



University
of Durham

Centre for Applied Social Studies

Sure Start Stanley

Evaluation Feedback Report

The Setting up Phase

September 2001

Draft

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1 Introduction

- This feedback report is aimed at parents and also professionals.
- Its aim is to give an overview of the early stages of Sure Start Stanley, before the Sure Start staff team were employed and began their work.
- We have presented the views of staff and parents on various issues, without judging them. An important part of our job is to sum up what people are saying and doing and feed this back so that staff and parents involved can reflect on this.
- The areas we have looked at are:
 - Ideas about the aims of the Stanley programme;
 - Early strengths of the programme;
 - Early challenges
 - Challenges for the future
- We have also made some comments about how Sure Start Stanley is working within Sure Start principles.
- The report is not intended to be a complete account. A summary of each key area is given, so that important issues are clear and readable.
- We have asked some questions which may help people to think more clearly or in different ways about what's happening.

2 Summary

- "Really good"... "marvellous" (Parents on Sure Start Stanley).
- "A closely knit group has been created" (Professional).
- "Fraught and frantic, we had to react and there was little time to reflect" (Professional on the early days of Sure Start).

Both staff and parents have devoted much time and energy to getting Sure Start Stanley off the ground. There has been a great sense of commitment, pressure, hard work, optimism, as well as frustration, at times, for those involved.



The Aims of Sure Start Stanley (see p.11)

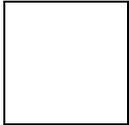
Staff think that key aims for Sure Start Stanley are:

- To use a community development approach which builds on the strengths of the local community;
- To maximise access to services rather than provide services itself;
- To help to reshape existing services;
- To seek to empower parents and give them an equal say in Sure Start

Parents think that key aims for Sure Start Stanley are:

- To provide crèches and playgroups;

- To set up a Sure Start centre.
- To give good quality information to parents about services available



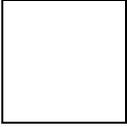
Strengths of the Programme (see page 17)

Staff see strengths of the programme so far as:

- General Progress: getting the programme up and running;
- Getting parents' views during the early parental consultation exercise;
- Setting up the temporary Sure Start Centre;
- Establishing early relationships with local agencies and organisations.

Parents are very enthusiastic about Sure Start, in general and especially about:

- What Sure Start can offer local families in terms of crèches and extra childcare;
- The information it will draw together about what services there already are;
- The Sure Start events which have taken place over the last year, such as the fun day at Easter, this year.



Challenges in the Setting up Stage (see p.18)

Staff saw the main challenges in the setting up stage as:

- Lack of a full-time Sure Start co-ordinator for a period which led to a heavy work load for some professionals involved in the programme;
- Collecting information for the Delivery Plan;
- Establishing effective working relationships between different agencies in the partnership;
- Working with parents and listening fully to their views;
- Pressures of government deadlines;
- Early accommodation problems;
- Employing Sure Start staff (identifying an employing agency and agreeing terms and conditions for staff).

Parents saw the main challenges in the setting up phases as:

- The time delay in getting the programme off the ground;
- Not being fully involved in early meetings.



Challenges for the Future (see p.24)

Staff see the main challenges for the programme in the future as:

- Changing how mainstream agencies work;
- Working with agencies so that they are clear about what Sure Start does;
- Keeping parents involved and giving them an equal say;
- Getting Sure Start buildings established;
- Keeping the Partnership going;
- Keeping Sure Start ways of working going after the funding runs out.

Parents see the main challenges for the programme in the future as:

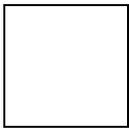
- Getting Sure Start buildings established;
- Keeping parents involved.

3 What's the Feedback About?

The report is based around what parents and staff thought and felt about a number of important questions relating to the early days of Sure Start Stanley. As the programme progresses, we will look at what children think about relevant issues.

It's very important to have a record of what happened in the early days of the programme so that people involved can look back and see how the programme has developed in the way that it has.

