

Annual Evaluation Report

Sure Start Orton

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Introduction

Sure Start Orton is the most recent addition to the Sure Start local programmes in Peterborough and has been officially running since May 2003.

The area is not culturally diverse, with approximately 5% of the local population representing families from ethnic minority backgrounds. However there is a diverse range of different cultures. In recent years the area has become home to families from countries that include Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The local population is also mobile. A significant number of families move to and from the area, both from other parts of the city and elsewhere. This contributes to adults feeling isolated and children facing disruption to schooling.

The Sure Start Orton area covers over 500 families with pre-school children, and includes Orton Goldhay, Orton Malborne and parts of Orton Brimbles.

However children in the area are already benefiting from early services provided by Sure Start, including play and learning sessions and special days out.

Current activities include parent and child groups, including drop in learning and play sessions, singing and swimming sessions. There is also a toy library with a fantastic range of toys and games. Sure Start Orton also provides support and training for parents and carers, from ante-natal education and advice on healthy eating to computer training and first aid, all with crèche facilities.

Sure Start Orton has been able to offer wider opportunities for families in the local area and build on some of the needs identified in the community, such as swimming lessons, baby massage and parentcraft.

The Programme has recently refurbished an empty shop in the Herlington Centre. This now accommodates staff, as well as providing a much-needed drop in and information centre in the area.

The project works in partnership with Peterborough City Council, Peterborough Primary Care Partnership, Peterborough District Hospital, voluntary and community organisations, local pre-schools and schools, and of course local parents. The Sure Start Orton team consists of a variety of specialists, employed by partner agencies, including Midwives, Health Visitors, Childcare workers, Outreach and Family Support Workers and Early Years Professionals. These specialists make up the team of dedicated and enthusiastic staff committed to making a difference to pre-school children in the Orton area.

From the very early days of the Programme it has been recognised that a robust system for monitoring and an effective evaluation strategy would be a key part in ensuring success. An evaluation strategy has been proposed to, and accepted by the Management Board. This strategy will provide a sound basis for the Programme to begin a continuous process of consultation and improvement.

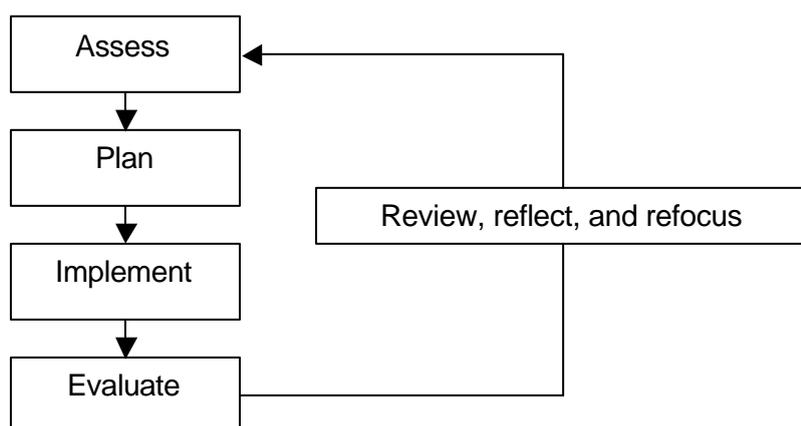
Evaluation and Monitoring Strategy

Sure Start Orton will operate under a culture of constant evaluation and consultation based on reflective practise. The programme is a constant learning curve and is therefore an environment where it is acknowledged that mistakes may be made and will be learnt from. The Sure Start ethos, which promotes a learning culture, is about doing things differently and supports considered risk taking.

The purpose of this document is to outline initial consultation and evaluation procedures within Sure Start Orton. This strategy seeks to inform:

- ◆ Staff
- ◆ Parents
- ◆ Management Board members
- ◆ Partner organisations/agencies
- ◆ Partnership Board and other interested parties

It is based on a holistic vision of consultation and evaluation and follows the principles of assess, plan, implement and evaluate.



