

Sure Start 'The Roundway' – Annual Evaluation Report

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January, 2004

Introduction

The Roundway is a Sure Start Round Six programme that was approved by the National Unit in August 2003. It is located in a densely populated section of the North London Borough of Haringey. Approximately 10,675¹ people live here and the population per square mile is around 23,999 compared to the Haringey average of 19,452. This figure includes many young people and it is estimated that between 25 and 27 percent are between 0 and 16 years old. Roughly 900 of these are under four years; the age group targeted by Sure Start services.

The 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 216,507² people live here and over half of them represent cultures outside of the United Kingdom. These countries include Greece, Turkey, Albania, China, India, Somalia, and those from the Caribbean islands and it is estimated that 193 languages are spoken here.

The Borough also reports one of the highest figures for asylum seekers in England, which ranges between 4,800 and 6,000 annually.³ 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 is at 7.3 percent, which is currently twice the national average.⁴ 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.

An external team from the University of Surrey currently provides the majority of the evaluation support for The Roundway. This team also offers assistance to five other Sure Start programmes in the Borough of Haringey, and evaluation activities are occasionally co-ordinated to streamline resources and avoid duplication. The six Haringey programmes have collectively adopted an 'action-research' approach, 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. During this past year, The Roundway has concentrated its evaluation efforts on

¹ Figure extrapolated from information provided by the RICHs system in the Haringey Primary Care Trust.

² Source: National Statistics, 2001 Census

³ Source: Average Social Service Caseload, Jan 1999 – Feb. 2000, London Boroughs, The London Health Observatory

⁴ Source: Haringey Council Fact File

establishing a baseline understanding of the available community services and its population's needs. This has resulted in a mapping report and plans for a parents' satisfaction survey, that will take place during the first quarter of 2004.

Establishing a Baseline

Phase I

The first evaluation priority for The Roundway 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 September 2002 and reached 62 residents through a Participatory Appraisal (PA) exercise. The second took place in the early part of 2003, where the opinions of an additional 106 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:

- The cost and lack of choice around childcare.
- The lack of childcare provision for parents wishing to go back into further education.
- More after school clubs (or wrap-around care).
- The need for toilets and better play facilities for young children in the area's parks.
- More parent and toddler drop-ins and playgroups.
- The need for more library services that offer toys, books and videos in community languages.

Phase II

The second phase of evaluation involved a mapping exercise conducted by the external evaluation team at the University of Surrey. This was done to enhance the programme's understanding of where and how Sure Start initiatives could best add value to the community. This project resulted in a geographic summary of the activities and services available for families with children between 0–4 living in the area, including

- Schools
- Childcare
- Recreation
- Healthcare
- Community Programmes

This exercise also included interviews that explored the perceived challenges and needs of 49 organisations providing services for families with children in

The Roundway area. Many of these organisations represent the needs of hard to reach groups, including asylum seekers and refugees. The details of these organisations were compiled into a Roundway Directory of Services that is currently available, free of charge, to families and organisations throughout the Borough.

The results of this evaluation are summarised in a report that contains additional information on how the area's families actually used these services during the months of August and September 2003. These findings were presented to the Partnership Board in November and suggest that increased childcare provision and training for English as a second language are particularly important to families living in The Roundway.

Phase III

Plans are now underway to supplement these two exercises with a Parents Satisfaction Survey that will provide "start-point" information against which improvement can be measured after three years. Parents recruited from the area will be trained to conduct a 45-minute interview that will systematically consider the opinions of a representative sample of the area's families. It is anticipated that the findings from this exercise will provide a detailed understanding of families' attitudes towards many of the issues identified through the Participatory Appraisal. It is also hoped that this exercise will give the programme much needed demographic information to further profile the needs of its area's population.

During the time of this writing, the University of Surrey is working closely with the Roundway area programme manager to develop a strategy to recruit parent volunteers to conduct the survey. This strategy involves a number of incentives to attract and maintain parent involvement that include

- Accreditation for participation.
- Direct remuneration for each completed survey.
- Childcare support when the parents conduct the survey.
- Strategically planned activities to encourage families from the community to respond to the interview.

From this perspective it is believed that this strategy will also contribute to the Sure Start objectives of involving parents and creating positive publicity for the programme. It is anticipated that this evaluation will be completed by the end of April 2004, and the results will be available to the programme by early June.

Additional Evaluation Activities

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

programme.

The primary purpose of this 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 this report 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.

Towards an Evaluation Strategy

The next evaluation priority for The Roundway Partnership Board is to implement an evaluation strategy. It is likely that this strategy will incorporate a Project Development Framework whereby new services and projects will be required to develop clear objectives that will provide a rationale for funding and a basis for future evaluation. This Framework requires that services and projects demonstrate how their activities support Sure Start objectives and targets by identifying

1. A target population whose needs they are trying to meet.
2. A clear aim or objective.
3. A set of activities supporting this aim, that can easily be identified and measured.

It is believed that such a framework will encourage projects and services to reflect on the appropriateness of their activities, as well as provide a means for evaluating their processes and methods right from the start.

The Board is also considering how additional training might support their understanding of evaluation and how it can be used to further monitor and improve services. It is believed that specific evaluation strategies will be identified within the next four months. These might include an evaluation of partnership board functioning and an implementation study of a new service.

References

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