



SURE START WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND

-EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME-

Annual Report

Year Two

October 2003 - September 2004

Introduction

This report summarises the evaluation findings from the period October 2003 - September 2004 of the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Programme. It is divided into three sections. The first looks at individual project evaluations; the second focuses on community participation and take up of services and the third section sets out some recommendations for taking the programme forward.

Aim of the evaluation

The aim of the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Evaluation is to describe:

- ☐ short term achievements of local Sure Start services
- ☐ progress towards National Sure Start objectives and targets
- ☐ progress to inform future development of services

Objectives

Within a three year period the goals of the local evaluation are:

- ☐ To describe and assess how services are working
- ☐ To provide information and feedback on how Sure Start services are meeting needs
- ☐ To describe achievements
- ☐ To encourage as full a community involvement as possible
- ☐ To find out to what extent the Sure Start programme is beginning to achieve the national Sure Start objectives (goals), which are:
 - to improve social and emotional well being
 - to improve health
 - to improve children's ability to learn
 - to strengthen families and communities

It is hoped that the national objectives will be achieved by the Weymouth & Portland programme through local activities and services provided for the Sure Start community.

Section One: Individual Project Evaluations

Beach Play

Sure Start Weymouth & Portland ran a Beach Play during the summer holidays for parents and their children from the Sure Start areas. Facilitated by play workers, it was very popular and enjoyed by many Sure Start residents and their children. One of the research assistants (a parent within Sure Start) who attended the beach play suggested that it should be evaluated to discover if it was meeting the needs of parents during a busy time of the year. The research assistant designed a short questionnaire and distributed them during August 2003 for parents to complete. Questions about their attendance and their satisfaction with the beach play were asked.

A total of 20 questionnaires were returned.

Summary of findings

General

- Attendance was on the whole evenly split between the four Sure-Start areas (30% for each area) with the exception of Littlemoor with only a 10% representation.
- On average families stayed at the beach for 2 hours.
- The majority of parents (three quarters) were very satisfied with the sessions and the rest were satisfied.

What parents gained from beach play

- The majority of parents (just over half) felt that beach play gave them the chance to relax knowing that their children were playing in a safe environment.
- The second most frequent response was the chance to socialise with other parents.

What children gained from beach play

- The majority of parents (just over three quarters) said their child enjoyed the interaction with other children.
- The second most frequent response was constructive and imaginative play.

Recommendations for the improvement of beach play

- To consider the installation of a gate at the entrance to the beach play area.
- To review the location of the beach play sessions to see if they could be positioned in a dog free area.

- An investigation into why fewer families from Littlemoor accessed the beach play sessions than any other area and an attempt to remedy any issues.

It becomes clear from all of the data collected that Sure Start Weymouth and Portland have managed to implement a valuable and enjoyable service.

Littlemoor Toy Library

It was agreed by the Evaluation Working Group that the Littlemoor Toy Library was one of the services evaluated. The toy library met once a week at the Littlemoor Community centre and was open to Sure Start members from the local area. The group was run by parents from the community who were responsible for all aspects of the toy library with support from Sure Start Weymouth & Portland.

An evaluation plan was devised after meetings with the parents and the Evaluation Working Group. The toy library was evaluated over a period of 12 months (phase one).

The Evaluation Plan

- Focus group interview with parents running the toy library - June 2003
- Follow-up focus group interview with parents - June 2004
- Individual interview with nursery nurse - August 2003
- Focus group with Sure Start play workers - March 2004
- Parent/carer interviews - semi-structured questionnaire-November2003-May 2004
- Fast feedback forms - completed by parent/carer when returning borrowed toys
- Smiley Bins - children putting the toys they borrowed in a happy or sad bin

During January 2005, it was agreed by the parents running the toy library with Sure Start Weymouth & Portland that the service needed to be revised. Low attendance and difficulties between parent volunteers led to a new service being formed. It was decided that the toy library was to be replaced with a mother and toddler drop-in service called Play Time 0-4's.

Additional parent volunteers were recruited from the area and meetings took place with project workers from Sure Start Weymouth & Portland. Play Time 0-4's was launched in February 2005.