Key questions for this first evaluation report were:



- What is Sure Start about for people in Stanley and what do they hope the programme will achieve?
- What were the early challenges for the programme?
- What has gone well so far?
- What challenges does the programme face now?
- How are those involved in the programme learning from what has happened so far?

The feedback report will also look at how the programme is starting to work within the Sure Start principles.

We hope that the report will help those involved in Sure Start Stanley to think more clearly about what has been happening in the early stages, where the programme is now and where it needs to go in the future.

Sharing Views on the Feedback

This first evaluation feedback is a very important stage in the collaboration between the Stanley programme and the evaluation team. Since collaboration is a two way process, we are keen to get as many responses to this report as possible from those involved. This will help us to target our evaluation more effectively in the future. Some ways of giving us your views about the report are given listed at the end (see page 34).



4 What is the Feedback Based On?

- Information for this report has been gathered from a number of places:
- Informal discussions with the programme manager (x3)
- Interviews (x4)
- Action Group meetings (x3)
- Partnership meetings (x1)
- Parents' meetings (x2)
- Stakeholder meeting (x1)
- County Sure Start meetings (x2)
- Programme Managers' meetings (x5)

A range of documents from Sure Start Stanley: the delivery plan; parent newsletters; training schedules for staff; on-going information about targets and general programme progress.



5 The Aims of Sure Start Stanley

5.1 Background

A large programme like Sure Start is bound to be about different things for different people. The Government has set out its aims for the programme nationally. These relate to improvements in the health and well-being of families and children to age four, so children are ready to flourish when they go to school.

Although there are guidelines for what each Sure Start programme should aim to do, the government does not expect all programmes to reach the goals in the same way because each has to respond to what's happening in its own local area. Therefore, each Sure Start programme will have slightly different aims and will work in different ways to achieve them.

Within each Sure Start, staff, parents and children will have their own way of looking at things because they are looking at Sure Start from different points of view. The government hopes that this range of views will be a major strength of the scheme.

It's very important that all of these views are known at the start, so that they can be taken account of. People's views may change as time goes on and the programme moves forward. We will be able to look at these changes in later feedback reports.

5.2 What Staff Think

Staff talked about their approaches to Sure Start in interviews and meetings. Sometimes, individuals emphasised slightly different ideas. This is not surprising, since professionals come from a variety of backgrounds and have different work experiences. Here are some of the main points they told us about.

A Community Development Approach

- Staff are committed to a community development approach which builds on the strengths of the local neighbourhood.
- Staff hope that this approach will empower parents.
- A community development worker will be an important member of the Sure Start team in Stanley.
- Staff believe that parents should have the same power and influence as professionals, although they know that this will take some time to achieve.

Reshaping Existing Services

- There is a strong feeling that Sure Start Stanley should be about reshaping existing services, rather than providing new Sure Start services.

- One view was that Sure Start will reduce the demand for existing services over time. After Sure Start, agencies such as Social Services should be able to spend more time trying to prevent problems from arising, rather than dealing with them when they have.

Sure Start: A Support System

- There was a view that Sure Start should only be a support system and should avoid being something that people are referred to because then Sure Start might become marginalised in the future.

Helping Parents Use Existing Services Better

- Staff feel that a key role for Sure Start Stanley is to help parents use existing services better, by providing consistent and good quality information.
- To support this, information officers will be vital members of the Sure Start team.

5.3 What Parents Think

The views of a small number of parents were collected.

Providing Crèches

- Several of the parents we spoke to, think that setting up crèches is an important part of the programme. They feel that this service will allow parents freedom, the chance to talk to other mothers and somewhere to go, particularly if mothers have post natal depression.
- One parent talked about the importance of giving children early social experiences outside the home, with other children.

Sure Start Buildings

- For a majority of parents, having a building for Sure Start activities was an important aim, although not all parents thought this.

Giving Information about Services

- Parents think that the Stanley Sure Start needs to give parents good quality information about what services were available. One parent said it took 6 phone calls to find a playgroup which in the end turned out to be 100 yards down the road.

Self Help

- One parent believed that helping people to help themselves was important, especially in economic ways.

Training

- Some parents thought that training for parents should be an important goal for Sure Start.

