but two identified difficulty in access, one because of transport, and one because of lack of availability of places, since it is often filled to capacity.

Although for the majority of parents access was not a problem, comment was made that the outside door to the crèche was difficult, especially with double buggies.

## Conclusion

This is an initial evaluation report, covering the first few months of the Programme's operation, during which time energies have gone into:

- Establishing the infrastructure
- Sorting out the capital building Programme in three locations
- Appointing staff

All of this has taken place within a climate of a scarcity of community facilities and resources, and of health professionals. Nevertheless, significant achievements have been reached in

- Delivering a wide variety and high volume of services, as described in this report
- Developing a community development culture with a high degree of parental participation. This is evident as a recurrent theme both within strategic functioning and in operational practice.
- Establishing a sound infrastructure to enable the Programme to develop.

We now turn to the core evaluation questions raised by Sure Start, namely:

- Is the Sure Start Programme working?
- How well (or not) is it working?
- What helps or hinders the effectiveness of the Programme?
- What impact has the Programme had on children and families?

### **Is the Sure Start Programme working?**

Parents and staff involved in the Programme, together with agencies represented on the Partnership Board and Evaluation Reference Group would say that it is, and that it has already made significant qualitative impacts. It has also been successful from the Sure Start perspective of contributing to achieving the objectives set out by the Unit. (The extent to which objectives have been achieved quantitatively has not been recorded here, but this is available in the quarterly monitoring data submitted to the Unit.)

In a qualitative sense, the Programme is working for those involved, and is impacting positively on the community. However, it is recognised that there is a need to reach wider numbers, but since many activities are already full or over-subscribed, there is a need for more resources – crèche, staff and buildings – to be developed so that more services can be delivered.



---

### *Satisfaction and benefits*

The level of satisfaction with the services provided by the crèche was rated very highly, with unanimous affirmation for the levels of safety, toileting, staff friendliness, number of staff and the venue itself. Equipment, toys and availability also rated highly, with 15 of the 16 mothers expressing satisfaction, whilst space in the crèche fared only slightly lower, with 13 mothers saying that they were satisfied.

Only one person commented that “sometimes more availability” would be appreciated.

Fifteen of the 16 mothers interviewed thought that their children positively benefited from going to the crèche, particularly in getting one-to-one attention, helping children to mix with others, learning, new things, and experiencing a variety of educational toys and child care, all of which helped children to have increased confidence, and in one reported instance improved speech.

### *Views on improving the crèche*

Given the high level of satisfaction expressed previously, there were only a few comments from parents on how the crèche provision could be improved, as detailed below:

Changes to help parents:

- The location (1)
- Occasional day care facility leaving mothers with no ties (1)
- A booking system (2)

Changes to help children

- More places and space (3)
- More age-appropriate toys for older children
- An outdoor play area

Changes to help the Programme

- Better advertising
- Booking system (2)
- Baby room (2)
- Bigger crèche

The picture of the crèche emerging from the views of the parents who were interviewed is one of a highly used service providing a very satisfactory level of care and stimulation for children. Parents trust the staff and are happy to leave their children there, and the children seem happy to be left!

---

The overall message from the interviews is that the service is excellent, but as a core support service there needs to be more of it, in terms of space and availability. (There is actually a booking system in place, which is not always used properly, particularly when people do not cancel places if they are subsequently unable to make use of them.)

### **Staff views**

Eight members of the Programme staff group were interviewed in order to elicit their views on the crèche provision. This included three crèche staff members and five others involved in providing other direct services and activities with parents and children. From these interviews the following comments were made.

All of the staff members interviewed are fully aware of what the crèche aims to do, and are very positive about what it does actually offer.

It does not just provide child care, but offers an enjoyable and stimulating environment where children can learn safely and develop skills as well as socialising with other children and trusted adults. This gives parents the freedom (and peace of mind) to attend courses and activities, as well as time to contribute actively to the Sure Start Programme in a wide variety of ways. Without the crèche parents would not be able to attend, and therefore other activities would not be able to function; neither would parents be able to participate in the strategic development, planning and implementation of the overall Programme.

It is generally recognised and appreciated that quality crèche provision is vital as a support service in the Programme, to help Sure Start achieve many of its targets.

Parents are made aware of the crèche provision by staff through word of mouth, letters, personal contact and visiting. Whenever any course, activity, meeting or parent event is planned, parents are advised that crèche facilities will be available.

Given the high level of activity for all staff involved in delivering direct services, this obviously creates an even higher numerical demand for crèche places. The current crèche provision at Grove Hill has limited capacity which at times is problematic, because demands outweigh the availability of places. This in turn affects how the non-crèche staff are able to do their work. This was not delivered as a criticism about the crèche provision as it exists and operates – more of a strong message that structurally and logistically there are just not enough crèche resources to cope with the increasing demand.

- 
- Comment was made that without the parents and the crèche there would be nothing. The crèche enables parents to access all activities and in this Programme it is reported to allay the separation anxiety that parents feel when leaving their children.
  - Sure Start is also having a very positive effect on the community, and is encouraging greater use of community resources.
  - "Everyone is happy; this applies to families too. There is now more of a sense of community, and hope for change."

The transactions of the evaluation feedback day have been reported at some length for two reasons. First, it is important to be assured that the contents of the draft evaluation report were accurate and balanced, and could be validated by the wider stakeholder group. Secondly, the points and issues raised will form a large component of the proposed planning day to be held in February 2004. On this day discussion will focus on what is to be done about the issues raised, both in the report and on the feedback day – what is to be done, how will it be done, when will it be done, and who will do it?

