

**Sure Start Bradley
and Whitefield
Local Evaluation**

Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield Local Evaluation

Final Report



*M·E·L Research & Service
Development*

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Executive Summary

This Executive Summary is presented in three main parts.

Firstly, the key findings from the evaluation of the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield local programme are presented. This focuses on answering the key evaluation question 'where is the programme at now'.

Secondly, the summary focuses on 'where does the programme want to go', building on the key findings and evaluating what these really mean for the future of the programme.

Finally, the summary concludes with the third evaluation question, 'how will the programme get to where it wants to go?'.

1) Where is the programme at now?

i) Programme context

Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield is a Round 2 local programme, which was approved by the Sure Start Unit in 2001. The programme has taken some time to get properly off the ground, and there have been delays in delivering services to the local community. A change in programme management has helped put the local programme back on track. While a high number of parents (over 90%) are registered with the programme, and use of Sure Start services is historically high, there has been a lack of sustained, longer term parental involvement in the programme. The local community is diverse, with a high proportion of Pakistani families living in the programme area.

ii) Board and Partnership

a) The Management Board

The Board consider that the following areas are working well:

1. Common interest supercedes individual member interest
2. Board members develop and maintain trust
3. Board members make changes to achieve shared goals
4. Members facilitate partnership working and support in their own organisations
5. The Board provides adequate direction to the partnership
6. Conflict is dealt with promptly
7. Members learn from each other and share their strengths
8. Member roles and responsibilities are well defined and accepted
9. Stable Board membership

Issues for future development include:

1. The focus of the Board tends to be on operational, rather than strategic, issues.
2. The representativeness of Board membership needs improving (8 of the 10 current members are White, while the community is predominantly Asian). The Board minutes show that the Board suffers from low membership and under attendance

3. More flexibility is needed in what and how things are done
4. More collaborative work focused on results is needed
5. Sharing responsibilities and rewards amongst members could be improved
6. Securing parental engagement and the involvement of voluntary organisations. The documentary review confirms that there is a lack of community and parental involvement at this level
7. Raising awareness of what the Board is and does
8. Sharing contributions, risks and rewards amongst members
9. A focus on mainstreaming
10. The need for the Board to self-evaluate performance and be self-critical
11. Assessing risk
12. While documentation has improved since 2002 (prior to which no documentary data was available), Sure Start targets are not regularly updated and for most, there is a lack of outcome data
13. There is no documentation detailing Sure Start activities, and few explicitly health-related or community development-focused activities
14. There has been little internal monitoring of Sure Start activities.

b) The wider Sure Start Partnership

There is some confusion about membership of the Sure Start partnership. It took time to determine exactly which organisations are part of the partnership, and which are not. This confusion is also evident amongst local partners. There appears to be some key partners who play no active role in the Sure Start partnership.

The wider Partnership consider that the following issues are working well:

1. Training for staff
2. Services focused on needs of families
3. Partners are clearly working in new ways, because of the Sure Start programme

Issues for further development are:

1. Common interest supersedes individual member interest
2. Communicating the role of the partnership to the local community
3. Securing parental engagement and involvement
4. Partners sharing a common vision of the difference they want to make
5. Awareness of respective roles and responsibilities.

iii) Consultation with parents and children

Positive feedback from parents includes:

- Awareness of Sure Start appears to be high (98% of survey respondents had heard of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield)
- 85% of survey respondents are satisfied with Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield services, and 64% reported an improvement in services over the last 12 months
- Parents taking part in the chattabout sessions enjoyed a range of Sure Start activities, and particular mention was made of trips and events, safety equipment loan schemes, swimming sessions and Bookstart sessions

- Sure Start was seen as a valuable source of information, advice and support, particularly in terms of providing venues in which parents can get out of the house and meet with other parents for a couple of hours
- Play sessions are seen as valuable, in that they help children to develop, learn how to behave and to develop their language capabilities
- The Sure Start staff are well liked by parents
- Training opportunities provided via Sure Start are valued by parents
- Health Visitors and Midwives are the Sure Start staff through which parents tend to find out about Sure Start. As contact with these health professionals happens at an early stage in a child's life, these good links need to continue and develop. Health Visitors (48%) and Midwives (27%) are the most common methods by which parents found out about Sure Start
- The close knit nature of the local community was valued by parents, as were the good local amenities.

Positive areas identified from the consultation with children using cameras indicate:

- Overall, the feedback from the consultation with children was positive. Children valued and enjoyed the play elements of activities, and enjoyed those where they can be creative and imaginative.
- Children enjoy taking part in activities in which other family members can get involved, such as stencilling.
- The social function of Sure Start activities (that is interacting with other children or with parents) is valued by those using services.
- Children enjoy activities which are sensory and those in which they can play at being an adult.

The key areas for improvement from the perspective of parents are:

- 67% of parents had actually used Sure Start services. However, levels of awareness for each individual Sure Start service was below 50%
- The timings and days of activities can be inconsistent with the needs of parents, both in terms of their day to day lives and cultural commitments. Activities need to be provided at times and on days which meet the needs of the whole community, a high proportion of which are Asian
- The survey revealed that language barriers and a lack of information are a reason for non use of Sure Start services. While 85% of survey respondents thought they receive enough information about Sure Start, the chattabouts highlighted that publicity and advertising information should be provided more often, and in the relevant community languages. Over 1 in 5 survey respondents similarly thought there are ways in which Sure Start could improve their information. Thus information provision in the relevant community languages is a key area for development
- Some parents in the chattabouts thought that the general community didn't really know exactly what Sure Start did, and consequently, what benefits it could offer them. By being specific about its remit and services, more parents are likely to use services and maybe get involved with the programme
- The newsletter is read by most parents who took part in the chattabouts, and seems to be a key method by which Sure Start can disseminate information about Sure Start. This is confirmed in the

findings of the survey, in which 80% of parents currently receive the newsletter, of which 92% read it. However, there is scope here to extend coverage to the 20% of respondents who do not receive or recall receiving the newsletter. Material for the newsletter would need to be translated into the appropriate community languages, again confirmed in the survey, in which this issue was one of the barriers to readership

- Word of mouth is another key way of disseminating information about Sure Start. Sure Start could build on this by developing further links with parents
- Whilst Sure Start provides a range of freebies, most parents in the chattabouts cannot remember receiving any of these. Similarly in the survey, less than 50% of respondents had received any of the free gifts available
- Some parents requested that more dedicated support be provided within sessions and activities, particularly if parents have a number of small children and are too busy looking after those children to fully participate in activities
- While training opportunities were generally valued, parents thought more use could be made of these training opportunities and that crèche provision may help here
- Trips and events are very popular amongst parents, and there were requests for more of these to be provided
- Two groups highlighted by parents in the chattabouts as being less well served by Sure Start are fathers and older mothers
- Parents expressed concern in the survey about the cleanliness of local parks and play areas, and community and road safety.

The findings of the consultation with children were largely positive. The only negative elements of children's involvement in Sure Start activities highlighted were the issue of conflict in play, and having to wait in turn to take part in play or activities.

iv) Cost effectiveness of publicity

A lack of documentation about the cost of publicity (nothing prior to March 2004), no publicity strategy for the programme and a lack of detail about publicity material or billing made an evaluation of cost effectiveness problematic. Despite the limitations of documentation, we do have information about parents' awareness of publicity.

2) Where does the programme want to go?

Having reviewed the key findings of the evaluation, this section of the Executive Summary focuses on the key question 'so what does all this mean for the future of the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield programme?':

- It is important to acknowledge and recognise that the literature shows from experience most new partnerships need time to settle down and begin to achieve their goals. The National Evaluation of Sure Start has shown that many Sure Start Partnerships have taken up to two years to settle down and begin working together to make a change in their communities. In that respect Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield appears to be typical.

- The programme has experienced a number of delays and teething problems, as well as a change in programme management. Hence there has been an historical element of a lack of continuity. However, recent improvement is visible in all elements of the evaluation, particularly since new programme management was secured. Crucially, just under two thirds of parents report an improvement in services over the last 12 months.
- There were poor Management Information Systems (MIS) in place prior to 2003, however, this has shown improvement since this time. There is a need for training for Sure Start staff, to embed monitoring and evaluation into everyday roles and responsibilities, and to instill the need to be outcome-focused. Targets and objectives need to be updated when achieved or out of date.
- The Board has only recently set up sharper management systems and sub groups, but there is still a lack of focus on implementation, future strategy and mainstreaming. A lot of energy seems to go on discussing staffing and operational details. These should be key priorities for the future, building on the positive and stable working relationships visible between members.
- The Board Minutes and Delivery Plan show that the Board has at least five vacancies, which need to be filled if the Partnership is to achieve its potential. At times attendance at Board meetings is so low, that those attending bear an unfair level of responsibility for management. One immediate action should be to recruit more Board members.
- The Bradley and Whitefield area appears to have undergone less active community development activity than a city like Birmingham, for instance. As a result, the area is likely to have less well developed community links. This is reflected in the lack of parental and community involvement, both in the Board and Partnership, and the programme generally. This has been a recurring theme during the evaluation. Many Sure Start programmes have found it difficult to recruit parents, whether at Parent Forum or Board level.
- In order to increase parental involvement, Sure Start services and information need to cater for the needs of the whole community, a high proportion of which are Pakistani. Barriers to the use of services or receiving Sure Start information has consistently been timings of services being inappropriate, and the need for written information to be translated into Urdu. The newsletter has a high take-up and level of readership, and as such, is a communication channel to be built upon by the programme. In addition, the Board needs to actively recruit statutory, voluntary and parent members that are more representative of the community as a whole.
- The Board survey reinforces the impression of isolation and of lack of support from the wider community. There was a marked reluctance to participate in the survey and to be self-critical. Hence self-evaluation should be built into future work of the Sure Start Board.
- The survey of the wider 'partnership' of the community reinforced the impression of a lack of community awareness and support. It was clear that some key partners are not part of the partnership, and there was confusion about exactly who is and isn't a local partner. Where partners are actively involved there is very positive support, which is an encouraging finding for the programme to build on.

- In terms of Sure Start activities, while general awareness of Sure Start is high, awareness and use of Sure Start services by parents could be improved. Those parents that are using services are generally positive about both the activities and the staff, giving Sure Start confidence about the services being provided.
- The programme needs to devise and implement a communication strategy, with regard to both parents and the local community, and wider partners. There is scope to improve a range of communications with the local community, particularly focusing on providing clear written information in Urdu which simply conveys what Sure Start does, and what the Board and Partnership do, as well as distributing available freebies more widely. Word of mouth is a key way of spreading information about Sure Start, and as such, should be included in the strategy.

3) How will the programme get to where it wants to go?

An action planning half-day workshop was held with 12 participants representing the Board (n=4), Partnership (n=6) and 2 members of the Sure Start Senior Management Team on 15 March 2005. This final section highlights 11 key recommendations for the future development of the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield programme.

1. The Management Board is the driving force behind any local Sure Start programme. We recommend that a review of Board membership is made as a priority activity, both in terms of ensuring the key strategic representatives are members, and that those members can contribute positively and actively in providing strategic steer and direction to the programme. For example, Midwives have been seen to play a key role in disseminating the Sure Start philosophy but are not included in Board membership. The Board needs to actively recruit a more representative membership, more in line with the diverse local community. The Board must seize active responsibility for the profile of the Sure Start programme and taking the Sure Start message out into the local community. A strategic decision will need to be taken about the role of the Management Board with the transition to Children's Centres, given that there is no requirement for a Board within the Children's Centre programme.
2. As part of the transition to Children's Centres and re-shaping of Board membership, we recommend that a succession strategy for the Board Chair is planned now. The appointment could benefit from a high profile, key local strategic player, most likely a key Local Authority representative of Director-level. Such an appointment would give the Board a strategic steer and a new impetus for change.
3. We recommend that the Management Board seeks specific external support, to assist in ongoing strategic development and developing strategic thinking capabilities.
4. We recommend that both the Board and Partnership seek external support, perhaps on a quarterly or six-monthly basis, to assist the team in developing strategically, particularly in light of the forthcoming transition to Children's Centres. The Board and Partnership need

- support to plan and operate strategically, and to embed self-evaluation into all they do.
5. We recommend that the Board and Partnership work together more closely, with external support as required, to develop a shared, agreed agenda and identity.
 6. We recommend that the Board and Sure Start staff actively develop closer communication and information sharing with members of the wider Partnership. Again, this will be crucial in light of the Children's Centres agenda. This would assist partners in being aware of the 'bigger picture' of Sure Start activity, rather than viewing the programme from their own silo. Holding post-workshop follow up meetings with partners, possibly staged quarterly throughout the year, would be one way of continuing the impetus provided by the workshop.
 7. Both the evaluation as a whole, and the workshop with the Board and Partnership, revealed a number of priority issues for development with regard to parental engagement with the Sure Start programme, both more broadly and at Board level. A Friends Group has recently been set up by the programme, with the purpose of providing support to parents to enable their views to feed into programme development. This is a move in the right direction. However, In order to tackle the issue of parental engagement fully, the Board needs to give considerably more thought to 'what is the ask'? What will parents get out of becoming involved with the programme as it stands? A dedicated externally facilitated away-day could progress this issue further, and also draft an action plan for delivery, building on the ideas of participants at the workshop.
 8. We recommend that as part of the further development to be undertaken around parental engagement, that the programme considers devising a communication strategy designed to disseminate information about Sure Start, the Board and the Partnership, building on the findings of this evaluation. The strategy should include key issues such as taking account of cultural issues, community languages and translated materials.
 9. The Children's Centre agenda, as noted, will have considerable implications for the Sure Start programme as it exists currently. We recommend that effective strategic planning will be crucial in making this transition as smooth as possible, both in terms of the programme and community perceptions and expectations. Funding regimes will move to control of the Local Authority, and there will be less ring-fenced money. Hence the programme needs to be able to assert its position assuredly and confidently, and be planning strategically now to ensure that the programme gets to where it needs to be.
 10. We recommend that the accountable body for the programme, Lancashire County Council, take a more prominent role in the local programme, in terms of ensuring that recommendations arising from the evaluation are pursued and delivered. Their role will become even more important when the programme becomes a Children's Centre.

11. The role of monitoring and evaluation will become ever more important with the Children's Centre designation, particularly in light of a revised set of local targets and objectives. We recommend that the programme takes steps to embed an evaluation culture and evaluation skills within the programme, with a focus on gathering meaningful outcome data related to the Sure Start targets, which will be a sound basis from which to develop and monitor Children's Centre targets.

4) Evaluation methodology

Evaluation is based on a pluralist methodology design. Through triangulation we have a more holistic picture of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield:

- A desk review of all documentation and monitoring data pertaining to the Sure Start programme
- A face to face survey of 200 parents and guardians in the programme area (with at least one child aged 4 or under or expecting to become a parent within 6 months)
- Four chattabout sessions with (3 with parents, and 1 with parents and children involving photographic evidence)
- A self-completion postal survey and follow up interviews with members of the Board and Partnership
- An action-planning workshop with the Board and Partnership.

1. Purpose, method and format

1.1 Purpose and Objectives

In May 2004, M-E-L Research was commissioned to undertake the local evaluation of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield.

The overall aims of the evaluation are two-fold:

- 1) To help the programme to develop a strategy to increase parental involvement at all levels.
- 2) To recruit parents to the Management Board.

There were a number of issues for the evaluation to cover:

- Local profile of awareness of Sure Start
- Parental engagement and involvement – current levels and how this can be improved
- Management Board – effectiveness and the way forward
- Partnership working in the community – effectiveness and the way forward
- In depth study of the Personal Dental Service

Three key themes formed the basis of this evaluation

- 1) Where is the programme at now?
- 2) Where does the programme want to go?
- 3) How will the programme get to where it wants to go?

In addition, a separate case study is currently underway, evaluating the Personal Dental Service.

1.2 Methodology

A number of complementary methodologies are being used in the evaluation:

- A desk review of all documentation and monitoring data pertaining to the Sure Start programme
- A survey of 200 parents and guardians in the programme area (with at least one child aged 4 or under or expecting to become a parent within 6 months)
- Four chattabout sessions with (3 with parents, and 1 with parents and children involving photographic evidence)
- A survey and follow up interviews with members of the Board and Partnership
- An action-planning workshop with the Board and Partnership.