5.4 What Outside Agencies Think

Some views Sure Start's aims from professionals, not involved in the programme, are given below. These views do not represent the whole range of agencies or organisations but they might help people in the programmes think about issues in different ways.

A Whole Family Approach

- Sure Start is aiming to work with all a family's needs, not just those which are related to health or education.

A Community Approach

- There is a view that Sure Start should aim to work closely with the local community and that within this, there should be a strong role for parents.
- Sure Start should aim to work with *all* parents.
- The programme should aim to work through what is there already in the community and not set up new systems. This is thought to be vital for contacting local people.

How Does Sure Start fit in with other Schemes?

- There is some confusion about how Sure Start's aims and ways of working were different from other early years schemes.

What Happens at the End?

- There is a strong view that Sure Start needs to have a clear idea of what the community should look like at the end of the programme, since this is seen to be a good way of ensuring that services and approaches continue after Sure Start funding runs out.



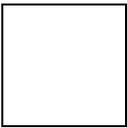
5.5 Talking Points

As expected, there are some differences in what different groups think Sure Start is about.

- Staff and parents emphasised different aims for Sure Start Stanley, in some areas, at this stage. Staff saw partnership with parents, family support and making existing services better, as key aims.

- Parents, on the other hand were understandably more concerned with the new services Sure Start can provide in the immediate future.
- Some people outside Sure Start were not sure about how Sure Start's aims fitted in with other early years schemes and what would happen after Sure Start funding runs out.

Below, we suggest some questions for people involved in the programme which seem to come out of the different views about Sure Start discussed by the different groups.

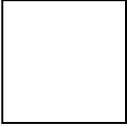


Sure Start as a Community Development Project

- What do parents understand by the term "community development programme" as it applies to Sure Start?
- What implications does it have for them?
- What are parents' views about their ability and wishes to influence Sure Start, as staff and government aims suggest they should be doing?
- How can the programme find this out?

Reshaping services

- How much do parents know about staff aims for reshaping services?
- Is there a role for parents in this area?
- Could parents become involved in this?
- What might be the advantages of their involvement?



6 Early Strengths of Sure Start Stanley

Staff and parents feel that much has already been achieved in the early stages of the programme.

6.1 What Staff Think

General Progress

- The completion of the delivery plan and the setting up of the partnership in the short space of time available, was seen as strength.

Parental Involvement in the Consultation Stage

- Key staff said that the programme had been very good at getting parents views during the consultation period.
- Staff were pleased with the response of parents to events such as fun day at Easter.

Temporary Sure Start Centre

- Getting the Sure Start portakabin up and running in a short space of time was seen as an achievement, particularly since there had been no full-time person responsible for Sure Start for a period of months before January 2001.

The Sure Start Team

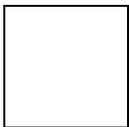
- Staff were pleased to get the Sure Start team in place.

Working with Local Agencies and organisations

- Relationships were already being created with local agencies, some with early success.
- Early links have been made with a number of local organisations through a small grant-giving scheme. For example, one local nursery used its Sure Start grant to buy 37 story sacks.

6.2 What Parents Think

- Parents generally thought that Sure Start was "really good".
- Parents were very pleased with the crèches and playgroups that would be set up.
- One parent talked about the benefits of economic development that Sure Start could bring.



7 Challenges: The Setting up Phase

Setting up any new scheme is often a difficult and time consuming task and this was certainly the case with Sure Start Stanley. It's not surprising, given the scale and newness of the scheme, that there have been a number of problems and frustrations involved in the setting up period. Some of these difficulties have been worked through, while others will take longer to overcome.

7.1 What Staff Think

Staff talked about a number of challenges during the early days of the Stanley programme.

Early Organisation of the Programme

- There was no full-time person responsible for Sure Start Stanley for a period of months after the delivery plan was submitted and before the appointment of the new programme manager, in January 2001. This caused some delays and extra work for some professionals involved.
- Some staff had to work intensively on Sure Start, as well as doing their normal job and this often proved difficult and stressful.

