



SURE START WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND



EVALUATION OF THE CHILDCARE TEAM:

THE IMPACT THEY HAVE ON PARENTS AND THE PARENT/CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Evaluation team:
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Thankyou

- To the families who participated in this study
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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The aim of this research was to explore the relationship between the Childcare Team and parents who had contact with the Team via accessing Sure Start services such as, the time out crèches, stay and play and beach play.

Mixed methods were utilised for this report. A focus group interview was carried out with the Childcare Team and parents attending activities where the Team were present were asked to complete a questionnaire.

The information collected from the focus group and the questionnaires compliment each other to reveal the positive and invaluable relationship that exists between the Team and parents.

- The Childcare Team emphasised the importance of striving to nurture good relationships with parents based upon being supportive, encouraging, friendly, non-judgemental and trustworthy. Data collected from parents clearly shows that this objective was being achieved.
- The Childcare Team felt that an important part of their role was to act as a source of information for parents spanning a range of topics from child care issues, such as child development and behavioural problems, to activities and play ideas for parents to instigate with their children. Parents clearly agreed with this describing the Team as ‘very helpful’ when approached for information. Parents also felt that information offered was both appropriate and given at the right time. This is backed up by the fact that all of the parents surveyed stated that they had put information offered to them into practice.
- The Childcare Team extended their role by undertaking listening skills training in order to feel confident enough to support parents seeking help and signposting them appropriately to other services. All of the parents felt that they were able to talk to the Childcare Team about their worries or problems.
- Signposting parents to other forms of help and advice was another important aspect of the Childcare Team’s role. The Childcare Team understood the need to offer parents appropriate advice and that this at times would involve networking with and/or referring parents to one of the Sure Start Project Workers. The majority of parents involved in this evaluation stated that they had been signposted to other forms of help or advice, including the Occupational Therapist and the Speech and Language Worker.

It is clear that the Sure Start Weymouth and Portland Childcare Team have provided an important and valued resource for parents that should be continued. The evidence collected in this evaluation shows the Team offer a comprehensive package to parents consisting of information, advice and sign posting to appropriate help and most importantly a relationship based upon trust, support, approachability and friendliness. The Team’s contribution to the overall Sure Start programme has been considerable.

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INTRODUCTION

The Child Development Workers and the Child Care Assistants are an essential part of the Sure Start Weymouth and Portland Team. The permanent staff of the Childcare Team currently consists of:

- four Child Development Workers (CDW) who are qualified to NVQ level 3, NNEB
- three Child Care Assistants (CCA) who are unqualified (however two have just passed NVQ level 3 and one is half way through)
- five sessional workers

The sessional workers (Three of which are NVQ level 3 qualified) can be called upon by Sure Start to work as required.

The CDWs and CCAs work in a variety of settings and offer a range of services to meet the needs of local families and their young children. They run various sessions including crèches at the Sure Start Weymouth and Portland Children's Centre and at outreach venues. The sessions offered include 'Stay and play' sessions, where the parents can join in the activities and learn skills from the child care workers. In the summer a series of 'Beach Play' sessions are provided where the families can join the child care staff workers on the beach for some outdoor fun. Activities are planned into their sessions that encourage the opportunity for children to play, be creative and develop their social interaction and communication skills.

Additional skills have also been gained by the CDWs/CCAs as they work very closely with other health care staff at Sure Start. They have gained a lot of information from the Speech and Language Development Worker, the Health Visitor and Occupational Therapist. This is due to them frequently working alongside other Sure Start professionals in joint sessions and the multidisciplinary set-up of the Sure Start working environment. The CDWs/CCAs have also gained listening skills from the Sure Start Counsellor. This was done at their request as they felt they needed to know more due to the problems that some of the families were experiencing. One of the CDWs is also qualified to run baby massage courses which has proved to be very popular with mothers. Additional support and advice is available from other disciplines within the team such as social care, health, education and the Early Years Adviser. They also receive regular supervision and offered other training opportunities such as child protection and other relevant topics.

Wherever possible Sure Start provides continuity of its CDWs/CCA at the services provided. This facilitates not just the children getting to know them, but the whole family. A good, trusting relationship often develops over time. Information is often asked for by the parents as they get to know and feel comfortable with the CDWs/CCAs. The skills possessed by the CDWs/CCAs and the openness and warmth that they convey result in them becoming a very accessible and informative resource for the parents. They can introduce the families to new ideas and ways of doing things with their child, and if necessary to more specialist staff members. Without them and the facilitation that they provide, some of the parents may find it difficult to access the services they so desperately need.

The diversity of the role of the CDWs/CCAs is quite unique within day care services. The original title for the role of the CDWs/CCAs was 'Play Workers', but as Sure Start became aware of how their role was developing, the whole Sure Start team and Manager decided that their title should be changed to reflect the service they were now able to offer families.



BACKGROUND LITERATURE

The available research highlights the importance of meeting parents' needs and identifies the impact upon the children if the family environment is problematic. Tracy (1994) states that the needs of children can't be met in isolation and that the parents needs must be met simultaneously with those of their child if the child is to truly benefit. This comprehensive approach is discussed by Kirk (2005), who identifies that Early Years Centres need to provide a child development approach that has child care and education as well as family support being explicit functions. If the exchange of information between parents and professionals/service providers can be on a continuous basis then the outcomes are even more advantageous for children (Lochrie 2005). This view is reinforced by Anderson (2005) and Barlow et al (2004) who state that families need continuous support. Barlow et al (2004) also identifies that there is a need for more support for parents such as parenting programmes and states that at the moment the rate of problems among pre-school children are high.