Internal Evaluation

Internal evaluation will be based on reflection and will assist in re-focusing the services provided. Evaluation of individual projects will be conducted at three levels of operation. This begins with the quality and type of consultation used in order to respond to issues raised by parents. Secondly at the planning stage a **Project Planning Document** will be completed, to include an implementation plan, a targets and objectives agenda and an agreed method of evaluation. Finally the project will be evaluated at a suitable point post delivery. The process then starts again. Parents should participate at each stage of the continuous cycle. The evaluations should be designed according to the nature of the project. For some projects, such as trips and events, a quantitative evaluation is all that maybe necessary. For other projects, for example those that involve training and education, a quantitative evaluation will not give all of the information required and, therefore, a qualitative method should be used. It is essential that before a project is initiated and agreed, an appropriate evaluation be designed.

The evaluation should:

- Assess the effectiveness of the project against its intended outcome.
- Consider if the project was value for money.
- Show any added value of the project in terms of any additional outcomes/outputs.
- Be output focused.

In addition to evaluation as a working part of all events and activities Sure Start Orton should:

- Carry out regular consultations in the Sure Start area to evaluate specified services or projects as part of a longer term, themed project. This should be defined by the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, a sub-group of the Management Board, and should link with the Parents Forum.
- Produce a **Quarterly Progress Report** for the Sure Start Management Board to include a summary of all completed evaluations.
- Produce an **Annual Report**, which will include a detailed evaluation document that considers cost and usage against both existing and potential service users.

External Evaluation

Independent Evaluation

An independent local evaluation will take place each year, working through consultation with, and documentation provided by, both service providers and service users. The independent evaluation will focus on:

- The process to date
- The satisfaction of local parents with local Sure Start services
- The Partnership arrangements, and its suitability to facilitate the necessary platform on which to deliver on the programme targets in 2004/5 and beyond.

Monitoring

Good monitoring data is essential to provide information in order to manage the programme effectively. This will help form the basis for key decisions about the future of services within the programme.

Data is routinely collected to monitor:

The take up of services

Any variances in uptake

Who is using a particular service

Monitoring Data will be used to help assess progress towards Public Service Agreements and Service Level Agreements at a national level as well as local milestones and targets.

Monitoring data can also be used as part of the evaluation of projects, events and activities and can help identify the success of these and other services in involving hard to reach groups.

Monitoring data will be reported as follows:

- A monthly report will be provided to Team members that shows, total numbers of families on the system, families within the Sure Start criteria on the system, contact data and specific information on a selected activity.
- A quarterly report will be included with the progress report to the Management Board and will include similar data to the monthly reports but for a complete quarter.
- As part of the annual report to support and strengthen individual services and projects.

Projects to date

The focus for the last 9 months has been on establishing monitoring systems, training, refining the registration process and proposing an evaluation strategy. It is still very early days for Sure Start Orton, and the team is working hard to establish relationships and gain trust from families within the area, as well as building a profile of the local community from contact and registration data. This is viewed as a vital starting point to ensure effective evaluation projects for the future.

However a number of smaller one-off projects have been completed during this time. These include:

The Summer Fun Day

The aims of the day were to engage with local families, increase awareness of Sure Start and raise the profile of the Programme within the area.

A simple questionnaire was used on the day together with some observation to evaluate the day. All partner agencies, that had attended and contributed to the day, were also consulted through a telephone interview.

The questionnaire design was kept simple to allow parents to complete the forms unaided and to minimise completion time. A total of 38 responses were received, which represented 20% of the families attending.

The evaluation supported the view of the staff that the event had been a success.

There were also several practical improvements that could be made to future events but the key findings showed that the event had engaged with a wide range of families from the local community. Simply, the day had been a huge success.

The Exercise Class

The aim of this project was to identify the reasons behind the failure of a twice-weekly exercise class that had initially been oversubscribed, but had dwindled to just 2 Mum's attending within 6 weeks.