1.3 Structure of report

This report presents the findings of the evaluation. Each chapter (which has been written to be stand alone, including detail of the methodology used) focuses on a different element of the evaluation, with an emphasis on 'where is the programme at now'. The executive summary provides an overview of the key issues, and focuses on 'where does the programme want to go', followed by 'how does the programme get to where it wants to go'. The executive summary also includes key recommendations for the future of the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield programme.

2. Documentary review

2.1 Aim

The aim of the documentary review was to collate all documentary information relating to Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield to tell the 'story' of the programme, provide context for the study, inform the design of the chattabouts and the survey, and finally, to analyse collected data into the four themes as presented below. Unfortunately, documents were only traceable from 2002. Yet the project Delivery Plan is dated 2000. This stage of the project has been invaluable in underpinning every other element and for providing the context to the study.

2.2 Methodology

Charlotte Venus visited the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield office on 17 June 2004 and collected a wide range of paper documents.

The documents were collated into four subject groups:

1. The Board and Partnership, Delivery Plan (2000), Constitution (no date) and minutes
2. Partnership projects
3. The Personal Dental Service (PDS) initiative
4. Publicity material and invoices

The documents were used in different ways, according to the subject area.

2.3 Overview of key findings

a) The Board and Partnership, Delivery Plan, Constitution, minutes

We carried out a comparison of the stated intentions in the Delivery Plan and Constitution against the attendance at the Board.

In addition, Sure Start targets from the original 2000 Delivery Plan were noted, along with the partner to deliver the activity, the outcome and evidence for this. This is appended in Table 1.

Minutes were examined for detail of Board activity.

Queries about the documentation were noted and followed up by Charlotte Venus in her August 2004 visit, at which time the August Board meeting was observed.

Observation and evaluation

This exercise demonstrated the lack of robust MIS and monitoring and evaluation systems prior to 2003.

1. There are no Board minutes available prior to February 2003, and after this date, there are six months for which the minutes are missing.
2. Some documents are labelled Sure Start Pendle Management Committee, which we assume means the Board. The focus of discussion appears to be on operational matters and lacks strategic overview. There is no documentation relating to Project

Monitoring and Implementation Sub Groups; sub-groups were not established until October 2003.

3. Board membership. According to the Constitution there should be 16 members of the Board serving for two years. There are only 10 so members have to work harder. The Board minutes show that since February 2003, there have never been more than 11 members present, and that this has often been as low as 5.
4. From the review of targets in the Delivery Plan, it can be seen that new targets have not been created when old ones are achieved/past their delivery date. One of the targets for which no evidence was identified, increase in reading to children, has been included in the parent survey. For most targets, the outcome is unknown.
5. The review informed our understanding of the make up of the Partnership and confirmed the lack of community input into the Board. The Board meets in the daytime. There may be a need to meet at other times such as evenings/out of hours, to attract or enable others to attend.

b) Partnership projects

There was no existing plan showing overall activities. The contents of documentation relating to partnership projects have been entered into a table of seven columns, showing the name of the project, the partner(s) involved, the activity, location, attendance data, date of evaluation by Sure Start, and the Sure Start stream into which the project fits. This table is appended (Table 2).

Observations and evaluation

1. Table 2 shows the extent of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield partnership activity. While most of the projects may meet more than one Sure Start objective, the majority are narrowly focused on objectives A (social and emotional development) and C (children's ability to learn).
2. The gaps in stream activity (concentration on playgroups, little on health or community activity) are revealed in the table and diagram. There is a lack of projects meeting objectives B (improving health) and D (strengthening families and communities). It is not clear that objective E (productivity of operations) has been documented or evaluated.
3. There has been no regular robust internal monitoring of attendance at projects. While many projects have one internal evaluation form, the detail obtained is very limited.
4. Information about projects has been used in the chattabout sessions and is being used in the survey.

c) The Personal Dental Service initiative

The documents were used to build up a picture of the NHS PDS/Sure Start Partnership story, the aim and objectives, and method of the dental care intervention. The main purpose of this has been to inform the design of the case study evaluation and LREC submission.

Observation and evaluation

1. There was a lack of documentation about the Sure Start / PDS Partnership. No Service Level Agreement was found. In addition, no referral monitoring data was present in the files.

2. We have had to request this information from the PCT, which is subject to LREC and R& D approval.

d) Publicity material and invoices

The material was used to compile a list of the publicity material that has been produced or purchased, and to use as a checklist for awareness in the chattabout sessions and in the parent survey.

Observation and evaluation

1. There was a lack of clear expense code billing in the Sure Start files, making it difficult for Sure Start to monitor their costs and for the evaluators to begin to assess the cost effectiveness of publicity. The earliest date for paperwork was March 2004; there is nothing before this date.
2. It was difficult to identify which invoices had been paid. So it was difficult to identify what materials had actually been purchased.
3. There does not appear to be a publicity strategy or plan, no written rationale for purchases. Similarly, lack of documentation about publicity, posters and so on is making a cost effectiveness assessment problematic.

3. Evaluation of the Board and Partnership

3.1 Aims

The specific aims of the evaluation of the Board and Partnership were to:

- Establish the history of the Management Board
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Board
- Determine the way forward
- Devise an action plan to raise parent membership
- Identify current partners
- Establish what is working well and what can be improved
- Identify future partners for new areas of work
- Evaluate working with other Sure Start programmes

3.2 Methodology

Design

A short survey and SWOT was designed for both the review of the Board and the review of the Partnership. The Board survey could either be faxed back or returned in a Freepost envelope. The Partnership survey was sent with a Freepost envelope for return. The design was based on established toolkits to evaluate Board and Partnership effectiveness. The effectiveness model is based on one used in the public sector to assess the progress partnerships are making.

Fieldwork

Three mailings were sent to both the Board and the Partnership.

M.E.L Research was provided with the contact details of members of the Management Board by Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. There were a number of issues in establishing who the Board and Partnership consisted of. With regard the Board, there was some confusion from some respondents as to the distinction between members with voting rights and those who are paid officers, and the list of Board members did change slightly as the fieldwork progressed. All replies received have been included in the analysis and in the number of surveys returned. The replies received include a response from all of the 9 names on the final Management Board list.

Similarly there was some confusion as to who the Partnership consisted of. An initial list of partners was provided by Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. Extra partners were identified by M.E.L as a result of the review of documentation. The details of extra contacts were emailed to Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield, for confirmation as partners along with a request for their contact details. The final list consisted of 35 names.

In the course of the mailings, M.E.L received notification that a representative of a local junior school and a midwifery representative were not involved in the partnership. In addition, another primary school did not complete their survey because of a lack of knowledge about the partnership.

It is also important to note that some members of the Board were also part of the partnership, so appeared on both lists provided by Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield.

Board

The initial mailing was sent out on 29 June 2004, with two reminder mailings. The first reminder was sent on 20 July 2004, with the final reminder sent on 5 August 2004.

A total of 10 replies have been received, a response rate of 100%.

Partnership

The initial mailing was sent out on 9 August 2004, with two reminder mailings. The first reminder was sent on 31 August 2004, with the final reminder sent on 20 September 2004.

A total of 14 replies have been received, a response rate of 40%.

Follow-up interviews

After the postal survey with the Board and local partners had been analysed, some follow-up telephone interviews were carried out to examine in more detail some of the issues raised in the consultation. Seven interviews were completed with key Board members, local partners and community leaders. The findings of these interviews are woven into this Chapter, with some remaining key findings presented at the end of this section.

3.3 Overview of key findings – the Management Board

This section presents an overview of the key findings from the postal survey and SWOT to both the Board and Partnership. Some interviews will also be carried out with key representatives of the Board and Partnership.

3.3.1 General issues

Figure 1: The Management Board – ranked ‘often’ responses

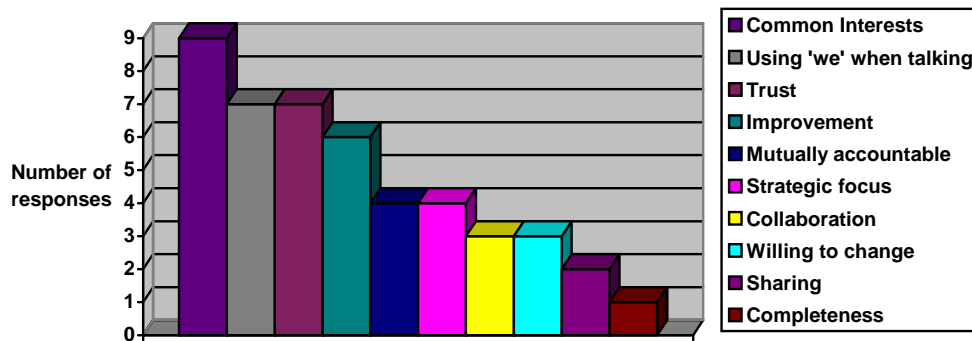


Figure 1 presents the findings from questions about the Management Board, displaying in rank order the number of respondents giving an ‘often’ rating to a series of statements about the Board. A number of areas are working well:

- Common interest supersedes individual member interest
- Board members use ‘we’ when talking about Board members

- Board members develop and maintain trust

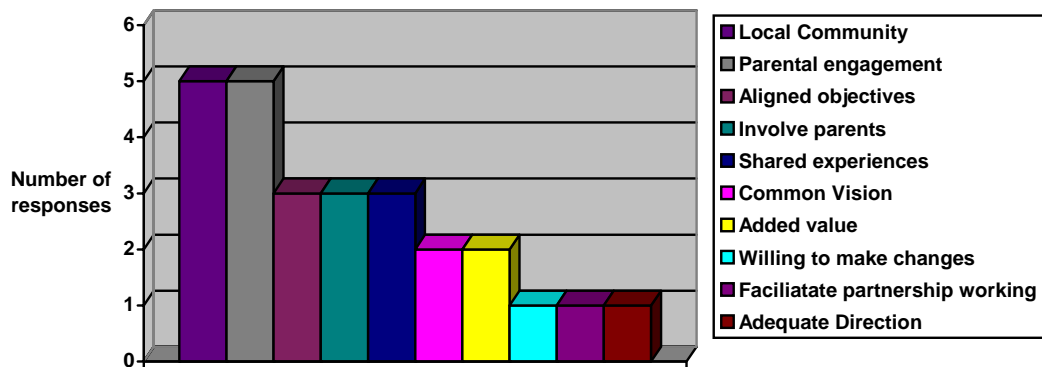
As can be seen, the key areas for action are:

- The completeness of Board membership – new members may be needed to ensure a cross section of views are represented
- Board members sharing responsibilities and rewards – more work is needed to work in this way
- Board members willing to change what and how they do things – more flexibility is needed
- Board members demonstrating real results through collaboration – more collaborative working focused on results is needed.

Some of these issues were picked up in the follow up interviews conducted with Board members and partners. This indicates that there is a real need to involve further Community and Voluntary groups and, most notably, more parent and carer representatives at Board level. Suggestions were also made that the Programme needs to link in with private childcare organisations, via their involvement on the Board.

3.3.2 Board leadership

Figure 2: Board Leadership – ranked ‘action is needed’ responses



Areas which appear to be working well are:

- Board members make changes to achieve shared goals
- Members facilitate partnership working and support in their own organisations
- The Board provides adequate direction to the partnership

Areas where action is needed include:

- Securing parental engagement and involvement – an action plan is needed

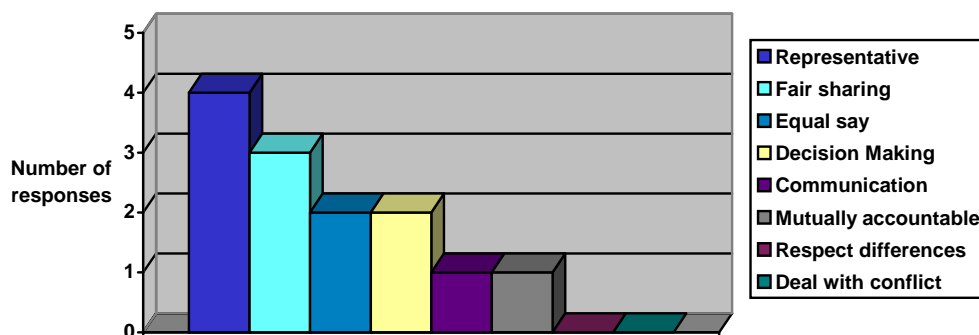
- Making the local community more aware of the role of the Board and what it does – information provision and awareness raising

Again, follow up interviews reinforced some of the key issues identified here, notably, the lack of parental engagement at Board level. Some Board members agreed that the current levels of parental involvement will have a real impact on the programme development, with potential for services to be delivered based around a professional-led agenda, rather than community needs. A number of key actions were identified which could help to facilitate parental involvement at Board level:

- Parents need to receive training to enable them to participate fully at a Board level. This should include confidence building, an induction pack and a briefing on their roles and responsibilities. It may also be beneficial to have a 'buddying system' to make Board involvement a less intimidating prospect.
- Parent representatives should be fully briefed, meeting the Programme Manager prior to Board meetings, and receive all documentation beforehand
- Meetings need to be more accessible whilst retaining their strategic focus. This can simply mean avoiding use of jargon and encouraging parents and carers to feel able to ask questions.
- Due to the nature of the community, the existing parent representatives explained that parental involvement at Board level will be difficult to achieve. The mainly Asian female service users lack confidence, particularly with speaking English. The majority will not have attended meetings before. These members suggested establishing an informal 'coffee-morning' group, which could form an informal Parents' Forum.
- Board meetings need to be provided at an accessible location. There should be bilingual support available and crèche facilities provided.

3.3.3 Trust

Figure 3: Trust – ranked 'action is needed' responses



Areas which appear to be working well are:

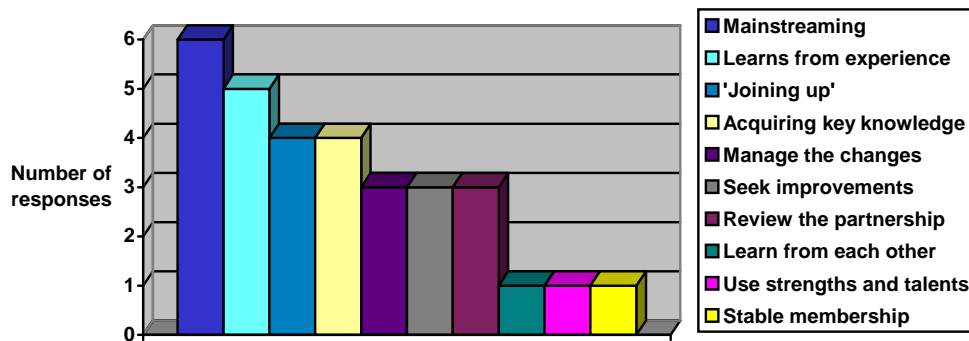
- Board members respect differences amongst members
- Members deal with conflict promptly

Areas where action is needed include:

- Board membership becoming more representative of the local community – a broadening out of membership is needed
- Board members sharing contributions, risks and rewards amongst members

3.3.4 Learning

Figure 4: Learning – ranked 'action is needed' responses



Areas which are working well include:

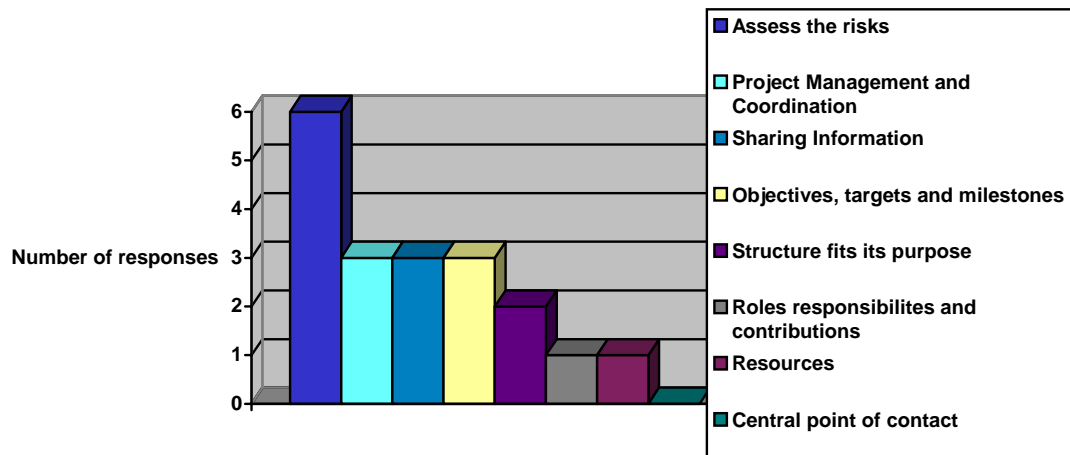
- Board members learn from each other and other experiences
- Members recognise and use strengths within the Board
- The Board has a stable and continuous membership

Areas for further action include:

- The Board setting the agenda for the mainstreaming of services – a focus on mainstreaming is needed. Further interviewing confirmed that there has been little progress with regard to mainstreaming, with problems achieving alignment of budgets and organisations concentrating on their own targets.
- The Board learning from experience e.g. lessons learned – the Board needs to self-evaluate its performance.