---

## Reflections on the evaluation

In relation to the first interim evaluation, the following points were made:

- The evaluation has demonstrated that much has already been achieved within the Programme, and participants judged that it is an accurate portrayal, telling the truth about what is working and what is not.
- The model of evaluation in which parents are the Programme's evaluators is seen as the right one for this context. There is however a need to advertise the approach more widely in order to get more parents involved. The experience of taking part would be a great learning opportunity; parents who have been involved in the evaluation felt quite strongly that they could not have done this a year ago.
- Each course or activity is also evaluated by staff as they go along, and at the end of a phase of the activity.
- The group judged that the frequency (annual) of the evaluation is just right.
- This evaluation has placed the accent quite rightly on the views of families, on what is important to parents, and on what needs to be prioritised by parents. Some participants stressed the importance, however, of not neglecting the views of staff members in reporting the findings.
- Within this evaluation it was users of the Programme who were interviewed; a suggestion was made that at some time in the future the Programme should conduct survey focusing on people who are not regular users or are not formally registered with the Programme.

## Differences to the lives of children, their families and the community

For those parents using Sure Start services, many differences have been noted:

- Parents think that their children have improved in confidence, behaviour, speech and play.
- Parents and children interact better with each other and with other parents and children. Parents also support each other outside of Programme activities.
- There is a high social gain to be derived from meeting people from different backgrounds. Everyone is valued in Sure Start, and this provides a role model for valuing others in the community.
- There are greater opportunities for parents and children to learn more through play and educational activities. This gives them an active part to play in providing a better quality of life for their children.
- Sure Start has helped parents to see services as non-threatening opportunities to learn more through training courses, and to gain certificates. This has helped to increase their confidence and self-esteem. In one instance a parent reported that until she became involved in Sure Start she hadn't realised that she had "stopped using her brain".
- Whilst some professionals may be surprised at the level of "parent power" in the Programme, this was received positively by the stakeholder group, It was said very strongly that parents feeling "listened to – not just having lip service paid to them. Parents are the boss."

---

Supplementing the core crèche is the occasional use of a mobile crèche, but there is not the same amount of confidence in guaranteeing the same quality as that provided by Grove Hill, apart from which, the mobile crèche is not always available either.

A booking system is in place which can be accessed by parents and by staff, so that places can be pre-booked. However, problems arise when parents do not always pre-book, and it is difficult for staff members to gauge how many parents will actually turn up for an activity. Sometimes places are pre-booked, and if parents are then unable to attend, insufficient notice is given in cancelling the places. On other occasions, more parents turn up than planned – positive for the event, but problematic for the crèche. The crèche is in fact frequently over-subscribed.

It is unanimously agreed by the staff (and highlighted in the parents' responses) that the booking system in one aspect of the crèche which requires change, to ensure that everyone (staff, parents and other agencies) uses it properly. This would reduce the incidence of parents being disappointed, activities being affected, and crèche staff feeling pressurised to provide care when they do not have the personnel or physical space to do so legally.

Because of its crucial role, the crèche provision may be taken for granted – in that it is assumed that it always be available when it is needed. This is the ideal, but the reality which not everyone outside the crèche appreciates is that the Ofsted requirements for staff ratios and space per child in crèche provision are very precise and stringent, and should not be contravened, even to admit just one extra little child.

In looking at ways for the crèche provision to be improved, staff views were similar to those of the parents in that the improvements were based on positively extending a provision which currently provides a quality service.

The ideas put forward by both crèche staff members and non-crèche staff members were thought to be developments, which would help all staff to be more effective in their respective roles.

Ideas include:

- More physical space (not surprisingly!) to accommodate more spaces
- An increase in the number of places
- A separate room for older children
- Separate facilities for babies
- A wider door for double buggies
- An outdoor play area
- Something for all age groups
- An extension to the hours offered
- More availability outside the hours of nine to five (evenings and weekends)

- 
- Flexibility to be mobile if activities involve parents being out of the building
  - More staff at ground level
  - A crèche manager or leader
  - A suggestions box
  - Making use of the booking system
  - Encouraging parents to use it
  - Cancelling places when not needed, and encouraging parents to do so
  - Improving communication
  - Raise awareness and understanding with staff at all levels of the difficulties associated with Ofsted requirements, and particularly the regulation about staff-children ratios, and the differences according to age range.

It is acknowledged that when the Martonside and Easterside Sure Start buildings are up and running there could be less demand on the provision at Grove Hill. This however should not be a reason for not addressing at least some of the suggestions for Grove Hill, thereby enhancing an existing provision which will be needed to provide a core service for this locality, and contribute to the success of the whole Programme.

It would also be prudent to use the expertise in Grove Hill, and to take account of what has been learned through this evaluation exercise, to inform the planning of any new crèche provision.

### **Parental participation – is the Programme getting it right?**

Since the initial planning stage for the Delivery Plan, there has been a strong commitment and high emphasis on active parental participation within this Programme. This commitment has been evident in practice on a continuous basis ever since, with local parents being involved in all aspects of the Programme at operational and strategic levels, in planning and development, and in the evaluation. Parental participation is core to the philosophy of effective implementation of a Programme responding to local needs. In this Programme there is the added dimension in practice of ensuring local sustainability of activities as well as mainstreaming of services.

Parental participation, the core component in philosophy and practice of this Programme, was identified by the parent evaluation team as a priority for evaluation, based on the need to make sure that it is being done effectively at the early stages of implementation as a foundation for future development.

The research study asked the key question: Parental participation – is the Programme getting it right? Seventeen parents (one male and 16 females) were interviewed, and three staff members. The findings for the parent interview group are as follows:

- 
- The monthly "What's on in Sure Start" diary sheet currently circulated to health visitors could be circulated more widely via other agencies and in public venues. This would provide regular up-to-date information on activities as well as a more coherent picture of what is available overall in the Programme. [In fact this suggestion has already been acted upon.]

### ***Physical profile (linked to publicity)***

- People need to be clear about what the Programme catchment boundary is to ensure that everyone who can access services is aware of this fact. This is particularly relevant for Saltersgill.
- The Programme does seem to have a reasonably high profile in some parts of the area, which will be greatly improved when the new facilities are available.
- The new building at Easterside can only be beneficial to the broader Easterside community, and the refurbishing of the precinct area will also have positive effects. If children do have positive experiences in community facilities, they may be less likely to be involved in vandalising either the building or the wider neighbourhood.
- A visible Sure Start presence will be based right at the centre of all the Programme's areas, which will facilitate integration of the services and activities into the community.

