

0212019

**INTERIM REPORT TWO FROM THE  
LOCAL EVALUATION**

Report from research  
carried out on behalf of

**SURE START  
KENDRAY AND WORSBROUGH**

July 2004



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

british market research association

**bmra**

member

RBA Research Ltd  
Royal House  
28 Sovereign Street  
LEEDS LS1 4BA

Tel: 0113 285 6300  
Fax: 0113 285 6308

Email: [service@rba-research.co.uk](mailto:service@rba-research.co.uk)  
Website: [www.rba-research.co.uk](http://www.rba-research.co.uk)

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Groups with Parents and carers .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Background and Objectives .....	4
2.2	Methodology.....	4
2.2	Main findings from the group discussions.....	5
2.2.1	Impressions of the Area .....	5
2.2.2	Activities and Entertainment in the Area.....	6
2.2.3	Experiences of Prospective and New Parents .....	7
2.2.4	What Parents Say They Would Like.....	8
2.2.5	The Sure Start Scheme .....	10
	Regular users.....	10
2.3	Summary and conclusions.....	14
2.4	Recommendations .....	15
<b>3</b>	<b>Father involvement.....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1	Introduction.....	16
3.1.1	Background and Objectives .....	16
3.1.2	Methodology .....	16
3.2	Summary and Recommendations .....	18
3.3	Main findings .....	22
3.3.1	Fathers' Current Experiences Of Involvement With Children .....	22
3.3.2	Fathers' Experiences Of Involvement With Children – The Desired State .....	24
3.3.3	Fathers' Knowledge and Experiences of Sure Start.....	25
3.3.4	Barriers to Fathers' Involvement in Sure Start .....	28
3.3.4	Initiatives From Other Sure Starts .....	31
<b>4</b>	<b>Cost effectiveness – unit costs.....</b>	<b>32</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	32
4.2	Units and Targets .....	33
4.3	Allocating the Direct Cost to the Programme .....	33
4.4	Allocating the Programme Overheads .....	34
4.6	Deriving True Unit Costs .....	35
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendations contained within this report and actions taken .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Future Research.....</b>	<b>39</b>

# 1 Introduction

- This report details research carried out by RBA Research on behalf of Kendray and Worsbrough Sure Start between October 2003 and June 2004.
- We considered it important to understand parents and carers views of Sure Start, from both those who use Sure Start services, as well as those who do not. This research explored issues in depth to find out why parents feel a particular way, which complimented the previous study that looked quantitatively at how many parents and carers hold a particular opinion.
- The lack of father involvement in Sure Start activities was an issue highlighted as being a particular concern for K&WSS in Interim Report One, so RBA held discussion groups with fathers of 0-4 year olds to understand why fathers are not getting involved and what K&WSS can do to encourage fathers.
- Finally, RBA looked further into the cost effectiveness of the programme and the individual services by carrying out a unit cost exercise with staff

## 2 Groups with Parents and Carers

### 2.1 Background and Objectives

Part of the local evaluation consists of talking to parents and carers in the area, to gain feedback on the provision for themselves and their children.

The specific objectives are:

- To find out what services parents with pre-school children want
- To find out what parents with pre-school children think of the services currently provided
- To find out why, where applicable, current services are not being used

### 2.2 Methodology

We thought it important to speak to users and non users of Sure Start as well as parents with different aged children, as they would have experiences of varying lengths.

The participants were recruited face to face, with our local recruiters knocking on doors around Kendray and Worsbrough to find the relevant people and asking them if they would like to take part in the research.

The specifications of the groups are shown in the table below:

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Group 5</b>	<b>Group 6</b>
<b>Use of Sure Start</b>	Have a say group	Either	User	Non user	User	Non user
<b>Age of child</b>	Any	Pregnant with first child	0 - 2	0 - 2	3-4	3-4
<b>Number recruited</b>	11	4	10	13	11	13
<b>Number attended</b>	<b>11 total</b> 2 Kendray 1 Ward Green 2 Stairfoot 6 Worsbrough	<b>3 total</b> 2 Worsbrough 1 Bank End	<b>8 total</b> 1 Kendray 7 Worsbrough	<b>8 total</b> 3 Kendray 5 Worsbrough	<b>6 total</b> 2 Kendray 4 Worsbrough	<b>8 total</b> 6 Kendray 2 Worsbrough
<b>When</b>	Thurs 13 <sup>th</sup> November @ 11am	Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> October @ 6.15pm	Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> October @ 1.15pm	Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> October @ 1.15pm	Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> October @ 10.15am	Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup> October @ 10.15am

Groups lasted 1 ½ hours with the exception of the 'Pregnant with first child' group which we decided, for the comfort of the pregnant women, would be kept to a one hour session. The groups were tape recorded for later analysis. All participants were given a voucher worth £25 for a local supermarket to thank them for their time.

## 2.2 Main findings from the group discussions

All the discussion groups held amongst local Kendray and Worsbrough residents fell into three main categories, i.e. parents who have a child aged 0-2; parents who have a child aged 3-4; and residents who are (or were at the time the group was held) pregnant with their first child. The groups were divided into current users of Sure Start services and non-users (or past users, but not within the six months prior to the groups being held).

Many of those attending the groups have children that fall into both categories (0-2 and 3-4) and so the experiences they speak of may not be in relation to only one child. Indeed, there is very little distinction in the points of view raised, as determined by the child's age.

One discussion group was held with members attending the Sure Start 'Have-a-Say' meeting and as the opinions and comments from this group vary very little from the main findings, they have not been specifically highlighted as a separate category (other than 'user') within this report.

### 2.2.1 Impressions of the Area

#### General Comment

Parents' views of the area they live in are quite disparaging, with the exception of one resident who was born and brought up in the West Midlands and who came to Barnsley as a young adult. Most parents describe the Kendray and Worsbrough areas as "rough", although Kendray is regarded as being worse than Worsbrough (and Bank End).

*"It's run down. They're not doing enough – repair-wise"*  
(user, age 3-4)

*"It depends where you live ... it can be rough ... vandalism, drugs and stuff like that"*  
(user, age 0-2)

*"The park at Lesley Rd were nice when it started, but it's full of graffiti and there's always glass all over"*  
(user, age 0-2)

*"The bigger kids roll up the swings so little'uns can't get on"*  
(user, age 0-2)

*"Coppers'll do nought"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

*"They put bad people in with good ones hoping it will rub off!"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

Parents are fairly sceptical that anything will be done to improve the area ...

*"It's not clean, the streets aren't kept clean"*  
(user, age 3-4)

... but they do acknowledge that since a lot of properties have been demolished in Kendray, things have improved.

Local residents suggest that residents from other parts of Barnsley see the Kendray and Worsbrough areas as undesirable and often choose not to live there. Although the local residents do criticise the area themselves, they resent the criticism that other Barnsley residents level.

*"They turn their nose up at Kendray, but it's not so bad, at Worsbrough"*  
(1<sup>st</sup> pregnancy)

*"When you say you're from Kendray, it's almost like – 'oh, my God' – but it's not that bad"*  
(user, age 3-4)

When asked to talk about the good things about the area, parents, initially, have little to say. On probing, however, they are more forthcoming – but often end on a negative note.

*“It’s pretty quiet ... there’s good walks and good countryside ... the schools are good”*  
(user, age 0-2)

*“The buses are child and pram-friendly”*  
(1st pregnancy)

*“There’s the animal farm ... and loads of green”*  
(user, age 0-2)

*“There’s Sure Start, but that’s not safe with needles and dog dirt”*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

Those who use the Community Centre are very happy with it, although they find the location (at the top of the hill) unhelpful. Parents also comment on the usefulness of the courses and qualifications on offer and make particular note of the availability of the crèche.

## 2.2.2 Activities and Entertainment in the Area

When asked about what there is ‘to do’ in the area for adults, young people and children, again parents are disparaging. The only entertainment they say is available for adults is the pub and they say that young people have nothing provided for them.

*“There’s nought. Just pubs ... and bingo”*  
(1st pregnancy)

*“There’s the reservoir – if you’re into fishing”*  
(1st pregnancy)

*“There’s nowhere for t’ kids”*  
(user, age 3-4)

Parents say that the lack of things for young people to do is what leads to their anti-social behaviour and vandalism, and that the older ones, in particular, cause a nuisance that stops the younger children playing safely.

*“You can’t put the kids down at Ardsley [park] ‘cos it’s all just full of broken glass – you can’t let ‘em play in there ‘cos they’ll end up in Casualty for hours”*  
(user, age 0-2)

They acknowledge the provision of the ‘Vida’ and the ‘Metrodome’, and say that some young people use them, but that the cost can be prohibitive. They also suggest that neither is close enough for younger children to go unaccompanied.

Some parents suggest that, whereas there are facilities for younger children, there is nothing for the older children, and that there is a particular lack in provision for 8 year-olds.

*“There’s plenty for little’un-end – it’s t’ older end where there’s nought”*  
(user, age 0-2)

*“There’s nought for 8 year-olds”*  
(user, age 3-4)

When asked what there is for parents and children to do together, parents suggest only two things – neither of which is in the immediate area.

*“Trips to t’ animal farm”*  
(user, age 0-2)

*“I go to a park in Rotherham because there’s nothing here.  
[In Rotherham] there’s no violence, no vandalism, there’s no racial abuse.  
There’s skating and all that – it’s marvellous. It’s looked after with CCTV”*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

Many parents say that there is nothing to occupy teenagers and they believe that this leads to drug use, vandalism and petty crime.

### 2.2.3 Experiences of Prospective and New Parents

When reflecting back on past experience, with particular reference to their ‘support’ needs at various stages from pregnancy, through childbirth and on to their children starting school, parents say they have had no emotional support and that there is an expectation that they **“just have to get on wi’ it as best you can”**. They say they have had a midwife during pregnancy but some say that there is little consistency in who attends them, which does not allow for a relationship to form.

*“9 times out of 10 you never had the same midwife”*  
(non-users, age 3-4)

*“You just have a short time with the midwife. They just have a quick look at you and then you’re gone”*  
(non-user, age 0-2)

*“I were scared at first ... I had no support until he [the baby] came, then I had a health visitor. They just gave me a leaflet on how to be a parent and I cracked up wi’ screaming”*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

Some say they have turned to family members for help, whilst others say they have had no help at all.