3.3.5 Managing for Performance

Figure 5: Managing for Performance – ranked ‘action is needed’ responses



Areas which appear to be working well include:

- The Board has a central point of contact for coordination purposes
- Adequate resources are devoted to achieving Board goals
- Member roles, responsibilities and contributions are defined and accepted

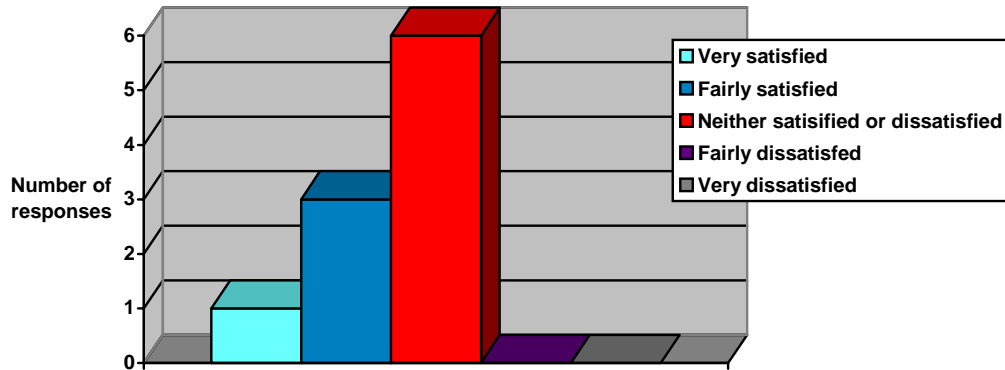
Areas for future action include:

- The Board uses a mechanism to assess risk – action is needed here

3.3.6 Overall satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Management Board

Effectiveness has been defined as the extent to which the Board achieves its own stated objectives.

Figure 6: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you overall with the effectiveness of the Management Board



Most respondents have reported that they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the effectiveness of the Management Board of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield, which suggests a reluctance to be critical of fellow Board members. However, given the number of vacancies on the Board, the Board is unlikely to be functioning to its' full capacity.

3.3.7 Demographics

Most respondents have been longstanding Board members, with 7 being appointed to the Board in or before 2002. A further two members have been appointed in October 2003 and January 2004.

7 respondents report having attending most of the Board meetings, 2 have attended all and 1 a few.

In terms of how many Boards or Partnerships members also sit on, there is a split between those who sit on several Boards (five members sit on 3 Boards or more) to those who sit on a few (four members sit on 1 or less). It is likely therefore that members will have mixed experience of partnership activity.

In terms of partnerships, the split is more obvious. One respondent sits on about 20 partnerships, and a further three sit on 4 or more partnerships. The remaining five members sit on 1 or less partnerships.

There is an equal gender split of 5 female and 5 male Board members, and a spread of age ranges from 25 up to 65+.

Eight members are White British, and one Pakistani and one Indian. This is not fully reflective of the diverse nature of the local community, and may contribute to the lower ratings given above for the representativeness of the Board.

Follow up interviews indicate that there is still a way to go in ensuring that the Board is representative, but numerous members identified a real improvement in the Board after a slow start; *'it has come a long way'*.

3.3.8 SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

Comments from the SWOT broadly reflect the findings presented visually above.

Strengths

Comments about strengths of the Board reflect the following themes:

- Dedicated membership
- Length of service
- Sharing atmosphere
- Trust

Weaknesses

Comments on weaknesses are about:

- Membership
- Attendance
- Parental involvement
- Lack of voluntary sector involvement

Opportunities

Internal and external opportunities noted in the SWOT include the new operational team, wider parent and community representation and the opportunities presented by the move to Children's Centres.

Threats

Internal and external threats include the Children's Centre agenda, mainstreaming and loss of members. This concern about the Children's Centre agenda was further discussed in the follow-up interviews. Responses suggested that there is a real concern about future levels of funding and the impact that this will have on staff turnover. Many Board members agreed that the Programme had finally built up a stable team which is interacting well with the local community, and any changes to this could be very detrimental to engagement with local families.

Effectiveness of the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield Board

Comments indicate that while improvement has recently taken place, there is more work still to do to ensure the Board is being fully effective.

3.4 The Partnership

3.4.1 General issues

Partners were asked who they think Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield partners are. Table 3 includes the findings.

While most respondents think that Midwives are partners, a representative of the Midwifery service declined to participate in the survey and didn't know enough about Sure Start, suggesting there may be a communication gap between perceived and actual partners. In addition, a smaller number of respondents think that CAMHS and junior schools are partners.

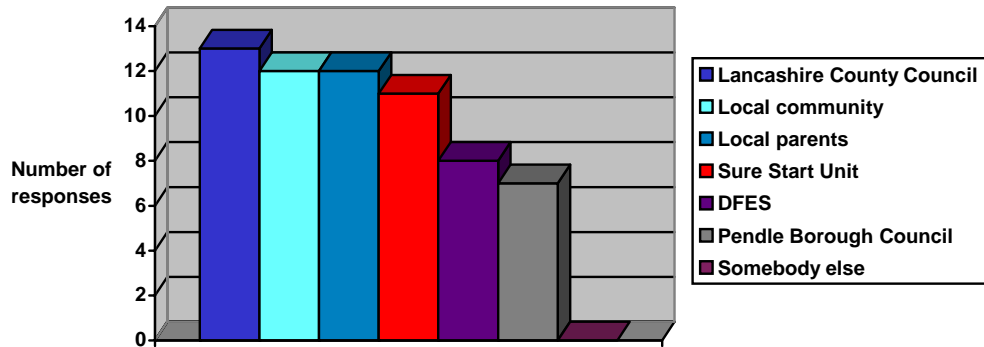
Nobody suggested any other partners to be included in the programme.

**Table 3: Who do you think the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield partners are?
 (tick all that apply)**

Who are the partners?		Who are the partners?		Who are the partners?	
Health Visitors	12	LCC Social Services	11	ACAP	8
St Mary's Parish Centre	12	First Class Childcare	10	Primary schools	8
Pendle Women's Forum	12	General Practitioners	10	Pendle leisure services	8
Nursery Schools	12	Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	10	Lomeshaye Business Village	7
Speech and language therapy	11	Domestic Violence Service	10	Fire Service	7
Dietician service	11	Pendle Community Network	10	Occupational Therapy	6
Midwives	11	Nelson and Colne College	10	Credit Union	6
St Phillips Family Centre	11	Job Centre Plus	10	New Era Enterprises	5
LCC Social Services	11	Pendle Pakistani Welfare Association	10	Junior schools	5
Sure Start Waterbridge	11	Playbus	9	CAMHS	4
Nelson Library	11	Personal Dental Service	9	Other organisations	0

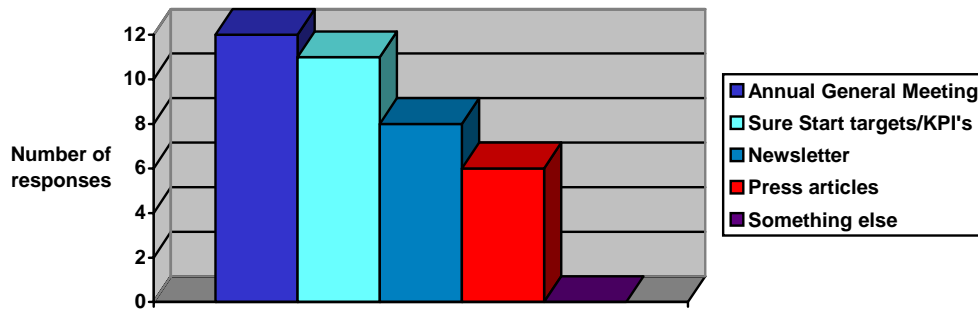
3.4.2 Accountability

**Figure 7: Who do you think the Sure Start partnership is accountable to?
 (Tick all that apply)**



A variety of responses were obtained in response to this question, with all options being selected to some extent.

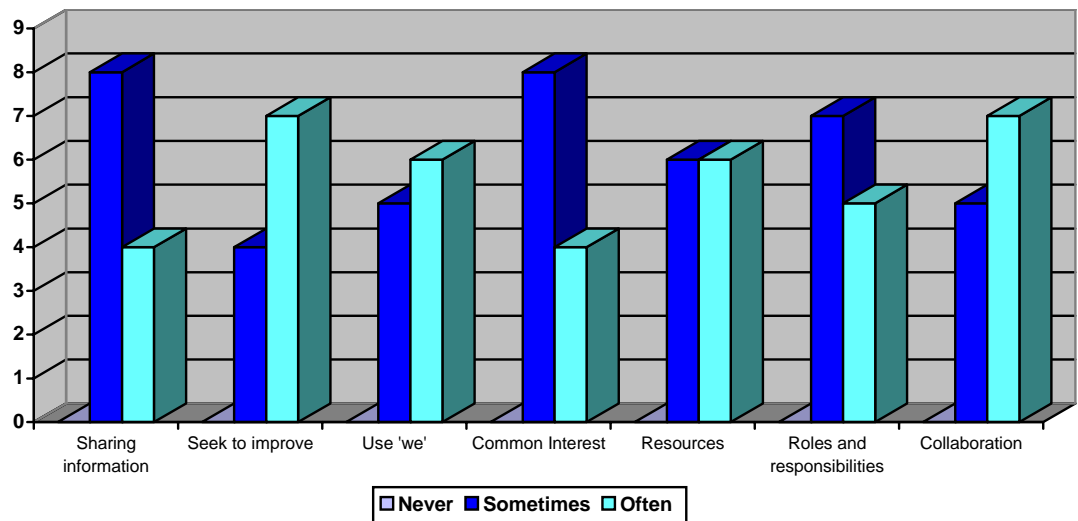
**Figure 8: How is accountability demonstrated?
 (Tick all that apply)**



Similarly, a range of options were suggested in terms of the demonstration of accountability, with the AGM being the most often suggested medium.

3.4.3 General questions about the Partnership

Figure 9: Partnership statements



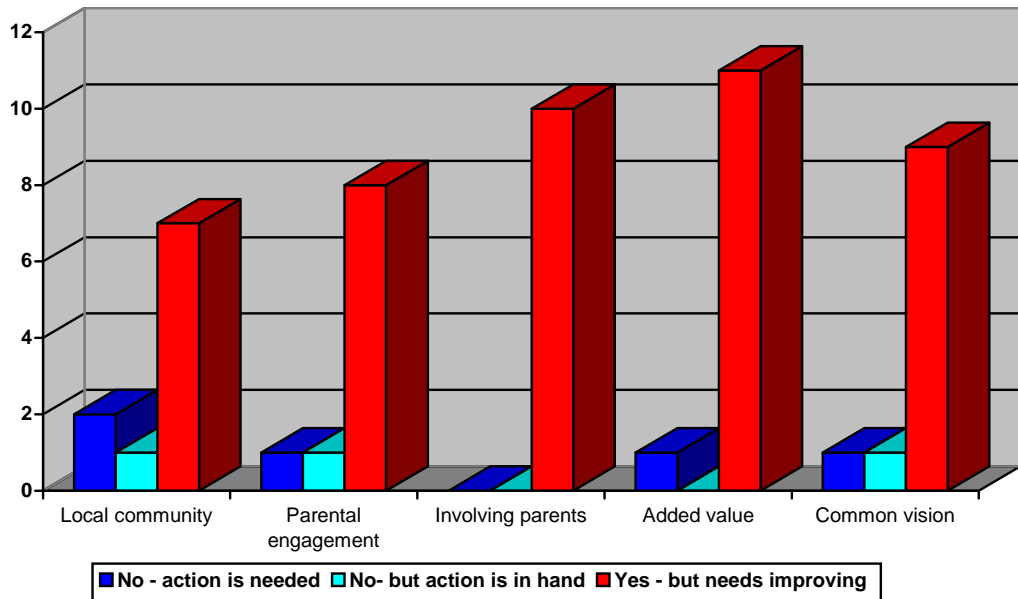
Interestingly, no respondents reported a 'never' response for any of these general statements about the partnership, hence the findings are generally positive.

In terms of improvements, the following issues received the lowest 'often' ratings:

- Common interest supersedes individual member interest
- The partnership has an established framework for sharing information

3.4.4 Leadership

Figure 10: Leadership statements



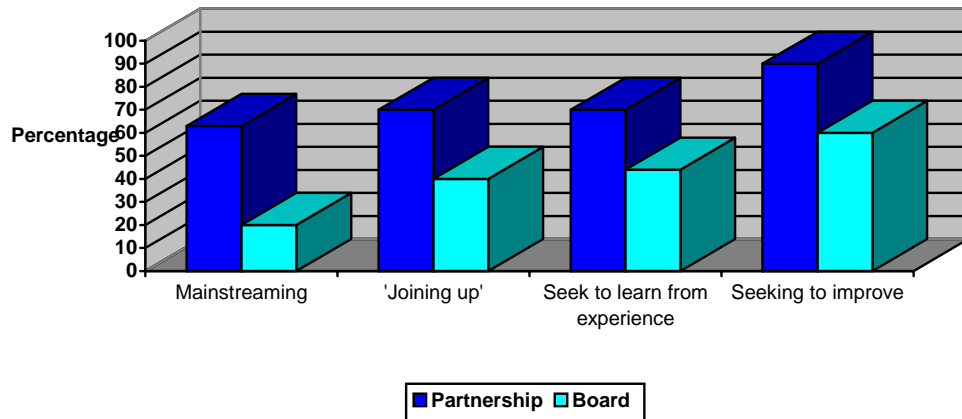
Most of these responses are positive. Again, the main issues for improvement include:

- The local community needing to be aware of and understanding the role of the partnership
- Securing parental engagement and involvement
- Partners focusing on added value
- Partners sharing a common vision of the difference they want to make

3.4.5 Learning

Questions about learning were common to both the survey of the Board and the Partnership. Hence here comparative findings are presented for both of these groups, and figures are presented as percentages to make comparisons more meaningful.

Figure 11: Learning responses – yes, but needs improving, Board and Partnership comparison

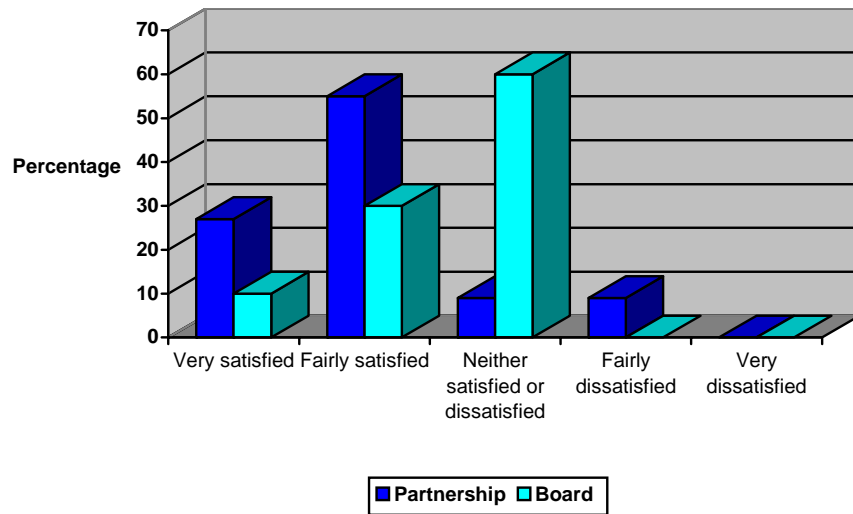


There are differences in perceptions between the Board and Partnership on all of these issues, particularly with regard mainstreaming. The Board contains a lower proportion of members than the partnership, reporting yes, but needs improving, for each of these issues.