### ***Reaching people***

- Surprise was expressed that (of those parents interviewed) people accessing services were mainly in their 30s and in a stable relationship. It was thought that the majority of people accessing the Programme would be of single parent status in the 20s age bracket.
- There clearly is a need therefore to target the other parents who are not accessing services, particularly single parents (who cannot always be easily identified) and dads. Both of these target groups tend to be difficult to reach.
- It was suggested that the younger parents may feel less confident about accessing new services, and may therefore need more encouragement and support to begin using them. (One approach could be to link them with an "older" parent, since it is felt that parents themselves may be most effective in attracting other parents.)
- It was noted that more parents attend Partnership Board meetings when they are held in the evenings, so flexibility of time could enable more people to be involved, particularly dads.
- As long as there is some provision for older children, parents seem happy to attend evening and weekend activities.
- Changing the current process of registration could also encourage more people to formally join the Programme, rather than just attend activities. Some parents do take time to make decisions, particularly about signing up to something they may not fully understand.
- It was also suggested that the term "enrolment" could be less threatening, and more user-friendly, than registration.

---

Comments were made by parents to the effect that they did not expect to have all the opportunities and options delivered, because when previously services have been promised, “a lot of crap is spoken.” However, their views on the Sure Start activities indicate that there are so many choices and opportunities that sometimes it is difficult to choose. The added bonus is that parents are actually helped to access activities by the Programme providing transport, food, good tutors and trainers and child care, even for older siblings when necessary.

Through the evaluation exercise parents too have seen the volume of activity occurring, which they think links them to new opportunities, such as college, and interactive fun activities which they could not otherwise afford. The Programme is becoming bigger than the parents anticipated, and it is developing all the time, with parents feeling that they are getting what they want.

Although parents are very happy with the activities which are being provided, views were voiced that increases in some resources would be appreciated, namely more crèche provision, staff to support the activities, more resources such as access to sewing machines and reliable transport, particularly for low numbers of parents. All of these would go a long way to generally improve their access to and enjoyment of the activities.

### **Issues affecting the overall Programme**

Several points were highlighted through discussion in the smaller groups which need to be addressed to improve and develop the overall Programme, and therefore enhance individual activities and services.

The points were based on the recognition that whilst many positive outcomes are being achieved, there are specific areas of operational and strategic practice which could be vastly improved. These are as follows:

#### ***Communication and publicity***

- Parents need to hear about Sure Start before the birth of their child, and be kept informed about what they can access.
- There is the need to keep people up to date with what is available within Sure Start. This applies both to parents already accessing services and those who do not yet do so.
- The quarterly newsletter is sent to every household, but perhaps people do not think it is for them, because in their view it is only for deprived people.
- Terms such as “social inclusion” and “deprivation” can give negative perceptions, and put people off attending. Publicity needs to address these misperceptions in a positive way.
- A possible role for the housing department was identified as advising Sure Start of new families in the area relevant to the Programme’s target group, and Sure Start could contact them offering a visit. (Information exchange from other agencies would also be helpful, as long as there was no breach of professional confidentiality.)

---

### ***The parent interview group***

Seventeen parents were interviewed; one was also a playgroup leader. The age range of the parents was mostly in the twenties and thirties, with one in the forties. Four out of the 17 parents were of single parent status, whilst the others were married or in a stable relationship. In all, this group of parents had 31 children (plus another due within a few months), of whom 16 were under four, and 15 aged four and above.

### ***Finding out about Sure Start***

Most of the parents had found out about the Sure Start Programme through the clinic and the playgroup at Easterside. Five heard about it at Beechwood Nursery, and others through friends or relatives, the local newspaper, in one instance through Pat's Puppets.

### ***Involvement in Sure Start***

Four of the parents interviewed were relative newcomers to the Programme, having accessed services over the previous six months. A further five had been involved for between six and 12 months, and the remaining eight for between 12 and 18 months. Seven of the parents said that they not only accessed the services and activities, but also actively participated in the development of the Programme. As a result they attend meetings, encourage new parents to register as well as accessing the crèche, undertaking education and training activities for their personal and career development, and participate in most of the events and trips.

Nine parents only accessed the services, particularly the outings and family fun activities, sometimes attending the Programme away days or one off events such as the Blood Pressure Awareness Day. One of them had also applied to the Community Chest on behalf of her playgroup. The remaining parent of the 17 commented that she had stopped attending Sure Start activities because she has two children, one aged three and the other aged five. She stated: "Since Sure Start do not encourage things for children five and over, it divides my children, which I will not allow."

### ***Is parental participation effective?***

When asked how effective parental participation was in the Programme, eight parents gave a very positive response, one was not sure and a further seven could not answer. The parents who access Sure Start only to attend or use the activities (as described previously) may not be fully aware of the potential to be actively involved in the "parent power" element of the Programme. In fact five parents did give their home contact details to find out more about becoming involved.

Generally, parents who are actively involved feel valued and appreciated, making it easier for them to take part more fully in the Programme. Table 5 illustrates this in more detail.

**Table 5: In terms of your participation, can you answer the following?**

	Yes	No	Don't know
<b>Do you feel valued as a person?</b>	9		
<b>Do you have a sense of ownership of the Programme?</b>	7		2
<b>Do you feel listened to?</b>	9		
<b>Do things change because of your opinion?</b>	4		4
<b>Is information delivered in a way you can easily understand?</b>	10		
<b>Is enough help given to you to be able to participate? E.g. childcare, transport, times of meetings etc.</b>	10		

As the information in the table suggests, the Programme is getting it right with the way they help parents to participate. This was reinforced by further comments such as "The staff go out of their way to help", "food and transport is provided", and "new parents are encouraged and supported", "parents are asked and involved throughout". No one said that the Programme wasn't getting parental participation right.