*“I had nobody”*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

Amongst those who are currently pregnant with their first child, some say they go to see the midwife at their allotted appointment time, but that this exchange is very short and doesn't really give them confidence. For those who have family members around them (as a source of information and support), this form of contact with the midwife poses no difficulty; for others, however, it can be very worrying. These sentiments are corroborated by other parents with young children under school age.

*"They don't tell you anything, they just give you a book to read"*  
(1<sup>st</sup> pregnancy)

*"I know what to do from my sister"*  
(1st pregnancy)

*"I'll see my mam, or my aunties"*  
(1st pregnancy)

*"My brother told me it's normal to 'pee' myself when I cough – and that's my brother!"*  
(1st pregnancy)

*"You're given a 'Bounty Pack' with your Benefit forms in and they don't even help you fill it in"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

*"I was discharged too quickly... hospitals treat pregnant women like cattle"*  
(user, age 0-2)

Parents are equally disparaging when reflecting on their experience of the 'toddler' stage and say that apart from family members (where that support is applicable), there is very little help in coping with such things as temper tantrums. They say this can lead to feelings of isolation.

*"You get a visit from the health visitor with a book on tantrums, and that's it!"*  
(user, age 0-2)

*"There's nobody there to tell you any better"*  
(user, age 0-2)

*"You can become reet lonely"*  
(non-user, age 0-2)

#### **2.2.4 What Parents Say They Would Like**

When considering the broader needs of the immediate area, these residents say they want leisure facilities, such as swimming, badminton, gym, bowling, indoor karting. However, parents punctuate this by saying that these facilities must either be licensed, or attached to a pub.

*"Something the adults can actually go to ... somewhere you can have a drink as well"*  
(non-user, age 0-2)

When asked to consider what the ideal provision would be for parents and children engaged in activities *together*, suggestions return to the notion of a pub, i.e. somewhere where the children can play safely and the adults can go and spend time relaxing. For the parents of Kendray and Worsborough, the 'ideal' does not appear to involve spending time engaged in activities *with* their children.

When asked to discuss the needs of families with children under school age, almost universally, parents (mothers and fathers) say they need somewhere to take their children on a daily basis. Somewhere they can leave their children and know they are safe and learning, amongst other things, socialisation skills. This would allow some parents to take up a part-time job, but others say they would simply benefit from the time away from their children.

*“Somewhere they can go and meet with other kids ... learn how to share things and play with others”*  
(user, age 0-2)

*“Every day – where you can take ‘em and leave ‘em, so you can go and get things done”*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

Some say they would welcome having facilitated discussions whilst their children are being cared for, on various aspects of child care and child development, e.g. how to deal with temper tantrums, what to do if they won't eat, how to deal with poor sibling behaviour, etc.

*“Somewhere to go to talk [topic-based], while t' kids are looked after”*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

Some parents say that practical help is needed as soon as the mother comes out of hospital with the new baby, and particularly when there are other children at home.

*“It would be nice for someone to come and take your kids for a couple of hours”*  
(user, age 0-2)

*“Somebody you can ring and they'll come round and help you out”*  
(user, age 0-2)

In short, the 'ideal' for the parents involved in these group discussions appears to be to have someone to look after their children, in safety, while they get on with their own activities.

## 2.2.5 The Sure Start Scheme

### Regular users

Parents who regularly use Sure Start services speak very highly of the scheme, describing it as a **“treasure chest”** for parents. They are very happy with all the services on offer in the form of sessions for them and/or their children, and particularly with regard to the practical assistance they receive from their Health Visitors.

*“The Health Visitor got me a safety gate, a smoke alarm and a Fire Guard – and I got £500 off t’ social”*  
(user, age 3-4)

One parent in particular has nothing but praise for the help and support she has received, through some very difficult times.

*“They’ve always been there for me”*  
(user, age 0-2)

Parents acknowledge the role that Sure Start plays and confirm the positive impact the project has had in the area.

*“Before Sure Start there was nought at all”*  
(user, age 0-2)

*“They’ve done a lot for the community”*  
(user, age 0-2)

But parents also acknowledge the limitations that they see Sure Start striving to operate under.

*“They’ve been brilliant, but they haven’t got enough facilities”*  
(user, age 0-2)

*“It would be better if it [Playgroup] were more than one morning a week”*  
(user, age 0-2)

*“There’s no swings or slide or ough, ‘cos it’s in a Community Centre”*  
(user, age 0-2)

They suggest that more age-related activities may be required, particularly for children just approaching school age who need more structured play. Parents believe that taking this approach and being more flexible about when and where the playgroups run, i.e. more often and in more locations, will generate better use of the facilities. They also suggest that having activities over a weekend, coupled with more male staff, would encourage greater participation by fathers.

Parents are happy to use the services provided, principally the Playgroup or the crèche when doing a training course, but they say that communications are poor and inconsistent and that information tends to spread by word-of-mouth; so if they are not in the information ‘loop’, they miss out. In particular, there is confusion as to who may or may not be able to help.

*“If you’re under a certain health visitor, you get help ... depends what street you live in and which doctor you have”*  
(user, age 3-4)

Parents acknowledge that they often receive letters about a particular initiative, e.g. trips out or ‘pamper’ days, but some suggest that a regular newsletter may be more effective in keeping everyone in touch with *all* the activities that Sure Start provides. At present there appears to be a sense that they don’t always get to find out about things and sometimes it’s too late when they do.

When shown the Sure Start leaflet, some parents say they are not aware of all the different services that Sure Start offers, despite being regular users, and some demonstrate real surprise at the range of services available. Others say they have been offered help with things when help was not needed.

*"I was asked if I needed help with tantrums, but mine were OK"*  
(user 3-4)

When asked how they had heard of Sure Start in the first instance, most say it was through their health visitor, midwife or through word-of-mouth from other parents involved in doing training courses. Some say they were given a leaflet and an initial information pack, but have little recollection of what was in it.

### **Past Users of Sure Start**

Parents who have used Sure Start once or twice, but no more, tend to be very critical of the playgroup facilities in particular. They say their experiences of attending have not been good and that they would not attend again.

*"I've used it twice, but they all get in their little groups and they're all 'stuck up' and they don't want ought to do with you"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

*"Mothers are running it and the Health Visitor just sits there in the corner"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

*"They all sit there ... the language is terrible ... they give their own kids all the best toys"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

*"I don't like it. You'll walk in and everyone'll stare at you and you feel out of place"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

These parents tend to be very sceptical about what Sure Start can offer them and, having tried it and not liked it, they may take some 'convincing' that it is worth their while trying again.

Prejudice does seem to play a part here and if the perception of these parents is that the Sure Start facilities are badly run and that they are not welcome when they attend – they readily attach a stigma to the Sure Start name that will require very positive action to overcome.

### **Non-users**

Amongst the non-users who have heard of Sure Start, there is a strong belief that the service is 'not for them', but this appears to be based on hear-say rather than experience.

*"All these Sure Starts are all the same"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

They say they don't like the idea of someone **"above"** them giving them advice and when asked about the idea of a 'weaning party', for example, some are bordering on belligerent in their response.

*"It's between the mother and that child. A mother knows best what her baby wants"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

Other non-users either simply haven't heard of Sure Start, whether from their health visitor, midwife or through word-of-mouth; or they know about it but don't use, for example, the playgroup because it is not run at a convenient time (or place) for them. They see no other purpose for it than to look after their children for them and if it is not provided in a way that meets their needs, they don't feel inclined to seek any other assistance.

*"It needs to be every day ... I can't go on a Tuesday"*  
(non-user, age 3-4)

When shown the Sure Start leaflet, many say they have neither seen it before, nor heard of Sure Start. Asked what would encourage them to use Sure Start services, some say it looks very interesting and believe it could meet their needs, whilst others believe they do not need the kind of help that is being offered, other than childcare on a daily basis. Those parents who have not heard of Sure Start, but would be prepared to 'give it a go', still place limitations on their use of the facilities, with particular regard to time of day and convenience.

*"I'd need to know where they were and the times ... but I'd be prepared to go in and have a look"*  
(non-user, age 0-2)

*"... needs to be easy to get to – shouldn't need to have to get a bus to get there"*  
(non-user, age 0-2)

*"... haven't heard of this [weaning parties]. It sounds good but t' time would have to be convenient. It's difficult to get to things first thing in the morning, but it would have to be daytime"*  
(non-user, age 0-2)

Having looked at the list of facilities and services available in the Sure Start leaflet, many parents say they would like to see more outdoor facilities provided for their children, e.g. climbing frames, and perhaps a 'pets corner'.

## **First Pregnancy**

Most of the first-time pregnant women that attended the discussion group say they have heard about Sure Start through acquaintances, but they say they know very little about what it does. All say that their midwife has not told them about it. (One pregnant woman was only two weeks from delivery at the time the group discussion was held).

*"I didn't have a clue really"*  
(1st pregnancy)

*"It's an organisation for women"*  
(1st pregnancy)

*"They'll help you get a job"*  
(1st pregnancy)

When shown the information about Sure Start, all agree that the services may prove useful and that they would probably make further enquiries to see what is available.

*"...seems like it would be for us"*  
(1st pregnancy)

They say they would probably be particularly interested in those services involving practical help and support and that although some are quite knowledgeable already (through family members), they would probably attend a particular topic session, such as the weaning parties.

*"I'd use the accident prevention thing"*  
(1st pregnancy)

*"I'd use the playgroup – it's good for 'em to socialise"*  
(1st pregnancy)

*"Things have changed so much these days, I'd probably go along [weaning party] to see what they've got to say"*  
(1st pregnancy)

When asked what else they feel they may want that Sure Start could provide, they say it would be nice to have somewhere like a **“community centre”**, where they could **“call in, pick up advice and have somebody there they could talk to”** if they needed it; but this, again, focuses on the desire for ‘refreshment’ as part of the package.