The impact upon the children growing up in problematic households is widely commented on. The child's psychological well-being and physical health are both known to be effected by family functioning. In order to improve the bond between parent and child, intervention and assistance in the development of parenting skills is needed (Johnson et al 2004). The distress and behavioural difficulties that result when this bond is fragile have an impact on the child's psychological well-being and physical health. Kirk (2003) also comments on the importance of this bond by adding that the relationship between the mother and daughter is actually a stronger predictor of child outcomes than the type of child care, although the quality of care was also of critical importance.

The stress and isolation that parenthood can bring requires support that some family networks cannot provide. If a mother doesn't find she is able to talk to her midwife or health visitor where can she go for the help she so importantly needs? Mannion (2005) identifies the need for support of mothers and how their confidence can grow when they meet in a regular group. It is known that parents experience a serious lack of community-based services and resources necessary to support families in a meaningful way (Rosenzweig et al 2002).

Children's development is enormously influence by their parents. The fact that genetics is just a small part of this influence is increasingly recognised. It is also recognised that parenting is rarely easy and can be a stressful undertaking (Ramchandani & Conachie 2005). Some parents find the experience more stressful than others. There is a strong and independent association between poverty, single parenthood, maternal depression and infant hospitalisation (Guttman et al 2004). Tackling inequalities in health has been a long-standing issue and one that is high on the political agenda of the Labour Government. Wide differentials are evident between high- and low-income groups in the outcomes of pregnancy and the health of babies. The worst outcomes appear to be concentrated in small subgroups of disadvantaged women.

More research is required into this area (Rosenzweig et al 2002). Once research has revealed the interventions that are effective, these should then be targeted at the subgroups in order to provide them with the extra support that they need (D'Souza &

Garcia 2004). Lochrie (2005) states that the Government needs to recognise the crucial role of the family in the welfare and educational success of children and urges the Government to attend to the needs of parents if the present situation is to be improved.



PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

Weymouth and Portland Sure Start are aware of the development of the CDWs/CCAs role from their own observations and comments they have received from parents. This has led them to want to investigate the area further and talk to the families and child care staff in more detail. So many studies concentrate on what play workers do with and for the children and not on the relationship that resultantly forms with the rest of the family and the impact that this can have. The needs that these families have, the isolation that they often feel and the information and support that is so frequently needed make this a compelling area to investigate further.

Sure Start are aware of family's that access Sure Start for the crèche and then once they feel familiar with staff, will access other services or talk about issues that have been concerning them. The CDWs/CCAs are therefore actively encouraged to develop a rapport and to try to help families to join in the other activities.

This study aims to

- investigate the relationship between the CDWs/CCAs and parents with particular focus on
- the information that can be exchanged between them and
- the impact and influence CDWs/CCAs have on parents.



METHODS USED

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used for this report involving both focus group interviews and questionnaires.

The focus group interview was undertaken with the CDWs/CCAs to find out their thoughts concerning their role and the impact it has on families. The interview schedule for this is shown in appendix 1. The interview was semi structured and the conversation was tape recorded and transcribed. Content analysis was then carried out on the data. This was done by two members of the evaluation team, who worked independently to arrive at their themes. This process adds further validity to the themes that were eventually arrived at when the results were amalgamated.

From the findings of the focus group, a questionnaire was devised in order to gain the views of the parents who come in contact with the CDWs/CCAs. This consisted of both open and closed questions and was designed to only take a few minutes to complete (appendix 2). The questionnaires were distributed to parents at all of the venues in which the CDWs/CCA's work. They were handed out by the CDWs/CCAs and parents were asked if they could take a little time to fill out the questionnaire at the venue rather than taking them home to encourage a better response rate. However, only a few questionnaires ended up being given out and it was noted that there was a tendency for a lot of the qualitative questions to be missed out.

As a result of the low questionnaire number another round of questionnaire distribution was planned. This time it was decided to let the parents take the questionnaires home to encourage the qualitative questions to be completed. A letter was attached that explained why the information was required, that it would remain anonymous and that assistance in filling out the questionnaire could also be provided. A couple of minor alterations were made to the questionnaire. An envelope was also attached and the parents were asked to complete the questionnaire as soon as they could, seal it in the envelope provided and return it to the Research Fellow based at Sure Start. This letter and the amended questionnaire are shown in appendices 3a and 3b.

Content and statistical analyses were then carried out on the returned questionnaires. The content analysis took the form of thematic analysis via codes and condensed codes. The statistical analysis was via SPSS, a statistical software package for computers, and Excel to display the graphics.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Data from focus group:

Themes from focus group interview

| Theme | Codes |
|---------------------------|---|
| Teaching parents skills | how to play with their child The various stages of child development skill range modelling behaviour |
| Relationship with parents | non judgmental friendly trustworthy informative |
| Supporting parents | reassurance getting parents out counselling separation from child |
| Networking | passing on information to the parents networking referrals Support of CDWs/CCAs |

Each theme will now be taken in turn and the findings discussed in more detail.

Teaching parents new skills:

In this theme, the CDWs/CCAs discussed encouraging parents to play with their children, how they often have to let parents know about the various stages of child development, the teaching of skills for encouraging a child through a variety of stages and finally how they demonstrate modelling of a child's behaviour.

How to play:

When CDWs/CCAs talked about encouraging parents to play with their children they stressed the importance of this role. Whilst being in a safe and secure environment, the children are learning through their play. The CDWs/CCAs talked about the importance of interacting with children, of encouraging their imagination, their role plays and getting down to their level and starting little conversations going:

“It's such an important thing to interact with a child, to teach them how to do it, taking, sharing, you know, letting that child express themselves through what they are doing”.