A new evaluation plan was agreed (phase two) which included finding out what volunteers, parents and Sure Start workers felt about the new service. Recommendations from phase one of the Toy library evaluation were

implemented for the new service and a phase two evaluation plan is as follows:

- Observation by parent researcher of the Play Time 0-4's group during the sessions - March/April 2005
- Self-completing questionnaire to parents using the group - April/May 2005
- Questionnaires completed by parent volunteers and Sure Start workers - April/May 2005

A draft report of both phase one and two will be produced by July 2005.

Speech and Language Service

The Evaluation Working Group also decided that the Speech and Language service should be evaluated. This particular evaluation was designed to describe the role of the professional delivering the speech and language service, how the programme was meeting the needs of Sure Start registered users and other health and educational professionals in the area.

The Speech and Language Worker is very active and has many differing roles within the Weymouth & Portland Sure Start programme that aim to improve speech and language development. These include:

- input into four nurseries working with children and training staff
- liaises with Community Speech & Language Therapists, Health Visitors, Portage staff and Sure Start staff
- runs groups and courses to develop children's speech and their parents skills in encouraging development
- carries out many home visits to assess and work with children as well as taking the time to keep their parents aware of everything that they can do.

The Evaluation Plan

A plan for the evaluation was devised by Bournemouth University, Sure Start Weymouth and Portland and the South West Local Research Ethics Committee. The sample had to cover a broad spectrum of families to reflect the range and nature of the Sure Start Speech and Language Worker. A stratified sampling technique was decided to be the most appropriate for these interviews and to target the service providers that worked with the Speech & Language Worker plus the parents who's children had received input from her. It was decided that the former category would be interviewed via telephone interviews and the latter via face to face interviews. Both were semi-structured in nature.

Nine telephone interviews were carried out which comprised of two interviews with a nursery (where several staff worked closely with the Speech &

Language Worker) and one interview from three other nurseries (where only one or two people worked with the Speech & Language Worker), a Community Speech & Language Therapist, a Health Visitor, a Portage worker and the Sure Start Health Visitor.

Eight parent interviews were carried out and these consisted of the following;

Two interviews were with families where the speech and language therapist had seen them just once. A target of three interviews had originally been set, but as no new information was emerging from the data they were stopped after two.

Three interviews were from families where the child had been seen in their own home. This equaled the target that had been set for this category.

Three interviews from families where the child was seen in nurseries or pre-schools. The target set for this category had originally been ten. As the data soon became saturated it was decided to finish the interviews after the third.

The final category of interviews were families who had complained about or not attended their sessions, these could not be carried out as the two families who fell into this category did not agree to participate in this study.

The Research findings

The data from the service provider interviews could be seen to fall into the following four themes.

Knowledge of the Sure Start Speech & Language Worker's role

In this theme the service providers talked about their knowledge of the Speech & Language Worker having to find new ways of working; trying to move the boundaries of interprofessional and personal working and her aim to normalise speech therapy.

Effect of having the Sure Start Speech & Language Worker's input

In this theme the service providers talked about the Speech & Language Worker working with staff; informing parents and report writing.

Sure Start Working

This theme details the interprofessional working of Sure Start; the flexibility of the service and the need for the service.

Feedback received about the service

In this theme service providers discuss feedback they have received from parents concerning the Speech & Language service offered by Sure Start and also give their own views.

Underhill Park

The Underhill park was an idea created by a group of local parents in 2002. Disillusioned and frustrated with the public play park, this group formed a committee. Each member undertook individual tasks and collectively planned and raised funds to build a new park for local children. The aims of the project were to provide a safe, attractive environment in which all children can be encouraged to socialize, interact, share and have fun playing.

The project was identified in consultation with local parents during the Sure Start Local Programme planning stage prior to the programme's launch in early 2002 and was thus included in funding plans for developing play areas for young children in Sure Start areas. The project was managed by Sure Start's partner, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council, which progressed the necessary planning permission, oversaw the installation and certified the play area upon completion. At the time of the project's completion, the Sure Start programme had met 86% (£42,000) of the costs and another of Sure Start's partners, Weymouth & Portland Housing, had provided towards most of the remaining costs.