Parents actively involved in Sure Start identified the benefits of this, not only for the Programme, but also for themselves and for their children and families.

Positive differences for parents ....

<b>Confidence</b>	3 parents	"It has helped me feel more confident and able to speak out at meetings."
<b>Meeting people</b>	8 parents	"I no longer feel alone, it has helped to get me out, involved, and provides extra facilities for my children."
<b>Education</b>	4 parents	"Do and learn new things."
<b>Mental health</b>	2 parents	"I have gained some sanity!"

---

**Story Sacks** is another very positive activity, quoted as being “brilliant”, where parents can be creative, and have positive interaction with their children, through reading books with them. Story Sacks that have been made are being used in the Sure Start family room at Grove Hill. The only questions raised concerning this activity were: can it run again and when?

**Women’s Support Group** is in its infancy, arising out of the health drop in sessions. This activity is highly valued by those parents attending the group.

*Issue:* In common with several activities, some parents know about it whilst others do not. The difficulty of how you reach people and inform them of all that is happening is not unique either to this activity or indeed to this Sure Start Programme. It is however an issue to be addressed for each activity and for this Programme overall.

**Early Starters** is reported by parents attending as having a very positive effect on parent-child relationships, even in the short time it has been running. The staff offer ideas, and the parents work with their children doing things that they would not have considered on their own.

**Sewing class.** This was seen as a good course, which whetted the desire for more sessions, which have in fact been promised.

*Issue:* There is not enough time and there are not enough staff to run the ten week course which was “promised”.

*Suggestion:* For practical skills courses, Sure Start could provide taster sessions to identify if there is sufficient interest, and negotiate or refer on to adult education or other topic-related agencies to run longer, more advanced courses.

**Emergency Aid** is another practical skills course which was well received, and it has actually been put to use when a child was choking on a two pence piece. Parents felt they were confident enough to deal with emergencies such as this!

*Suggestion:* that this course be done again, with the inclusion of how to lift babies and children properly, especially when parents may have more than one child to lift and carry at one time.

### **General comments on activities**

Whilst there obviously are issues to resolve to improve some of the activities, generally they are well received and appreciated by those attending. This was confirmed on the feedback day as well as being highlighted through the evaluation exercise.

---

## Activities provided by the Programme

Within the discussion groups, comments were made about the Programme's activities and services, focusing on what was good about them, issues raised, and suggestions for improvement. This format has largely been followed in the following summary of the discussion.

**Buggy walks** were viewed as an excellent idea, and most enjoyable. The children learned new things to do, which they continued to do when they got home (for example, sticking leaves on paper).

*Issue:* The location of the walk is not always appropriate to the weather conditions.

*Suggestions:* In planning this activity parents could be asked to list their favourite walks, and different types of walks could be arranged depending on the weather on the day – one for good weather, and an alternative if it is wet weather. Another suggestion was that the day of the walk could be changed for each cycle of walks, to allow other parents the opportunity to attend if they have regular commitments on the same day that the buggy walk is planned.

**Swimming** was seen as very popular, so much so that this caused a problem with some parents not being able to attend because it was fully booked. However, not all of those on the initial list subsequently maintained their attendance, and this caused some antagonism from those who wanted to attend but didn't get on the list in the first place.

*Issues:* For staff members there is the difficulty of prioritising stretched resources while trying to meet demand for the activity. There is an added dilemma as to which parents (if any) should get priority booking on courses: should it be those who are regular users, or should it be first come first served.

*Suggestions:* Swimming sessions are popular, and it is intended to have it as a summer activity next year. There may be more availability of places, but a reserve list was suggested, to reconcile the problem of demand and resources. Although the activity is reported by the parents to be very positive for parent and child interaction, it was hoped that future sessions may include an opportunity for adults also to have time for themselves.

**Health drop in** This is a very positive and successful development and extension to the traditional concept and use of the baby clinic. It is now available on a weekly basis; the atmosphere and reception are friendly, with toys available for the children, and healthy refreshments for parents, children and young people. Parents report that there is now the opportunity to get together with other parents, children mix with each other, and people can access help and information on a variety of health issues.

---

Positive differences for children and families ....

<b>Child socialising</b>	6 parents	"Child likes coming so much he doesn't want to go home."
<b>Managing behaviour</b>	2 parents	"I no longer feel alone, it has helped to get me out, involved, and provides extra facilities for my children."
<b>Education</b>	4 parents	"Do and learn new things."
<b>Mental health</b>	2 parents	"I have gained some sanity!"

### ***Improving parental participation***

"Parental participation is what makes Sure Start work so it is very important" was the comment from one parent, and it is doubtful that anyone would contradict this sentiment. It is evident from the illustrations above that parents do feel that the Programme is getting it right, particularly for those who are currently involved. The need and the desire to develop and widen this component of the Programme is recognised by the parents as well as by the staff group, so the parent evaluation team included in their questionnaire questions on how to achieve this.

First, questions on helps and hindrances to participation were asked:

Things that hindered: Only three parents making comment about factors in their own lives, such as other commitments and family illness, which hindered them from being more involved. One parent felt that she would not have the confidence to take on such responsibility as making decisions in meetings.

Things that would help: To enhance participation parents did however mention that provision for older children, such as a school pick up or activities particularly in school holiday times, would encourage and enable them to be more involved.

This was followed by questions aimed at clarifying how parents could be encouraged to be involved in the Programme, and how they could be reached to do so. Several suggestions were made by parents, as follows:

- It would be nice to see new and more faces at meetings, particularly dads
- More social events, even something as simple as coffee mornings
- It would be good if parents got more involved with other parents, helping them get back to work, or go back to college
- Developing different types of activities, such as music sessions (this has in fact begun to happen)

---

Suggestions as to how new parents could be best reached included:

- Keep advertising, but do it more through leaflets and mail drops to each household
- Wider advertising at events on possibilities for parents to be more involved
- More recruitment events, information days
- Offering more courses on personal development and employment
- Encourage parents who are involved to talk their friends and families into registering and participating
- Make sure that more people are asked what they want from Sure Start

Several of the parents (10 out of 17) who are involved stated positively that they would be prepared to be active in helping to access other parents.