The child should be encouraged to explore and play with as wide a range of toys as possible. The interests and motivation of the child should aim to be followed. If they want an activity then the adult should comply.

The focusing on the child and giving them attention before it is demanded were stated as being important along with the fact that play should always be fun. The CDWs/CCAs are aware that not all parents are aware of these things and that part of their role is to inform the parents of how the child benefits from these activities.

Letting parents know about the various stages of child development:
 Passing on information about child development was discussed and the need to inform parents about this. Quite a few parents wanted to know more as they could easily become concerned about their children if they were a little behind their peer group in certain areas of their development.

CDWs/CCAs also mentioned parents wishing to encourage their child’s development and asking for toys and activities to be recommended. The linking in with the project workers at Sure Start was highlighted as any concerns that the CDWs/CCAs may have about a child’s development can be discussed or referred. Parents can also be informed of this role if their concerns about their child’s development continue.

“if they (a child) have not been walking, developing in their physical development, then again that is something we will explain, we have got an occupational therapist”.

Teaching of skills for encouraging a child through a variety of stages:
 A whole range of skills were stated as being discussed with parents (see Table 1).

Table 1

| Skill |
|------------------------|
| Potty training |
| Teething |
| Diet and eating issues |
| Sleep patterns |
| Language development |
| Dummy and bottle use |
| Encouraging walking |
| Behaviour management |
| Parenting skills |

The passing on of information is carefully carried out so as not to offend but to always support and encourage.

“...educate them in a way that is very tactful, because it is like treading on eggshells. You don’t want to reprimand them or anything”.

“I do feel that society needs to realise that anybody involved in the development of young children is doing a fantastically

valuable job for the rest of society”.

Modelling behaviour:

The CDWs/CCAs talked about passing on parenting skills and mentioned that they are aware that some of the parents may not have had good role models from their own childhood. They are aiming to benefit the children through this and to increase the chance of the children growing up in the environment they deserve and have the right to be given. The method they use is modelling behaviour, where they continually demonstrate good practice in the hope that the parents and children will benefit and learn from the experience.

“I think that it is quite important because parents or carers see how you can achieve some behaviours from a child that perhaps they are not getting at home ...It can help them gain confidence with their own parenting”.

This was described as being particularly the case in the Stay and Play, where the parents remain with their child during the session and the play with the child can be structured and directed by the CDWs/CCAs. It is hoped that the parents gain as much as the child from these sessions as this is the reason they are set up. The parents’ interaction with their child is greatly influenced by observing the behaviour of the CDWs/CCAs. The parents can therefore model their behaviour throughout the session by watching the CDWs/CCAs and consequently can improve their skills of interaction with their child.

“The whole thing is an interactive session with the child and it’s stimulating for the parent as well as the child and generally they go home quite happy”.

Relationship with parents

This theme looks at the CDWs/CCAs relationship with the parents and the findings covered the following areas; the need for the CDWs/CCAs to be non judgemental, friendly, trustworthy and finally the informative aspect of their role.

Non judgemental:

The CDWs/CCAs talked about the importance of listening and understanding;

“we can show a lot of empathy, we are parents too and we know what it is like”.

This was an important starting point in the building of a good relationship with parents. The development of this relationship was described as occurring gradually over a period of time. It is facilitated by the fact that the parents have a lot of contact with the CDWs/CCAs.

The need to be very sensitive to various situations was also discussed. Some of the parents have learning difficulties, some may be in denial about their child’s problems, some may be experiencing depression or low self esteem. There are a whole variety

of issues that the CDWs/CCAs need to be aware of and an informed, non judgemental approach is vital if a good relationship is to be established. They stated that the most important thing to remember is that they are in a supportive role and are really there to encourage parents to take advantage of the services that Sure Start is offering. At the same time as this they must be seen to be open and non judgemental whilst making people feel comfortable about asking for some help.

Friendly:

The CDWs/CCAs aim to be supportive, encouraging and friendly and recognise the impact of this within their role;

“I think we have got that air about us that we are welcoming; we are building up a relationship all the time. We are wanting to get to know their child as well as them so that we can look at everything that they have done, and to encourage it, to have that bonding. I think most parents find us quite friendly and approachable”.

They are aware that because of the frequent contact, it is sometimes easier for parents to talk to them than other project workers. They also believe that some of the parents do need to feel cared for and describe how making a cup of tea and offering a piece of toast to some parents can really make their day.

Trustworthy:

In the developing of relationships, trust was stated as being important to establish. They discussed how this takes time to establish with parents, the importance of respecting confidentiality and need for these to be continually maintained.

“It comes gradually over a period of time, I think again building up on that relationship”.

They are aware of the need for continuity within their service and therefore the Deputy Manager aims to have the same staff at certain venues each week. Once this aspect of their relationship with parents has developed they commented that parents may confide in them and seek out more specific help.

The respecting of parents' views, the need to understand how they are feeling and how this can only happen gradually were discussed. The good foundation to the relationship that results means that the CDWs/CCAs are able to offer appropriate advice that has a good chance of being taken onboard by the families.

“I think you have to respect the parents' views don't you and if they are in denial you have to do it gradually, but where they do come in and build up a relationship with us, then we are at an advantage and can say, well look we could just try this”.

Informative:

The CDWs/CCAs recognise being informative is an important part of their role. They discussed the fact that they actively encourage families to take advantage of a whole

range of Sure Start services, as many as they feel the family would benefit from. As they get to know the parents they therefore start to inform them of other activities, members of staff and offer them information. They also understand the importance of doing this in an *'open and non-judgemental way'*.