Agencies Working Together

Understandably, staff commented that there were a number of problems in building working relationships between members of different agencies in the early days. There were a number of reasons for this:

- Each organisation has its own aims and its own way of doing things.
- There was not enough time to learn how to work together because the Sure Start partnership had to be set up so quickly.
- One view was that it often takes up to two years to build a partnership which is "singing from the same song sheet", where partners understand each other's language and standpoint. The Sure Start partnership had to be up and running within a few months.
- Another view was that there was a difficulty in "moving away from a funding led view of things". This means that staff were not used to

thinking about what really needed to be done. They were more used to getting money for particular projects.

Working with Parents

- Staff thought that the programme involved parents well during the consultation period but there were problems involving parents, after this stage.
- This was because sometimes professionals found it difficult to change the way that they talked in meetings. This meant that parents did not really understand what was going on in the early stages.
- Staff felt that parents became disappointed by delays in the programme: "Time passes more slowly if you're a member of the community, waiting for things to happen" (Professional).

Listening to Parents

- There were some early issues around making sure that parents' views were listened to, accepted and reflected in the delivery plan. For example, there was some debate about parents' stated wish for crèches.

Outside Pressures

- Staff said that the pressure of numerous government deadlines made the situation difficult for the programme, at times.

Collecting information for the Delivery Plan

- It was sometimes difficult to collect the information needed for the delivery plan because some of it had not been collected before. For

example, little was known about how many parents read to their children, for example.

- Another problem was that councils collect information according to electoral wards but Sure Start districts are often not the same as electoral wards, so facts and figures do not match.
- It was difficult to find out how many women smoke in pregnancy. Health visitors work with G.P. practices which do not necessarily relate directly to Sure Start wards.

Accommodation Problems

- Poor working conditions created many difficulties for programme staff in the early days.
- There were many problems in getting the temporary Sure Start portakabin up and running. For example, delays in installing electricity resulted in freezing pipes and flooding. Sorting out these issues took up a lot of time.

Problems with Employing Staff

- There were several complications in working out which mainstream agencies would employ Sure Start staff and what the terms and conditions of these staff would be.

Setting up a Database

- This issue caused significant difficulties in the early days of the programme.

- Problems relating to data protection issues were especially problematic. The initial challenge was how to gather the necessary details on local Sure Start families for a Sure Start database.
- Another problem was setting up a database which would meet the monitoring needs of the programme.

7.2 What Parents Think

Parents mentioned some of the same early challenges as staff and some different ones.

Time Delay

- Some parents thought that Sure Start had taken too long to get going and that the momentum had gradually disappeared.

Changes of Direction

- One parent said that there had been some "doubling back" because of changes in the leadership of the programme in the early stages which had been "frustrating".

Levels of Parental Involvement

- One parent felt frustrated because more parents had not wanted to be actively involved in the early stages.
- There was a feeling that it was the "same faces" at meetings.

Involvement in Meetings

Several parents said that going to meetings in the early days became quite frustrating for a number of reasons:

- Often jargon was used, although this did improve.

- Parents felt that agencies were talking to each other and that parents had to sit back and listen.
- They felt that often the same things were being discussed at every meeting they attended and so it was not worth going to lots of meetings.
- Having said this, parents did understand the need to go along with technicalities in a Government schemes. They were also aware that professionals had a different role in Sure Start because it was their job.
- One parent commented on how difficult it had been for agencies to learn to work together - there had been a lot of "in-house fighting" at the start.

8 Learning Through the Setting Up Phase

It is clear that much learning and development has already taken place in Sure Start Stanley, as a result of working through some of the issues described above. Some important areas of learning are listed below:

Working in Partnership with Parents

There is a feeling that there has been progress in this area.

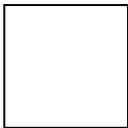
- Staff believe that a very closely-knit group of people working on the programme has now been created, which includes parents.
- Parents' views on their needs have been listened to and reflected in the Sure Start Stanley approach.
- Some parents said that meetings had improved. There was less jargon being used but also parents now understood the jargon more.