The aim of the evaluation of Underhill Park was to discover how the parents and carers of children using the park felt about the refurbishment. A self-completing questionnaire was devised by a parent researcher supported by the Evaluation Working Group which included questions about patterns of using the park before and after the development, other parks used and satisfaction with the facility.

A total of 23 questionnaires were completed by parents/carers over four days during July and August 2004.

Initial findings show that attendance at the park has increased by local children and their parents and satisfaction with the facility is high. The report is currently being written by a second parent researcher as the former parent researcher has gained full-time employment. The final report is expected shortly.

In-house evaluations

A number of project evaluations have been carried out by Sure Start project workers during the second year of the programme. These range from fast feedback questionnaires about a particular activity or course to an in-depth evaluation about a group providing a specific service. These evaluations include:

Evaluation of Colourstrings Music Sessions - Sure Start Project Worker

Colourstrings is a music session for parents and children commissioned by Sure Start. The session is 45 minutes long and comprises of singing, rhymes,

actions, musical instruments, listening to music and dancing. Each session has clear aims and objectives to promote basic musical elements. Parents book to attend a block of 11 sessions.

A short questionnaire was devised for parents to complete after attending the sessions, it included questions about satisfaction with the sessions, what has been gained from the sessions for both parents and children, the resources and future recommendations. A telephone questionnaire was also used to ask those participants (4) who had stopped attending about their views and why they did not continue with the sessions.

Findings show that the majority of parents (82%) had attended most or all of the sessions and of those 100% had very much enjoyed the colourstrings course. Comments included:

My daughter looks forward to it every week.

It was a fantastic course, very gentle, organized and interesting.

My children settled and joined in straight away.

Parents stated that their children had gained a number of physical and social benefits from colourstrings, especially an increased awareness of music, fun in learning and an introduction to structured learning.

Parents themselves also felt they had benefited from the sessions by learning new songs to sing with their child, meeting and learning with others and gaining an increased awareness of the importance of singing and language in child development.

All of the respondents to the questionnaire said they would recommend colourstrings to a friend and the majority would be willing to pay a fee to attend.

Some parents suggested ways to improve the sessions by: including some physical activity, increasing the number of sessions, and offering the service to a wider area.

Reasons given by parents who had not completed the course included: began full time nursery, time constraints, child was being disruptive.

In conclusion, colourstrings has provided a valuable service to parents and their children and will be repeated in the future to a wider area within Sure Start.

Feedback from Dads/male carers

A short questionnaire was devised by the staff at Sure Start Weymouth & Portland to get some information from fathers and male carers of children in the area. The programme recognizes how important it is to engage dads as much as possible and to encourage them to take an active part in their child's upbringing. The form asked the following questions:

- What activities would you like to see in your area provided by Sure Start?
- Would you like a group with just Dads or with Dads and their children?
- Would you be interested in attending a Dads group?
- What type of venue would you like a group/session to run from? i.e. community centre, sports centre.
- What activities would you like to see in a Dads group?

So far eight questionnaires have been returned and the findings are currently being analysed.

Evaluation of Weymouth Breastfeeding Peer Support group - Breastfriends - Sure Start Project Worker (Health visitor).

The evaluation of Weymouth Breastfriends group obtained feedback of those women attending the group. Their views of the group and their breastfeeding patterns were recorded. The evaluation also looked at why some breastfeeding women did not use the group.

The evaluation was carried out by postal questionnaire and achieved a good response rate from both those attending and not attending the group (see following table)

	Group	Non-group
Questionnaires sent	45	37
Questionnaires returned	30	16
Percentage (%)	66%	43%

Findings showed high satisfaction with the Weymouth Breastfriends group with 100% of mums attending the group stating they would recommend the group to others and over 70% of mums who attended the group felt they could breastfeed for as long as they wanted (which is way above the national average, Infant feeding Survey 2000).