"We must make the person feel comfortable about asking for some help perhaps, or make them slowly realise that perhaps there is more that could be done in the situation that they are in".

In order to be fully informative, the CDWs/CCAs also mentioned that in some cases they need to find out some background information on the families in order to ensure they offered them the most useful advice. This included finding out the area the family lived in, the services they had access to as well as liaising with other staff which will be discussed in more detail in the 'Networking' theme.

Supporting parents

In this theme the CDWs/CCAs discussed the need to support parents by giving reassurance, getting parents out, counselling and dealing with separation from child.

Reassurance:

The CDWs/CCAs discussed the importance of giving parents constant reassurance whilst supporting them. Many points were discussed with one of the most important being acting like a support network and the importance of giving praise. The CDWs/CCAs may instigate the involvement of other members of the family if they feel the parent/parents require this. They also mentioned how they may phone parents at home so that they can offer them more frequent support if this is thought to be required;

"I think we are like a support network...we are there for them to fall back on and we have got the resources that they need and are there to support them... helping them realise they are doing a good job, you know, the hardest job in the world isn't it, bringing up children".

The CDWs/CCAs explained that they were also parents and understood how difficult a role it can sometimes be. Some other points mentioned were; the pressure that parents are under; the perception that children have to be completely potty trained before attending playgroup and the constant comparisons that parents find themselves doing between other children and their own. The CDWs/CCAs stated that a lot of their time was spent giving reassurance.

Getting parents out:

Being a welcoming face at venues and encouraging parents to get out and use the Sure Start services that are available was mentioned. Sometimes this encouragement would extend to taking parents and their children to venues if this is what the family needed;

"They might not know anyone in the area and then when we suggest they go to a coffee and play group where they can meet other parents...they know one of us will be there so they have that contact with us and we

can introduce them to other people, or, in some situations we have actually gone and called for them to take them into different venues, because the biggest thing is getting through that door”.

The CDWs/CCAs discussed how once parents started attending these groups they often formed social groups of their own and no longer needed such intensive support. However breaking out of this isolation can be a problem for some parents after having a baby. One mum said;

“I thought after having a baby, all my friends would come round and visit me, but they don’t”.

The CDWs/CCAs understood the importance of this and how difficult it can be for some people. They stressed the importance of ‘*getting mothers out of those four walls*’ during the day.

Counselling:

Whilst supporting the parents the CDWs/CCAs stated that sometimes depression within families was noticed, or other problematic issues that may require counselling in order to resolve.

“it probably is post-natal depression and the mum hasn’t quite realised how much it is affecting her because she is so involved with the child it’s hard to see the wood for the trees basically”.

This was a frequent enough occurrence for the CDWs/CCAs to feel it necessary for them to improve their counselling skills and they asked the Sure Start counsellor to provide some training for them. In some cases the depression of a parent had been noticed to have an affect on the child. The CDWs/CCAs, having received the training, felt confident to broach the subject and offer some initial advice or the chance for an individual to talk to a counsellor. They stressed the need for such help to be offered when the parents were ready for it and on their terms as much as possible.

Separation from child:

Some parents had a lot of difficulty leaving their child and in some cases the child’s behaviour could be quite extreme;

“We also had a situation on the separation where the little child, every time the mum tried to leave the child, the child would actually be sick and that was the habit”.

The CDWs/CCAs manage to notice the parents and child’s behaviour in these situations and work out what needed to be done. They can work with the child and parents, supporting them throughout and eventually the problem can be resolved.

Networking

This final theme looks at the CDWs/CCAs passing on information to the parents, networking with other staff and organisations, referrals and the need for support within their extended role.

Passing on information to the parents:

The providing of general information such as resolving sleeping problems and behavioural issues and informing parents about the Children's Information Service was mentioned as being a common occurrence. The CDWs/CCAs felt they had a good knowledge base and were able to pass on a lot of information effectively. The importance of doing this on the parents' terms was stressed such as offering information when the parents appeared to want it, along with providing the right type and depth of information. They were aware that the environment they created and the relationships they formed with the parents improved the chances of parents taking on board their suggestions.

"I feel we are a happy organisation here, that they (the parents) feel more relaxed and they are far more likely to accept that there might be something, whereas I think that if they feel that someone is going to judge them ... quite a few nurseries and places like that where they might have had a bad experience, can actually put them off and make them judge where they would actually take their child and make them isolate themselves again".

Networking:

In addition to constantly adding to their own knowledge base CDWs/CCAs also use the resources in the wider team, both workers and materials, to help them inform parents. They also will link in with agencies outside of Sure Start such as Community Health Visitor, as part of the Sure Start Team, if this seems appropriate in order meet the needs of the family.

"You have got to tread very carefully because sometimes a child might come in that does have special needs and you are aware that they had these learning difficulties and just by observation, that the mum is in denial of it. This has happened on a few occasions. Then the mum has got quite cross with that child and I think you have to break it down to calm them down but keep encouraging them to come in and then gradually introduce outside agencies".

The importance of notifying parents of other services, of talking to the parents and letting other people be aware of somebody's difficulties and concerns was stressed. The CDWs/CCAs are aware that parents find them approachable and that part of their role is to operate as a front line to the other services that Sure Start offer.

"Quite often they come to us with concerns. We are able to give them advice on different things, or perhaps signpost them to different places. I think we tend to be the first person they come to".

Situations were discussed such as the CDWs/CCAs being quite sure that a mother was depressed, probably post-natal depression, but the mother hadn't fully realised how much it was affecting her because she was so involved with her child. In their role they are ideally placed to guide parents through the problems they encounter with the support of the rest of the team.