3.4.6 Overall satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Partnership

Again, findings have been presented in order to draw comparisons with the views of the Board.

Figure 12: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you overall with the effectiveness of the Partnership/Board of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield



Again, there are differences in perceptions between members of the Board and Partnership. A higher proportion of partnership members are satisfied with the effectiveness of the partnership compared to Board members satisfied with the Board. In addition, a higher proportion of Board members are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied in terms of effectiveness, compared to members of the partnership.

3.4.7 SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

Strengths

Key strengths highlighted in comments from partners include:

- Communication
- Information sharing
- Training for staff
- Services focused on needs of families

Weaknesses

Weaknesses noted include:

- Awareness of respective roles and responsibilities
- More information about how the programme is run and who does what
- Lack of communication

Opportunities

Opportunities include:

- Staff
- Linkages with other organisations/partners
- Linkages with the PCT
- Children's Centres

Threats

Threats include:

- Poor quality service delivery
- Lack of communication
- Lack of knowledge about partners
- Funding

Effectiveness

Communication is highlighted in comments from partners as being crucial to an effective partnership. Partners' comments indicate that the partnership is becoming more effective, but there may still be issues associated with being clear about respective roles and responsibilities.

Partner impact examples

A range of partners indicated that their organisation has changed the way they do things because of Sure Start. These changes range from changes in approach (e.g. new ways of accessing harder to reach families), accessing new funding streams, work towards mainstreaming via joint events and liaison, changes services in response to parents' needs (e.g. new times of sessions), and the provision of joined up services (e.g. provision of weaning sessions in conjunction with a dietician).

The interviews with Board members and other key local figures yielded more evidence about local partnership working. Whilst some strong partnerships were identified (for example between Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield and local nurseries and childcare providers), many respondents did identify some real areas for improvement with regard partnership working. Responses suggested that partners can appear unwilling to become involved with Sure Start unless they can see a tangible benefit in it for their own organisation, hence therefore a culture of partnership working is limited in its development. The early history of the programme has also rendered partnership working difficult in some cases, with the history being widely known amongst local agencies. Many partners, notably schools, are mindful of undelivered commitments from Sure Start in its early years of operation.

Comments from local partners themselves suggested that Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield does need to improve the way in which it communicates with partners. Some local partners explained that they were unsure about the work and *'overall picture'* of Sure Start, with only very limited contact with the programme. This would suggest that Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield need to improve communication with key local partners, going *'back to basics'* about the aims of Sure Start, and building relationships from the foundations. One practitioner suggested that Sure Start should follow the lead of local community organisations such as the PWA and PWN *'run on a shoestring'*, but successfully keeping partners well-informed.

3.5 Follow up interviews – additional information

During the follow-up interviews, respondents were asked to discuss the Board and partnership, reflections on the successes and areas of weakness of the programme overall, as well as community involvement. A number of these issues have been woven into this Chapter, however, other issues emerging have been summarised below.

3.5.1 What has worked well?

Respondents were most likely to identify community engagement as a successful element of the programme's work. Whilst it has been difficult to achieve at a Board level, the programme has generally engaged with local families well, with staff *'going out and getting them involved'*. The staff were praised, as were the awareness raising methods used by Sure Start including *'freebies'*. Many partners believed that Sure Start is a much needed service in Nelson.

3.5.2 What has not worked well?

A high number of respondents discussed the Programme's *'rocky start'*, with mismanagement, staffing issues and problems with County Council involvement. These initial problems lost the programme *'a lot of time and goodwill'*. In terms of current problems, the lack of parental representation on the Board was identified as a key area of weakness, and one which will be hard to address due to the nature of the local community.

Respondents also identified a lack of mental health provision, support for single parents and that there is still some way to go in engaging with the local community.

3.5.3 Future opportunities and threats of the programme

The new building was identified as a key opportunity for the development of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. This will give the community a focal point. The fact that Sure Start will be sharing the building with other agencies should additionally facilitate partnership working. The move to a Children's Centre was also believed to be an opportunity by some respondents, as was future partnership working with extended schools and other local initiatives.

In terms of threats, the move to Children's Centres was highlighted as a concern by a number of respondents, notably, the associated drop in funding. This may promote staff turnover, once jobs become increasingly insecure, which in turn could jeopardise carefully built links with the community. One Board representative also explained that community development is not a core offer of Children's Centres, and was concerned that this may lead to a drop-off in service uptake. Other threats identified included a lack of communication with partners, and organisations such as Sure Start becoming overwhelmed with targets and losing sight of its true goals.

3.5.4 Community involvement

Respondents were unable to identify much existing community activity which Sure Start could feed into. This may indicate that there is very little activity or a real lack of awareness of this. In order to attain greater community involvement, respondents believe that Sure Start should organise more high profile community events and fun days. Many respondents did believe that Sure Start is doing well in terms of engagement, however, with one community leader explaining that '*Sure Start is always there at all these multi-agency events*'.

3.5.5 Impact of Sure Start

Respondents were asked to consider the successes of Sure Start as well as its impact on preparing children under 4 years for school.

Key successes of the programme

- Provision of Family Support
- Response to serious family situations and emergencies
- Partnership working
- Increasing confidence of the local community
- Meeting local needs
- Play sessions

Where does the programme need to focus its attention in future?

- Parenting skills- this was perceived to be a key area by many local partners and parent representatives on the Board.
- More support for mothers, particularly single mothers
- Promoting the health of young children
- Making a success of the Beacon Centre.

Respondents were unable to provide much information regarding future mainstreaming. The responses indicate that respondents are not aware of much activity with regard to mainstreaming at this stage, and that attention needs to be focussed on really driving this forward, rather than '*paying lip service*' to this agenda. Health was one area in particular where mainstreaming was thought to be important, but little visible progress has been made. In order to enable mainstreaming to happen effectively, partners need to align funding and improve communication. Effective leadership from local government is essential in ensuring that mainstreaming progresses effectively.

Impact of Sure Start

- The majority of those partners and Board members interviewed did believe that Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield has made a difference to the readiness of young children to attend school. Respondents spoke from both personal experience, and their experience of working with Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield.

- The sessions held at local libraries are important in achieving this, particularly taking into account the number of parents and carers who are not literate in English.
- Sure Start also provides children with the opportunity to interact with others. This allows children to increase in confidence and adapt to school life more readily.

3.5.6 The future

What three key things does the programme need to do differently in the future?

- Improve communication with local parents and carers
- Improve communication with partner agencies
- Provide more information about services
- Engage more parents representatives at a Board level and retain these parents
- Establish an information Parent's Forum
- Tackle mental health problems, notably, post natal depression.

4. Chattabout sessions

4.1 Aims

The aims of the chattabout sessions were to:

- Elicit perceptions of the Sure Start programme
- Identify how the Sure Start programme could be improved
- Find out levels of awareness of publicity and how publicity could be made more effective
- Examine levels of involvement in Sure Start and how this could be developed

4.2 Methodology

Chattabouts

Three chattabout sessions were arranged and held with local parents, grandparents and carers of children under 4 years of age. The sessions were designed to be interactive, flexible and informal.

When arranging the sessions, M.E.L Research liaised with members of the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield team to identify suitable groups and venues where the sessions could most successfully be held. Care was taken to ensure that the timing of the sessions fell outside of the school summer holiday period, to maximise attendance. Sessions were arranged across the programme area - both in Bradley and Whitefield, and involved a diverse range of the local community.

A translator was provided in each session, with translation skills provided by Sure Start workers.

Three sessions were facilitated as follows:

Whitefield

- Nelson Civic Theatre, pre-Bookstart lunch, Thursday 26th August
- Nelson Civic Theatre, Sure Start Open Play session, Friday 27th August

Bradley

- Walton Lane Open Play session (Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield and Sure Start Waterbridge), Friday 27th August

Each session lasted for between 1-1½ hours and was facilitated by an M.E.L Researcher.

A total of 21 parents, carers and grandparents attended the three chattabout sessions held between 26th and 27th August 2004. Attendance at each session is broken down in Tables 4-6 below.

Table 4: Session 1 - Nelson Civic Theatre (pre-BookStart lunch)

Attendees	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Area of residence
7 parents 1 grandparent	7 females 1 male	6 Pakistani 2 British	2 aged 16 – 24 5 aged 25 – 34 1 aged 45 - 54	6 Whitefield 2 Bradley

Table 5: Session 2 - Walton Lane Community Centre

Attendees	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Area of residence
6 parents	1 male 5 female	6 British	4 aged 25 – 34 2 aged 35 - 44	4 Waterbridge 1 Vivary Bridge 1 Bradley

Table 6: Session 3 - Open Play session at Nelson Civic Theatre

Attendees	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Area of residence
7 parents	7 female	5 Pakistani 2 Pakistani/British	3 aged 16 - 24 3 aged 25 – 34 1 aged 45 - 54	6 Whitefield 1 Nelson

As Table 5 illustrates, the majority of the participants in the session at Walton Lane Community Centre were not from inside the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield programme area. Some of these parents and carers made reference to services provided by Sure Start Waterbridge. These comments have still been included in the analysis; however, it has been made clear that these refer to Sure Start Waterbridge.

Due to the diverse community in the Bradley and Whitefield area and the huge variation in language capabilities, M-E-L designed the sessions to be as flexible as possible. Rather than facilitating a large discussion group in all of the sessions, 2 or 3 smaller groups were often held within each session. The session facilitator was accompanied by a translator from Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield, enabling parents and carers with limited understanding of English to get more fully involved in the consultation. Each parent was provided with a £10 gift voucher as a *'thank you'* for their input.

Consultation with children

As well as consulting parents and carers about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield and local services, the evaluation captured the views of another group of service users - young children.

Due to the difficulties in consulting young children using traditional research techniques such as surveys and interviews, M-E-L designed a programme of consultation using cameras. We wanted to gain a bank of photographic evidence to reveal what young children think about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield services.

Four disposable cameras were purchased. Two of these were given to families in regular contact with Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield services (identified by Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield). The second set of two cameras was given to Sure Start crèche workers. Parents and crèche workers were given an information sheet explaining the aims and objectives of the evaluation and what would be required of them if they chose to take part. They were asked to take their cameras along to every Sure Start activity attended over the course of one week, and to work with their children (or for the crèche workers, the children attending the sessions) to identify aspects of the activities which children enjoy, and do not enjoy. They were then to take

photographs of these and record on a sheet provided why the child in question likes, or does not like, the subject matter displayed in each photograph.

Parents/carers and crèche workers were given a one week timeframe in which to return their cameras and completed 'good things' and 'bad things' explanatory sheets to a named contact at Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. The cameras were passed onto M-E-L at which point the films were developed.

The findings of the sessions and consultation with children have been reported thematically, with illustrative quotes provided where appropriate. In the case of the consultation with children, photographs have also been scanned into the report.

4.3 Key findings

4.3.1 Knowledge of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield

During this opening part of the session participants were asked to briefly describe what they knew about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. As may be expected, the majority of responses referred to the individual services that Sure Start provides. Participants also talked about the support and advice function of Sure Start as well as general perceptions of the programme.

Services

The services that Sure Start provides were mentioned in each of the three sessions facilitated. Whilst the majority of responses were specific to individual services, one parent stated that Sure Start *'provides services for families with children under four living in a certain area'*. One parent at the Walton Lane session expanded on this; *'it is to improve the welfare and social condition of children who live in poorer areas'*. This idea of improving the 'general welfare of children' was one that also emerged amongst other groups. Responses relevant to individual services are listed below.

Playgroups

There were mentions of playgroups in the two sessions held at Nelson Civic Theatre. Participants were particularly likely to refer to the popular Open Play sessions.

Trips and events

Many of the participants in the three sessions were aware that Sure Start arranged a variety of events and trips. Participants talked about the trips held during the summer.

Swimming sessions

Awareness of swimming sessions was high amongst participants at the three groups. Parents referred to the free passes that families were able to access through Sure Start.

Bookstart and library sessions

Participants at the two sessions facilitated at Nelson Civic Theatre were extremely quick to mention the fact that Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield provides sessions at the local Library, including BookStart sessions. These were thought to be 'very educational' for young children.

Other groups and services mentioned by the participants consulted included the gardening group and the planned shopping crèche. Participants at the Walton Lane session referred to the Baby Massage sessions provided by the neighbouring Sure Start Waterbridge. Groups and sessions were generally very popular for a number of reasons. Firstly, Sure Start was thought

to be an important provider of education for young children, with one parent describing it as an 'early education scheme'. Participants also noted the convenience and accessibility of services, *'facilities are free and nearby.'*

Advice and support

The idea that Sure Start provided advice and support was a key theme to emerge from this section of the consultation. Participants particularly mentioned specific advice services. For example, participants in two of the groups spoke about the dietary and oral health advice provided by Sure Start staff and visitors at play sessions; *'They give you advice about dietary needs of children'*. Participants at the Walton Lane session mentioned general ideas of support for parents (however, a number of these parents were members of Sure Start Waterbridge). Lastly, breastfeeding support was mentioned by this latter group, and was thought to be an invaluable service.

Information

One key perception of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield was that it is a provider of information to families in the Nelson area. Participants in two of the groups specifically referred to the newsletter Sure Start; *'this lets you know what goes on and what groups are held where'*. Parents are also provided with a Sure Start information pack when they sign up with a member. The feeling amongst mothers was that Sure Start was good at keeping parents informed; *'when they arrange anything new they always tell you about it'*.

Health services

Whilst comments centered on play and learning services, some mention was made in each of the three groups of Sure Start's involvement in providing health advice and care. Participants at two of the sessions referred to the health and safety equipment that they have received from Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield; *'they've been round to our house and given us health and safety equipment as well- like Fireguards'*. Participants also mentioned the fact that Sure Start workers have staff present during the baby clinic at Nelson Health Centre and that they provide a dental service for families. One mother explained, *'My children are with a dentist but it might only be a matter of time before I have to start paying so I've actually put their names down for this Sure Start dentist'*.

Training

Participants at the two sessions held at the Civic Theatre explained that Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield provided ESOL classes for local parents of young children. In these two sessions, it was clear that the classes were a valuable resource for parents. One mother also talked about other courses that Sure Start could offer, such as the 6-week childcare course with a crèche. There was a degree of interest in this course from other parents present, with some indicating that they were planning to take up such training opportunities in the future.

Social function for parents

Sure Start sessions were seen by many participants as a time when they can socialise and meet new people. The sessions also *'give mum a break'*.

More generally, participants in all three of the groups saw Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield as a positive thing for themselves and their families; *'I think it is really good'*. One parent told how it is simply *'good for children'*; whilst another shared that they enjoy Sure Start sessions *'because the children do'*.

Lastly, participants highlighted that they were able to be as involved with Sure Start as they wished to. Whilst it was clear that some parents and carers were keen to attend as much as possible, one parent explained; *'I go to the library every week- that's the only thing that I do'*.

4.3.2 Good and bad aspects of Sure Start

Next, participants were asked to discuss what they believed to be the good aspects of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield, as well as the areas for improvement. Table 7 displays the good and bad aspects of provision of services for families with children under four years of age in Bradley and Whitefield.

