

## **Sure Start Stamford Hill: Annual Evaluation Report February 2004**

### **Background**

The Stamford Hill approach to evaluation is underpinned by the programme's governance arrangements. An elected board including significant parent representation meets monthly. The board receives the following reports on a regular basis

- Monitoring returns analysis – quarterly
- Programme manager report – monthly
- Finance report – monthly
- Annual reports from commissioned projects – as provided
- Copies of local and external evaluation reports as produced

### **Monitoring**

Without robust monitoring information evaluation whether internal or external has little meaning. The system used by the Stamford Hill programme is efficient, cheap to run and is very user friendly. The information project officer spends an average of 5 hours each week on monitoring work. This includes training local groups and organizations on how to make their monitoring returns and there are some useful spin offs for the programme in terms of strengthening our day to day links with local organizations and helping them to build capacity.

System used	Membership card with individual user number. Monitoring carried out by commissioned organisations and returns entered on to excel spreadsheet. Information transferred to Sure Start IT system each month.	In place from Jan 03
Reach results 2004	Programme average % children seen per month Region average Round 3 programmes average	26% nk 26%

### **Key findings**

- Unable to compare reach results with other programmes in the region as this report has been withdrawn from the website.
- User numbers dip at particular points of the year reflecting religious and secular holidays
- Good balance of repeat and new users.
- Spread across ethnic groups represents local community.
- Some projects work intensively with a small number of families. The intensity of their work is not reflected in returns to the Sure Start unit.
- Local parents prefer the anonymity of the system and would not be happy with a registration scheme that identified them.
- Local voluntary and community projects feel comfortable with the system used and comply with requirements.
- Statutory organizations need a lot of encouragement to monitor their work – they tell us this is because of a lack of capacity.

### **Evaluation activity**

Each programme is required to engage in continuous evaluation activity with a recommendation that approximately 3-5 % of the programme budget is used on evaluation. Evaluation requires a combination of internal and external activity

### **Internal evaluation in 2003**

- Monitoring system in place.
- Service level Agreements in place for projects over £1000

- Quarterly evaluations of all projects carried out by Programme manager – in 2003 58 quarterly evaluations were carried out.
- Annual reports on funded projects over £5000. In 2003 15 annual reports were produced .

#### **Key findings**

- Initially programmes were anxious about how much work would be needed to complete monitoring forms. Many had had bad experiences with other government-funded programmes.
- Few projects had experience in putting together an annual report. With support they found this a useful exercise and used the reports to apply to other funders and identify futures plans.
- All projects described learning experiences and challenges faced as part of their regular quarterly evaluation. Projects initially found this difficult and were not used to thinking in this way.
- It was clear that projects had found the capacity building elements of the programme very useful.
- Projects in the voluntary sector valued the quarterly evaluation exercise especially as it offered an opportunity to integrate their work with the whole programme.

#### **Local evaluation projects**

Child protection survey	All 37 local nurseries in the statutory and voluntary sector surveyed to ascertain take up of child protection training, levels of satisfaction and future need.
User satisfaction survey August - October	90 users surveyed
Study of census information – October	Population, health, employment, family size for whole programme area. Further studies into population characteristics on local estate.
Day care Trust	Daycare needs on the Stamford Hill estate
The Green paper “Every Child matters”	Focus group with 10 local parents

#### **Key findings**

- Voluntary sector organizations had had more CP training than we thought. They wanted more to be made available.
- Voluntary organizations wanted CP training to be locally based and include the choice of single gender courses.
- Services users were overwhelmingly happy with the projects they attended. They wanted more of them and made a number of comments about how they could be improved relating to better quality premises for venues.
- Service users felt strongly that there should be no restrictions on access relating to programme boundaries.
- Census information results were unreliable, as the Hackney return was poor.
- The Day Care Trust survey was expensive and reached a low number of people. It did not tell us anything new.
- The Orthodox Jewish focus group which looked at “Every Child Matters” thought each child should be given a pin number at birth so that they could be tracked for compliance with things like developmental assessments. This was surprising in a community that is highly conscious of confidentiality.

### **External evaluation activity**

Faith in the Future. Evaluation began spring 03 , completes April 04	Assessing the programmes success in delivering integrated services in a minority led community.
Sure Start Unit	18 month risk assessment
External audit – August September 03	Carried out by Audit Commission on behalf of accountable body PCT

#### Key findings

- Local voluntary organisations co-operated with the Faith in the Future evaluation even though the concept was new to them.
- Programme eventually assessed as low risk although lack of consistent representation on the Management Board by statutory organisations had initially raised the score.
- Audit certificate granted.

### **Internal and external evaluation plans for 2004-**

Annual reports	Increase number of reports to reflect all projects
Royal Holloway Collage	Full evaluation of all aspects of the programme. Began February 04 lasts for 12 months
Local Birth Centre	In partnership with neighbouring Sure Start programme and SRB 7,500 household survey as part of a campaign to develop a local birth centre.
User survey Health visitors survey of day care need	To be repeated October 2004 Under way
Survey of day care need in religious Muslim families	Under way
Maternity experiences of women with large families.	Starts April

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