Referrals:

The CDWs/CCAs discussed the referrals they make and stated that they tend to refer to all of the Sure Start project workers (the health visitor, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, midwife and counsellor). The CDWs/CCAs also mentioned how respecting confidentiality throughout is important and that they always aim to work with the parents:

“We might say, well what do you want us to do, should we phone your Health Visitor?”

The mums will often ask if they can speak to certain project workers by asking for them by name rather than using their title. This familiarity acts as a further way to breakdown barriers and ease communication. This aim for equality between parents and staff is continued throughout the whole of the Sure Start Team:

“They (the project workers) do not come zooming in, you know, they are playing around with other children, have a little chat and introduce themselves to the mum”.

Support of CDWs/CCAs:

The last section of this theme discussed the need for support within the role of the CDWs/CCAs. The service that they provide has become a very complex one due to their extended role in meeting the needs of the families and this does have repercussions for the CDWs/CCAs:

“I mean you need to off load and the confidentiality of it all is very important”.

The CDWs/CCAs support each other as much as possible and because the Project Workers operate as an interprofessional team there is the opportunity to talk issues through with the relevant health care professional. Sure Start Weymouth and Portland also operate a supervision service for the CDWs/CCAs where they have regular supervision every six weeks for two hours plus team and case discussions, which offers them the chance to discuss any concerns they may have and the opportunity to get information and support from other Sure Start workers. They can also phone up the Deputy Manager at home should anything occur out of office hours such as a parent meeting them in town and discussing issues with the CDWs/CCAs which cause concern.

Questionnaire distribution:

1st Round of questionnaire distribution:

Number of questionnaires-18

A response rate of 100% was gained for this round of questionnaire distribution.

2nd Round of questionnaire distribution:

Number of questionnaires returned-9

An accurate response rate was not able to be ascertained for this round.

Overall number of questionnaires returned-27 families out of a sample of approximately 45 families.

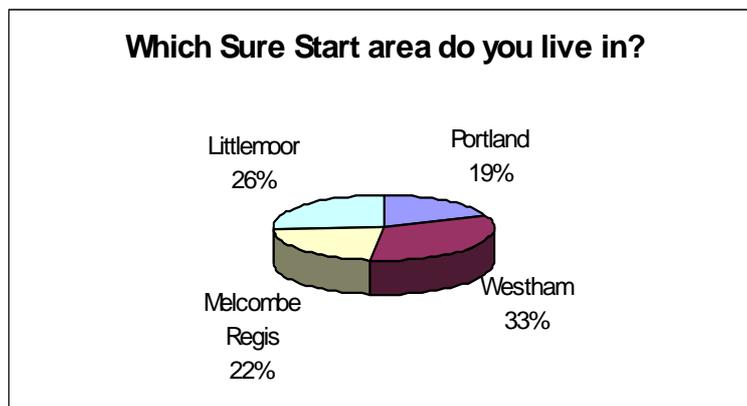
(Total parent population of Weymouth and Portland Sure Start- 749 families)

Data from Questionnaire:

The following findings are based on the responses of 27 parents.

The questionnaire began by asking parents which of the four Sure Start areas they lived in. Figure one reveals that the majority of parents attending activities where the Childcare Team were present came from the Westham and Littlemoor areas (33% and 26% respectively). The remaining respondents were split between living in Melcombe Regis (22%) and Portland (19%) (figure 1).

Figure 1



Parents were then asked which Sure Start activities/groups they attended where the Childcare Team were present. The list below (table 2) shows all of the activities/groups parents mentioned with the number of responses for each shown in brackets.

Table 2

- Stay and Play (8)
- Time out Crèche (17)
- Colourstrings (7)
- Breastfeeding group (4)
- Play Time 0-4's (4)
- Beach play (8)
- Park Church drop in (1)
- Bumps to babies (2)
- St Francis drop in (1)
- My child and me (1)
- Coffee and Play (4)
- Outlooks (1)
- Dads and tots (1)
- Peeps for ones (2)
- Mosaics (1)
- Sing and sign (1)

When asked how long parents had had contact with the Childcare Team the majority of respondents stated two years (10 parents). The remaining answers ranged from one to four years (see figure 2).

Figure 2

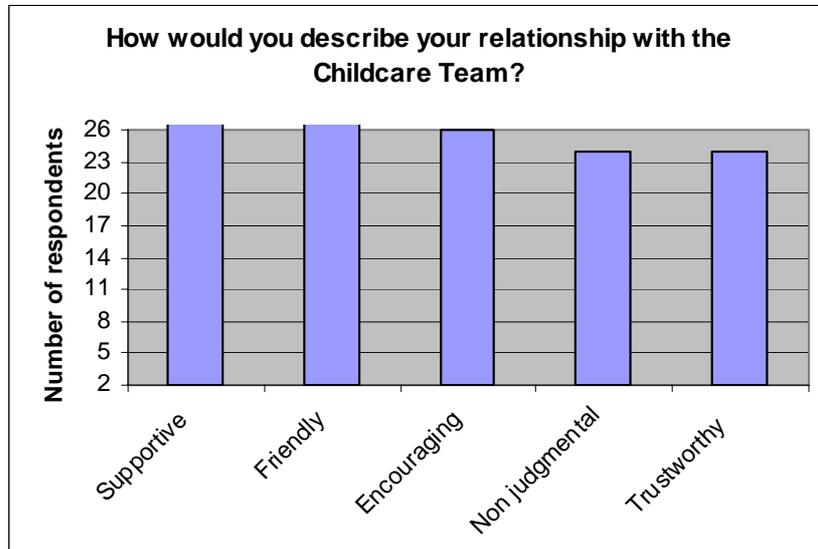


Information gathered from the questionnaire clearly shows that all of the parents accessing the Childcare Team found them helpful, with 96% describing them as 'very helpful'. Parents went on to elaborate upon their answer with comments such as 'really helpful and supportive', 'all very nice and helpful' and 'excellent job girls, keep it up'.