Table 7: Perceptions of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield

Good things	Bad things
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bookstart/Library sessions ➤ Playgroups ➤ Safe for children ➤ Crèches ➤ Storytelling and singing songs ➤ Access to a variety of toys ➤ Trips to Southport ➤ Events ➤ ESOL classes ➤ Tadpoles swimming classes ➤ Teaches children social skills ➤ Improves child's behaviour ➤ Can spend time with your children ➤ Parents can socialise ➤ Provides training ➤ Timetable covers all ages ➤ It is free ➤ Sure start fund places at nursery schools. ➤ Children get new experiences ➤ Prepares children for nursery ➤ Friendly Sure Start staff ➤ Organisation of sessions ➤ Sure Start newsletters ➤ Rhythm and Rhyme groups (Sure Start Waterbridge) ➤ Breastfeeding groups (Sure Start Waterbridge) ➤ Swim and story sessions (Sure Start Waterbridge) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Groups are not always held at convenient times ➤ Need more frequent reminders re: groups and events ➤ Lack of specific help for older mothers ➤ People outside Sure Start area are excluded ➤ Snacks at sessions should be free or everyone pay ➤ Difficult for some ethnic minorities who can't speak English ➤ Friday open play session not convenient for Muslim families ➤ Not enough support

Good aspects of Sure Start

Play sessions

The play sessions were perceived to be excellent by the majority of participants. Children especially enjoy the open play sessions where there is less structure as the activities *'are quite varied'*. Mums told how their children *'want to go all the time. They don't want to stay at home anymore.'* As well as the facilities available, children enjoy listening to nursery rhymes; *'they like listening to the rhymes and the singing'*. Participants also stated that the messy play sessions were very good and stressed how well these were organised. As well as being enjoyable for the children, these sessions were believed to be very beneficial socially and developmentally.

One of the key ways in which this benefit is manifested is that it gives children excellent foundations for their time at nursery. In all of the sessions participants praised this aspect of the playgroups. It *'teaches new social skills'* and *'helps improve behaviour'*. It also *'helps children develop their language skills and teaches them to interact and share with other children.'* Participants were very positive about the progress their child had made during Sure Start sessions and said that; as a result, *'they don't have so many problems then when they go to nursery'*. The groups were generally thought to be very stimulating for the children enabling them to get *'new experiences every time they come to a session'*.

Sure Start playgroups were also commended for the wide range of toys they offered. Children have access to toys they don't have at home (e.g., bikes, sandpits). Sure Start Waterbridge rhythm and rhyme groups were seen to be extremely popular by the parents. One parent said *'they're fantastic, really good; he's not stopped talking about it. However they have long waiting lists.'* This group may be equally popular if it were to be provided in the Bradley and Whitefield area.

Finally, the Sure Start staff working at the play sessions were praised for their friendly approach and for the highly professional service they provide. The way in which the sessions are organised and facilitated by Sure Start was praised highly by many participants. *'It's always so well organised'*. One parent stated how the toys and food are always set out well and it is all handled *'very professionally'*

Library sessions

Participants at the sessions expressed strong praise for the sessions held at Nelson library. Parents believed the library to be a valuable resource. The Bookstart sessions were very popular with the parents *'we like them very much', they are very educational, especially the children like them, they look forward to the library, particularly when staff read books to them'*. The parents also suggested that the library sessions help their children to concentrate. They praised the fact that sessions are accessible to all age groups because of the wide range of songs, stories and activities that are available. This allows parents to take along children of different ages.

Trips and Events

All comments about events and trips that Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield arranged were extremely positive. The trip to Southport was thought to be particularly good. Almost all of the participants consulted were very eager for more trips to be arranged throughout the year. Parents at the session held at Walton Lane talked about the trips and events that Sure Start put on during the summer holidays. These events were especially popular as they are open to older children in a family *'it's nice to be able to do something as a family; it's nice when they put something on for the older ones too'*.

Swimming

In two of the sessions parents mentioned that the swimming events and Tadpole groups all work very well. Awareness of these services were high, and a number of participants reported to be planning to use services in future; *'I haven't taken my child but I've heard about it and I will be going sometime in the future'*. Participants at the Walton Lane session also praised highly the Swim and Story session provided by Sure Start Waterbridge.

Crèches

A number of participants consulted referred to the crèche facilities provided by Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. Participants thought that leaving their children on their own for a short

period of time was good preparation for nursery. There was also a mention of the shopping crèches in one of the sessions. Parents here thought this to be a really good idea; *'I will definitely use it'*.

Other groups, which were cited as a 'good' aspect of Sure Start provision included the breastfeeding support, provide by Sure Start Waterbridge as well as the planned multiple birth group.

Staff

A key contributory factor to the popularity of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield are the staff employed by Sure Start. Participants were particularly complimentary about the friendliness of the Sure Start staff. *'The staff are good and friendly.'* *'They all do a fantastic job.'* One parent also commented on good safety provision at sessions, explaining that Sure Start staff are well aware of safety issues and are always watching over the children. The general feeling was that the staff offer a valued and professional service.

Social function for parents

Equally important as the social benefits of Sure Start for children, was thought to be the social aspect for parents. Getting to meet other parents in similar situations was seen as being very important by many of the parents. One parent said *'if you didn't mix with other parents you'd be climbing the walls'*. Sure Start sessions not only provide children with a chance to socialise but also give mums and dads a chance to meet new people. This was seen to be particularly important for new mothers who can often feel isolated, particularly if they are the only parent in their peer group.

As well as this interaction with other parents, the set up of the groups allow parents to interact fully with their children. Parents at the Walton Lane session stressed that this was far preferable to just leaving your child at a group. Despite this, if parents needed a break, they are able to leave their child to play, as they will be well looked after by the crèche workers.

Information

As mentioned previously, Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield was perceived to have an important role in terms of providing information to parents. This information was described by parents as being generally very *'helpful'*. The newsletters are thought to be *'especially good'* and were read by the majority of those consulted. A number of parents referred to the information provided by professionals at Sure Start sessions, for example, the information provided on dental care and dental services was thought to be *'really useful'*; *'Healthy eating- that was really good'*. One group of parents talked about a professional who had spoken at a Book Start session the week previously, at which parents had been told *'all about dental hygiene'* and handed out free toothbrushes. One parent explained that this visit ensured that her child's next visit to the dentist *'was fine'*. Parents generally praised Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield for the amount of information that it provides to its members.

As well as this help and general advice, some parents referred to the fact that Sure Start provides practical tools to help parents care for their child. The provision of home safety equipment was felt to be extremely useful, especially for new parents who are often unsure what they need to buy.

Training

Participants were found to be very happy with the courses and training opportunities that were made available to them by the programme. Parents in two of the sessions (both held in Whitefield) referred to the ESOL classes provided through Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield.

These were seen to very *'useful'* and provided *'new information'*. These classes are clearly very popular and highly valued resources, and there was a real enthusiasm apparent to pursue these classes further.

As well as the language training, parents mentioned the courses provided on First Aid and general safety. In the session held at Walton Lane Community Centre, one mother explained that she was undergoing training to enable her to help out at a Sure Start breastfeeding support group. She said *'it's like passing on your experience isn't it.'* (This was coordinated by Sure Start Waterbridge).

General

Overall, perceptions of Bradley and Whitefield Sure Start indicated that it provides an excellent service. *'They've done very well for us.'* *'I think it's superb, I think it's brilliant, I really do.'* Parents praised the programme as a whole, with particular emphasis on the excellent staff. The timetable and programme of activities were believed to be excellent as *'they do cover a lot of range in age, don't they?'* The comprehensive timetable allows families to *'get a full week out of them (Sure Start)'*.

Other aspects of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield believed to be good by participants include the funding of places at local nurseries.

Least popular aspects of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield

Participants were then asked to indicate whether there were any aspects of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield that they believed should be improved. The comments made are analysed below. It is important to mention at this point that whilst there were a few negative issues raised, the vast majority of participants didn't have anything bad to say about Sure Start. Indeed, parents used this section of the consultation to reinforce their positive experiences of Sure Start; *'Nothing is bad about Sure Start! That's why we are here!'* Whilst this is undoubtedly an excellent reflection of the service provided by Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield, it is important to remember that the location of the sessions (all held at Sure Start sessions) may have had a part to play in this.

Times of groups and sessions

One minor criticism of some of the Sure Start sessions was that they were held at inconvenient times. For example, one parent explained how her child enjoyed the messy play sessions but was not able to attend as they are all held during the morning; *'I can't bring my child on a Tuesday because she's at nursery in the morning.'* One participant also suggested that some of the groups were held at an inconvenient time for Muslim families. Some were not able to attend the Open Play session at the Civic Theatre on Friday due to it being a day of prayer. They explained that it would be more convenient if the group was held on another afternoon.

Information

Although there is a regular newsletter provided to all parents, a small number of parents thought there should be more frequent reminders about what is going on and where and when to meet.

Language barriers

Two participants in one of the sessions mentioned that they experienced difficulties using some services due to language barriers. They explained that it can sometimes be difficult to find out information and understand newsletters and information booklets. There was also a mention of

a local Chinese family who were interested in the Sure Start sessions, but couldn't attend due to the lack of a Chinese-speaking member of staff at Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield.

Snack sessions

Another minor criticism made by a parent consulted referred to the arrangement of snacks at Sure Start sessions. She explained that the current system in which some people pay and others get the snacks for free isn't fair. She believed that the snacks should *'either be free or everyone should pay.'*

Catchment area

One negative comment that arose from a parent referred to the fact that Sure Start has to have a catchment area. This, therefore, denies access to its services for parents and their families living outside the programme area. She was sympathetic about friends who live just a few yards out of the area and who are ineligible.

Support for older mothers

Finally, one parent raised the point that the Sure Start programme does not provide specific support for older mothers; *'they didn't cover anything about being an older mother, I'm an older mother you see'*. This parent went on to say that, *'When I was having children all those years ago, my friend were having children too... now there is nobody my age group having children. I'm lacking with friends in that way. It's hard to go out and make those connections because you lack the confidence and things'*. She suggested that there could be specific support for older parents as this group often felt very *'vulnerable'*. She explained that people can look at you suspiciously, as if to say *'are you the grandmother?'*

4.3.3 Improvements for Sure Start

The final area of discussion in this opening area of questioning focused on improvements that could be made to Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield.

Nothing to improve

Once again, the majority of participants consulted were keen to stress that Sure Start already provided an excellent service. Parents were very complimentary about the Sure Start programme as a whole and said that they *'do everything at the moment'* and *'they don't need anything else'*. Overall participants could think of few improvements to Sure Start, as they are very impressed with it.

Information

Despite the very positive perceptions of provision, there were mixed feelings evident about the level of information Sure Start provided. Whilst some parents thought that they received enough information and receive plenty of information packs, other parents made the point that some families are aware of very little that is going on in Nelson. Reinforcing this, some mothers consulted explained that if you didn't come to many of the Sure Start sessions then it was far harder to access information. Whilst parents did mention that passages of the newsletter are translated into Urdu, some suggested that information could be improved by providing more materials and information in a variety of languages.

Training

Participants in two of the sessions also made some suggestions referring to improvements that could be made to the training and courses provided by Sure Start. During the chattabout sessions there was keen interest expressed for childcare and beautician courses, parents

believed that more of these training opportunities should be provided. One mother mentioned that Whitefield Nursery was supposed to provide some training for parents, however, this had not happened, which she was disappointed about. One participant was also interested in the ESOL course run at Nelson and Colne College. She explained that she was unable to attend as her husband did not give her permission to do so, and as a result she was missing out. She commented *'if Sure Start did classes from home, I would like that.'*

Another issue that was raised was the importance of organising crèche facilities to accompany training for parents. Parents emphasised that if they were receiving training then they would like their children to be in a crèche nearby to the training venue. *'I like to have my child there in a crèche nearby so I can do my course'*. It also helps if children of different ages can go to the same crèche; *'I would like them altogether rather than one here and there'*.

Trips

Some parents suggested that there should be more trips for parents and children. They said that trips to the local park would be good as it would be *'nice for families to feed the ducks.'* Participants at Nelson Civic Theatre explained that they would like to get to the park more, but were afraid of going to Victoria Park alone, as *'it is a bit of a dodgy area'*. Other trips that parents would like to take part in include trips to the beach; trips to the wacky warehouse and also to just look round the library rather than have just story time there. In addition to this, one parent suggested that trips and events should be provided for parents only, for example, shopping trips. She thought that this would be important for mothers who can sometimes feel that they are lacking support.

More support for parents

Whilst the majority of parents did not feel that they were lacking support, some parents believed that Sure Start should provide more support. One parent mentioned that parents with a number of children could need extra help at certain groups. For example this mother had a multiple birth and said that she needs extra help at the messy play session as she finds it hard to keep an eye on all of her children. She also finds it difficult to socialise with other parents as she is constantly keeping a watch on her children; *'I need help, really... I can't talk to any mums...I can't because I'm watching three'*. It was suggested that the multiple birth group provided by Sure Start Waterbridge would be good for her. She is also interested in going to swimming sessions however she doesn't think this is possible due to the ratio of staff to children.

Another mother reinforced the need for more support for older parents; whatever form this was provided in. Lastly, participants in one group suggested that providing more groups or events specifically for parents might help to improve support.

Times of sessions

As mentioned earlier some Muslim families find the open play sessions on a Friday inconvenient, as they have to attend the Mosque. The open play sessions are extremely popular but would be even more popular with Muslim families if it were moved to another day as well as Tuesday.

Provision of more services

As mentioned previously, participants were very happy with the quality of services provided by Sure Start. Some parents called for *'more of everything'* that was already provided. Another parent added that *'two open play sessions isn't enough'* due to the popularity of the services.

Combining Sure Start services

One group of parents suggested that Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield could improve its services if the programme worked more closely with Sure Start Waterbridge. Parents believed that the programmes could link up to provide groups jointly, it would enable parents to access a greater range of groups and services, *'some Sure Starts do things that other ones don't do'*.

Catchment area

Further to the comment that parents should not be excluded from accessing services if they are outside the Sure Start catchment, one parent suggested that Sure Starts should generally be more accepting of people in the outside area.

Other suggestions made during the consultation included re-running the Tweenies group and better promotion of the Sure Start dietician (a number of parents were keen to use this service but were unaware of it).

4.3.4 Sure Start advertising

There was very mixed feelings about the quantity and quality of advertising Sure Start provides. Whilst the majority of participants agree that they do have enough information, a number of parents highlight this as a gap in provision. Access to information is clearly an important concern for young families.

Despite the conflicting views that were apparent in the consultation, it was clear that all participants involved in the sessions had seen some Sure Start publicity or received some form of information from Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. The ways in which parents had received information about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield are discussed in more detail below.

Newsletters and Information packs

In all of the three sessions the vast majority of parents mentioned that they received a newsletter 'through the post'. The newsletter provides them with information on 'what's going on' and where and when the groups, sessions or events are taking place. These newsletters were popular and thought to be extremely useful by many of the parents, most of whom reported that they do read their newsletters. Some mothers also mentioned that passages and articles in the newsletters were translated into Urdu, making it more accessible for parents for whom English is not a first language.

Participants in each of the groups confirmed that receiving materials through the post was the main way in which they received information about Sure Start and relevant services in Nelson. As well as the newsletters, parents at the Walton Lane session explained 'I get a lot of flyers through the post and a timetable of what they do'. Another parent at Nelson Civic Theatre told that 'they send newsletter through the post and also leaflets of any new groups and stuff like that through the post'.

However, whilst a high number of participants consulted praised the newsletters and mailings as being a key source of information, one parent raised the point that these sources of information may not be available to non-members of Sure Start; 'I don't think people who aren't members get anything'. This parent believed that non-members would also benefit greatly from receiving mailings and newsletters.

Finally, a high number of parents had apparently received an information pack from Sure Start, or which contained Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield materials. Again, these were either received through the post or handed out to parents when they were in hospital after giving birth.

Posters and leaflets

As well as the information received through the post, many of the participants in the chattabout sessions also mentioned that they had seen leaflets, flyers and, to a lesser extent, posters advertising Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield and its services. A number of parents specifically referred to Sure Start staff giving out leaflets at a stall in Victoria Park. This was thought to be a good way of advertising Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield, and was fun for the children as they received balloons and freebies. Parents also mentioned that they'd seen leaflets in the Town Hall in Nelson, nurseries, sports centres, at the baby clinic and 'especially in doctor's surgeries'. One parent explained that she found these leaflets useful in illustrating how much Sure Start is involved with; 'you see all these things with a Sure Start logo at the bottom and you think 'O right I didn't know they did that''. Not many people reported seeing posters advertising Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield or its services, however some posters advertising a treasure hunt for children had been seen. A number of parents consulted raised the point that they had seen little or no promotional material in Nelson Town Centre, the market halls or local supermarkets.

