

High Cross Sure Start Local Programme: Annual Evaluation Report

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1. Introduction

High Cross is a Sure Start Round Five programme that was approved by the National Unit in January 2003. It is located in North East Haringey, and falls across two wards, Tottenham Green and Tottenham Hale. It has a population of approximately 6,435 people¹. This figure includes many young people and it is estimated that between 25 and 27 percent are between 0 and 16 years old². As of 30th August 2001, there were 487³ children under four years in High Cross; the age group targeted by Sure Start services.

The London Borough of Haringey is a highly ethnically diverse community. It is approximately 11.5 square miles and was formed in 1965 from the old Boroughs of Hornsey, Tottenham and Wood Green. Approximately 216,507⁴ people live here and over half of them represent cultures outside of the United Kingdom. Countries represented include Greece, Turkey, Albania, China, India, Somalia, and the Caribbean islands. It is estimated that 193 languages are spoken across the Borough.

The Borough also reports one of the highest figures for asylum seekers in England, which ranges between 4,800 and 6,000 annually.⁵ These groups include people of Kurdish, Somali, Afghan and Kosovan origins. These individuals do not have entitlement to benefits or work and many live in poverty. The unemployment rate in Haringey is at 7.3 percent, which is currently twice the national average.⁶ These factors contribute to Haringey's high deprivation ranking (28th), making it one of the poorest areas in the United Kingdom. Some of the most disadvantaged include families with young children who would directly benefit from Sure Start services.

2. Sure Start Haringey Local Programmes: Evaluation Approach

An external team from the University of Surrey currently provides the majority of the evaluation support for High Cross. This team also offers assistance to five other Sure Start local programmes in the Borough of Haringey, and evaluation activities are occasionally co-ordinated to streamline resources and avoid duplication. The six Haringey local programmes have collectively adopted an 'action-research' approach,

¹ Source: 1991 Census

² Source: London Research Centre 2000

³ Source: Primary Care Trusts Child Health Information Service 2001

⁴ Source: National Statistics, 2001 Census

⁵ Source: Average Social Service Caseload, Jan 1999 – Feb. 2000, London Boroughs, The London Health Observatory

⁶ Source: Haringey Council Fact File

whereby Sure Start stakeholders are encouraged to participate in each phase of the evaluation process. Each one of these programmes is at a separate stage in its development.

3. Establishing a Baseline

The first evaluation priority for High Cross was to establish a baseline understanding of the community's needs, so that appropriate services could be developed and implemented. This began with two consultation exercises with the local community. The first took place in Spring 2002 and reached 50 residents through a Community Participatory Appraisal (CPA) exercise. The second took place in the early part of 2003, where the opinions of an additional 88 parents were polled through interviews and group discussions facilitated by Wendy Sugarman Associates, a local community development firm.

The main issues identified through these two consultations informed the development of the programme's Delivery Plan and are as follows:

- Difficulties with accessing health services
- The lack of play facilities
- A lack of opportunities/venues for parents to seek the support of other local parents
- The need for more learning opportunities for pre-school children
- A requirement for more information for families about local services

The programme also commissioned a study to identify the needs of refugee and asylum seeking families and suggest ways in which Sure Start could address these needs. This piece of research involved interviews with local service providers and with 52 asylum seekers and refugees⁷. The programme is responding to a number of recommendations made in the report. For example it is currently establishing the 'Language for Life and Parenting Classes' pilot⁸ in conjunction with a neighbouring Sure Start programme (Park Lane). As part of an Action Research approach, the evaluation team undertook interviews with key stakeholders to inform the development and implementation of the programme. This is described in more detail in section 5 below.

4. Developing an Evaluation Strategy

The programme developed an evaluation strategy, achieved by carrying out a scoping exercise between the Programme Manager, the Strategic Services Manager for Haringey Sure Start local programmes and the University of Surrey evaluation team. The key priorities are outlined below. The Partnership Board was consulted throughout this process.