Agencies Working in Partnership

- Agency representatives on the partnership were able to work through initial difficulties and produce a delivery plan.
- It is felt that people are now able to listen to each others' views with more understanding, although there is still some work to be done.

Setting up a Database

- Sure Start Stanley worked in close collaboration with other Sure Start programmes in the area to set up a Sure Start database.
- Data protection issues are being successfully worked through with support from Durham County Council. Sure Start registration forms have been developed and are now in use.



9 Challenges for the Future

Both staff and parents involved in Sure Start Stanley feel that there are still many challenges ahead for the programme. Understandably, there are some differences in what staff and parents see as the main issues for the future.

9.1 What Staff Think

Staff identified the following challenges for the future:

Changing how Mainstream Agencies Work

- One professional said: "by far and away the biggest issue is how we make sure that the reshaping of services is not about the 1% of Sure Start funding but about the 99% of other funding".
- Staff think it is vital that Sure Start is not seen as an elitist service and that it does not become possessive.

Working with Agencies: Setting up Boundaries

- One professional said it was very important to be clear about where Sure Start's boundaries were, so that agencies knew exactly what the programme could and would do, as well as what it could not do.

Keeping Parents Involved

- Staff are aware that new parents have to become involved with Sure Start all the time because families will leave the programme as their children reach four.
- Key professionals thought it could be difficult for new parents to join an already established parent group.

Giving Parents an Equal Say

- Staff want to see more parents being able to give their views on Sure Start.
- They feel that giving parents an *equal* say in Sure Start will be an important challenge for the future.
- One view was that it's not just about parents coming to meetings. It's also about how staff from agencies work with families on a day-to-day

basis in ways which encourage them to ask questions about what is being provided and how.

- It was thought that enabling parents to give their views is one of the best ways of making services more effective. A view was that agencies are often poor at changing services which do not work.

Getting Sure Start Buildings Established

- Staff said that the buildings part of Sure Start is a big challenge.
- There was a feeling that neither the government nor the Sure Start Unit appreciated that £750,000 is a limited amount of money for a rural area.
- Furthermore, these bodies do not seem to understand how time-consuming it is to acquire land, clear land, get planning permission and build, within the timescales envisaged.

Keeping the Partnership Going

- Staff feel that it is vital to keep the Sure Start Stanley partnership going and sense that commitment to the partnership has been "falling away" in recent months.
- One professional said that a recent partnership meeting had felt more like an action group because so few people had attended.
- Another professional pointed out that the partnership must be revisited and strengthened if they want to bring Sure Start into mainstream work.

After the Funding Runs Out..

- Staff thought that a big challenge for the future was how to keep Sure Start ways of working going after funding for the programme runs out.

9.2 What Parents Think

Parents talked mostly about the same challenges as staff:

Getting Sure Start Buildings Established

- Most parents we spoke to, felt that getting the new Sure Start centre built was the most important issue, although one parent wondered if this was really what Sure Start was about.

Keeping Parents Involved

- Parents feel that keeping parental involvement going in the future will be a challenge.
- Few parents have been attending the community meeting in Stanley.
- In response to this, parents are trying to make the Parent and Community Group more informal, to encourage others to attend.
- In future, instead of an agenda, there will be more general discussions.

9.3 What Outside Agencies Think

People from agencies outside Sure Start have identified a number of issues for the future, in discussion and at Stakeholder workshops:

- Keeping the Sure Start building and services going after funding runs out;
- Making sure that Sure Start can change its approach and services, depending on where families live;
- Getting Sure Start parents to find out what other parents in their neighbourhoods think of the programme;

- Working out how Sure Start will work with other programme such as Early Years Excellence Centres;
- Keeping services outside Sure Start up to date with what it is doing.

The issue of parental involvement was raised as a key issue by both staff and parents. We have suggested some questions which may help the programme to think about this issue in different ways.



9.4 Talking Points

We have suggested some questions below which may help Sure Start Stanley think about two of the key challenges identified above: the future involvement of parents and keeping the partnership going.