*“Somewhere where you could get a cup of tea”*  
(1st pregnancy)

## 2.3 Summary and conclusions

1. The parents of Kendray and Worsbrough, as represented by those attending the discussion groups, have limited expectations of their area and are very insular in their outlook. Other than **“moving to Spain for t’ sunshine”** or perhaps to Cornwall for cleaner air, most say they have no wish to live anywhere else and do not appear to welcome newcomers very easily.

*“No-one talked to me for the first five years when I moved in!”*  
(user, age 3-4)

*“It takes a lot to be accepted if you’re not from around here ...  
people tend to stick in their own little groups”*  
(user, age 3-4)

2. It appears that once many parents have made up their mind about something, e.g. a poor opinion of the Sure Start services, it may take considerable positive action, on the part of Sure Start, to change this perception.
3. Current users are generally happy with the services provided but Sure Start may have an uphill struggle in engaging with non-user parents in the area if they see no relevance in what is being offered, or if they feel that what is being offered is ‘cliquie’, badly managed, in the wrong place, on the wrong day or at the wrong time of day.
4. Parents appear to have low expectations with regard to *what* may be provided for them, but the *manner* of the provision leads to other expectations, i.e. parents do not appear to be particularly willing to ‘put themselves out’ in order to benefit from what is provided.
5. Those parents who regularly use Sure Start services and have regular information about current activities, speak very highly of the scheme. Many say they really benefit from the services, although even here, they say that there should be more provided, with better facilities and better age-appropriate play provision.
6. Current Sure Start service users say that communications are generally poor and that if they are not in the immediate ‘loop’ for information (with particular reference to word-of-mouth), sometimes they miss out on what’s going on. They say they often receive letters informing them of particular initiatives but that sometimes these come too late to benefit from them. They say they would like to have more information about all of the Sure Start activities, on a regular basis, so that they can become (and remain) well informed about all that is on offer.
7. Current, regular playgroup users applaud Sure Start for the service that is provided but say that facilities are limited and they would like to see the childcare better resourced and more widely available, i.e. more days, times and locations.
8. Past users of Sure Start services have made some very damning comments about the playgroup provision, in particular. They say it is badly run (i.e. influenced too heavily by parents demonstrating bad language and poor behaviour), unwelcoming, shows ‘favouritism’ towards some children and is geared too much towards younger children with no constructive play (and poor facilities) for those children rising school age. Regardless of whether or not this is ‘true’, these sentiments are strongly held and can be very powerful in convincing other parents.
9. Notification of Sure Start services appears to be very sporadic and entirely dependent on which GP surgery the residents belong to – except where a friend or family member is aware of the scheme and they are informed ‘anecdotally’. However, this information route can have both negative and positive connotations with regard to Sure Start’s reputation.
10. When asked what service would be most beneficial to parents in the area, without exception, all parents say they want childcare provided for their children, every day of the week and, preferably, all day. They would also like to see more weekend activities, to involve fathers. Regular users also say that Sure Start should reach parents as early as possible because there is so much to be gained from being involved.

## 2.4 Recommendations

1. Whether or not parents have heard of Sure Start in the first instance appears to be somewhat of a 'lottery'. If Sure Start is to achieve universal coverage within the catchment area, more effort needs to be made to ensure that all local GP surgeries have the necessary information (and are kept updated) to ensure *all* parents, and *prospective* parents have an opportunity to see what Sure Start is about, for themselves.
2. Sure Start must undertake an investigation into the allegations regarding the running of one or more of its playgroups. The criticisms made by past users are damning and, if true, action must be taken to correct this. If untrue, great efforts must be made to invite current non-users and past users into playgroup sessions, to see for themselves that the comments are unfounded.
3. Communications with both users and prospective users is much too frail. As a matter of urgency, Sure Start must devise an *effective communications strategy* to ensure that the right information goes to the right recipients. According to regular users, communication from Sure Start at present, is on single topics, haphazard and appears to rely too heavily on word-of-mouth. If this is the view of Sure Start's regular users, it is not surprising that many of the parents involved in this project have not heard of it.
4. A strategy for communications may involve developing a regular Newsletter, but this can sometimes create more problems than it solves, and if this route is followed it must be well thought out and properly resourced (including manpower and production costs) – it must be published at regular, pre-determined intervals and continue for a specified period of time. This may be an area where sponsorship could be achieved.
5. Parents say they want childcare provision all day, every day. They also say they would like to be able to attend informal, topic-based discussion groups on childcare and child development subjects, whilst their children are being looked after. Providing this would increase Sure Start's capacity to attract new parents into the service.
6. Parents also ask for more age-appropriate facilities for their children, particularly in relation to rising school-age children who require more structured play and good resources.

## 3 Father involvement

### 3.1 Introduction

#### 3.1.1 Background and Objectives

The Kendray and Worsbrough Sure Start (K&WSS) programme is looking at ways to develop and increase the involvement of fathers. Sure Start is designed to support *families*, therefore should not be perceived as being only for women and children. There have been attempts made to engage with men and their children but to date men have tended not to play an active part in K&WSS activities.

The specific objectives are:

- To evaluate men's understanding of Sure Start and services for children
- Ascertain what men see as the barriers to becoming involved
- To raise awareness and interest among men on the importance of their role in children's early development, and the support available to them as fathers
- To promote all aspects of the programme to men, especially the opportunities to join the partnership management board
- To establish ways of engaging dads in basic skills and other local training provision, raising awareness of local agencies and links to work where appropriate
- Explore the attitudes of mothers towards dads' involvement (men's perceptions of women's attitudes)

#### 3.1.2 Methodology

##### ***Desk research***

RBA gathered evidence from existing research including national studies on father involvement as well as local Sure Start evaluation report references to the issue of a lack of father involvement. This extant material both complemented the primary research – i.e. the group discussions – and informed the discussion guide that was used to shape these group discussions.

##### ***Focus groups***

RBA conducted two group discussions with fathers.

All of the participants were recruited on the basis that:

- They are the father of or primary carer for a child aged 0-4 years
- Their wife or partner is registered with K&WSS

To recruit fathers, we worked with a local mum, whom we had already trained to interview for a previous research project for K&WSS regarding the establishment of a new neighbourhood nursery. This recruiter then networked at Community House, handing out leaflets to mothers with the suggestion that these leaflets be taken home to the their partner/the father of their child. This leafleting was then followed by door-knocking in the Kendray and Worsbrough area. The groups were held in The Cutting Edge Pub in the same geographic area with discussions taking place in a separate room that provided the necessary quiet and privacy whilst still being a comfortable, relaxed environment to put the participating fathers at their ease. Each group discussion lasted 1½ hours.

The groups were segmented by geographic area as shown below.

<b>Group</b>	<b>Where the dads live</b>	<b>Date and time</b>	<b>Number invited</b>	<b>Number attended</b>
<b>1</b>	Kendray	Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> March @ 6.30pm	14	3
<b>2</b>	Worsbrough	Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> March @ 8.15pm	12	3

Reminder calls were made to all fathers the evening before the groups but, despite this, the turnout was poor. To increase the number of fathers consulted by RBA, we called those fathers who did not attend their group discussion and asked them if they would participate in a on-to-one in-depth interview over the 'phone.

Four fathers agreed to take part in these in-depth interviews. Three are Worsbrough residents and one lives in Kendray.

All participants were given a £15 voucher for either Tesco or B&Q as a "thank you" in order to recompense them for their time and any expenses incurred in participating in the research project.

## 3.2 Summary and Recommendations

The following overview summarises the research findings detailed elsewhere in the report and proposes how Kendray and Worsbrough Sure Start (K&WSS) could begin to involve fathers and other men who are principally responsible for the care of children aged 0-4.

Whilst levels of awareness of K&WSS and perceptions of its offering vary considerably amongst fathers and other male carers, those with some degree of understanding of K&WSS's services feel K&WSS provides real value. This perception of value is gained via their wives/partners, and fathers see the positive impact that K&WSS has had on their partner and children and therefore on the life of the family. There is, therefore, a firm bedrock – in terms of the goodwill held by some fathers/male carers – upon which K&WSS can build.

As this implies, one of the barriers to father involvement in K&WSS is lack of awareness and/or understanding of Sure Start and what it offers to parents with children aged 0-4. The other barriers fall into three types – practicalities, perceptions of K&WSS and social / cultural attitudes.

The practical barriers are that the men consulted tend to work full time and so perceive themselves to be time-poor, in terms of having time to spend with their children. Weekday evenings in particular tend to be spent in 'recovery' from work and in trying to find some quality time to spend with their wife/partner, with little time left for their children and no time available for organisations such as Sure Start. In this respect, the obvious lever to overcome barriers to father involvement is to make the weekend – and, fathers tell us, Sunday morning in particular - the principal focus of father-related Sure Start activity.

Father/male carer perceptions of Sure Start that can act as barriers to involvement are that:

- Involvement as a volunteer will entail looking after other people's children and so spending even less time with your own.
- Involvement with the management board will lead to a 'snowballing' of responsibilities – for organising initiatives etc – that fathers do not have the time to commit to.
- Sure Start is for parents only, not other carers such as grandparents.
- Men attending Sure Start activities will discover that they are the only man there.
- Sure Start is some kind of charity that gives money to deprived families (this impression came from a father's investigation of the national website).
- The aim of Sure Start's service is to give you a break from your children by leaving them with someone else – whereas fathers/male carers want to achieve **more** time with their children, not **less!**

Interestingly, the idea that dads or male carers might not be welcomed by the mothers involved in Sure Start is not an issue amongst our sample, despite its having arisen in other Sure Start consultation. Perhaps this is because the dads/male carers consulted would feel welcomed by the mothers that they know, i.e. their own wife/partner! It may be that it is unfamiliar males that are less welcomed by some mothers/female carers, and this theory also implies a solution: that of involving dads and their wives/partners in K&WSS projects aimed at fathers.

Most powerful of all are the barriers that result from societal or cultural attitudinal stereotypes. These attitudes are as follows:

- Some men appear to be more comfortable with their identities in terms of career/role as breadwinner and a father in the sense of disciplinarian as opposed to an identity as a father in a softer or more caring sense.
- Men tend to be self-reliant: it is women who are more comfortable in building networks to support each other as mothers and the context in which men tend to socialise (sporting activity, drinking etc) is not obviously conducive to sharing experiences as fathers.