Parents were then given the opportunity to describe their relationship with the Childcare Team by ticking any of the words they felt were appropriate. All of the respondents stated that they had a 'supportive' and 'friendly' relationship with the

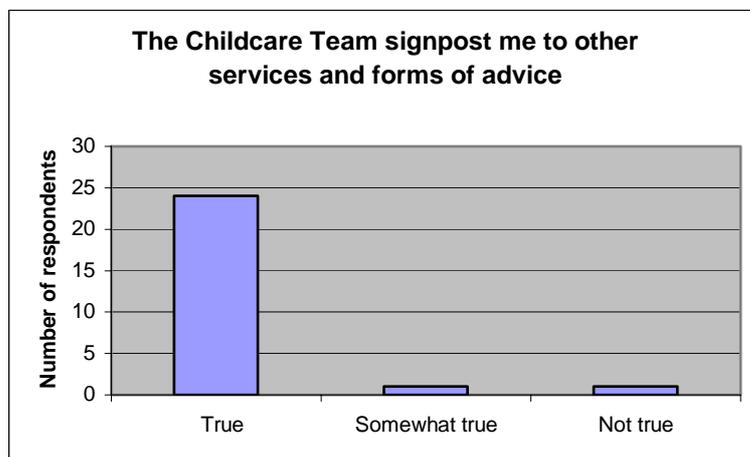
Childcare Team. All but one parent (96%) also explained that they found the Team encouraging. When asked if they felt their relationship with the Team was ‘non judgmental’ and ‘trustworthy’ 88% of parents agreed (figure 3).

Figure 3



Parents were offered the chance to reflect upon the help and advice the Childcare Team give by categorising a series of statements as ‘True’, ‘Somewhat true’ or ‘Not True’. To begin with parents felt it was ‘True’ or ‘Somewhat true’ that they could talk to the Team about their worries and problems. Parents also felt that it was ‘True’ or ‘Somewhat true’ that the Childcare Team offered good ideas for playing with their child. When asked if parents felt the Team sign posted them to other services and forms of help 96% stated that this was ‘True’ or ‘Somewhat true’, but 4% described the statement as ‘Not true’ (see figure 4). One of the parents who described this statement as ‘True’ elaborated upon their answer by explaining that she was having concerns over her child’s walking and the Childcare Team had referred her to the Sure Start Occupational Therapist. Having been signposted to the Occupational Therapist her worries were also passed on to the community physiotherapy clinic who contacted her to offer help and advice.

Figure 4

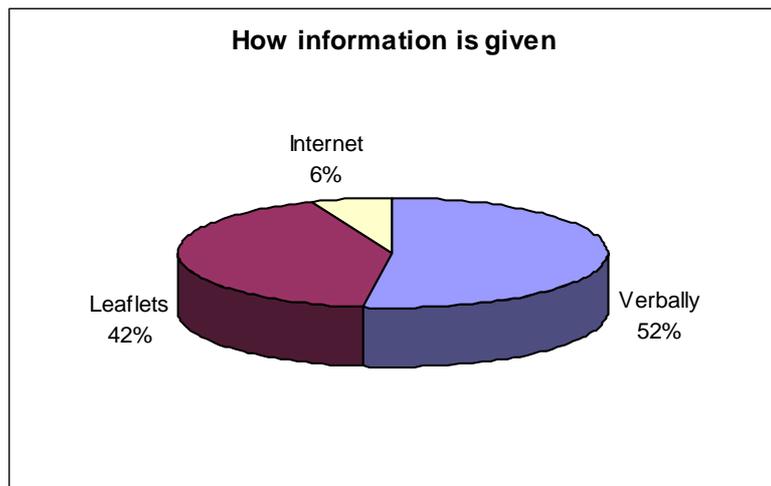


Parents were then asked if the Childcare Team discussed child-care issues with them and offered helpful advice. All of the parents who answered this question agreed that the statement was 'True' or 'Somewhat true'. Finally this section of the questionnaire asked parents to give their views on the statement that the Team was a resource to learn about other Sure Start activities and groups. All of the parents who responded to this question described the statement as 'True' or 'Somewhat true'.

Parents were asked if there were any other areas of help or advice the Childcare Team had given them. Responses included speech and language information, toilet training, behaviour and ideas for days out for parents and their children.

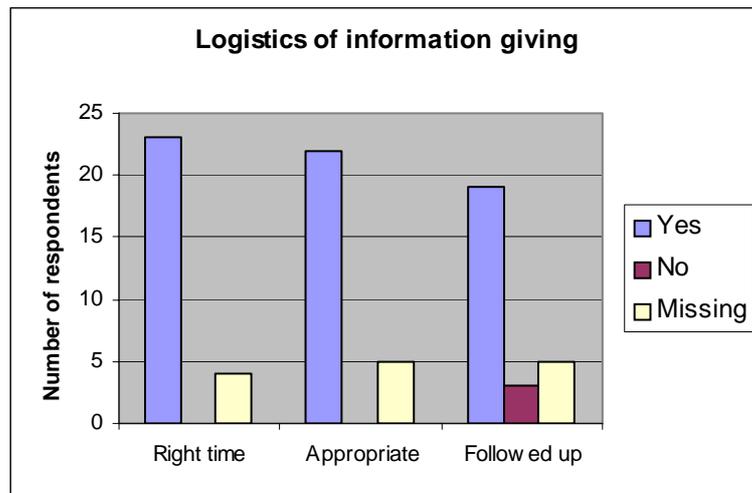
Having asked parents about the type of advice and information the Childcare Team offered, the questionnaire went on to enquire how this information was given. Respondents were offered three methods of information giving and asked to select all that applied. The quantitative data collected suggests that the majority of information (52%) was offered verbally, followed closely by the use of leaflets (42%). Use of the internet as a resource for advice was the least employed method for giving information with just 6% of parents stating they had received advice in this way.