Future Parental Involvement

- Why are greater numbers of parents not attending meetings? Is this monitored? How could it be?
- How much are parents actively involved in individual decision-making that goes on in individual meetings?
- To what extent and in what ways are parents' views explicitly sought during meetings? Is this monitored on an ongoing basis?

- Do parents need time to discuss what they feel about their actual involvement in decision-making?
- Could the meetings be run in different ways to facilitate greater active parental involvement? For example, could small groups be used so that parents might feel more confident about expressing their views?
- What background knowledge is needed by parents to participate actively in discussions? Is this taken account of during the planning or the running of meetings?
- How will parents be recruited to the management aspect of the programme in the future?

Keeping the Partnership Going

- Why are some partners not attending? How can the programme find this out?
- What are the implications of dwindling attendance at partnership meetings for the programme?
- How can more members of the partnership be encouraged to attend?

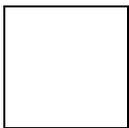
10 Working within Sure Start Principles

The Government expects every Sure Start programme to work from a shared set of key principles. Sure Start services must:

- Co-ordinate, streamline and add value to existing services in the Sure Start area
- Involve parents, grandparents and other carers in ways that build on their existing strengths

- Avoid stigma by ensuring that all local families are able to use Sure Start services
- Ensure lasting support by linking Sure Start to services for older children
- Be culturally appropriate and sensitive to particular needs
- Promote the participation of all local families in the design and working of the programme.

It is too soon in the programme to comment in any depth on how the Stanley programme is working towards the Sure Start principles but some early comments can be made in three areas:



10.1 Co-ordinate, streamline and add value to existing services

Staff involved in Sure Start Stanley are very much aware of the need to establish effective working relationships with mainstream services such as Health, Social work and Education, as well as with other initiatives such as Neighbourhood Nurseries. The programme has made progress in this area in a number of ways:

- The core team was established with the clear aim of developing existing services, not replacing them.
- Two "stakeholders" meetings have been held, to which many people from local agencies and organisations were invited. One hundred and twenty

people were invited to the workshop in May 2001, although only thirty five attended.

- Close working links have already been established between the local Family Services Team and Sure Start.
- The programme manager meets with health visitors in the area regularly to work out ways in which the programme can work with them.
- A breastfeeding support group has been set up at the temporary Sure Start centre, through this link.
- The Stanley Sure Start programme manager is involved in countywide discussions with managers from other County Durham Sure Starts about how to work most effectively with mainstream services.



10.2 Involving parents, grandparents and families in Sure Start in ways that build on their existing strengths

Involving parents to the extent envisaged by Sure Start takes time to develop. Sure Start Stanley has made a good start. Parents in the area have taken part in a number of ways, so far. Many have attended fun days and some have attended family learning groups.

Several parents have been much more closely involved in the programme, participating in a wide range of activities. We summarise ways in which parents have been involved so far below:

- There was an **in-depth consultation exercise**. Numerous and varied approaches to community consultation process (fun days, parental consultation around the district);
- **There is on-going consultation** with parents on weekdays and weekends;
- There is ongoing communication with families through the **Sure Start newsletters**;
- **Some parents attend a number meetings**, such as parent group; action group, partnership and stakeholder meetings;
- **Chairing meetings** - a parent chairs the community group;
- **Giving feedback reports** - from the community group to the action group;
- **Shortlisting and then Interviewing** all Sure Start staff;
- The organisation and running of **trips and fun days**.

Grandparents

- Discussions have taken place on the importance of involving grandparents, and possible ways of doing so for example, in the Stakeholder meeting in May 2001.

10.3 Avoid stigma by ensuring that all local families are able to use Sure Start services

- Sure Start Stanley is working through mainstream services, so that individual families are not singled out.
- Attempts are being made to use non-stigmatising words in meetings, such as under-resourced, rather than "disadvantaged".

- The programme is considering the use of community resources which already exist to spread information about Sure Start.



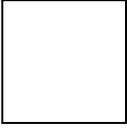
11 Learning from the Sure Start Experience

We hope that this feedback report will help Sure Start staff and parents to reflect on what has been learnt so far and the evaluation will continue to support learning through future feedback and discussion.