There is therefore significant anxiety surrounding the idea of father involvement in K&WSS and this informs our proposed approach to overcoming barriers to father involvement.

Fathers/male carers are more likely to become involved in K&WSS if the context for that involvement addresses the practical concerns and reduces the anxiety surrounding that involvement. Dads and other male carers tend to be most interested in **energetic activities**, such as swimming, bowling and **outdoors activities** such as walks and bike rides. **Football** in particular, is an area that men tend to feel very comfortable with and enthusiastic about.

However, dads' interests tend to revolve around their **aspirations** for what they would like to be doing **in future** when their children are older or draw on experiences with their own children, some of whom are older than Sure Start's target 0-4 age group.

There is therefore a need to harness dads' enthusiasms in order to draw them into K&WSS whilst acknowledging that the activities that dads enjoy tend not to be suitable for K&WSS's target group of children aged 0-4 – especially the younger children within this group.

We therefore suggest that K&WSS sets up weekly family events at which:

- Dad's natural enthusiasm, enjoyment and sometimes pride in taking part in activities such as football, bat and ball games or riding bikes with their children is capitalised on. Whilst we recognise that 0-4 year olds are less likely to be able to participate in such activities at the moment, teaching fathers to teach their own children develop the skills from an earlier age, is something that in effect will bring that desired opportunity to fruition earlier. To some extent, this element of the events would be mainly for dads – this is to encourage the dads to network with the other participating dads, as is discussed below.
- Where possible, other family members also play a part. The events must be inclusive, drawing in older children and wives/partners into more general socialising – perhaps with refreshments – and playing with the children.

These weekly energetic play and dad-coaching events should be held at the preferred time (weekends and, in particular, Sunday mornings, as noted above) and could be held outdoors in good weather or indoors (such as in a sports hall – dads feel more comfortable in sports-related venues than in venues like community centres) in poorer conditions.

A key variation on this 'energetic play and dad-coaching event' model relates to **swimming**. Clearly for sessions based around swimming and teaching children to swim, the venue will be quite different but also:

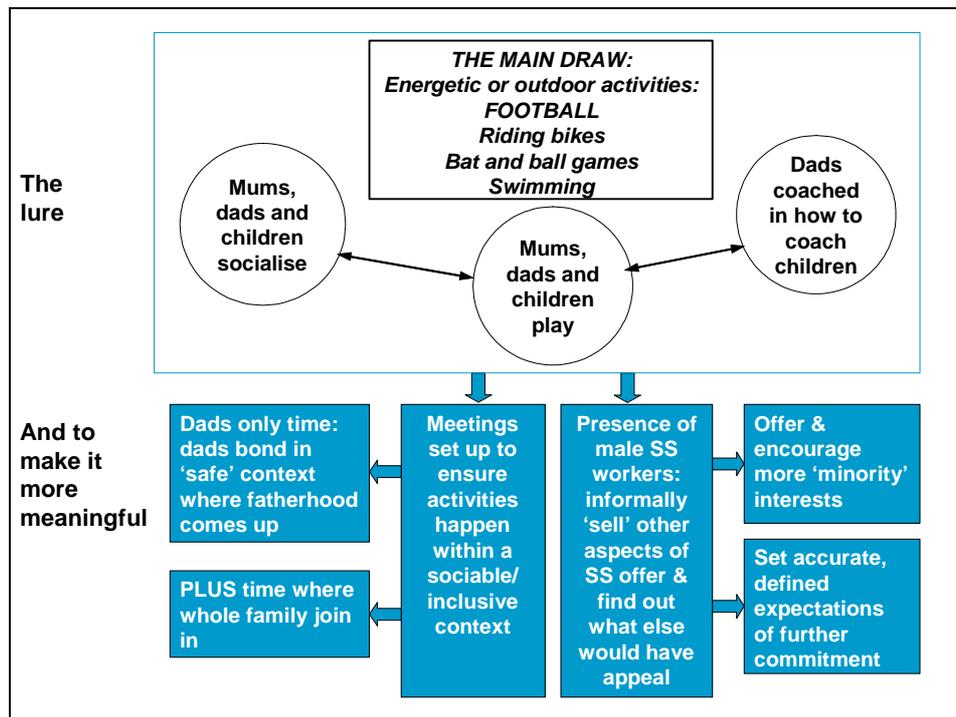
- For many families the cost of going swimming with several children prohibits their doing it regularly. Sure Start could either provide financial assistance or use the mechanism of a block booking to save families money. Both this saving and the laying on of a minibus/coach to ferry the families to the activity could be a powerful incentive to draw fathers and the rest of the families along.
- With swimming, children aged 0-4 can begin to participate in the central activity, even if it is simply by becoming familiar with the experience of being in the water.
- There is less likelihood of there being 'dads only' or 'dads and children only' time within swimming sessions as the whole family are likely to engage in the teaching and being coached in how to teach.

The overall 'energetic play and dad-coaching event' model is elaborated on below.

Thus, having used football and other physical activities as a 'hook' to lure fathers/male carers to Sure Start and to increase their feeling of comfort, the way that the event is set up must make this kind of activity meaningful/worthwhile in terms of Sure Start's mission.

Chart 1, below, suggests how this could begin to be achieved:

**Chart 1: Model for Increasing Father/Male Carer Involvement**



To some extent, bringing dads, mums and children together to socialise and engage in energetic play is a worthwhile end in itself. However, if set-up carefully, it should be possible to use such meetings to enable K&WSS to further the Sure Start aims. This could be as simple as making sure there is some 'dads only' or 'dads and children only' space for a time each week, to encourage the dads to bond with each other. With this happening whilst their children are around, issues relating to fatherhood may arise naturally, and in a context (football etc) that reduces anxiety and does not feel like it involves asking for help or support. A dads support group or dads and toddler group thus comes into being without the dads even realising that they are attending one!

This leads us to an important point, that dads tend to be less at ease with activities that sound overtly worthy or relating to support or sharing feelings. The naming of and terms of reference used to discuss such K&WSS initiatives will therefore be crucial to the initiatives success. Indeed, even using terms like initiatives is likely to deter dads! Dads tend to want to be active with their children and tend not to want to think about needing support or what it means to be a dad. The aim of RBA's recommendation is to bring such support into being without the dads realising that they are being supported.

As dads/male carers also tend to value time with their partners and children, it will also be important that the session allows mothers/female carers to become involved so that the whole family can spend some time together if this is desired.

By introducing male Sure Start workers into this context, further activities can be subtly 'sold' to the already-involved dads:

- Visitor attraction trips. These are already popular with dads and should continue. However, to date they appear not to have drawn fathers into further involvement with K&WSS and so should take place alongside the new initiatives suggested.
- More 'minority interest' father/male carer and children activities:
  - DIY
  - Photography
  - Fishing
  - Cricket

Each of these could be run on a similar basis to that described above, with dads being coached in how to coach their children to help them develop the initial skills in the relevant activity (again accepting that the majority of children aged 0-4 will be too young to fully participate in the activity that dads enjoy).

- Activities aimed at fathers/male carers alone in skills such as IT. Some dads are aware of how interesting/helpful their wives/partners have found such courses, and there is further interest in these areas where they impact on the father/male carer's relationship with his child(ren). An example is where the father's IT skills are not adequate to answer a child's questions.
- The management board: there is some recognition from dads that if they become more involved in this then the activities offered to them by K&WSS will be better tailored to their needs in the longer-term, simply because of the input of fathers/male carers into decisions made about provision. However, to encourage involvement in the management board it is important to set realistic and limited expectations regarding what level of commitment will be entailed. Dads/male carers are more comfortable with coming along to air views for a set period of time – they are more fearful of being asked to organise initiatives and their responsibilities 'snowballing' from there.

If these additional activities are not taken-up, then at least the dads attending the weekly social meetings will have been coached in teaching their children and will have had access to a social support network of other dads.

Desk research from the published findings of N Lloyd, M O'Brien and C Lewis<sup>1</sup> show that designing activities specifically for fathers and employing male staff members has proved a success in other Sure Starts. As described above, RBA's strategy for increasing father/male carer involvement in K&WSS incorporates both of these elements.

Using energetic activities to entice dads is not a new idea to K&WSS, as there has already been efforts made to do this. However, the male volunteer working on this programme did not have the time to give to this project. K&WSS therefore need to ensure that they allocate sufficient resource to this. Despite male Sure Start workers not being mentioned spontaneously by participants in this research, having a male member of staff on the K&WSS team is one way to provide a dedicated resource and this member could also perform the role of subtly 'selling-in' other aspects of the Sure Start offering to dads/male carers within the weekly social meetings.

A final point relates to raising awareness/promotion. The weekly meetings based around energetic and outdoor activities could be promoted in places where dads with these types of interests tend to look – in football match programmes or the sport pages of the local newspapers, for example – whilst simply introducing references to dads into the names of Sure Start groups and activities and into Sure Start registration packs and other literature would help to make dads/male carers feel that there is something in Sure Start for them.

The remainder of this report describes the context in terms of dads' experiences of being a father, as well as giving further detail on the above proposals.

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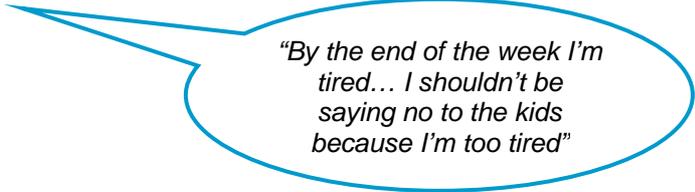
<sup>1</sup> Lloyd N, O'Brien M and Lewis C. (2003) Fathers in Sure Start local programmes

### 3.3 Main findings

#### 3.3.1 Fathers' Current Experiences Of Involvement With Children

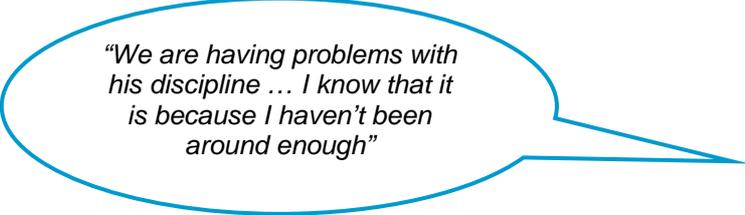
##### *Time currently spent with children*

The amount of time fathers spend with their child(ren) varies considerably, with most fathers saying that the child's mother looks after the child while they are at work, then the father takes over the responsibility when they get home. However there are variations, such as the father studying as well as holding down a full time job, leaving little time to look after the children. Weekdays do seem to be hectic though, as fathers say that they are tired when they get home from work and spend the evening recovering, so they feel that they can't give their child the time they want to give on weekdays.