Figure 5



Having established the types of help and advice the Childcare Team offers and the methods they employ to give this information, the questionnaire went on to enquire about the logistics of the information giving process. Firstly, parents were asked if the advice offered was given to them at the right time. All of the respondents who answered this question stated 'yes' it was offered at the right time. When asked if parents felt the information was appropriate and put into practice, again all of the respondents who gave an answer stated that it was. Lastly, parents were asked if the information given was followed up to check that they had understood it. The majority of respondents (86%) stated 'yes' it was followed up, with 14% of parents answering 'no'.

Figure 6



At the end of the questionnaire parents were offered the opportunity to add their own comments about the Childcare Team. Statements such as ‘brilliant’, ‘very welcoming and friendly’, ‘great and wonderful’ and ‘lots of help and advice’ were popular comments. One parent summed up the help they had received from the Childcare Team by stating,

They have really helped me through the first five years of my child’s life. The help and advice offered is always very positive and always given in a non-patronising way.

Another parent commented,

The whole team are a strong unit of support and encouragement. They always do their best to help with any problems. We know we can trust them.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between the CDWs/CCAs and parents, with particular focus on the information that can be exchanged between them and the impact and influence CDWs/CCAs have on parents. The study design resulted in a lot of useful information being obtained. The data received from the focus group interview of the childcare workers was very detailed and offered a great deal of insightful information. The questionnaires provide valuable information concerning the opinions of the parents and the findings backed up those received from the focus group interview.

Relationship:

The findings revealed that the CDWs/CCAs had firm views on the importance of building a good relationship with the parents and the factors that were required in achieving this. They had stated how they aimed to be supportive, encouraging and friendly. The data from the parents on this subject was very positive: 100% found the CDWs/CCAs supportive, 96% found them encouraging and 100% found them friendly. The importance of listening and understanding in their relationship with parents was stressed by the CDWs/CCAs and that parents should feel comfortable in asking them for help. They added that it was important that they were open and non-judgemental and that parents needed to feel they could trust them. The findings from the parents reinforced this as 100% found them non-judgemental and 88% stated that they could trust them. The CDWs/CCAs also believed that their collecting of some parents and taking them to activities was important as it encouraged these parents to participate in Sure Start activities and socialise. This relevance of this role was backed up by the literature which states that there is a need to support mothers and how their confidence can grow when they meet regularly (Mannion 2005).

Information:

The CDWs/CCAs believed that within their role they passed on a lot of information concerning a whole range of issues. This view was backed up by the data from the parents who described the CDWs/CCAs as being very helpful (96%), providing information on childcare issues which covered all the areas the CDWs/CCAs had set out to cover. The parents also agreed that they received information concerning services available at Sure Start. The CDWs/CCAs described themselves as passing information on “*carefully*” to the parents. Again this claim was backed up by the parents who stated that the information was appropriate, and given at the right time. A variety of methods of information giving were provided and 86% of parents said that their understanding of the information was followed up or checked up on in some form. The teaching of parents about how to play and interact with their child was described by the CDWs/CCAs as being an important part of their role. The parents all agreed with this point. The CDWs/CCAs went on to say how they would explain to parents how play benefits the child, encourage the parents to play and interact with their child and stress the importance of this. If they felt parents needed further advice they would link in and network with other services. The CDWs/CCAs demonstrated an awareness of the importance of the information they gave. The need for parents to have people who can provide intervention and assistance for them was stressed in the literature as the continuation of problems between parents and child will greatly effect the bond between them (Johnson et al 2004). The distress and behavioural difficulties

that result when this bond is fragile have an impact on the child's psychological well being, physical health and child outcomes (Johnson et al 2004, Kirk 2003).

Impact and influence:

The CDWs/CCAs saw themselves as being approachable and believed it was important that they worked closely with parents and helped them. The parents agreed with this with all of them stating that they could talk to the team about their worries. If the CDWs/CCAs felt a family needed more help than they could provide, such as counselling, difficulties separating from their child and housing advice then they could link in with the Project Workers. The importance of parents having their needs met was reinforced in the literature. The needs of children can't be met in isolation and the parent's needs must be met simultaneously with those of the child if the child is to truly benefit (Tracy 1994). The CDWs/CCAs stated that it was important that parents could see how they worked with their children so that they could learn some of the demonstrated skills and model their behaviour. The CDWs/CCAs also described how parents would also ask them for games and activities that would encourage the development of their children. If parents had any other outstanding concerns the CDWs/CCAs would again link in with other Sure Start workers in order to help in resolving the problem. One of the roles of the CDWs/CCAs was the informing of parents about other Sure Start services or activities and most of the parents (96%) said that this had been provided. The impact and influence of the role of was made very apparent when all of the parents stated that the information and advice that had provided by the CDWs/CCAs had been utilized and put into their everyday practice.