A detailed interview with the Sports centre administrator and the crèche workers identified issues that had been raised by parents as they accessed this provision.

The administrator provided a list of the carers who had attended. Together with the information they had provided, this formed the basis of a telephone interview.

9 carers were contacted and completed the telephone questionnaire which represented 50% of the attendees of the 2 classes.

This process highlighted several key issues. These were used to recommend changes to the way the group was run.

These changes included running one of the classes as a morning session, defined time periods to a set of classes, a more rigid structure to the activity and ongoing and pertinent advertising. It was also concluded that feedback should be sort from the carers part way into the sessions to ensure that they were meeting the expectations of the participants.

Time For Me

The "Time For Me" confidence building course was run over a fixed period of 8 weeks. Of the original group of 9 mum's, 4 dropped out within 2 weeks. Together with some negative informal feedback a short piece of research was conducted to look at why there was such a high drop out rate so quickly into the sessions.

A user satisfaction questionnaire was completed by all those mum's who completed the course and telephone contact was made with 3 of the 4 mum's who dropped out.

The response to the survey was positive and very complimentary to the organiser.

The feedback from the telephone interviews was not conclusive and suggested no common link in the dropouts. A further course is currently being considered with a more carefully planned selection process for the participants.

How Sure Start Orton is developing evaluation.

Although the Programme is still quite new, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to support an effective evaluation strategy.

Monitoring and Evaluation Sub-Group

Set up as a sub group of the Management Board, the Monitoring and Evaluation Group has responsibility for:

- Overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of the Sure Start Programme on behalf of the Management Board.
- To ensure the timely return of monitoring information to the Regional Unit
- To consider monitoring information and identify trends and patterns that will effect service delivery.
- To make recommendations to the Management Board on issues arising from monitoring information.
- To determine methods of local evaluation and make recommendation to the Management Board.

Monitoring and Evaluation Forum

The Forum is a regular, informal session that includes evaluators from all 3 Peterborough Programmes, SSEYDCP and several Cambridgeshire Sure Start Programmes.

This group was set up to allow local evaluators to share good practise, discuss common problems and barriers and to invite guest professionals to talk about related subjects. This has included issues around data collection, including the views of children in evaluation projects and the inclusion of Fathers in Sure Start Programmes.

Ness Workshops

Representatives from Orton Sure Start have attended Ness workshops on cost-effective evaluation, working with fathers and an introduction to local evaluation.

Training

The Orton Evaluation Team has developed a structured approach to training that includes enhanced computer training to extract, manipulate and report on monitoring data. External training has included writing effective questionnaires, how to conduct evaluations that include vulnerable hard to reach groups and communicating with children.

As well as training that can be directly related to the role, courses on Data Protection, CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) study days and effective communication have been accessed to broaden general knowledge about the work of the team.

Clear training plans have been agreed to continue this work.

Where Next?

Currently Sure Start Orton is refining the data collection process and moving towards an electronic method of collection. This will improve the integrity of data as well as speed up the process of recording and inputting information onto the database. It is planned to develop a system for recording and tracking internal referrals using these handheld computers. Combined with the ability to monitor care worker access to families it is hoped that the result will reduce wasted time and resources, while still providing quality services to those families.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Sub Group is currently reviewing the evaluation strategy to look at how and when implementation can begin. Cordis Bright, the external evaluators have begun their work with the Programme and are expecting to complete this by April of this year. Training sessions for all staff are being planned to introduce and begin trials of the Project Planning Document. It is anticipated that following on from the Cordis Bright evaluation, a local internal piece of work will begin. This is expected to include a number of shorter projects following a common theme and picking up on any relevant points from the external report. The Monitoring and Evaluation Group are considering ideas for how this will work.

Acknowledgements

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Our thanks also go to Sure Start Scunthorpe who provided much of the framework on which our current system is based.