*"By the end of the week I'm tired... I shouldn't be saying no to the kids because I'm too tired"*

Thus there is a degree of guilt about not being able to spend as much time with their children as they would like, and some perceive that fatherly influence is lacking in their child's upbringing.



*"We are having problems with his discipline ... I know that it is because I haven't been around enough"*

Other fathers have less time to spend with their children as they are studying to further their career as well as holding down a part-time job, so have very little spare time.



*"Sunday morning is the only time I have to spend with my kids"*

Outside of the mother and father partnership, there tends to be only minimal involvement from other family, friends or other support networks, thus increasing the perceived value or potential value of Sure Start's services.



*"We rarely leave him with anyone else"*

Despite the difficulties in finding the time to spend with their children, fathers say their relationships are rewarding.



*"We're like best friends now,  
as well as father and son"*

Overall, fathers would like to be spending more time with their children, but many feel that work commitments make this difficult. Mums are more likely to be looking after the child during the day while the Dad is at work. The issue of lack of time is a recurring theme throughout the research findings.

### **Current activities**

Fathers of older children within the 0-4 age range currently take part in mainly lively activities with their children, with these activities echoing the active nature of the child. For the same reason, outdoor activities are particularly enjoyed when the weather is good enough. Fathers also say that they enjoy activities that the whole family can take part in, such as bike rides. Fathers identify the following as the things they do with their child:

- Play / watch football
- Swimming
- Shopping
- Walks
- Bike rides
- Visiting relatives
- Watching TV
- Parent and toddler group
- Tai Kwon Do

The latter two activities are undertaken by a dad who is the main carer for his children and is unusual in being a frequent attendee at various voluntary and parent-child activity groups.

Fathers with younger children find it more difficult to identify what they do with their child, apart from just looking after them. For some in this situation, they look forward to when their child is old enough, for example to play football. This is emphasised in the following section, where fathers talk about the ideal involvement with their child(ren).

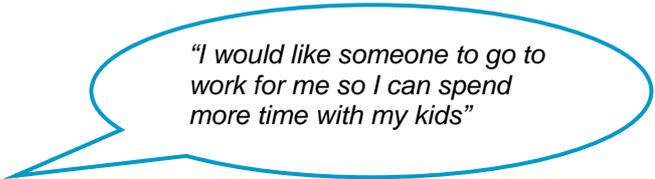
### 3.3.2 Fathers' Experiences Of Involvement With Children – The Desired State

To find out what fathers think is missing from the time they spend with their child, it is useful to see what fathers' 'desired state' of involvement with their child would be. In most cases, they want time and funds to be doing the things they already do but more often, so there is crossover in what fathers say they are doing now, and what things would be like in their desired state.

So, as is the case with fathers' current activities, lively and energetic activities, often taking place outdoors, dominate. Examples included lots of fresh air, cycling, going to the zoo, and going to the coast although some indoor activities – discos with other children, ice-skating and bowling – are also mentioned. These aspirations revolve mainly around activities for older children, so fathers are thinking about the activities they would like to be doing in the future, or the activities they are currently doing with their older children, so fathers need to be encouraged to transfer their enthusiasm to the activities they can do with their younger children.

Fathers would like to go on more trips at the weekend, whereas cost and time currently limits this. Fathers say they aren't lacking support, despite rarely receiving any and talking somewhat enviously of the support that mothers give one-another: this suggests that fathers' claims that they don't lack support is really due to their attitude of self-reliance rather than their genuinely not needing any support.

Fathers want more free time to spend with their child, rather than somebody to help to look after their child so they have more free time for themselves.



*"I would like someone to go to work for me so I can spend more time with my kids"*

Fathers want the money to be able to do the activities they want.



*"It would cost me £11 to take the whole family swimming, so it doesn't happen."*

Fathers do not identify any support they need to help them to bring up their child. This does not necessarily mean that fathers don't need support, but could instead be a symptom of men's tendency to be more self-reliant.

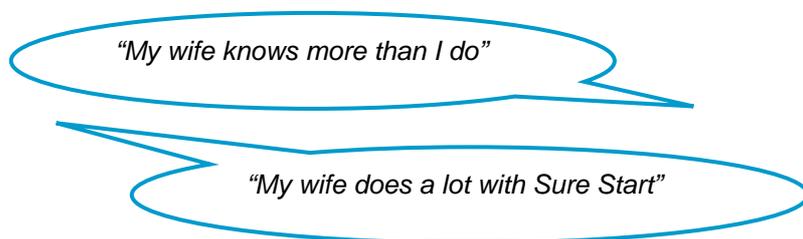


*"Men don't ask for help"*

Monetary support is the only support acknowledged as being needed, although reluctantly, as there is for some a degree of sensitivity to being seen as needing charity.

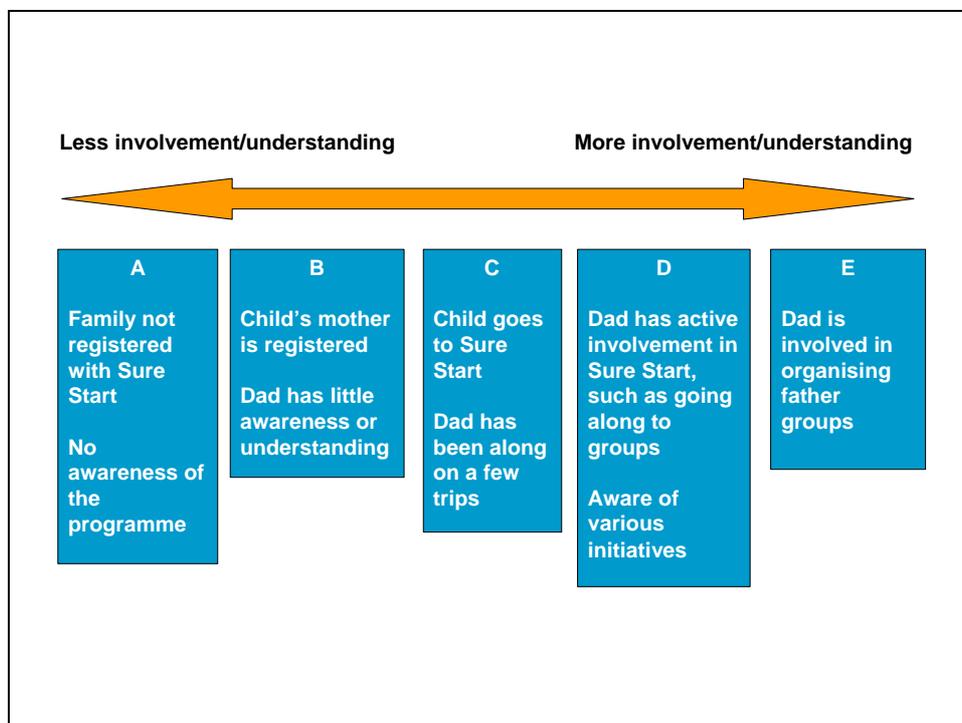
### 3.3.3 Fathers' Knowledge and Experiences of Sure Start

Fathers tend to say that their knowledge of what K&WSS does is limited and that their child's mother knows more about Sure Start than they do themselves.



In reality, of dads whose children are registered with Sure Start, the degree of understanding varies considerably. Chart 2, below, shows these different levels of involvement and understanding:

**Chart 2: Level Of Involvement In and Understanding of Sure Start**



We purposely did not speak to anybody in the 'A' category, as we feel that this group is the most unlikely to get involved. Fathers we spoke to were mainly within the B, C or D categories, with one verging on the E category.

Those in category B have no involvement in Sure Start but have heard of the programme through their wife/partner's registration. Fathers are most likely to fall into category C, where they know of Sure Start through their wife/partner's involvement and have occasionally been along on trips, but this is where their involvement ends as they feel they don't have the time to further commit themselves to Sure Start. Fathers in category D are those who go along to groups, such as the parent and toddler group, usually with their wife. They say that they are usually the only male there, and although this does not dissuade them from attending, there is some sense of discomfort about this. The ideal would be for K&WSS to recruit a father to category E, to encourage father-specific activities to become established in Kendray and Worsbrough.

Within this spectrum of differing degrees of understanding of Sure Start, there is awareness of a number of specific initiatives and activities aimed at children specifically, parents specifically and at the whole family. However, interestingly, there is no perception of Sure Start offering anything aimed specifically at fathers/male carers.

Fathers recognise that Sure Start offers services for children specifically:

- Local authority based groups for toddlers and children up to 4
- Playgroup
- Bookstart
- Pre-school learning
- A local government initiative facilitating reading, playing
- Pre-school start
- Facilitating social development of children by bringing them together

There is also awareness of services aimed at parents specifically:

- Home visits – health
- Home safety checks, such as fitting smoke alarms
- A source of help – allowing you to take your children to play in a controlled environment, e.g. a crèche
- Learning for parents, including regarding IT and child nutrition
- Regular parent meetings and get-togethers

The activities aimed at the whole family that fathers are aware of are:

- Free local activities
- Going to places at weekends
- Parents and children interacting together
- Giving people a chance to go somewhere
- An opportunity to have fun
- Like one big family

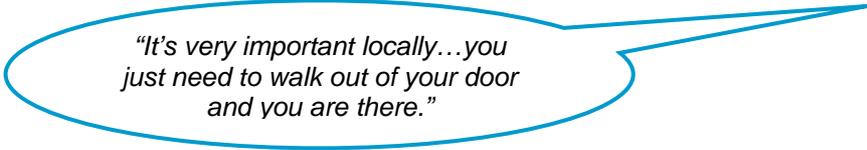
Indeed, fathers who have experience of using K&WSS all say the experience has been positive and is an important part of their lives.