On a positive note, a final comment from one parent was:

*"Keep up the good work!"*

### **The staff interview group**

Staff members recognise the importance of parental participation in the Sure Start Programme because parents are their children's first educators, and are crucial to their future development. If parents are asked what they want from Sure Start, they can make their own choices, which assures that the Programme is developed to meet their needs and give them what they want for themselves and for their children.

Essentially, the desire for parental participation is genuine amongst all members of the Programme team, since without it, there would not be a meaningful Programme which helped positive parent and child interaction.

Parental participation in the Programme is encouraged by all staff members: partly by planning events for parents and children together, and secondly by asking parents what they think, and acting on this information. This includes parents being asked both about individual activities they attend, and also about the development of the Programme overall.

Some staff see parent participation in the sense of parents interacting with their own children, and staff can help this to happen by reporting on, and sharing in, the achievements of their children,

Data protection issues and matters of confidentiality for individual parents and staff members were the only aspects of the Programme where staff members felt it was inappropriate to encourage parental participation.

## Stakeholder views on the findings of the evaluation

### The evaluation feedback day

The findings of the evaluation were shared with stakeholders at an evaluation feedback day (Tuesday 28th October 2003<sup>4</sup>). These stakeholders were: members of the Partnership Board, including the parents who formed the evaluation team, the staff of the Programme, and representatives from associated organisations. This day was the first of two days: on this occasion the evaluation was to be reported, and on the second day (scheduled for 17th February 2004), the same group will use the findings to make plans for future work and direction.

The day had two components: first, the evaluation team and research consultants presented the results of their work; then, the work was discussed in small groups (followed by plenary feedback), considering the following questions:

1. Do the reported findings fit with stakeholder perceptions? Are there any surprises, or was it all predictable?
2. What difference is the Programme making to the lives of children, their families, and the community?
3. What is working, and not working – individual activities and the whole Programme? What is helping and hindering, and therefore what lessons can we learn?
4. Is the evaluation working – is the model the right one, and how is it doing in practice?

Each of these groups was chaired by a member of a partner agency, and the four questions were addressed in a different order in each group, to ensure that they were all adequately covered. Within the discussion, a wide range of points and issues was raised by parents and professionals, and these are outlined below. Inevitably, some aspects of the Programme are dealt with in more detail than others, and this reflects the composition of the group or groups in which the discussion took place, and also those activities of which parent participants had had direct experience.

---

<sup>4</sup> The event took place during October half-term holiday at Middlesbrough Training and Learning Centre. A crèche was provided at the venue for younger children, and the older children of parents attending spent the day at a nearby activity centre.

---

## Parent views

The views of parents on the impacts of these activities were almost entirely positive, especially when activities focused on joint parent and child activities, or when there were separate parent and child activities followed by some shared time. Such events and activities were highly valued. Although some parents enjoyed parent-only activities, which gave them time to themselves to talk to grown ups, or learn new practical skills such as sewing and computer technology, nonetheless they felt that parent-only sessions may have been of less positive value for their children. We would actually question this – a more fulfilled parent could well contribute to greater happiness and fulfilment in the child – especially in relation to activities which involved: meeting new people, particularly parents in the same situation as themselves, learning how to deal with new situations, increasing their confidence, contributing to their personal development, and learning how to deal with stress.

Only five adverse comments were received, most of which were in fact implied compliments – not enough sessions, not enough parents taking part, could have had more speakers, could have been a follow up course, and having to go home. One parent felt that the swimming sessions were a bit rushed, because she had two children to get changed after the session, and the changing units were limited.

In relation to activities which were seen to have an impact on the child, these were about direct learning of new activities, helping children to interact with each other and to join in and share with each other. For the swimming activity, the value was seen as getting used to water from an early age. As we have already suggested, the best things about the activities happened when the children and parents were involved together more: the children enjoyed it, and so did the parents – more so when they played or worked together on a one to one basis, or in some instances when there was time for the parents and children separately, and thereafter together.

What could make things better? The comments for improving matters came down to the need for more of the same, but also perhaps to arranging better timings of meetings and to arranging trips away at better times. Developing more practical skills like sewing and advance computing were also highlighted as specific ways for parents to help children in their development. One service, namely the Mums to Be Group, while still in its infancy, and therefore hard to put a value on, was nonetheless judged by one parent to promise to get better.

There was a very specific suggestion made that crèche access for children with special needs should be improved.

In relation to seasonal events, and also to football, parents greatly appreciated the family focus approach – involving all the family, including those age groups which are not the primary focus of Sure Start.

---

More staff, administrative support and dedicated consultation time were identified by some staff members as ways of helping them to further promote parental participation within their own roles.

In order to promote and enhance parental participation for the Programme over all, several suggestions were made:

- More publicity
- Assuring parents that this Sure Start is a community project, not an extension of Social Services
- Other events such as dance classes, music and pantomime trips
- Shopping trips for parents, both weekly food shopping and occasional trips to Newcastle
- Occasional day care to give parents more time without being tied to crèche hours
- Make sure that parents are about everything possible

In terms of getting parental participation right within the Programme, staff members thought that although there was room for improvement, the approach and practice within the Programme was in fact getting it right. This is based on the fact that staff do speak to parents about all important issues, and their concerns and views are taken into account.

Perhaps it is best summed up in the comment from one member of staff, who stated:

*"Parents have real power in the Programme."*

## **Speech and language therapy**

### **Parents' perspectives**

Both the children of the parents who were interviewed were boys, referred by the school because of poor speech development. While both parents regretted the delay before the service was started, they were pleased with the results, saying that their children had benefited. They remarked that:

- The speech and language therapist was easy to talk to
- There was a definite difference in the boys after therapy
- They could speak better, and their parents could understand them better
- Others outside the family also noticed the difference, and could understand the children better
- The children had acquired slightly more confidence

One parent felt that it would have been even more useful the child had had longer time out from mainstream education, so that he could have more one-to-one sessions with the therapist.