Of those that did not attend, half were aware of the group. Almost two thirds said there was nothing that could have been done to encourage them to attend the group. Those women not attending typically had more children than those women attending the group.

The evaluation demonstrates that Weymouth Breastfriends group is providing much appreciated support for local breastfeeding women. The women attending the group identify both the peers and the professionals at the group as sources of support. Many of the areas that were highlighted in the evaluation as needing addressing have already been identified and worked on. The Weymouth Breastfriends group is now well promoted so all pregnant women should be informed about the group.

The success of the Weymouth Breastfriends group has led to a further two groups being set up, commencing along the same principles. Further peer support is being planned.

Evaluation of Sure Start support for Mums-to-be (Sure Start Midwife)

A questionnaire was designed to identify how best to support women when they are pregnant and during the early days of parenthood, so that the Sure Start Programme can support the family in the most effective way.

The questionnaire included questions about the type of help and support needed during pregnancy, for example, benefit information, diet, parenting information, preparation for the birth.

Questions about attending specific groups were asked, which included, breastfeeding workshops, keep fit classes, first aid and baby massage. Mothers were asked their time and venue preferences.

The final question asked mums if they would like a visit from a Sure Start Home Link Worker and how they think this new role could support them.

Eighteen questionnaires have been completed and the findings are currently being written.

Section Two: Community participation and take up of services

Parent Researchers

From the beginning of the planning stages of the evaluation it was agreed that parents should be encouraged to take an active role in the evaluation of the Sure Start programme. Therefore, two parents from two of the Sure start areas were employed by Bournemouth University as research assistants. It was proposed that these parents will remain in post for one year and then the opportunity will be given to other parents in the following two years.

The research assistants work for a total of one day a week, dividing the hours between them. Crèche facilities are provided by Sure Start. A number of different parents have now been in post for two years and have been involved

in all aspects of the evaluation, including, questionnaire design, data collection, analysis and dissemination (which has included presenting findings at conferences/workshops). Their local knowledge and personal experience of services and the difficulties that can arise provides a valuable component of the evaluation process. It is important that this role helps these parents develop their research skills and awareness of the ethical issues involved in research.

The research assistants are based in the Sure start office, fully supported by the research manager. Visits to Bournemouth University have also taken place and it is planned for them to attend some research workshops run by the university in the near future. Two parent researchers have since left the post to take up full-time employment. Both of these parents felt strongly that the experience and confidence gained from the researchers post at Sure Start Weymouth & Portland helped them with their career move.

It is hoped that this parental involvement scheme will continue at Sure Start Weymouth & Portland and the number of researchers will increase. It is envisaged that all of the programme evaluations will be undertaken by parent researchers in the future with support/consultation from Bournemouth University when needed.

The parental research assistant role will itself be evaluated and included in the final reports to Local and National Sure Start. The research assistants are keeping reflective diaries and will be interviewed about their experiences and feelings of their role.

Parental Involvement at Sure Start

Parents have been an integral part of the programme since the launch of Sure Start Weymouth & Portland and have been involved in a number of ways, which includes:

- Chairing Management Board meetings
- Representing each Sure Start area on both Management and Partnership Board meetings
- Chairing and taking minutes at Parent Forum Meetings in the four Sure Start areas
- Attending media group meetings
- Attending evaluation working group
- Participating on interview panels for Sure Start staff posts
- Participating as Sure Start volunteers
- Writing articles for newsletters
- Disseminating Sure Start information at meetings/conferences
- Facilitating and running groups in their community e.g. Toy library, drop-in sessions at the Sure Start caravan

Range and take-up of Sure Start Services

The following table and graphs show the range and take up of Sure Start services, groups and activities during the second year of the evaluation. It is clear that there has been a steady increase in attendance at a variety of services and numbers of registered families has steadily risen during the second year of the evaluation except for a dip in December 2004 (see fig 1).

The following services are held in a variety of venues within the four Sure Start areas of: Westham, Melcombe Regis, Underhill and Littlemoor. Federated House is the temporary base for the Sure Start office and holds a number of activities. The programme is moving to a new building in April 2005. Other venues include an indoor children's play area, a mobile caravan and community halls.