*“Sure Start has been a big part of our lives since he [his child] was born.”*



*“I meet friends there... spend quality time there.”*



*“It’s very important locally...you just need to walk out of your door and you are there.”*

There is therefore barely any negative association with Sure Start amongst those who have any great degree of awareness of the programme – the C/D positions on the Chart 2 spectrum.

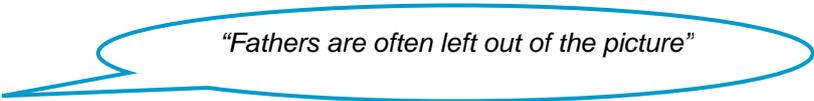
The only negative connotations spring from those towards the A/B end of the spectrum shown in Chart 2, with these being negative views being derived from at best only a slight knowledge of Sure Start. K&WSS needs to address these misconceptions.

For example, one father had gained an impression from the national Sure Start website that Sure Start was aimed at those ‘in need of charity’. This put him off the Sure Start programme, as he perceives it to be a hand out for people in socially deprived areas and felt patronised by it.

Another misconception is that, although some fathers acknowledge that Sure Start is for the whole family, others see it as more for mothers and children than for fathers.



*"They do groups for young mothers"*



*"Fathers are often left out of the picture"*

Similarly, a grandfather we spoke to, who looks after his grandchild every day and acts as the child's father figure, perceives Sure Start to be solely for parents and he thus feels excluded from the Sure Start programme.

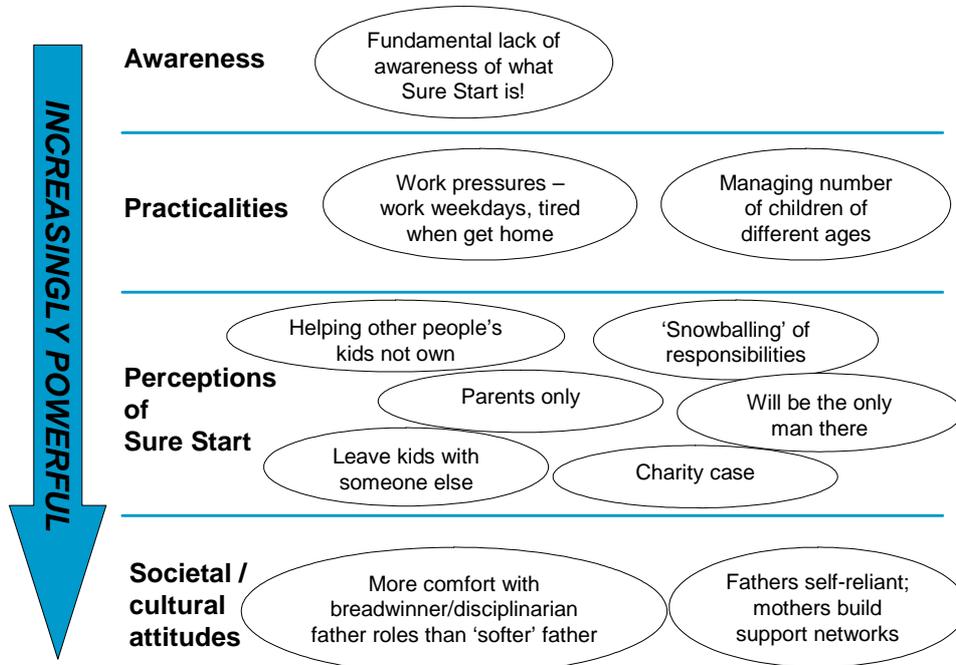
Even amongst those who are aware that Sure Start embraces the whole family, some don't think that K&WSS does anything **specifically** for dads/male carers. As an example of this, the parent and toddler group is referred to by some, as 'the mother and toddler group'.

So, to summarise: whilst levels of awareness of K&WSS and perceptions of its offering vary amongst fathers/male carers (as Chart 2 shows), those with some degree of understanding of K&WSS's services have absorbed via their wives/partners. There is, therefore, a firm bedrock – in terms of the goodwill held by some fathers/male carers – upon which K&WSS can build.

### 3.3.4 Barriers to Fathers' Involvement in Sure Start

A summary of the main barriers to father involvement in Sure Start is shown in Chart 3 below. These barriers fall into four categories of awareness, practicalities, perceptions and attitudes.

Chart 3: Barriers to Fathers' Involvement in Sure Start



The first barrier to father involvement in K&WSS is lack of awareness and/or understanding of Sure Start and what it offers to parents with children aged 0-4.

The next level of barriers are the practical issues: the men consulted tend to be the breadwinner and so perceive themselves to be time-poor, in terms of having time to spend with their children. Weekday evenings in particular tend to be spent in 'recovery' from work and in trying to find some quality time to spend with their wife/partner, with little time left for their children and no time available for organisations such as Sure Start.

*"You will never be able to get working dads involved in Sure Start. They will never have the time"*

In this respect, the obvious lever to overcome barriers to father involvement is to make the weekend – and, fathers tell us, Sunday morning in particular - the principal focus of father-related Sure Start activity. There is also a need to re-educate: K&WSS need to emphasise that time spent with Sure Start is not taking time up that fathers would be better off spending with their children, but rather Sure Start time has the potential to be better quality time for the parent and child.

The next level of barriers to participation are relating to perceptions of Sure Start; that:

- Involvement as a volunteer will entail looking after other people's children and so spending even less time with your own.
- Involvement with the management board will lead to a 'snowballing' of responsibilities – for organising initiatives etc – that fathers do not have the time to commit to.
- Sure Start is for parents only, not other carers such as grandparents.
- Men attending Sure Start activities will discover that they are the only man there.
- Sure Start is some kind of charity that gives money to deprived families (this impression came from a father's investigation of the national website).
- The aim of Sure Start's service is to give you a break from your children by leaving them with someone else – whereas fathers/male carers want to achieve **more** time with their children, **not less!**

Returning to the idea of father involvement in the management board, desk research found that, of Sure Start projects surveyed, an average of five parents are represented on the management board, with around half of programmes having fathers on the board<sup>2</sup>. There are no fathers on the management board at K&WSS, so establishing the reasons for this is a key objective.

Mirroring the barriers to involvement in Sure Start overall, the first barrier to involvement in the board is awareness. None of the participating fathers has heard of the management board and so could only guess at what involvement would entail.

This brings us to our second barrier – that of perceptions. As is noted above, the perception is that a great amount of commitment would be involved, with fathers expecting to be delegated work on various Sure Start initiatives at the management board meetings.

Fathers tend to be interested, in theory, in being on the board, so RBA asked how much time and commitment they would be able to give. This line of enquiry established the following:

- Fathers say that they would be able to attend a meeting once a month, as this would not eat into their time to an unacceptable extent.
- Most would want to attend the meeting purely to voice their opinions, i.e. without having to commit to extra work.
- There are mixed views about when the meeting would need to be held, with evenings being difficult for those who work, and weekends eating into family time. Overall, weekends are the preference of most.
- Fathers say they would want to be given long notice of when the meetings will be, so they can plan their attendance.
- They would also wish to be able to miss odd meetings if they couldn't attend while still being kept 'in the loop'. This could be by sending them the minutes of all meetings, including those they were unable to attend, or being kept up to date on future meetings and being informed about what actions are being taken as a result of the meetings.

An attitudinal barrier to joining the management board is that of apathy resulting from cynicism regarding local authority and government initiatives. Some residents feel that they have not been listened to in the past **in general**, and haven't been given the opportunity to give their views, such as regarding the state of their local area. K&WSS will need to convince such fathers that their views are important and that what they say will make a difference to Sure Start's initiatives.

Interestingly, the idea that dads or male carers might not be welcomed by the mothers involved in Sure Start is not an issue amongst our sample, despite its having arisen in other Sure Start consultation.

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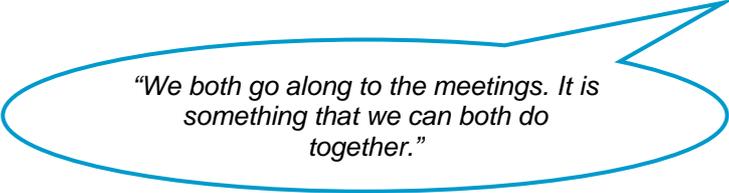
<sup>2</sup> *In what way does a Sure Start Programme help to develop closer links with parents?* Carlisle South Sure Start April 2003

RBA's desk research revealed findings by Lloyd, O' Brien and Lewis (2003) that suggest that staff and mothers have reservations about the involvement of fathers/male carers in Sure Start. Of the fathers we spoke to, their perception is that their wives/partners would be happy to see them get more involved in Sure Start activities. Fathers consulted by RBA also say that other mothers have reacted positively to, for example, them attending a parent and toddler group.



*"They [the mums] found it interesting that I was there, giving a different perspective on things."*

The desk research also revealed that Sure Start West Central Halifax mums ideally want to leave their partner at home in order to meet other mums. RBA would need to consult mums specifically to find out how relevant this is to K&WSS, but this is not the impression held by the fathers/male carers consulted by RBA.



*"We both go along to the meetings. It is something that we can both do together."*

It may be that it is unfamiliar males that are less welcomed by some mothers/female carers, and this theory also implies a solution: that of involving dads and their wives/partners in K&WSS projects aimed at fathers.