---

## The views of teachers

Teachers noted that they had observed greater speech development difficulties in boys than in girls. They felt that help doesn't always come soon enough, and should be at the earliest possible point in the child's life, when the problem has been identified. Not only that, but they felt that children don't get enough sessions when they are finally referred.

They reported clear improvements as a result of therapy:

- Better pronunciation
- Increased vocabulary and comprehension
- Enhanced confidence and better speaking in groups
- Greater co-operation and collaboration in class

Collaboration between school and therapy was valued by parents. The school also appreciated the collaboration and its positive impact on the child's participation in the literacy hour.

School staff saw the speech and language therapist as having a wide remit; not only was the work seen in terms of a direct therapeutic service, but the speech and language therapist also assesses the child's ability, helps the school to help the child, and helps the parents to help the child at home.

*Things which would help ....*

*.... the child:* if the difficulties were noticed and assessed at the earliest possible age

*.... the parents:* if they were included more in sessions

*.... the school:* if more relevant information was provided to the school.

---

Table 8 contains the responses of staff and parents when interviewed for the evaluation. They may well in further reflection extend their responses, as they remind themselves of other impacts which the activities have sustained.

Even so, positive impacts were reported for all but three activities. These three were just becoming established, and it was too early to form a view about their achievement.

Many of the activities had several positive outcomes. For example, the Women's Support group enhanced women's confidence, highlighted issues harmful to parents and children, provided peer support and helped improve family interaction.

Some activities contributed to more than one Sure Start objective, notably the seasonal events, which....

- improved parent/child relationships
- raised awareness about health
- stressed the key importance of play
- helped reduce isolation and enhanced friendships.

### **Self-evaluation**

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of services is simply good practice, as well as being a Sure Start requirement. On the whole, some form of self-evaluation (staff evaluating their activities) does in fact take place, more systematised and formal in some instances than others. In Table 9, a brief picture is given of the forms which self-evaluation takes in the Programme.

**Table 9: Evaluation – what form does it take?(more than one response is possible)**

<b>Type of evaluation</b>	<b>Number of activities</b>
Parents asked each session	10
Parents asked for comments at the end, or periodically	5
Leader's own reflection	1
Leader's own record	5
Leader and co-leader de-brief and record	3
Telephone follow-up	1
None	4

It will be noted that in four activities formal self-evaluation has yet to be established. Staff were aware of the need to do so, and were giving the issue some attention. At the other extreme, for some events and activities, there was weekly feedback, together with a formal gathering of views at the end of a series. In one instance, this was further reinforced by personal (telephone) follow-up.

**Table 8: the impacts of Sure Start (continued)**

**Strengthening families and communities**

	Reduce isolation, encourage friendships	Achieve confidence needed to get paid work	Engage with the community	Improve parent skills	Gain peer support for dads	Provide peer support for women	Highlight stress and anxiety in women
<b>Seasonal events</b>							
<b>Parent training</b>							
<b>Newsletter group</b>							
<b>Capacity building</b>							
<b>Making choices</b>							
<b>Swimming</b>							
<b>Small hands, big ideas</b>							
<b>Special starters</b>							
<b>Making books</b>							
<b>Buggy walks</b>							
<b>Story Sacks</b>							
<b>Internet taster sessions</b>							
<b>Men's health</b>							
<b>Football for dads</b>							
<b>Wacky Warehouse</b>							
<b>Health drop in</b>							
<b>Community drop in</b>							
<b>Smoking cessation</b>							
<b>Mums to be</b>							
<b>Women's support</b>							

## **An overview of the Programme's activities**

In carrying out an overview survey of the range of activities offered and provided by the Programme, a total of 20 activities were considered. In addition to these and the activities covered within the priority areas study, a number of other services and activities are provided: on the whole, these were one-off provisions, and are not included in this overview of on-going provision, but are listed in Appendix 4. It is also important to remember that many of the 20 activities which feature in this overview contain several discrete activities. For example, "capacity building" includes: management board training, chairing meetings training, and recruitment and selection training. "Seasonal activities" include: going to the pantomime, Easter Fun, Kirkleatham Owl Centre, and a summer celebration. Parenting training includes all of the parent meetings, the parent network, as well as specific activities such as "Time for you", and jointly with health staff a Breastfeeding Partnership event.

Interviews were carried out with the member of staff who takes the lead in relation to each activity, and a parent who is a user or consumer for each of the activities. The questionnaires used for these interviews are in Appendix 5.

It should also be noted that some of the activities listed were not contained in the Programme's original delivery plan. Their need became evident once the Programme had become operational.

This wide range of activities must be set within the even wider context of the whole Programme. The foundation of the Programme is its strategy. It is clear from chapter three that much activity is going on at this strategic level, and will continue to do so. The next layer or stage also supports the whole Programme: parental participation and crèche provision, without which the activities could not function. Then follow the activities themselves, including the 20 activities summarised in this chapter, and those provided jointly to all the Middlesbrough Programmes, namely Midwifery and Speech and Language Therapy.

The following is a list of the 20 activities provided directly by the Programme, and the points at which they have been introduced.

**Table 6: Activities provided by Sure Start Grove Hill, Beechwood and Easterside**

Activity	Apr02	Jul02	Oct02	Jan03	Apr03	Jul03	Oct03
Seasonal events							
Parenting training							
Newsletter group							
Capacity building							
Making choices							
Swimming							
Small hands, Big Ideas							
Special starters							
Making Books							
Buggy Walks							
Story Sacks							
Internet Taster Sessions							
Men's Health							
Football for Dads							
Wacky Warehouse							
Health drop in – Grove Hill and Easterside							
Community drop in							
Smoking cessation							
Mums to be							
Women's Support							

**Key:**

- Parents and Community**
- Work with children**
- Books and early literacy**
- Dads' work**
- Health work**

Generally, attendance at these activities and events was good and consistent, though there is in some a tendency for initial enthusiasm to tail off a little. It should be noted that several of the activities were restricted in their numbers because of the maximum numbers of children allowed within the crèche.