Sure Start Stanley is already developing its own structure and identity. We must continue to collect views and information about this and feed it back to the programme in the coming months and years.

12 How the Programme is Monitoring its Progress

- The Stanley programme has co-funded the development of a Sure Start database.
- The database is to be installed shortly. It is hoped that a training course will be available to teach staff how to use it effectively.
- This database produces all the necessary information for Sure Start unit monitoring forms.



13 Responding to the Feedback Report

Possible Areas for Comment

It is vital that we get as many responses as possible to this first feedback report because this will help us to target our evaluation more effectively in the future. Possible questions to help you to think about your views are:

- Does the feedback accurately sum up what the setting up period was like at Sure Start Stanley? If not, why not and what is missing?
- Is the feedback easy to understand and clear to read? If not, how could it have been clearer?
- What was the most useful section of the feedback? Why?

Ways of Responding to the Evaluation Feedback

There are a number of ways in which you can tell us what you think about this feedback by:

- Giving your views at the usual programme meetings, that is at the action group, community group or partnership meeting.
- Contacting the evaluation team directly, by writing to Carol Potter at The Centre for Applied Social Studies, 15 Old Elvet, The University of Durham, Durham DH1 3HL. If you would rather speak to Carol, you can ring on 0191 374 4752. **We look forward to hearing from you.**

14 Moving On

- The next evaluation feedback report will move on to explore issues to do with what Sure Start Stanley is doing in the local community and how well it is doing it.
- Future reports will look at areas which parents and professionals decide they want us to look at in more depth. We will be helping them to choose these areas soon.
- We will continue to report back on how the programme is working within the Sure Start principles.

We look forward to working with Sure Start Stanley in the future.

Appendix: Summary of Feedback on the “*The Setting up Stage*” Report

The feedback outlined below was gained from discussion at:

- one Action Group
- one partnership meeting
- one parents' meeting, attended by four parents

WHAT PARENTS THOUGHT

Format and Content

- All of the parents (four) at the feedback meeting found the report very interesting and easy to read.
- They agreed that it was an accurate description of what the setting up stage of Sure Start Stanley was like.
- They thought that the similarities and differences between what staff and parents thought were interesting. For example, in the report, both staff and parents commented on the difficulties in working with different agencies.
- Differences between staff and parent views were also discussed, such as parents wanting services quickly and staff looking at the project over a longer period of time.
- There were some ideas in the report which parents had not come across in Sure Start before, such as “mainstreaming”.

Possible Improvements for the Future

- Parents agreed that the greater use of colour would make future reports more attractive. For example, one parent suggested that

- colour coding the different sections could make the report easier to read.
- Parents thought that the report could be made more widely available - for example, in playgroups or doctor's surgeries. CP thought this an interesting idea but said that, at present, reports were confidential to people involved in the programme. To make the report more widely available, a different agreement would have to be made, after people involved had thought through the implications of such a change.

WHAT STAFF THOUGHT

- Both the Action Group and the Partnership Group accepted the report.
- The report was found to be an accurate reflection of the setting-up period
- Both groups emphasised that the report was very easy to read and understand.
- Staff thought that the report raised a number of important issues such as:
 - The need to continue to increase parental involvement in the programme
 - The challenges faced by the programme in establishing effective working relationships between different agencies in the partnership and beyond
 - The need to avoid the use of jargon language that is sometimes difficult for parents to understand
 - The frustration around early accommodation problems

- There were some concerns by staff that not all the parents' views were reflected in the report - it is important for the programme that parents are involved in the programme and feel able to work with staff and express their views freely.

Implications of the Report for the Programme

- Staff felt that the report reminded them that Sure Start Stanley was aiming to reshape existing services not create new ones. The next step would be to discuss how this would be done and by whom. The stakeholders' day in January will look at this issue, as will the partnership.
- It was agreed that parents could play a more active role in some areas, in the future. For example, Sure Start parent representatives agreed to write to all agencies asking them to attend Sure Start meetings on a more regular basis, or send a representative, if possible.