Most powerful of all are the barriers that result from societal / cultural attitudes. These are as follows:

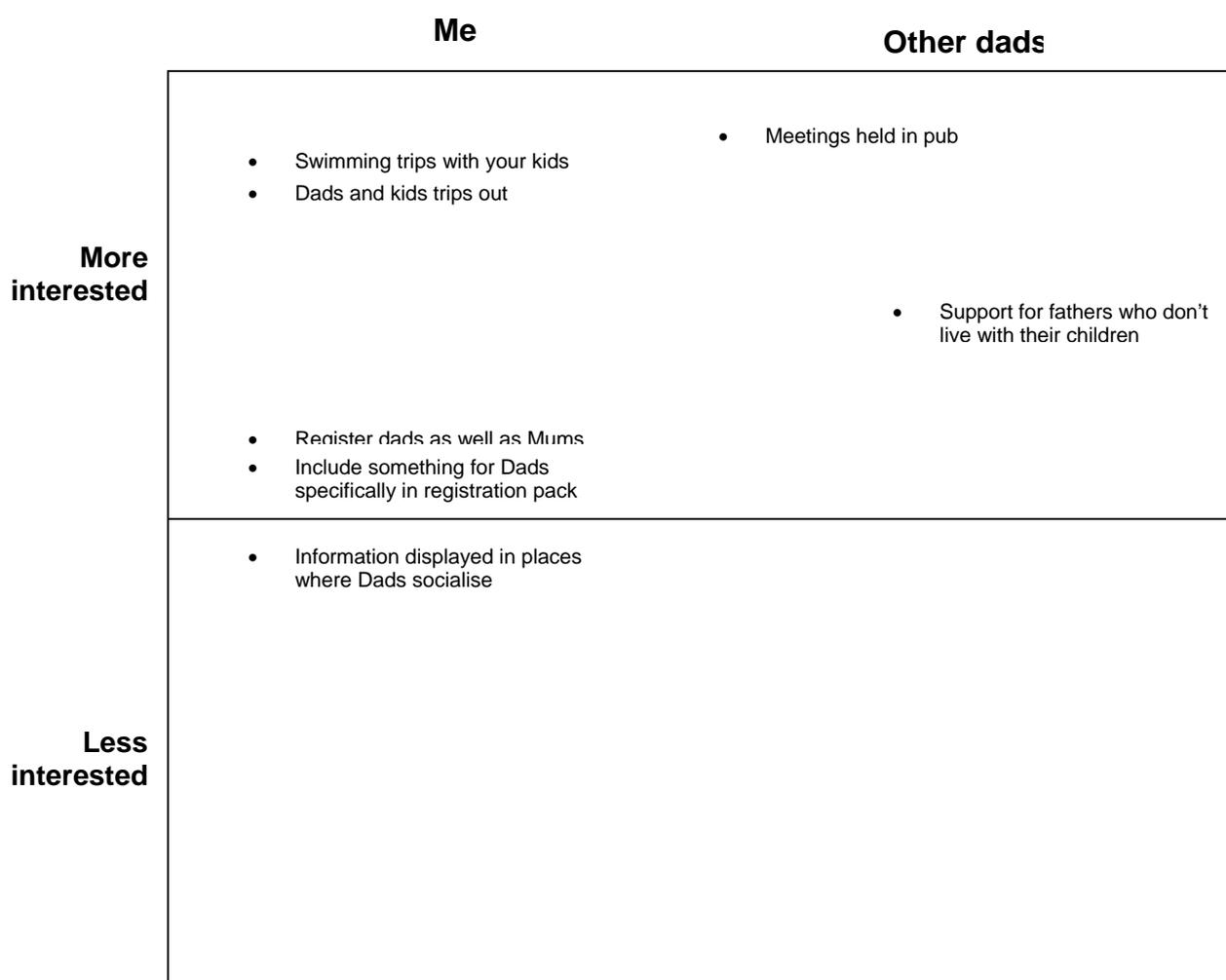
- Some men appear to be more comfortable with their identities in terms of career/role as breadwinner and a father in the sense of disciplinarian as opposed to an identity as a father in a softer or more caring sense.
- Men tend to be self-reliant: it is women who are more comfortable in building networks to support each other as mothers and the context in which men tend to socialise (sporting activity, drinking etc) is not obviously conducive to sharing experiences as fathers.

### 3.3.4 Initiatives From Other Sure Starts

Sure Starts across the country have been tackling the issue of father involvement, so we showed participants a list of the initiatives, and asked them to answer honestly about whether each initiative would make them more or less likely to get involved with Sure Start, or whether they think other dads, but not they themselves, may be interested. Each initiative was written on a card and the participating fathers were given a grid, like the one below, on which to place the cards. Chart 4, below, summarises opinions of the initiatives presented.

Going on trips in general and swimming trips in particular are the only areas that appeal to a number of fathers personally. Fathers are far more enthusiastic regarding the sports and football-related activities that they themselves spontaneously suggested and this is borne out by accounts of what fathers currently do with their children.

**Chart 4: Fathers' Feedback On Initiatives Used by Other Sure Starts**



For many of these ideas, such as talks on men's health / money matters, creative writing are not appealing to most fathers, so even if fathers are involved in Sure Start, they are unlikely to get involved. Therefore these initiatives should initially be steered well clear of, as time and resources will be much better spent encouraging fathers to attend activities they are actually interested in the first place.

Some of the above ideas may be introduced as a means of increasing the commitment of fathers who are already involved with Sure Start, but they are less likely to entice fathers in the first place. It is for these reasons that RBA recommends the strategy described at the start of this report, using fathers outdoor / energetic interests to encourage fathers to get involved.

## **4 Cost effectiveness – unit costs**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Following on from looking at the ideal / actual allocation of spending across the four objectives (reported in Interim report one), we looked at the unit costs for Sure Start activities.

This is an important process for, although it is recognised that there is a certain amount of professional judgment in the approach rather than exact detail, it allows us to appreciate how much money is being spent on delivering each activity to each individual within the community.

There is a consensus amongst parents in receipt of Sure Start benefits and amongst staff and volunteers who deliver those benefits, that the activities are making a difference. Measuring the impact each activity is having on individuals and on the community (in the eyes of children, parents, Sure Start workers and external agencies) is the other key component of the cost effectiveness exercise.

Having information on both the impact and the cost of activities enables informed decisions to be made about the continuation of the activities and provides an argument for persuading other agencies to sustain or mainstream the activity after the Sure Start funding has come to an end.

The following sections outline the stage reached in the process so far, the next steps and how this is to be achieved. It looks at deriving the unit costs, the impact will be measured through the individual project assessments.

## 4.2 Units and Targets

Unit costs aim to establish how much delivery of one Sure Start benefit to one individual costs. Examples of this include:

- A child receiving a Book Start pack at eighteen months
- A parent attending a Bottle to Cup session
- A household receiving accident prevention equipment
- A group receiving insurance information/advice

The programme breaks down into fourteen projects and each project runs a number of activities. There are goals for each activity in terms of the number of units it delivers.

For example, in 2003/04 there was a target such that 180 children would receive the Book Start pack when they reached 18 months of age; there was a target that 2 groups for expectant substance misusing parents be delivered; there was a target that the nursery based worker deliver 70 sessions in local nurseries; and so on.

Delivery against these targets are monitored quarterly by the programme's Finance and Performance Officer.

Although the target for a project may be, say, delivering 20 groups aimed at parents, the number of parents attending should also be monitored in order to calculate the cost of delivery per parent.

## 4.3 Allocating the Direct Cost to the Programme

Each activity is allocated a budget, determined at the beginning of each financial year. That budget breaks down into components. For example, the budget for the Childcare project breaks down into:

- Childcare workers salaries (4 positions)
- Agency Fees
- Employee insurance
- Car allowance
- Computer equipment
- Books, toys and games
- Provisions
- Mobile telephones
- Materials

Each project was presented with a matrix of their budget costs against their target activities and were asked to consider how each budget contributed to each activity.

For example, a salary cost would be split in approximate proportion to the amount of time spent working to achieve each activity target.

An example of a completed matrix for the Childcare project is shown here:

		Expenditure Headings										
		Childcare workers salaries (4 positions)	Agency Fees	Employee insurance	Car allowance	Computer equipment	Books, toys and games	Provisions	Mobile telephones	Materials	Total Cost	
CHILDCARE	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Target</b>	47580	3500	220	500	300	500	500	150	1200	54450
	Sure Start groups receiving childcare support	360	46546	3424	215	489	293	489	489	147	1174	53266
	Programme promotional events attended by Childcare team members	8	1034	76	5	11	7	11	11	3	26	1184
	<b>Budget allocated</b>		47580	3500	220	500	300	500	500	150	1200	
	<b>Remainder to allocate</b>		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## 4.4 Allocating the Programme Overheads

The programme has central and administrative costs that do not directly contribute to delivery against the targets (including the Programme Manager, admin costs, office space costs, evaluation costs).

The Finance & Performance Officer, working with the evaluators, allocated those costs across all of the different projects.

Once allocated to a project, the central admin cost was split across the activities in proportion to the way the project's direct budget was allocated.

For example, in the case of the Speech & Language Therapy project, 21% of its direct budget was spent making sure 4 groups received speech and language support packages, and so 21% of its central admin cost was added to the cost of this activity.

By adding the direct cost and the central admin cost for each activity and then dividing that figure by the target number for each activity, we are able to derive the unit cost for delivering each activity (in terms of its target deliverable).

An example completed matrix for the Speech & Language Therapy project is shown below:

		Expenditure Headings					Total Cost	% of total budget	Central admin overhead	Unit cost (total / target)
		Admin support	Speech and Language Therapist	Travel	Printing and stationery	Therapy equipment				
<b>SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY</b>										
Activity	Target	2710	24730	1570	1045	1045	31100		6941	
Groups receiving speech and language support packages	4	180	4946	187	158	1045	6516	21%	1454	1993
Training events delivered on the early identification of speech/language difficulties	2	181	4074	187	418	0	4860	16%	1085	2972
Professionals attending specialist speech and language training	60	0	4074	187	17	0	4278	14%	955	87
Families surveyed for the SSLM	60	2168	3488	635	17	0	6308	20%	1408	129
Speech and language promotional activities delivered	6	181	4074	187	418	0	4860	16%	1085	991
Programme promotional events attended by Speech and Language Therapist	4	0	4074	187	17	0	4278	14%	955	1308
<b>Budget allocated</b>		2710	24730	1570	1045	1045				
<b>Remainder to allocate</b>		0	0	0	0	0				

At this point it became clear that the task of allocating the budgets against activities was more complex than had been realised. Some projects had allocated budgets in proportion to the target number of activities which results in the same unit cost no matter what the activity.

It was decided that this stage should be revisited as the individual project assessments were undertaken.