The frequency of each activity was determined by the nature of that activity. Typically, sessions run weekly, either on an open-ended basis, or for a fixed term. The frequency and timing is often determined by an explicit need – for example, the management board training was geared to the need to get the Board up and running. The swimming group ran twice weekly, with two distinct groups of parents and children, because of the initial very high demand.

**Table 8: the impacts of Sure Start (continued)**

**Improving children’s ability to learn**

	The importance of play, and play opportunities	Introduction to literacy	Introduction to IT	Encourage parents and children to read	Make books real	Help people discover their creative skills	Encourage people to use the library
<b>Seasonal events</b>							
<b>Parent training</b>							
<b>Newsletter group</b>							
<b>Capacity building</b>							
<b>Making choices</b>							
<b>Swimming</b>							
<b>Small hands, big ideas</b>							
<b>Special starters</b>							
<b>Making books</b>							
<b>Buggy walks</b>							
<b>Story Sacks</b>							
<b>Internet taster sessions</b>							
<b>Men’s health</b>							
<b>Football for dads</b>							
<b>Wacky Warehouse</b>							
<b>Health drop in</b>							
<b>Community drop in</b>							
<b>Smoking cessation</b>							
<b>Mums to be</b>							
<b>Women’s support</b>							

**Table 8: the impacts of Sure Start (continued)**

**Improving health**

	Raise awareness health	Achieve fitness	Enhance men's health	Improve children's diet	Highlight health needs	Provide health advice
<i>Seasonal events</i>						
<i>Parent training</i>						
<i>Newsletter group</i>						
<i>Capacity building</i>						
<i>Making choices</i>						
<i>Swimming</i>						
<i>Small hands, big ideas</i>						
<i>Special starters</i>						
<i>Making books</i>						
<i>Buggy walks</i>						
<i>Story Sacks</i>						
<i>Internet taster sessions</i>						
<i>Men's health</i>						
<i>Football for dads</i>						
<i>Wacky Warehouse</i>						
<i>Health drop in</i>						
<i>Community drop in</i>						
<i>Smoking cessation</i>						
<i>Mums to be</i>						
<i>Women's support</i>						

---

Activities are publicised in a wide variety of ways:

- Mailing list
- Posters
- Newsletter
- Fliers to Sure Start households
- Other professionals (including midwives, health visitors and Family Learning staff)
- Children's Unit
- Direct telephone calling
- Toddlers groups
- Nurseries
- Personal approaches
- Pubs and toilet doors (for Men's Health)
- Through mums (Dads groups)
- In one instance, dads devised the idea themselves
- Word of mouth
- Drop ins

Overall, virtually every one heard about activities from the Programme itself, through the media listed above. The one exception was of a dad hearing about an activity from his partner.

Each Sure Start activity is required to state a clear purpose, linked explicitly or implicitly to one or more of the Sure Start objectives. Without such a statement no meaningful reviewing or evaluation is possible. In table 7, the views of staff are summarised as to the purpose of each activity, and an assessment is offered by them as to the fulfilment of that purpose. It is also hoped that these summaries give some insight into the sorts of activities provided by the Programme, and the range which they cover.

### **Table 7: the aim of the activities**

#### ***Parenting training***

##### ***aims to....***

Help parents learn about their child's development, to develop coping skills, and to build their confidence.

##### ***....and does it achieve its aim?***

People are learning. It's a gentle introduction to learning in general as an adult, as well as the specific content of the courses.

---

### **Seasonal events**

#### **aim to....**

Let people know about Sure Start, and encourage new joiners.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

We've a long way to go, but starting to make progress. It's always tricky to get parents past registering stage to take part in other events.

### **Capacity building activity**

#### **aims to....**

To increase skills and knowledge amongst parents, so that people can take an active part in the Programme (for example the Management Board).

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

Yes, the Board works well, and people have learned a lot about how to conduct business.

### **The newsletter group**

#### **aims to....**

Help improve communication and publicity, and to help develop skills in working together as a group.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

It has helped lots of new parents join in with activities.

### **Making Choices**

#### **aims to....**

introduce parents to childcare issues.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

Yes, very much so. One parent has gone on to an NVQ3 course. Five others want to do play workers course.

### **Swimming**

#### **aims to ....**

Improve health and fitness, and give parents an opportunity to interact, and an opportunity for children to experience a new activity, as well as to help them adapt to water.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

Most children enjoyed it. They became more relaxed in the water as they got used to it.

**Table 8: the impacts of Sure Start**

**Improving social and emotional development**

	Improve parent/child relationships	Improve child's interaction with adults and other children	Give parents a chance to be with people who understand their difficulties	Improve interaction	Improve father/child relationship
<i>Seasonal events</i>					
<i>Parent training</i>					
<i>Newsletter group</i>					
<i>Capacity building</i>					
<i>Making choices</i>					
<i>Swimming</i>					
<i>Small hands, big ideas</i>					
<i>Special starters</i>					
<i>Making books</i>					
<i>Buggy walks</i>					
<i>Story Sacks</i>					
<i>Internet taster sessions</i>					
<i>Men's health</i>					
<i>Football for dads</i>					
<i>Wacky Warehouse</i>					
<i>Health drop in</i>					
<i>Community drop in</i>					
<i>Smoking cessation</i>					
<i>Mums to be</i>					
<i>Women's support</i>					

---

### **Women's Support aims to ....**

To provide quality respite and peer support for women in facilitated groups.

### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

Yes. The women's support group focuses on them as people and they are linked to the women's support network (there are ten in the group). The initial evaluation indicated that the service is currently meeting the needs of the women who attend and that the format should be continued for a further six weeks, then re-evaluated.