To conclude, the service provided by the CDWs/CCAs has been shown to be wide-ranging and to be very valuable and well thought out. It offers the parents a huge resource and the findings have been resoundingly positive as a result. The way the service is delivered, with the focus on equality of relationships, respect and understanding makes it a very effective way of engaging and resultantly influencing parents' behaviour. The findings from the parents who participated in the study offered insight into their views, experiences and needs. The results of the study demonstrated that the full range of the service being provided by the CDWs/CCAs was utilised and valued by the parents who completed the questionnaires.

In drawing the conclusion to an end, a few quotes have been selected that highlight some key areas of the report:

"We must make the person feel comfortable...make them slowly realise that perhaps there is more that could be done in the situation they are in"
(CDW/CCA)

"...helping them realise they are doing a good job, you know, the hardest job in the world isn't it, bringing up children" (CDW/CCA)

"They are a strong unit of support and encouragement" (parent)

"They have really helped me through the first five years of my child's life"
(parent).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this study showed that the service being provided by the extended role of the CDWs/CCAs was very intricate and all areas of it were greatly valued by the parents. The role the CDWs/CCAs viewed themselves as providing was stated by the parents as being provided. The parents who took part in this study also considered the service as being valuable and effective. The recommendations from this study therefore are that the existing service should be continued as all aspects of the extended role are central to Sure Start values and have been shown to match up with the needs of the families who took part in this study. The Childcare Team makes a considerable contribution to the overall Sure Start programme.



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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CHILD WORKERS

1. What do you think are the main functions of your role?
 - i. Briefly list
2. Briefly describe what effect you feel your influence has on parent members.
 - i. Parents trying out ideas
 - ii. Relief / Appreciation
3. Could you quickly list the types of assistance parent members require from you?
4. Could you talk about the situations where parent members have asked you for help?
 - i. Problems described
 - ii. Information given
5. There are times when you know that parent members are not getting the help they require. How would you delve deeper?
 - i. Relationship building / trust
 - ii. Noticing
 - iii. Communication / Information giving
6. When would you consider this to be necessary?
 - i. Protection
 - ii. Prevention
7. Could you talk about the referrals you make?
 - i. Who do you tend to refer parent members to?
 - ii. What needs of theirs make the referrals necessary?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX 2

PARENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE-views on child workers

1. Which Sure Start area do you live in?

Portland Westham Melcombe Regis Littlemoor

2. Which Sure Start activities/groups do you attend where Childcare Team are present?

3. How long (weeks/months/years) have you had contact with the Sure Start Childcare Team?

4. How helpful do you find the Childcare Team?

Very helpful Helpful Sometimes helpful Not helpful

5. Tick any of the words you feel describe the relationship the Childcare Team have with you?

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Supportive | |
| Friendly | |
| Encouraging | |
| Non judgmental | |
| Trustworthy | |

6. Thinking about the help and advice the Childcare Team give, how true do you think the following statements are? Tick all those that apply.

| | True | Some what true | Not true |
|--|------|----------------|----------|
| I can talk about my worries and problems. | | | |
| They give me good ideas for playing with my child. | | | |
| They sign post me to other services and forms of help. | | | |
| They discuss child care issues with me and offer helpful advice. | | | |
| I learn about other Sure Start activities and groups from them. | | | |

7. Are there any other areas of help or advice the Childcare Team have given you?

8. How is information given? Please tick all that apply.

Verbally Leaflets Internet access

9. Was the information you received

| | yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| Given to you at the right time | | |
| Appropriate and put into practice | | |
| Followed up to check that you had understood | | |

10. Any other comments about the advice the Childcare Team that you would like to add.

APPENDIX 3a



The Evaluation Group is currently researching the Childcare Team at Sure Start. We would appreciate it if you could take the time to fill in this questionnaire.

Your comments will only be seen by the evaluation team and all information will remain anonymous.

We would appreciate it if you could return the completed questionnaire, sealed in the attached envelope, to a member of the Sure Start team or the reception of @ The Mulberry.

If you would like any assistance in filling out this questionnaire, I am at Sure Start on Tuesdays, and would be happy to go through the questions with you. I can also go through the questionnaire over the phone if this would be more convenient, just leave your phone number with a member of staff from Sure Start and I can get back to you.

It would be a great help if this could be done as soon as possible.
Thanking you

CHILD WORKER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Which Sure Start area do you live in?

Portland Westham Melcombe Regis Littlemoor

2. Which Sure Start activities/groups do you attend where Childcare Team are present?

3. How long (weeks/months/years) have you had contact with the Sure Start Childcare Team?

4. How helpful do you find the Childcare Team?

Very helpful Helpful Sometimes helpful Not helpful

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| | |
|----------------|--|
| Supportive | |
| Friendly | |
| Encouraging | |
| Non judgmental | |
| Trustworthy | |

6. Thinking about the help and advice the Childcare Team give, how true do you think the following statements are? Tick all those that apply.

| | True | Some what true | Not true |
|--|------|----------------|----------|
| I can talk about my worries and problems. | | | |
| They give me good ideas for playing with my child. | | | |
| I learn about other Sure Start activities and groups from them. | | | |
| They direct me to other services and forms of help. | | | |
| They discuss child care issues with me and offer helpful advice. | | | |

7. If you have been signposted to other services/given advice, could you please give some details

8. Are there any other areas of help or advice the Childcare Team have given you?

9. How is information given? Please tick all that apply.

Verbally Leaflets Internet access

10. Was the information you received

| | yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| Given to you at the right time | | |
| Appropriate and put into practice | | |
| Followed up to check that you had understood | | |

11. Any other comments about the advice the Childcare Team have given you that you would like to add.