## **4.5 Allocating “Hidden” Costs**

A further element that should be included in calculating costs is the “hidden” cost associated with delivery. These derive from any “free” volunteer work that contributes to a target being achieved (e.g. it may be possible to deliver a group for parents only if there are volunteers contributing their time, or materials may be given free).

These are important to include, as part of the purpose in establishing the unit costs, is to be able to put a price on delivery that would have to be met by another agency if Sure Start were not providing this particular service.

There are guidelines as to the value you can put on (for example) volunteer time and when the individual project assessments take place, this element should be introduced.

## **4.6 Deriving True Unit Costs**

For each activity, combining the direct cost to Sure Start with the overhead and the hidden cost, then dividing the total by the number of activities delivered gives us a unit cost for each activity.

This may be the final unit cost in some cases (for example, ‘individual patients receiving direct support to quit smoking’ is a Smoking Cessation project activity), but in others it is necessary to go one step further.

For example, a project may be aiming to deliver a number of groups over the course of the year, so the unit cost calculation thus far will give us the cost per group delivered. However the true unit cost should take into account the number of parents/children/families being reached. We would need to divide the unit cost for the group by the average number of parents/children/families attending.

With the data collected by this programme, this will be possible and will form part of the reports on individual projects.

## 5.0 Recommendations contained within this report and actions taken

	Recommendation	Action planned or taken
1	<p>More effort needs to be made to ensure that <b>all local GP surgeries have the necessary information</b> (and are kept updated) to ensure all parents, and prospective parents have an opportunity to see what Sure Start is about</p>	<p>The Project Midwife and the Sure Start Health Visitor make links with local GP's, albeit on an informal basis. More formalised access to and with GP's is made through the Locality 3 Clinical Forum. Health newsletters and updates are distributed to GP's. The Project Midwife has established a Teenage Health Clinic at a Worsbrough surgery and the Health Visitor attends clinic sessions across the catchment area. Notice boards have been established at BDGH close to the Maternity wing.  <i>Updates on Breast Feeding activity via Midwife are included on antenatal notes.</i>            The Information Officer will assist information being distributed to local GP's. The establishment of the LIFT project at Worsbrough will provide enhanced access to local GP's who will be based within one central building. The recently appointed Information Officer has responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of information displays within a variety of community settings, which includes local GP practices.</p>
2	<p>Sure Start must undertake an investigation into the <b>allegations regarding the running of one or more of its playgroups</b></p>	<p>Spot checks are to be undertaken in relation to Sure Start groups operating in a range of premises across the catchment area. No formal complaints have been received in relation to any Sure Start group currently operating.</p>
3	<p>Sure Start must devise an <b>effective communications strategy</b> to ensure that the right information goes to the right recipients</p>	<p>The programme has jointly appointed with the Kendray Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder, a Community Information Officer. The post is a part time post (18.5 hours) and a remit of the worker is to produce an effective Communications Strategy for the Sure Start programme. The postholder has responsibilities for auditing and reviewing the range of information currently held and distributed. The Information Officer also has responsibility for the marketing and promotion of Sure Start activities. The post is based within Barnsley MBC's Communications Team and the worker therefore has access to a wide range of media and publicity contacts. A further benefit of the post is linkage with the activities of the Kendray Neighbourhood Management team, which has crossover elements with Sure Start. The postholder commenced in July 2004.</p>
4	<p>A strategy for communications may involve developing a <b>regular Newsletter</b> - it must be well thought out and properly resourced - it must be published at regular, pre-determined intervals and continue for a specified period of time</p>	<p>Parent Volunteers have been involved in the production of a Sure Start Newsletter of which a first issue has been distributed. The Information Officer will assist the group in the regular production and distribution of a newsletter to local Sure Start families. The Information Officer holds the relevant budgets to resource printing and distribution costs.</p>

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action planned or taken</b>
<b>5</b>	Parents ask for <b>more age-appropriate facilities for their children</b> , particularly in relation to rising school-age children who require more structured play and good resources	The Sure Start age remit is under 4's and funding is restricted to this age group. However, the parental 'Have A Say' group recognise this as an issue and are currently in the process of securing grants in their own right to fund activities for older children. Sure Start local programmes will extend their age remit to 0 - 5 as they move towards Children's Centre status. It is envisaged that the location of the Children's Centre adjacent to a primary school will provide opportunities for the delivery of activities geared towards older children. There is a ring fenced budget within Sure Start funding that is scheduled to be allocated to Sure Start local programmes to be directed towards the development of Out of School provision.
<b>6</b>	Parents say they want <b>childcare provision all day, every day</b> . They would like to be able to attend <b>informal, topic-based discussion groups</b> on childcare and child development subjects, whilst their children are being looked after. Providing this would increase Sure Start's capacity to attract new parents into the service	<p>The programme does provide childcare support for the majority of Sure Start activities, however this is usually under two hours and parents must be present with their child. This arrangement is to comply with OFSTED registration requirements. The programme has not had premises approved or available in which to deliver childcare where children can be left. The proposed Children's Centre will have the capacity to provide sessional and full daycare and should be available from March 2005. The programme has now linked into Neighbourhood Nursery Funding and is currently offering the availability of full daycare places for children aged 0 – 4. A total of 6 daycare places are available at the Apple Tree House Day Nursery in Worsbrough Dale. These places are a partnership arrangement between Sure Start and the Apple Tree Day Nursery. The places will cease in March 2005 when 22 full daycare places will be available at the Sure Start Children's Centre at Bank End.</p> <p>Parents have access to a range of informal topic groups covering Health and Safety in the home, Nutrition and Get Cooking courses, Ante and Post – Natal Advice, Substance Misuse, Webster Stratton parenting programmes, Exploring the Outdoors activities, Smoking Cessation, Baby Massage and Clinic advice sessions. The programme ran in conjunction with Barnsley Choices, Childminding recruitment information sessions for interested parents. Many of the above sessions are provided with childcare from the Sure Start Nursery Nurses.</p>
<b>7</b>	A lever to overcome barriers to father involvement is to make the <b>weekend</b> (in particular Sunday morning) the principal focus of father-related Sure Start activity	The Community Involvement worker has established a male carers group who meet on a monthly basis on a Sunday.
<b>8</b>	We suggest that K&WSS sets up <b>weekly family events</b> at which Dad's natural enthusiasm, enjoyment and sometimes pride in taking part in activities such as football, bat and ball games or riding bikes with their children is capitalised on. We <b>recommend teaching fathers to teach their own children</b> and develop their skills from an earlier age - something that in effect will bring that desired opportunity to fruition earlier	The programme runs a range of summer activities and events open to all eligible families including Dads. Weekly events tend to be the scheduled Sure Start activities. The Dads group is in its infancy and areas of engaging their support and involvement in their children's learning are being explored. The Dads group has been on swimming excursions and visited a local children's indoor play centre.

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action planned or taken</b>
<b>9</b>	Events must be inclusive, drawing in older children and wives/partners into more general socialising – perhaps with refreshments – and playing with the children	The larger scale events to promote and publicise Sure Start have always been inclusive to all members of eligible families including older children.
<b>10</b>	For many families the cost of going <b>swimming</b> prohibits their doing it regularly. Sure Start could either provide financial assistance or use the mechanism of a block booking to save families money. Both this saving and the laying on of a minibus/coach to ferry the families to the activity could be a powerful incentive to draw fathers and the rest of the families along	The programme has established Parent and Toddler Swim sessions which are run twice weekly on Tuesday and Thursday. The swim sessions are free to Sure Start eligible families and transport is available to enable access. The programme block purchased swimming vouchers at the town centre Metrodome complex.
<b>11</b>	We suggest making sure there is <b>some 'dads only' or 'dads and children only' space for a time each week</b> , to encourage the dads to bond with each other	No activities have yet been established to meet this recommendation. The male carers group is currently looking at suitable activities, times and venues to engage eligible 'Dads' within the Sure Start programme.
<b>12</b>	<b>The management board:</b> to encourage male involvement in the management board it is important to set realistic and limited expectations regarding what level of commitment will be entailed. Dads/male carers are more comfortable with coming along to air views for a set period of time – they are more fearful of being asked to organise initiatives and their responsibilities 'snowballing' from there	Attendance on the Sure Start Partnership is open to all eligible parents who wish to have involvement in the programme. The Partnership has produced a member's handbook to help facilitate a better understanding of the purpose of the Partnership and its roles and functions. Parents wishing to be part of the Partnership have the opportunity of shadowing meetings prior to their participation, to gain a feel of the group and what might be expected of them in this forum.  Targets have been set with the Community Involvement worker to recruit at least one Dad onto the Sure Start Partnership.
<b>13</b>	Despite <b>male Sure Start workers</b> not being mentioned spontaneously by participants in this research, desk research shows that having a male member of staff on the K&WSS team is one way to provide a dedicated resource and this member could also perform the role of subtly 'selling-in' other aspects of the Sure Start offering to dads/male carers within the weekly social meetings	The programme employs a male sessional childcare worker who supports childcare within some Sure Start activities. This will help breakdown gender inequalities. Consideration is being given to the recruitment of a part time sessional male involvement worker.
<b>14</b>	<b>Raising awareness/promotion:</b> The weekly dads' meetings could be promoted in places where dads with these types of interests tend to look – in football match programmes or the sport pages of the local newspapers, for example – whilst simply introducing references to dads into the names of Sure Start groups and activities and into Sure Start registration packs and other literature would help to make dads/male carers feel that there is something in Sure Start for them.	The Information Officer will be examining a range of Sure Start information to ensure that the slant of promotional materials is geared equally towards both mums and dads.

## 6.0 Future Research

- RBA research is currently undertaking an 'activity mapping' exercise, which will visually show where services are being delivered, as also the spread of activities across each age group
- We will be carrying out service evaluations for five services which involve a comprehensive unit cost exercise and by talking to service managers, we will also ascertain what impact or benefit the services should be having on it's users. This will be followed by speaking to users of five services to understand the benefits they are actually receiving from using K&WSS services
- This research will be reported later in the year

Interim Report Two includes research carried out by the following people:

***Caroline Hughes***  
***Tim Neal***  
***Angus Tindle***  
***Rachel Featherstone***

***July 2004***

**RBA Research Ltd**