This rapid overview of activities provided by the Programme is based on an assessment at a given point in time. This profile is shifting constantly, as new developments are considered and implemented. For example, discussions have taken place for the Programme to host a seconded Welfare Benefits Worker, and discussions are also under way for the Programme to enter into a partnership for victim support work.

### **Community Chest**

One area of work not covered by the overview is the Community Chest, which is of a slightly different nature from the directly-provided services. The Community Chest was established in order to support local play and learning activities. A total of £5,000 per year is available, and the maximum grant to any one group is £500. The funding is allocated through a committee in which parents lead and are the sole decision makers.

Over the last year, nine funding applications have been successful. These have largely been to play groups, and the majority of grants have been awarded for the refurbishment or replacement of toys and equipment. There are some exceptions: one grant was given to allow the enhancement of a playgroup's staff skills through further training; other grants given were for: family fun days and outings, and for focused activities such as child safety projects.

The Community Chest benefits smaller groups within the neighbourhood, and helps to improve the quality of their resources and provisions, as well as helping to advertise and promote Sure Start by encouraging the users of these community activities also to register and access Sure Start activities.

### **Impacts of the activities**

It will be evident from these cameos that each of the Programme's activities is thoughtful and purposeful; in addition, to a great extent, they are fulfilling the purpose for which they are designed. However, they do also need to be set within the requirement by Sure Start to achieve four key objectives. The impacts of the activities were assessed with this in mind, and the following table was drafted, illustrating the impacts achieved by each activity, and setting them within the framework of Sure Start's objectives.

---

### ***Small hands, Big Ideas***

#### ***aims to ....***

Provide a relaxed atmosphere to enhance the child's ability to learn, to improve their social and emotional ability, and their interaction with others.

#### ***....and does it achieve its aim?***

Not yet, but in due course it will. It will contribute to helping develop the child's focus of attention and their listening skills.

### ***Special Starters***

#### ***aims to ....***

Provide a support group for parents of children with special needs, and then help them blend in to mainstream activities.

#### ***....and does it achieve its aim?***

Yes. For those parents, there is comfort from being able to speak to others in the same situation. There are always activities for the children, and a chance for parents to talk to each other.

### ***Making Books***

#### ***aims to ....***

Assist interaction between parent and child, help develop an understanding of age appropriate books, and of what makes them appropriate in terms of pictures and text.

#### ***....and does it achieve its aim?***

It helped Mums to put together a proper book which was very personal to their child, and a book they can keep reading.

### ***Buggy walks***

#### ***aim to ....***

Give an understanding of how to approach stories through the back door, focusing on a book and interaction between parent and child, and improving sensory appreciation in the outdoors.

#### ***....and does it achieve its aim?***

It promoted story and rhyme skills, improved the parent child interaction – when the children were told the story, parents came and sat beside them. Parents actually wanted to borrow the book, especially the Brown Bear Book.

### ***Story Sacks***

#### ***aims to ....***

Develop and understanding of the importance of sharing books with children.

#### ***....and does it achieve its aim?***

It's not quite concluded as an overall activity. Although some parents have not finished their story sack, they do have six absolutely brilliant story sacks.

---

### **Internet Taster Sessions**

#### **aim to ....**

Demystify learning of IT, helping parents to learn, which in turn will help children to learn at school, and to raise awareness of the library offering free internet access.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

It is demystifying learning; mums actually wanted more specific computer training and one of them now uses the computer facility at the library.

### **Men's Health**

#### **aims to ....**

Partly to publicise the Dads Worker as a resource, but primarily to raise awareness on the emotional welfare and health of men, and also on sexual health issues as well as men's health issues (lumps and bumps), and to publicise the availability of free condoms for prevention of STD.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

Yes, definitely. It has given openings to discuss health issues and safe sex, and the male partners are still involved as core dads within the Programme.

### **Football for Dads**

#### **aims to ....**

Provide family interaction in a non-threatening environment, using community facilities, particularly for children, increasing their social development, either through crèche or PERCY, and to improve interaction between children and dads

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

Yes. Families are now coming out as a family unit. We now have six dads and fourteen children, five of whom in crèche, nine with PERCY. It's helping dads to cut down on smoking. The children get activities out of it. One mum is particularly pleased that she could sit down when partner and children were out, and then share the activities when they returned home, so helping family interaction.

### **Wacky Warehouse**

#### **aims to ....**

Have an informal chat with dads to identify what they want to do as a group.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

Not yet recorded, as it is happening as we write.

---

### **Health drop in – Grove Hill and Easterside**

#### **aims to ....**

To provide easily accessible family-centred opportunities for support the provision of health information, guidance and support. Parents are able to drop in and access a broad range of health-related activities. It aims to change the old idea of a health clinic as being about weighing babies and getting milk tokens now families can drop in and chill out in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. Health promotion can occur subtly whilst parents have tea and coffee and the children enjoy fruit and snacks.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

It's getting there. Services have developed from weighing and distributing milk to a more sociable point to discuss and access information and advice and support in relation to the whole family. All the drop in families has tried out a broad range of fruits, and have had the opportunity to access other health services.

### **Community drop in**

#### **aims to ....**

To gain a continuous presence, to get known in the area, and to provide outreach in the community

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

Over the summer it has lost its momentum, and had shorter opening hours, so it's hard at the present to assess. It will require long term commitment and continuity to gain the confidence of the broader community.

### **Smoking cessation**

#### **aims to ....**

To ensure that information, guidance and support on smoking cessation is available throughout the Programme and is easily accessed.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

Parents and staff are now aware that this service is not about persuading people to kick the habit, rather it is about ensuring that those smokers who are considering quitting know where to gain the best information, guidance and support.

### **Mums to Be**

#### **aims to ....**

To access mums during pregnancy to ensure that they have information on Sure Start services, and how they can promote optimum health opportunities for their baby.

#### **....and does it achieve its aim?**

The Programme increased its contact with pregnant women during the pilot phase of this service. The initial evaluation of this service prompted links with the Young Mums to Be Group at Grove Hill Resource Centre, who will now attend the Mums to be Drop In on alternate weeks.