⁷ Gibbons, S. (2003) *Resilience. The experiences of refugee, asylum seeking and transient families in High Cross and Park Lane Sure Start areas: attending to mental well being.*

⁸ Williams, M. and Johnson, R. (2004) *Report on the 'Language for Life and Parenting' Proposal.*

5. Social Inclusion

High Cross decided to focus its evaluation resources on supporting the development of social inclusion policy and practice. To this end, the University of Surrey team reviewed current literature and summarised the barriers faced by asylum seekers, refugees and transient families. Key 'social inclusion' concepts were also outlined and the developments of 13 other Sure Start programmes were summarised based on interviews with staff from these programmes who were involved with social inclusion⁹. In addition, the research team provided an overview of local initiatives which aim to promote social inclusion. This work has provided a context for the development of a social inclusion strategy.

The evaluation team also informed the development of a 'Language for Life and Parenting Classes' project. This is being established in response to the needs voiced by refugees and asylum seekers in the 'Resilience' report. It was recognised that the pilot project was a novel idea and would require the collaboration of a number of organisations and professionals. To this end the Sure Start evaluation team were asked to consult Sure Start staff, English tutors, people who work with volunteers and local parents about the proposals. It was felt that each of these groups would have something to offer in the way of advice either as a potential member of staff, through their work with volunteers, or as a potential volunteer or participant. In total eighteen people were interviewed between December 2003 and January 2004. Each interviewee was asked to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, identify areas that needed strengthening and offer advice for improving the proposal. They were also asked to give feedback on specific features of the pilot's design including:

- Times and venues
- Session structure
- Topics
- Session staff (tutors, volunteers etc)
- Those who participate in the project
- Materials
- Further planning

The findings have informed the development of the classes, for example the course was shortened from 26 weeks to 16 weeks based on responses. Furthermore, the need for a training plan for volunteers was identified which is now being developed. This work was conducted using an Action Research approach with constant feedback being provided to the programmes. The evaluation team is currently helping High Cross and Park Lane to build on-going evaluation into the project.

6. Capacity Building

The High Cross Partnership Board have asked the external evaluation team to work with service providers to evaluate existing services. An Evaluation Group is

⁹ Williams, M. (2004) *Social Inclusion and Sure Start*

currently being formed to oversee this process, and to ascertain the views of users of the programme's drop-in services. The group will consist of four parents from the High Cross Parents' Forum, the Programme Manager, a member of staff from Haringey's Teaching Primary Care Trust and a member of the evaluation team. To help the parents take an active role in this evaluation, the research team is hosting three induction sessions for the parents. The purpose of these sessions is to give parents a basic understanding of evaluation and how it relates to Sure Start Local Programmes.

7. Process Evaluation

High Cross also participated in a process evaluation that took place with the six Haringey Sure Start local programmes during the first half of 2003. This evaluation used qualitative methods (such as interviews and observations) to gather the perceptions of the Programme Managers and other employees who contributed to the day-to-day functioning of each programme.

The primary purpose of the process evaluation was to provide an understanding of how key activities contribute to short term outcomes within an Action Research perspective, thus allowing the Programme Managers to assess their progress towards Sure Start's longer-term delivery targets. The activities discussed in the report¹⁰ were identified using thematic analysis methods and include issues surrounding each programme's

- Management and organisation.
- Mainstreaming activities.
- Level of parent participation.
- Evaluation strategy.

This report is currently under review with Sure Start Haringey's Strategic Services Manager, and it is anticipated that its findings will generate a set of action points for each of the programmes to incorporate into future decision making.

8. Next Steps

High Cross has two evaluation priorities:

- Develop the Evaluation Group to include producing an outline work plan to evaluate the drop-in services and reflect on the experiences of service users.
- Continue to utilise an Action Research Approach to further develop social inclusion policy and practice within the programme.

¹⁰ Asmussen, K., Axelrod, L., Johnson, R. and Smith, P. (2003) *Facing the Challenges Presented by Change: An Interim Process Report - Sure Start Haringey*

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