Sure Start Services

SURE START CENTRE FEDERATED HOUSE	LITTLEMOOR COMMUNITY CENTRE
Crèche Stay & Play Mosaics Numeracy/literacy skills Basic computer skills Paediatric first aid	Parents Forum Toy Library/teambuilding Aerobics Colourstrings Crèche My child and me Coffee morning
Melcombe Regis	Westham
Parents forum Colourstrings Coffee & play Sure ways to de-stress Teenage parenting group Health after childbirth Teens and tots	Parents forum Coffee morning Coffee & play Crèche My child and me Sure ways to de-stress Celebration day
Underhill	Other venues
Baby and toddler first aid Picnic in the park - opening Coffee morning Colourstrings Play & learn	Baby and toddler first aid Self awareness workshop Teenage parenting group Baby and toddler hygiene Beach play Teens and tots Colourstrings Aerobics

It should also be noted that a number of activities and groups are repeated in different areas to ensure that all Sure Start residents have an opportunity to attend.

Take-up of services

The following graphs show the numbers of registered families and monthly take-up of services. Figure 1. shows the numbers of families registering each month with Sure Start Weymouth & Portland between the launch in March 2002 until March 2005. Figure 2. shows the same data but cumulatively. The upward trend begins in early 2003 when the Sure Start manager appointed temporary project workers to develop services. New families registering has remained constant to date.

Figure 1.

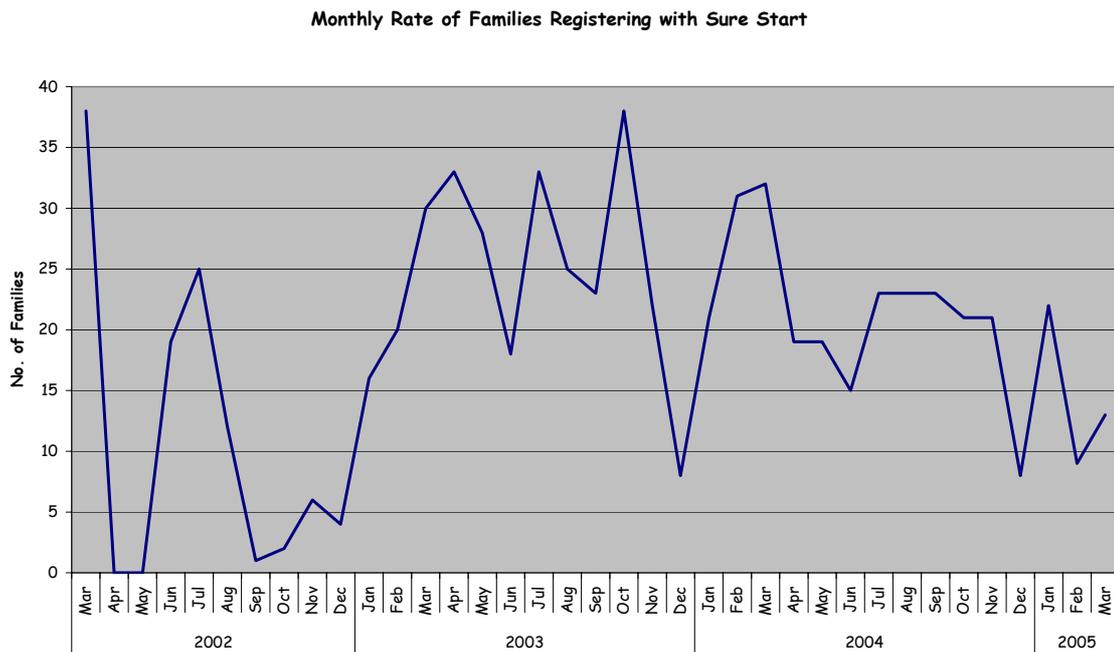
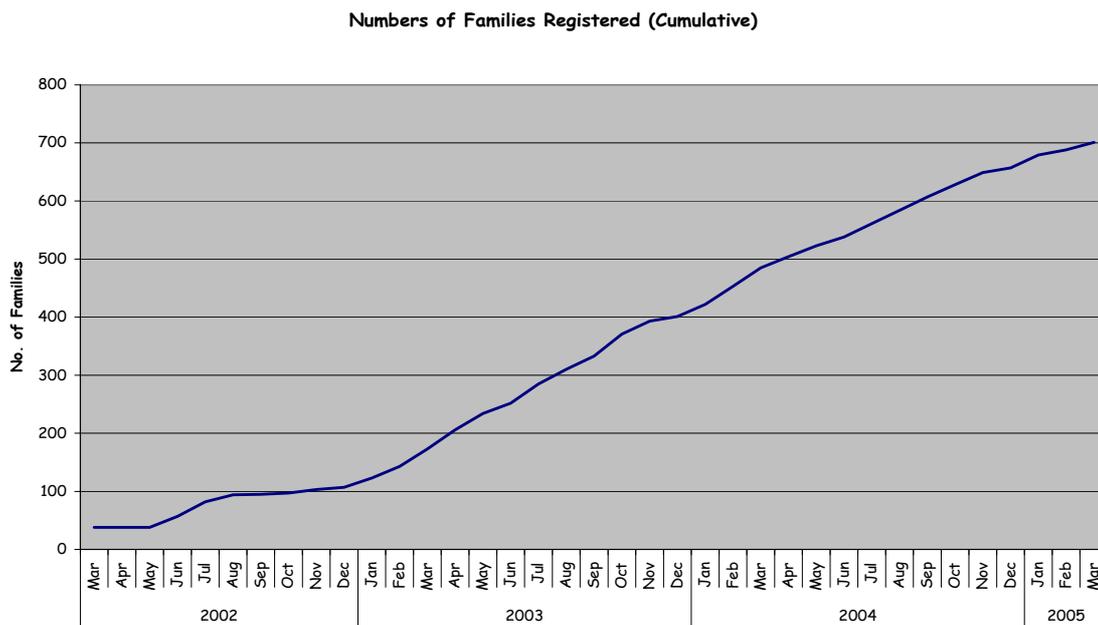