Health professionals

Whilst, posters, leaflets and newsletters are an important method of raising the profile of Sure Start and disseminating information, it was clear that health professionals also had a key role to play in this. A very high number of parents reported to hear about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield through a range of health professionals. In particular, Health Visitors and Midwives had spoken to parents about the programme- this was mentioned in all three of the sessions- 'My Health Visitor told me about Sure Start when she first started, I had no help and she told me about Sure Start'. One parent suggested that the work of these professionals ensured that few new mothers would be unaware of Sure Start, 'I think a lot of people now are getting to know anyway. My sister has just had another child and, again, her midwife and Health Visitor have told her about Sure Start. I'd already told her as well'.

Finally, one parent at the Open Play session at Civic Theatre spoke about the Sure Start workers in situ at Baby Clinic and Health Centres who approach new mothers. This mother explained that these workers were a useful source of information about Sure Start, as 'I don't think anyone would be able to miss them'.

Freebies

Few participants could recall receiving any freebies from Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. Some parents had received goodie bags or starter packs with mugs and cutlery for children, however not everyone had received one of these. Other parents reported receiving baby bowls, cutlery and feeding cups as well as mugs and Book Start packs. Additionally one parent was very grateful to receive toothbrushes for her children from a worker talking about dental health at a Sure Start group; she commented 'they saved me about £2 each so they saved me a lot of money'.

Finally, few parents could recall seeing or receiving any freebies branded with the Sure Start logo; *'I've had a few things through....nothing with Sure Start written on it though'*.

Media

Participants in all three of the chattabout sessions agreed that there was very little evidence of Sure Start advertising in local or national media. Just one parent at the Walton Lane session reported to have seen a newspaper advert for Sure Start; 'I've seen them in the paper'. Remaining parents were unaware of seeing any media promotion for Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield, although a translator at one of the Civic Theatre sessions explained 'they (Pakistani parents) don't look in English newspapers'.

Participants at the Walton Lane session mentioned the publicity for the national Sure Start initiative, but this was not thought to be helpful for parents wanting to know more about their local programme. Finally, one parent told that parents could also get information about Sure Start by looking at job adverts for Sure Start staff in local papers and job centres.

Word of Mouth

Whilst this is not a formal method of promotion, participants in all three groups consulted stressed that word of mouth was one important way in which they received information about Sure Start. These parents explained that parents often recommend particular groups to one another. One mother at the Walton Lane session explained; *'I think more and more people find out about it now, you know, word of mouth. Everyone always says how good it is. I know I do'*. One parent thought that it can be difficult to hear about things unless through other parents at a group. If parents don't come to the sessions then they don't know what is going on. She believed that Sure Start groups are advertised more by word of mouth than by any formal means.

A number of other comments were made regarding local advertising of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield and these presented a fairly mixed picture of publicity. Whilst a high proportion of participants were satisfied with the amount of information that they receive about Sure Start services and events, others perceived this to be an area of shortfall in provision. These parents suggested that there is not enough advertising, and the information that is produced is not accessible to or seen by everyone. One grandfather consulted in session one reported that he had seen very little information about Sure Start at all. He received the newsletter and saw *'the odd poster on the Civic or on the door'*. He suggested that this may be because he is outside the target group of Sure Start and that young women may receive information in different settings e.g. in the hospital or GP surgeries.

Another comment made by some participants was that whilst the majority of parents were aware of Sure Start, there is a certain amount of confusion as to what exactly the programme does. The posters and leaflets let parents know that Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield exists, *'but you wouldn't know what it does'*. These suggested that you needed more general information about who and what Sure Start is. Another parent explained that whilst you see lots of information about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield and Sure Start as a whole, the information is often very vague. She thought that it was often just background knowledge about Sure Start rather than relevant information for parents. The Sure Start national website was also commented on as being *'too vague'*.

4.3.5 How did you first hear about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield?

Although parents had seen a wide range of Sure Start publicity, the ways in which they had first come to hear about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield were dominated by one source of information. The vast majority of mothers reported that they had first heard of Sure Start through their Health Visitor, and to a lesser extent, their Midwife. Indeed, this accounted for all parents at the Walton Lane session. Parents described how Health Visitors often gave them information about Sure Start at the four-month check up. In a number of cases Health Visitors had actually signed up families themselves. This was thought to be an excellent service.

At the two sessions held in Whitefield ward, participants had been made aware of Sure Start in other ways addition to this. A number of parents reported that they had found out about the programme either through a friend or family member. Lastly, a small number of parents explained that Sure Start community development team had visited families and introduced themselves.

4.3.6 Improvements to advertising

Following on from their discussion of publicity, participants were asked to suggest ways in which advertising and information dissemination could be improved. The suggestions made are explored in more detail below. The majority of comments refer to where the local programme is advertised rather than the content of the publicity, which was largely perceived to be *'very useful'*.

Advertising in public places

In all three of the sessions facilitated many participants suggested that displaying publicity in more prominent, central places would improve the overall advertising of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. One particularly popular idea, which emerged from two of the sessions, was for advertising to be displayed in local supermarkets *'as everyone goes there'*. Parents also called for more advertising in the centre of Nelson, including Market Halls, as well as local schools. One parent believed that *'schools should get involved'* as parents with older children could receive information brought them by the child. This was thought to be particularly good for parents who are not able to *'get out and about'* so often.

Finally, one parent raised the point that working parents may not be exposed to as much publicity as those parents who do not work. She explained; *'if you get someone else to take your child to the baby clinic you won't see the posters on display there'*. To remedy this, she, again, believed that publicity should be displayed in more prominent, public places.

Media advertising

Another popular set of improvements to publicity involved displaying Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield advertising in the local or national media. Participants in two of the sessions suggested that more adverts should be placed in local newspapers, along with inserts, such as leaflets and booklets. Another parent believed advertising on the local radio station 2BR would be very effective due to the popularity of the station. Finally, parents believed that advertising on television would be extremely effective, although they recognised that this would be too expensive, *'maybe something on television, but obviously it's very expensive though, isn't it?'*. This would reach a very wide audience, however, *'as everyone watches TV, don't they?'*

Language

Although, the majority of Asian parents consulted were not concerned about the languages in which publicity is provided, some Asian mothers had very low levels of understanding spoken or written English. A small number of parents at the chatabout held at the Open Play session at Nelson Civic Theatre reported that they would like to see more newsletters, flyers and posters in languages other than English e.g. Urdu. This publicity would need to inform parents which groups were running or when any new groups are starting. Finally, the issue was raised that some parents and grandparents had low levels of literacy in any language, and so verbal information is more appropriate.

Newsletters

A small number of comments were made in relation to improving the newsletter. One mother suggested that newsletters should be sent out more often as parents don't get regular enough information. Another parent believed that it would benefit local families who were not registered with Sure Start to receive the newsletter.

Information for parents outside the programme area

Participants in two of the groups made comments in relation to the lack of information available for parents living outside the Bradley and Whitefield programme area. One parent at the Walton Lane group explained that many parents outside the area were unaware that they could attend

Sure Start sessions as guests. She believed advertising outside the area should be improved to rectify this. As mentioned above, a suggestion was also made that the newsletter be sent to all local parents.

Content of the publicity

Whilst the majority of suggested improvements referred to the places in which Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield displayed publicity, there were some comments made about the content of the advertising. A number of participants at the two sessions held at Nelson Civic Theatre questioned the relevance of the advertising and information to local parents. These respondents believed that the information can be too vague and also presumes that parents know what Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield are and who it is for. Other suggestions included provision of more regular information as well as more detailed information as to exactly which groups and services are provided, and what each service involves.

4.3.7 How are you involved with Sure Start?

The final section of the consultation focused on involvement of local parents in the Sure Start local programme. The notion of involvement is a complex one. This involvement can take place on many different levels and in many different ways. The consultation aimed to explore how parents are currently involved in the local programme, and whether they would like to develop this in the future.

Firstly, participants were given some examples of means of involvement with the programme and asked to indicate whether they had become involved in any of these ways. Table 8 shows that the vast majority of participants receive the Sure Start newsletter, use Sure Start services and are members of the Sure Start local programme. In addition to this, over half of the parents had recommended Sure Start to a friend. As may be expected, however, far fewer parents had been involved in more intensive or active ways. For example, none of the parents were on a board or sub group, and only one mother had volunteered to help out a group or with a service.

Table 8: Methods of involvement in Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield

Involvement	Number of parents
Get the Sure Start newsletter	20
Use Sure start services/attend groups	20
Member of Sure Start	19
Introduced a friend to Sure Start	12
Taken part in questionnaires/research for Sure Start (previous to this)	8
Told Sure Start how to improve services	2
Volunteer	1
Subgroup Member	0
Management Board Member	0

4.3.8 Getting more involved in Sure Start

A number of participants in the sessions indicated that they would like to become more involved in Sure Start in the future in one way or another. Most commonly, parents reported that they

would consider helping out at sessions and volunteering. One parent mentioned that she would particularly like to get involved in the sessions held at Nelson Library. She enjoys reading stories to her own child and suggested that she could read to other children.

Despite this apparent enthusiasm, all of those who suggested that they might wish to become more involved explained that they would not do so in the short-term future. Currently participants thought that they were unable to get involved as they simply did not have the time to do so. One parent attributed this to amount of time she spends looking after her children; *'I wouldn't be able to now – not a chance, these are a full time job!'* Other parents were also unwilling to commit to being more involved at the current time because they thought that their children were too young; *'when the children have gone to school, yeah, I wouldn't mind enquiring about a job vacancy or something.'*

Involving other parents

As well as exploring whether participants in the sessions would like to become more involved in Sure Start themselves, we asked how Sure Start could encourage other parents to become more involved.

Most participants agreed that this was just about more advertising. When asked what would be the best way of advertising to new parents one said *'the newsletter is best'*, however they were aware that unless you are already a member of Sure Start you wouldn't receive the newsletter. For this reason parents emphasised, once again, that to get new parents involved the newsletter needs to be sent out to non-members.

In order to involve other parents they thought that more trips, events and fun days should be arranged to encourage new members to join up and use a wider range of services.

Other parents said that Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield should also try to involve more men. There was a consensus that there is currently a lack of provision for fathers. It was felt that Asian men in particular *'would not like to come to Sure Start groups.'*

A final suggestion that one parent made was to reach people through job centres. This would allow Sure Start to reach those on benefits.

Other comments

The overall perception of parents was that Sure Start provides an excellent service. On the whole people genuinely couldn't think of any major criticisms of the Sure Start programme in Bradley and Whitefield. *'Overall, I think it's brilliant I really do.'* The only main improvements are suggested when Sure Start is compared to a neighbouring Sure Start area. Sure Start appears to be very popular and people are extremely grateful for the facilities that it gives the children and the opportunities it provides. The willingness to criticise Sure Start may however have been affected by the Sure Start worker being present in the chattabout sessions.

4.4 What does this mean for Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield – key points

The chattabout sessions with parents show that it is possible to get parents involved in activity that interests them, both White parents and Black and Minority Ethnic. This may indicate a way forward for encouraging the development of Parent Forums.

The sessions also show that Sure Start initiatives are popular (such as open plan sessions and library sessions) and the staff are liked.

The parent survey in Chapter 5 quantifies the level of awareness and satisfaction.

There is a need to review the times of sessions, in particular for Muslim families who are unable to attend on a Friday.

4.5 Consultation with young children

This next section presents the results of the consultation with children under four, carried out with the help of parents/carers and members of staff at Sure Start sessions. The four cameras were taken to the following sessions:

Camera One: (Parent/carer) Open Play Civic Theatre, Chatterbox

Camera Two: (Crèche worker) Bradley Primary School Open Play

Camera Three: (Parent/carer) Unspecified session

Camera Four: (Crèche worker) Whitefield Stay and Play

4.5.1 Good things

Both parents/carers and staff were considerably more likely to identify aspects of Sure Start groups and activities enjoyed by children, than those which they do not enjoy. This suggests that, overall; children do enjoy the activities provided by Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. The aspects of Sure Start activities identified as '*good things*' by children, and captured by parents or staff are themed below.

Play

According to the results of the consultation, children were most likely to identify 'play' activities as aspects of Sure Start groups which they enjoy. Photographs taken display children enjoying playing in a 'Ball pit', with a train set, with a pram, in a car, in a kitchen and on climbing apparatus and a slide. Explanations for the children's enjoyment were varied and included:

Slide: '*it is like the park slide*'

Car: '*I like driving the car, I feel like a big boy*'

Dolls house: '*it is good fun*'

Playing with a kitchen: '*helping my mummy to make tea*'

Playing with snake; '*Didn't smile but laughed and giggled*' (Staff comment)

Camera Two



Picture: "The girls in the ballpool"

Why I like this:
"It's exciting"

Camera Three



Picture: "Driving car"

Why I like this: "I feel like a big boy"

Camera Three



Picture: "Playing in the sand"

Why I like this: "It's nice to touch"

When we examine the reasons given by the children, parents or staff for the enjoyment of these play activities we can see that the children like to play at '*being a big boy*' and stimulating their senses; '*it's nice to touch*'. A high number of pictures show children replicating day-to-day situations, most notably, '*cooking*'. This was mentioned by children in the context of '*helping*' parents and carers. It is clear from the pictures taken that children also enjoy using their imagination and being creative in play situations.

Colouring and drawing

Six of the photographs taken also showed children enjoying activities such as drawing, stencilling and colouring.

Comments included: '*enjoys colouring Winnie the Pooh*'
'*I like making pictures for my mum*'
'*It is his favourite thing to do*'

Camera Four



Picture: "Haroon and Zainab stencilling at the table"

Why I like this: "I like making pictures for my mum"

Camera Four



Picture:
"Stencilling at the table Sohaib, Ali"

Why I like this: -

Pictures of children drawing and stencilling show that it usually a group activity, which may suggest another reason for the children's enjoyment. Photographs taken by staff show that this activity is often enjoyed by all the family, with staff describing, *'all the family stencilling'*.

'Making things'

Five photographs show scenes of children using 'play dough', building blocks and peg boards. These activities allow children to be creative and use their imagination as shown in the responses below:

Peg Boards; *'I can make patterns'*

Playing with Play dough; *'I am making chapattis'*

Camera Two



Picture: "children playing with playdough"
Why I like this: "I'm making balls like the balls in there (pointing to ballpool)"

Camera Three



Picture: "Peg boards"
Why I like this: "I can make patterns"

Again, the pictures show that these tasks involve interaction with other children as well as parents, with staff photographing parents 'showing the children' how to 'build towers'.

'Snack time'

Four photographs in two sessions showed children and their parents enjoying snack time.

Children referred particularly to the '*nice things to eat*' indicating that they do enjoy the chance to eat healthily; '*like eating strawberries*', '*it looks yummy*'. Pictures also indicate that snack time is a very much social activity with all parents and carers and children sitting together in a group.

Camera Four



Picture: "Parents & children at snack time"

Why I like this: "Eat healthy food"

Helping

A number of responses given by children indicate that children enjoy aspects of Sure Start groups when they can help the staff and play at helping their parents and carers. Photographs showed children playing in a kitchen 'because I like to help my mummy in the kitchen at home', 'Zainab sharpening a pencil' as 'she likes to help staff'. Some photographs are displayed below:

Camera Four



Picture: "Children tidying up"

Why I like this: "To help teachers"

Camera Two



Picture: "Kitchen cooking"

Why I like this:
"Helping my mummy to make tea"

Reading

Just two photographs highlighted reading as an activity enjoyed by children at any of the Sure Start sessions. At the Bradley Primary School Open Play Session, crèche workers recorded children '*looking at the colourful pictures*' in a book. In the Whitefield Stay and Play Group they photographed '*Humaira looking at books and creepy crawlies*' as '*she likes animals and books*'.

One remaining photograph which does not appear to naturally fall into one of the above categories showed a child '*looking at a large egg timer*'. This girl enjoyed '*watching the sand*'.

Overall the photographs indicate that children enjoy a variety of activities at Sure Start sessions. These included play activities, notably where children have the opportunity to re-create day-to-day situations and play at being an adult. They also appear to enjoy creative activities and helping the Sure Start staff and parents. Whilst the children's comments themselves did not indicate that they particularly enjoyed the social function of groups, the photographs do indicate this. The majority of the pictures show children interacting with their peers and parents, and spending time in group situations.

Camera Two



Picture: "Two girls at the train track"

Why I like this:
Adults view-
"communicating and sharing"

Finally, the photographs indicate that children enjoy the fact that the Sure Start sessions allow them to stimulate their senses. Pictures show children enjoying *'watching the sand'*, using their sense of touch; *'it is nice to touch'*, as well as referring to the *'yummy'* taste of the food. The only senses not mentioned by children are hearing and smell.

4.5.2 Bad things

Very few photographs showed aspects of the Sure Start session which children do not enjoy, indeed only seven pictures were taken. The aspects highlighted by children were varied.

Conflict with others

In one session (Bradley Primary School Open Play), three photographs were taken of children having problems interacting with peers. One picture shows two children arguing over a pram; *'the girl has taken the pram'*. A second shows a girl *'crying with mum'*, explaining *'she won't give me the pram'*. The final picture depicts a boy who is upset that he is playing alone.

Camera Four



Picture: "Boy on his own crying"

Why I don't like this:
"Playing on my own"

Three photographs were taken at another session, showing aspects of the session which a child does not enjoy. These included drawing; *'I like drawing at home, not at nursery'* and playing with a doll; *'it's a girls thing'*.

Camera Three



Picture: "Jigsaw"

Why I don't like this:
"Too hard to do"

One final picture taken by staff at Whitefield Stay and Play show children complaining about having to wait for attention; '*Not waiting, I want it now*'.

4.5.3 Conclusions

Whilst it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from the photographic evidence collated by children, it does suggest that, on balance, children do enjoy the sessions provided by Sure Start including the Bradley Primary School Open Play, Whitefield Stay and Play, Open Play at The Civic Theatre and Chatterbox. An examination of the photographs indicate that the children enjoy the aspects of the sessions which involve interacting with other children, interacting with their parents and carers, as well as being creative. Play activities are particularly popular, notably where children can emulate every day life activities, such as cooking and playing at being an adult. Finally, it was clear that activities which appeal to children's senses can add to their enjoyment. The only aspects of activities which children do not enjoy are those which lead to conflict with other children, or those activities which children do not think are appropriate to them- whether they are too difficult or '*a girl thing*'.

5. Findings of the survey with local parents

5.1 Aims

The aims of the survey with local parents were to:

- Assess current levels of awareness of Sure Start and specific services
- Assess awareness and perceptions of Sure Start publicity
- Identify current and possible future levels of involvement
- Identify barriers to parents becoming involved with the programme
- Elicit perceptions of the Sure Start programme.

5.2 Methodology

Design

The questionnaire was designed in consultation with Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield and piloted in the Bradley and Whitfield area before being finalised. Some minor amendments were made to the questionnaire in light of the exercise.

The questionnaire was also used for parents to express interest in registering as Sure Start parents.

At the end of the questionnaire, a telephone number was requested, so a random call-back could be made to at least 10% of questionnaires to ensure the interview had been carried out correctly.

A set of showcards was designed to complement the questionnaire, helping with speed and ease of completion for respondents.

Local recruitment

We were keen to work with local people as information gatherers, as well as information providers. To this end, we sought to involve local people as interviewers. A range of publicity materials advertising the interviewing position (and raising awareness of the consultation in general), including posters and flyers were sent to a range of local organisations.

An interviewer briefing session was held on 29 September 2004, at Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. A total of 10 potential interviewers attended the session. Interviewers were introduced to the project and taken through the specifics of the project. They were also briefed on the MRS (Market Research Society) Codes of Conduct and provided with some background information to surveys, research and good interviewing technique and interviewer safety.

Sampling

The main intention of the sampling method used was to gather the views of parents who were involved with Sure Start and those that were less involved. Due to the high level of registration with the programme amongst local parents, it was agreed to use the registered parents list provided by Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield as the basis of the sampling, given that some parents on the list would be more involved with Sure Start than others. A small number of interviews (<10) were also carried out with eligible parents who lived in the same household as a registered Sure Start member.

Fieldwork

Letters of authorisation were provided, for interviewers to hand out to each respondent, as well as interviewer identification badges and information leaflets about Sure Start. The local police were notified of the presence of the interviewers in the area.

Six local interviewers began the interviewing, alongside M-E-L Research's own team. Four of the original potential interviewers dropped out, largely because of the likelihood of payment affecting benefit uptake.

A local drop off point for collection and disposal of questionnaires was arranged at the Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield building.

105 questionnaires were completed by local interviewers and the remaining 95 were completed by M-E-L interviewers.

Table 9 shows the target interviews and actual number of completed interviews in each area.

Table 9: Target and actual interviews

Area	Target Interviews	Actual Interviews
Bradley	100	89
Whitefield	100	111

Data processing and analysis

Survey data was entered into SPSS Data Builder and analysed using SPSS. Responses to open ended questions have been coded thematically. A 10% quality check was carried out on entered data, to check for accuracy.

5.3 Key findings

The survey data is analysed overall, and for Bradley and Whitefield separately. The graphs in the appendix illustrate the key findings displayed for both Bradley and for Whitefield. Percentages are expressed as a proportion of those respondents who answered each particular question. Key findings are presented in highlighted boxes.

5. 4 Profile of Respondents

The profile of respondents taking part in the survey is.

- The majority of respondents interviewed were female (89%).
- In terms of ethnicity, 91% of respondents were Pakistani and 9% (n=18) were British.
- Over half of respondents were in the 25–34 age range (61%), with 23% in the 16–24 age group and 14% in the 35-44 age range (see Figure 1).
- 90% of respondents had shared responsibility for the care of their children (see Figure 2).
- 16% of respondents were expecting to become a parent in the next six months, at the time of the survey.
- 96% of respondents were registered as a Sure Start parent.

5.4.1 Employment status

Figure 3 shows the current employment status of respondents in Bradley and Whitefield. 76% of respondents were currently 'at home, looking after their child/ren', 9% (n=17) of respondents were working 'part time', 8% (n=15) working in 'full time jobs' and 1% (n=1) were 'not seeking work', 'permanently sick or disabled' or a 'student'.

5.4.2 Health

Nine percent (n=17) of respondents reported having a long term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities. A further 6% (n=11) of respondents reported that their child had special needs (see Figure 4).

5.4.3 Reading at home

Respondents were asked how often their child/ren are read to at home. Approximately 44% of respondents reported that their children are read to everyday, 21% are read to 2-3 times a week and 16% of respondents never read to their children (see Figure 5).

5.5 Awareness of Sure Start

Awareness of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield was very high amongst the parents and carers questioned. This was to be expected as the sampling was taking from the Sure Start registered parents list. When parents were asked 'Had you heard of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield before today?' 98% of respondents agreed that they had.

Awareness of Sure Start was very high, with 98% of parents and carers reporting that they had heard of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. This is likely to reflect the use of the registered parent list as the basis of the sampling.

5.5.1 How did you first hear about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield?

Respondents had heard about Sure Start from a variety of sources. Overall, the four most cited sources are as follows (respondents could give more than one answer):

- Through my Health Visitor (48%)
- Received information through the door (30%)
- Through my Midwife (27%)
- Through a friend or family member (26%)

Putting the 'don't know' response aside, respondents were least likely to cite radio adverts (1%, n=1), newspapers (5%, n=10) and through schools (7%, n=13). The full results are displayed by area in Figure 6.

Those respondents who had heard of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield through 'another way' provided a range of responses. These included hearing information from the 'children's clinic' (n=3), 'community worker' (n=1), 'dietician' (n=1), 'family planning' (n=1) and 'doctors' (n=1).

Parents and carers are likely to find out about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield through formal methods and statutory/partner agencies such as Health Visitors (48%) and Midwives (27%). Promotion of Sure Start through radio advertising (1%, n=1) and in newspapers (5%, n=5) appears to have relatively low uptake.

5.6 Sure Start publicity

5.6.1 Sure Start Information and Publicity

After establishing awareness of Sure Start as a whole, we then focused on Sure Start publicity and advertising. Approximately 85% of respondents thought that they received enough information about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. Respondents were then asked where they had seen Sure Start information and publicity (see Figure 7, respondents could give more than one answer).

- 76% of respondents had seen Sure Start publicity in the Health Centre.
- 49% had seen information in nurseries and schools.
- Respondents had also seen Sure Start information in the library (41%), hospital (36%) and had received information through the door (35%).

- Parents who had seen information in ‘another way’ mentioned that they had seen publicity in the ‘doctor’s surgery’ (n=2), ‘St. Mary’s Street’ (n=1), from ‘friends and family’ (n=2) and also from ‘Sure Start employees visiting houses’ (n=3).

85% of respondents thought they received enough information about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. When asked where they had seen Sure Start publicity, 76% of respondents reported seeing information in the Health Centre, 49% in schools and nurseries, 41% in the library and 36% had seen information in a hospital.

5.6.2 Sources of information and publicity

Respondents who had seen at least one type of publicity were then asked what this information was. The responses have been analysed into key themes.

Posters and leaflets

Posters and leaflets were the most common type of publicity that respondents had seen. Approximately 68 respondents reported seeing Sure Start posters and leaflets in the area.

Sure Start activities and services

Approximately 20 respondents reported that they had seen information about activities and services that Sure Start offer. These included ‘baby massage’, ‘shoppers crèche’ and ‘playgroup activities’.

Information through the door

Respondents also reported having Sure Start information posted through their door. Sixteen respondents mentioned that they receive the newsletter through the post a further respondent said ‘I receive regular mail’.

Trips and events

Overall, 8 respondents had seen information about Sure Start trips and events. Five of these parents mentioned they had seen information on ‘summer trips’ and ‘summer holidays’.

Free gifts

Two parents in the Whitefield area mentioned that they had received free gifts from Sure Start. Free gifts that were mentioned included ‘Birthday card’ (n=1) and ‘Bounty pack’ (n=2),

Sure Start posters and leaflets in the local area were the most common type of publicity seen by respondents (n=68), followed by information about Sure Start services and activities (n=20), information through the door (n=16) and information on trips and events (n=8).

5.6.3 Location of publicity

These respondents were then asked to provide details about where they had seen this information and publicity.

- The most popular place where Sure Start publicity had been seen was ‘through the post’. In total, 65 respondents mentioned that they had received ‘information through the door’.
- The ‘doctors surgery/Health Centre’ (n=25) were also popular responses made by respondents. A further 6 respondents had seen Sure Start information in the ‘Nelson Civic Centre’.
- 16 respondents reported seeing Sure Start information in the library. Parents had seen ‘books’, ‘magazines’ and ‘newspaper articles’ in the library.
- 5 parents mentioned that they had been visited by a Sure Start worker. In addition to these 4 parents in the Whitefield area had been contacted by a Health Visitor.

- Other venues where Sure Start information had been seen included the 'dentist', 'hospital', 'town centre' and 'Church' (n=1).
- Finally, 4 respondents had heard about Sure Start through their friends and family and thought that 'word of mouth' was more important than other information sources.

The most common location where Sure Start publicity had been seen by parents was through the post (n=65), this was followed by information in Health Centres (n=25), the library (n=16) and from Sure Start workers (n=5).

5.6.4 Satisfaction with Sure Start publicity

Approximately 68 respondents found the information to be 'good', with a further 7 respondents stating that it was 'fantastic', 'very good'. Parents described the information as being very 'helpful' (n=2), 'clear' (n=3), 'eye catching' (n=8), 'interesting' (n=5) and 'informative' (n=13).

Other respondents were satisfied with the information and thought that what they had seen was 'ok' and 'fine (n=34)'. In contrast to this, a few respondents 'didn't think much of it' (n=10). Two respondents also mentioned that they didn't think the information was very 'clear' (n=3) and 'eye catching' (n=1).

Overall, parents provided positive comments about Sure Start publicity. In total 68 respondents found the information to be 'good', with a further 7 respondents stating it was 'very good'. A further group of respondents thought the information they had seen was 'ok' and 'fine' (n=34).

5.6.5 Sure Start newsletter

All respondents were then asked if they receive a Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield newsletter. Overall, 80% of respondents reported that they currently receive the newsletter, with 85% receiving it in Whitefield and 72% receiving the newsletter in Bradley (see Figure 8).

Respondents who currently receive the newsletter were then asked if they usually read it. Overall, 92% of those parents who receive the newsletter reported that they usually read it (see Figure 9).

Respondents who receive but do not read the newsletter (9%, n=13) provided a variety of reasons for this. The most common was that they 'couldn't read it'. In total, 6 parents mentioned that they have 'bad English', which prevented them from reading the newsletter. A further 3 parents in the Whitefield area stated that they 'haven't got the time' to read it.

Parents who receive the newsletter were then asked, 'Is there anything that you think Sure Start could do to improve its newsletter?' The majority of parents in Bradley and Whitefield thought that the newsletter was 'good', and for this reason they could not think of improvements. More parents in Whitefield reported that the newsletter 'is ok, at present', 'it is useful and well presented'. Some improvements that were suggested by parents were as follows:

- 'Make it more eye catching' (n=1)
- 'Keep it short, too much information bombards you' (n=2)
- 'Information should be clear and easy to understand' (n=2)
- 'Offer more information on pregnancy and health' (n=1)
- 'Translate newsletter into Urdu' (n=4)
- 'Ask people for their own opinions' (n=2)

Overall 80% of parents currently receive the Sure Start newsletter. This indicates that there are a further 20% of respondents who have either forgotten the newsletter or don't currently receive it. Of those who receive the newsletter, a high proportion, 92%, reported actually reading it. Language issues were the main reasons for respondents failing to read the newsletter. Parents recommended that the newsletter should be translated into Urdu (n=4) and should be 'clear and simple' (n=2).

5.6.6 Improvements to be made to information

Overall, 22% of respondents suggested ways to improve the provision of information about Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. Suggestions made by respondents were as follows:

- Respondents suggested that more '*relevant information*' needs to be provided (n=3).
- 12 respondents mentioned that they would like to see more '*newsletters*', '*adverts*' and '*flyers*' through the post. One parent in Bradley said '*I never get information and when I do it's always late*'.
- Word of mouth (n=2) also seemed important in providing parents with Sure Start information. One parent in Bradley suggested that '*Sure Start information should be given out in Mosques, most parents send their kids for learning at the Mosque in the evenings. This would be a good platform to spread the word about Sure Start.*'

How would you like to receive Sure Start information?

Approximately 90% of respondents would like to receive Sure Start information through the door. This was followed by receiving the Sure Start newsletter (76%) and information being passed on by Sure Start workers (43%) (Figure 10, respondents could give more than one answer).

Those who suggested '*another way*' of receiving information mentioned that they would like to be '*contacted by telephone*' (n=3). One parent in Whitefield also suggested that '*information via the website*' (n=1) would be useful. Other suggestions included receiving '*information in schools*' (n=1) and '*mosques*' (n=1).

Most effective ways of informing parents about Sure Start

The best or most effective way of informing parents about Sure Start was thought to be by sending them the '*Sure Start newsletter*' (n=42) and '*posting information through the door*' (n=33). Parents in Bradley also thought that more '*advertising in specific areas*' (n=8) would work well. In addition to this one parent in Whitefield suggested that there should be more '*adverts on television*'. Personal visits to the home by '*Health Visitors*', '*outreach workers*' and '*Sure Start employees*' were mentioned by 20 respondents. Despite the majority of people thinking that advertising and written information is the best way to publicise Sure Start, two parents thought that '*word of mouth*' was more important.

22% of respondents thought there were ways in which Sure Start could improve their information. These included providing 'more newsletters,' 'adverts' and 'flyers' (n=12), providing more 'relevant information' (n=3) and providing Sure Start information at mosques (n=1). 90% of parents said that they would like to receive Sure Start information through the post. Postal provision of information was also seen as the most effective way of parents finding out about Sure Start (newsletters, n=42).

5.6.7 Sure Start freebies

Parents were then asked if they had received any Sure Start freebies. The most common were bowls and plates (31%) and other cutlery such as knives, forks and spoons (30%). Baby bibs were also popular (29%). When comparing the areas, people living in Whitefield tended to receive more freebies than those living in the Bradley area (see Figure 11).

Other Sure Start freebies mentioned included, 'safety gates' (n=21), 'socket protection' (n= 3), 'fire guards' (n=3), 'smoke alarms' (n=1), 'baby gro's' (n=5), 'face clothes' (n=3), 'toothbrushes' (n=1) and 'starter packs' (n=1).