Figure 2.



Figures 3. and 4. show the numbers of individual children and adults taking up services each month. It must be noted that these figures are a count of individuals each month and not a general head count of spaces taken up. One individual may have taken up several services but will only be counted once for that particular period. It should also be noted that data from Underhill covering the period September 2004 onwards has not been available for inclusion. This data would normally provide up to an additional 21% to those shown on the graphs.

Figure 3.

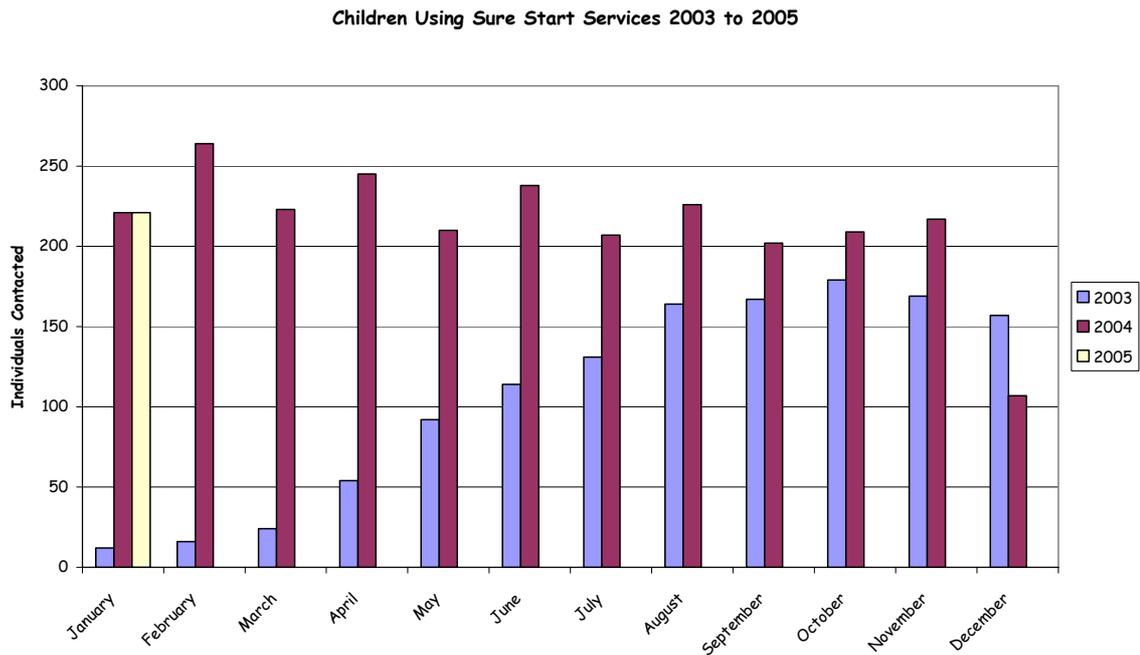
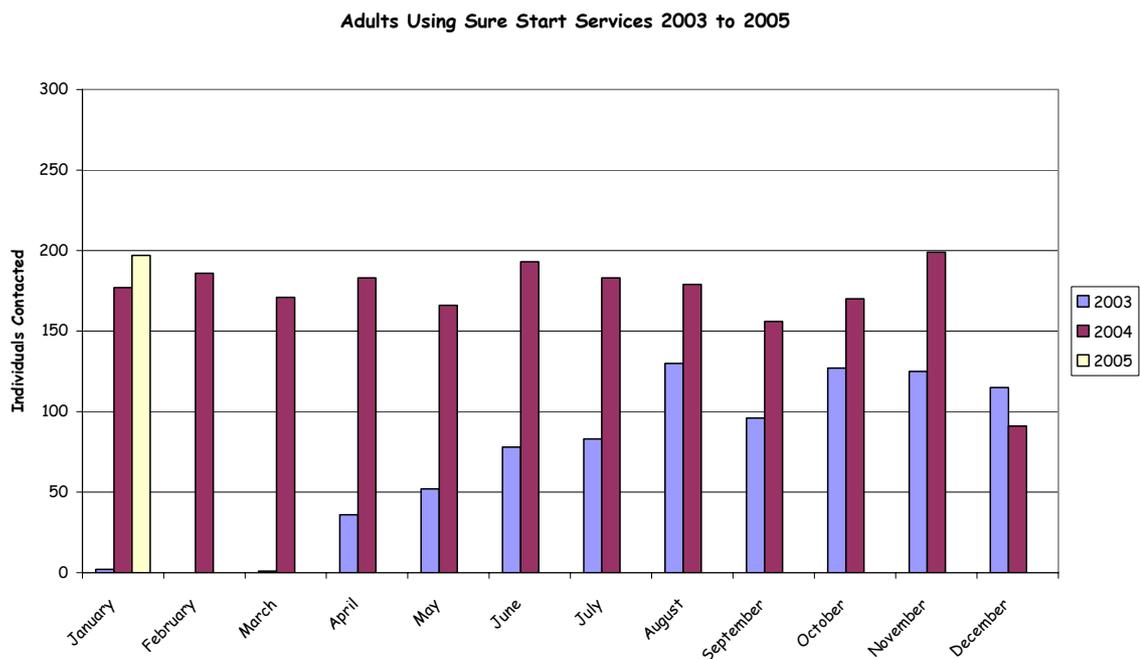


Figure 4.



Section Three: Conclusions and recommendations

Sure Start Weymouth & Portland have made great progress during the second year in offering a variety of services and activities for parents and children in all of the Sure Start areas. It is clear from the evaluation findings that users of the service are satisfied with all that is on offer and numbers of registered families are consistently rising.

Recruitment to the team of people who were prepared to take risks, and work in a very different way, thinking 'out of the box', has been critical to the success of the programme, as has the agreement of agencies from which staff have been seconded. All staff have continued to receive 'clinical' supervision from their own line managers as well as the Sure Start programme manager, and have attended their own discipline's team meetings as a matter of course. The programme manager felt it was crucial that agencies should be as closely involved as possible in order to facilitate mainstreaming in a comprehensive way.