The most common Sure Start freebies were bowls and plates (31%) and other cutlery such as knives, forks and spoons (30%). Other freebies included safety gates (n=21), fire guards (n=3) and baby grows (n=5). There is clearly scope to expand the provision of these freebies, as fewer than 50% of parents taking part in the survey (the vast majority of whom were registered with programme) had received any of the free gifts.

5.7 Use of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield services

After establishing awareness of Sure Start as a whole, we then focused on awareness and use of specific services provided by Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield. Overall, 67% of respondents had used a Sure Start service in the past 12 months, with one third of respondents reporting that they had never used Sure Start services (see Figure 12). Of those respondents who had used a Sure Start service, 74% lived in Whitefield and 59% in Bradley.

Respondents who had never used a Sure Start service provided a range of comments on why they hadn't done so. The most common response from both programme areas was that they had time constraints, 'I don't have the time during the day' (n=8), 'I'm too busy' (n=2). Many parents reported that they 'never get the time' (n=3). The second most common response was because of language barriers. Parents in Whitefield said they have 'language problems' (n=6). Other parents stated that they were 'not interested' (n=2) or that they 'just don't know' (n=9).

Considering the high levels of awareness of Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield, not all respondents had actually used Sure Start services. Approximately 98% were aware of Sure Start, whereas 67% of parents had actually used Sure Start services (with one third not having done so). Language barriers (n=6) and time constraints (n=13) were the main causes of non-use.

5.7.1 Awareness of specific Sure Start services and activities

Respondents were then asked to identify which Sure Start services they had heard of and which they had used in the past 6 months. In terms of individual Sure Start services, considerable variations in awareness were identified. These are displayed fully (by area) in Figure 13. Overall, the Sure Start services, which have the greatest level of awareness, are as follows:

- Safety Equipment Scheme (47%)
- Sure Play (39%)
- Open Play sessions (32%)
- Bookstart (29%)

In contrast, respondents demonstrated very low levels of awareness of the following Sure Start services:

- Hairstyling (3%, n=6)
- Clown around (9%, n=17)
- Pitter Patter (9%, n=17)
- Women's Light group (9%, n=17)

Other Sure Start services mentioned by parents included play groups, nursery, crèche, dietician, speech therapist, gardening and support workers. The largest variations in awareness by area were seen for the Open Play sessions. Awareness of this was highest in Whitefield (36%), falling to 27% in Bradley.

The Safety Equipment Scheme (47%), Sure Play (39%) and other open play sessions (32%) were the most popular Sure Start services that respondents had heard of. In contrast to this the services with the lowest levels of awareness were Hairstyling (3%, n=6), Clown Around (9%, n=17) and Pitter Patter 9%, n=17). Levels of awareness for each Sure Start service was below 50%.

5.7.2 Use of Sure Start services

Respondents who were aware of specific services were asked whether they had used these Sure Start services. In terms of specific Sure Start services used, a great variation of take-up is observable (see Figure 14). The services that had the highest take up amongst respondents were as follows (figures are expressed as a proportion of those respondents who had heard of each service):

- Safety Equipment Scheme (75% of those who had heard of this service had used it)
- Personal Dental Service (70%)
- Bookstart (49%)
- Sure Play (49%)

The services with the lowest take up amongst respondents were as follows:

- Clown around (6%, n=1)
- Little VIP's (11%, n= 2)
- Shoppers crèche (14%, n=3)
- Basic IT skills with crèche (14%, n=4)

Overall, 67% of respondents had used a Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield service. In terms of specific services used, a great variation of take-up was observable. The services with the highest take-up were the Safety Equipment Scheme (75% of those who had heard of it had used it) and Personal Dental Service (70%). Clown Around (6%, n=1) and Little VIP's (11%, n=2) had the lowest take up amongst respondents.

5.7.3 Personal Dental Service (PDS)

The parents who had heard of, and used, the PDS were asked some additional questions:

- Approximately 70% (n=38) of those respondents who had heard of the PDS had used the service.
- 97% (n=37) of respondents reported that the PDS was easy to travel to.
- 95% (n=36) of respondents reported that the day of the appointment was convenient for them. Those who thought the day was inconvenient explained that they rearranged the appointment to a more convenient day and time.
- Overall, 97% (n=33) believed that the appointment was at a convenient time.

Respondents who had used the PDS were then asked whether their care of their children's teeth had changed since visiting the PDS.

- 71% (n=27) of respondents reported a change in the frequency of their child's teeth brushing since visiting the PDS. 68% (n=26) of respondents also said that the time spent brushing their child's teeth had changed since visiting the PDS.
- Overall, 71% (n=27) of respondents thought that the amount of sugar eaten by their child/ren had altered since visiting the PDS.

- 63% (n=24) of respondents thought that the frequency of visits to the dentist for a checkup had also changed since visiting the PDS.
- 58% (n=22) of respondents reported that they have now registered their child/ren with a dentist since visiting the PDS.
- 92% (n=33) of respondents reported that they are more confident in encouraging their children to look after their teeth since visiting the PDS. Only 3% (n=1) of parents thought that the PDS had no impact on their confidence levels.

Overall satisfaction with Sure Start Personal Dental Service

Approximately 72% (n=26) of the parents who were aware of and used the PDS were 'very satisfied' with the dental care that was provided. Only 3% (n=1) of parents were either 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'.

70% (n=38) of respondents who were aware of the PDS had used it, and of these, 72% (n=26) of respondents were very satisfied with the care provided. The PDS was perceived as being easy to get to (97%, n=37). 95% (n=36) thought that the day of the appointment was convenient and a further 97% (n=33) reported that the time of the appointment was convenient. The PDS appears to impact on dental care behaviour. 71% reported a change in the frequency of their child's teeth brushing since visiting the PDS (n=27), 92% (n=33) reported that they were more confident in encouraging their children to look after their teeth and 58% (n=22) of respondents went on to register with the local dentist.

5.8 Overall satisfaction with Sure Start services

Lastly, all respondents were asked to express how satisfied they were with Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield services (see Figure 15).

The responses provided a positive reflection on Sure Start services. Overall, 30% were 'very satisfied', 55% 'quite satisfied', 4% (n=1) 'not very satisfied' and 1% (n=1) 'not at all satisfied'. Thus 85% of respondents were satisfied with Sure Start services.

Levels of satisfaction did vary slightly between the two programme areas. A higher proportion of respondents in Whitefield were 'very satisfied' (43%, compared to 15% (n=13) in Bradley). In contrast to this there were a higher proportion of respondents in the Bradley area that were 'quite satisfied' (64%, compared to 48% in Whitefield).

Approximately two thirds (64%) of respondents in the Bradley and Whitefield area thought that services for children under 5 have got better over the last 12 months (see Figure 16). Only 1% of respondents thought that the services have got worse, and 35% thought that services have stayed the same.

Levels of satisfaction with Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield services were found to be high, with 30% of respondents being 'very satisfied' and 55% 'quite satisfied'. 64% of respondents reported that services for children under the age of 5 have got better over the last 12 months, with 35% reporting no change of services in the local area. Thus Sure Start appears to be having a considerable impact in the local area, with change being slower to be seen by parents with regard some services.

5.8.1 Reasons for non-use of services

Respondents were asked '*what do you think gets in the way of parents using facilities in Bradley and Whitefield?*' Some of the issues that parents thought prevented them for using services are as follows:

- '*Haven't got the time*' (n=35)
- '*Language barriers*' (n=23)
- '*Too far to travel*' (n =6)
- '*Transport problems*' (n=3)
- '*The time is inconvenient*' (n=6) '*some activities are too early in the morning*' (n=1)
- '*Lack of information about the activities and events available*' (n=10)
- '*Lack of communication between provider and community*' (n=1)
- '*Young people cause too many problems*', '*vandalism*' (n=2)
- '*Lack of facilities*' (n=4)

The main reasons for non-use of services include lack of time (n=35), language barriers (n=23) and lack of information about activities and events that are available (n=10). Thus the provision of information in a range of community languages is a key area for development.

5.8.2 New Sure Start services to be provided

Respondents were asked '*Are any other services you think Sure Start should provide for children under 5 and their families?*' Suggestions that were made are listed below:

Trips and events

- '*Holiday clubs*' (n=1)
- '*More organised parties*' (n=2)
- '*Cinema and McDonalds trips*' (n=1)
- '*More trips and entertainment*' (n=2)
- '*Summer school*' (n=1)
- '*More swimming trips and groups*' (n=2)

Childcare services

- '*Nurseries*', '*playgroups*' (n=20)
- '*Better crèche facilities*' (n=10)
- '*Provide crèche in exercise classes*' (n=1)
- '*Provide flexible childcare services*' (n=1)

Sure Start activities

- '*Father and children groups*' (n=1)
- '*Story time reading session*' (n=1)
- '*More evening and weekend groups*' (n=2)
- '*More support for disabled parents and single parents*' (n=2)

Venues

- '*Community centre*' (n=1)
- '*Family clinic*' (n=1)

5.8.3 Interest in other Sure Start services

Respondents were provided with a list of other typical Sure Start services and asked if they would be interested in finding out more about them. 53% of parents were interested in physical exercise groups for children, followed by 50% interested in keep fit groups for parents. Parents also showed a high level of interest in the baby massage service (44%) and picnics to local parks (44%) (see Figure 17).

The most popular suggestions for other Sure Start services were childcare-related ('nurseries' and 'playgroups', n=20, 'better crèche facilities' (n=10). Other suggestions were to run more Sure Start trips and events (n=4). Respondents were then asked if they were interested in other Sure Start services. 53% of respondents were interested in physical exercise groups and 50% interested in 'keep fit' sessions for parents.

5.9 Involvement with Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield

Respondents were then asked if they were involved with Sure Start at the moment and whether they would like to be involved in the future.

Receiving a newsletter (77%) was the most common way that parents were involved in Sure Start (hence a more passive form of engagement), followed by 60% using Sure Start services and 57% recommending Sure Start to their friends (see Figure 18).

Respondents were then asked if there was anything that would encourage them to become more involved with Sure Start in the future. Suggestions included:

- 'Provide more Sure Start information' (n=7)
- 'Improved crèche facilities' (n=4)
- 'Incentives' (n=2)
- 'Home visits by Sure Start' (n=4)
- 'More play schemes after school' (n=3)
- 'More appropriate facilities and services for religion and culture' (n=4)
- 'Language translators' (n=3)
- 'More advertising' (n=5)
- 'Cater more for males' (n=2)

Receiving a newsletter (77%) was the most common way that parents were involved in Sure Start, followed by 60% using Sure Start services and 57% recommending Sure Start to their friends. Providing more Sure Start information (n=7), advertising (n=5), improving crèche facilities (n=4) and catering more widely for other religions and cultures (n=4) were ideas suggested by respondents in order to encourage parents to become more involved in Sure Start.

5.10 Perceptions of the Bradley and Whitefield area

Respondents were asked 'What do you think are the good and bad things about living in Bradley and Whitefield?' Results have been analysed into key themes.

Good things

The local community

Respondents praised the area and said that it is a 'close knit community' (n=43). Twelve respondents also reported that it is a 'good area'. Parents mentioned that 'everything is close by' (n=48), 'schools are good' (n=14) and 'everyone is friendly' (n=6). Ten respondents also reported that Bradley and Whitefield has a 'good neighbourhood and community' and is in a 'convenient place to reach all amenities' (n=8). Twelve parents in Bradley said the 'people' living in the area are what makes it such a good place to live in.

The local amenities

Respondents also mentioned that the local amenities are good. These included the 'shopping centre' (n=14), 'nurseries' (n=8), 'doctors' (n=11), 'parks' (n=3), 'library' (n=3) and the 'town centre' (n=14). Parents also said that they 'feel safe in the area as amenities are so close' (n=2).

Other

Other things that parents thought were good in the area included, 'markets' (n=2), 'Sure Start activities' (n=4), 'leisure centre' (n=3) and 'supermarkets' (n=5).

Bad things

Parents were then asked what they thought were the not so good things about living in Bradley and Whitefield.

Cleanliness

Respondents were unhappy with cleanliness in the area, 'there is mess everywhere' (n=5). Five parents said that the area was 'untidy', 'the streets are dirty' (n=2) and 'there is litter everywhere' (n=8). One parent said that 'the council needs to do more'.

Housing

Respondents also made negative comments about the housing, stating that housing in the area is 'poor' (n=22), with 'derelict houses' (n=28) and 'no gardens' (n=1).

Lack of facilities

Respondents were unhappy with the facilities in the Bradley and Whitefield area. Approximately 15 respondents said 'there is nothing for children to do'. Overall, parents would like to see more 'parks and playgrounds' (n=18)

Safety

Respondents were also concerned about safety in the area. Many respondents said that the area 'is not safe at night' (n=25); there are 'speeding cars' (n=9) and 'no street lights' (n=4). One respondent mentioned that 'better road safety measures are required'. Parents in the Whitefield area also talked about a drug culture amongst youngsters. One parent reported that there 'is a lot of juvenile nuisance'.

Respondents praised the area and said that it is a 'close knit community' (n=43), 'it is a good area to live in' (n=12). Respondents also mentioned that the local amenities in the area are good, these included 'nurseries' (n=8), doctors (n=11) and the shopping centre (n=14). In contrast to this, parents were dissatisfied with the cleanliness of the area 'there is litter everywhere' (n=8). Respondents were also unhappy with the 'derelict houses' (n=28), the 'lack of facilities for children' (n=15) and safety in the area (n=25).

5.10.1 Improvements to the Bradley and Whitefield area.

Parents were asked what improvements could be made to the Bradley and Whitefield area which would make life better for families with children under the age of 5 years. The results are analysed by key themes:

Local environment

The majority of responses referred to the improvements that need to be made to the cleanliness and safety of the local environment. A number of parents agreed that there is a real need to 'clean up the parks and play areas' (n=24) Respondents also believed the appearance of the local area needs to be improved.

Road safety

Some respondents discussed the importance of improving road safety in the area. Approximately 10 parents thought that roads should be made safer and there should be less traffic. Parents suggested that 'traffic lights are needed' (n=1) and 'the speed limit should be reduced (n=1).'

Community safety

Some respondents discussed the importance of tackling problems of drug use in the area. Many parents and carers would like to see more police 'on the beat' locally to reduce the drug problems (n=12). One parent said that 'police could do more to stop drug trafficking'.

Trips and outings

Respondents reported that introducing more outings and educational trips would improve the lives of families in the Bradley and Whitefield area (n=5). One parent living in the Whitefield area mentioned that they would like to see 'more qualified, professional people to call on parents instead of going for quantity, they should go for quality'.

Priority areas for improvement in the Bradley and Whitefield area were found to be parks and play areas (n=24), community safety (n=12), road safety (n=10) and Sure Start trips and outings (n=5).

5.11 Other comments

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any other comments to make about any of the issues raised in the survey. In total, 48 respondents made additional comments – 15 in Bradley and 33 in Whitefield.

In Bradley, comments were generally positive. The most common response, made by three parents, was that 'Sure Start is a good idea'. Others were also 'satisfied' with the service that Sure Start provides. Parents in Bradley made comments as to how Sure Start publicity needs to be improved.

- 'More information is needed in Urdu'.
- 'More publicity is needed – the information about facilities is not easy to access'.
- 'I used to live in the Covington area; the Sure Start was a lot better and more informed.'

One parent suggested that Sure Start should offer 'programmes on Healthy Living, more outings and more evening and weekend sessions'.

In Whitefield, there were again a number of positive comments regarding Sure Start. In total, 24 parents believed that Sure Start provides a 'good service'. Many of these parents said that they were 'happy with Sure Start'. 'Sure Start have done a good job in the area'. In addition to this, one parent praised Sure Start for the 'excellent facilities and appropriate staff, there is a good ethnic mix.' Further parents commented on the 'excellent services'. Other comments referred to providing organised events in the evenings and at weekends and also being more open and letting children share their experiences.

5.12 Concluding comments

Thus the survey with parents has provided Sure Start Bradley and Whitefield with a wealth of quantitative data relating to awareness of Sure Start, perceptions of Sure Start information, publicity and services, involvement with the programme, and perceptions of the Personal Dental Service. The key findings from the survey, along with recommendations from the evaluation overall, are included in the executive summary.