All of the individual evaluations have been positive in their findings with parents and children expressing high satisfaction with groups and activities. Although the Littlemoor Toy library experienced some problems during its development, parent volunteers and Sure Start workers worked together and were able to identify the problems and reorganize the service. It is clear that parental involvement and community participation is extremely important to Sure Start Weymouth & Portland and is actively encouraged at all levels of the programme.

However, it is important to develop this participation further and continue to encourage parents from areas that are not as involved. Having parents as researchers has been one of the major successes for the programme. The involvement of parents and carers in local evaluation is an important aspect within the Sure Start principals and Weymouth & Portland clearly recognize that they cannot understand how well their services are working unless they ask those who use them.

The Dorset Sure Start Unit and this local programme are very keen to maintain as much parental involvement as possible. They are currently giving consideration to a parent being 'vice' chair to the chair of the new Management Board. The programme will continue involving parents at interview panels, various sub groups and general involvement.

It is particularly encouraging to see that all of the Sure Start project workers are actively involved in evaluating their own activities, groups and services. Evaluations range from small scale feedback forms to larger postal questionnaires. Staff are clearly motivated to discover how their services are meeting needs in the local areas and are keen to learn new methods of how to evaluate by collaborating with the local evaluator from the University.

The presence of the local evaluator at the Sure Start centre has meant that project workers and parents have been able to access research information and share ideas. This model of working has proved to enhance the evaluation process, rather than have an evaluation team removed from the programme. Once the commissioned evaluation period is over, it will be important to ensure that parent researchers and project workers continue to work together, sharing their skills and knowledge to improve the overall quality of the evaluation.

The needs of families have been monitored constantly using the Programme's own (MS Access based) database and this has allowed the Programme's management to see much earlier indications of where families may have been slow to take up services being offered. This collation of information, providing statistical evidence of any trends, together with very valuable feedback from service users, has allowed some projects to be revised and adapted over time to be more in keeping with actual needs of local families.

This has ensured that uptake on services by Sure Start families has been maintained as high as possible in each of the four Sure Start areas. Evidence is that, whereas parents bring their little ones to all manner of activities (crèche, play, music, arts and crafts) they themselves are more inclined to access projects where they can meet others and have a bit of fun whilst learning new skills and gaining greater self confidence (e.g. arts and crafts, cooking, breastfeeding and Teen Parents groups, baby massage). Families occasionally seek specific, targeted services to find help for particular needs (e.g. counseling, Health Visitor or midwife, referral to partner agencies). It has also been evidenced that some families will travel to another Sure Start area in order to access an activity not available at that time in their own.

The Programme is moving towards service provision for the whole community in the future. Current and future projects will need continued monitoring to ensure the future success of the Programme in meeting the needs of local families whilst delivering quality services to meet Government objectives in this area.

Sure Start Weymouth & Portland is having a town centre building refurbished and will share the building with the local Arts Centre. It is hoped that the building will be complete by February 2005.

The programme has heard that the implementation plan to become a Children's Centre has been approved, and the final designation will take place in May 2005 subject to an Early Years teacher being appointed. Children's Centres will play an important role in delivering the government's ten year strategy on Children's Services, providing universal and targeted services for families with the eventual aim that any family in the community will be able to access provision if they need to. It is expected that key targets will include developing quality affordable childcare which can be delivered in the child's home as well as that of the childminder, and ensuring that all children are receiving care that is clearly based on 'Birth to Three Matters' and the

Foundation stage. Early Intervention and prevention will continue to be critical to the success of the programme enabling children to achieve their potential as much as possible.

Sure Start Weymouth & Portland has progressed considerably in the last twelve months and have worked hard to reach all families in all of the four Sure Start areas. Plans are in hand to introduce Home link workers, and discussions are taking place with the SWDPCT regarding the longer term funding of these posts. As this report shows there are a wide variety of services and activities being offered throughout the programme and attendance appears to be consistent. However, particular attention must be given to the marketing and publicity of the programme to ensure that all families living in Sure Start areas have the opportunity to attend.

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