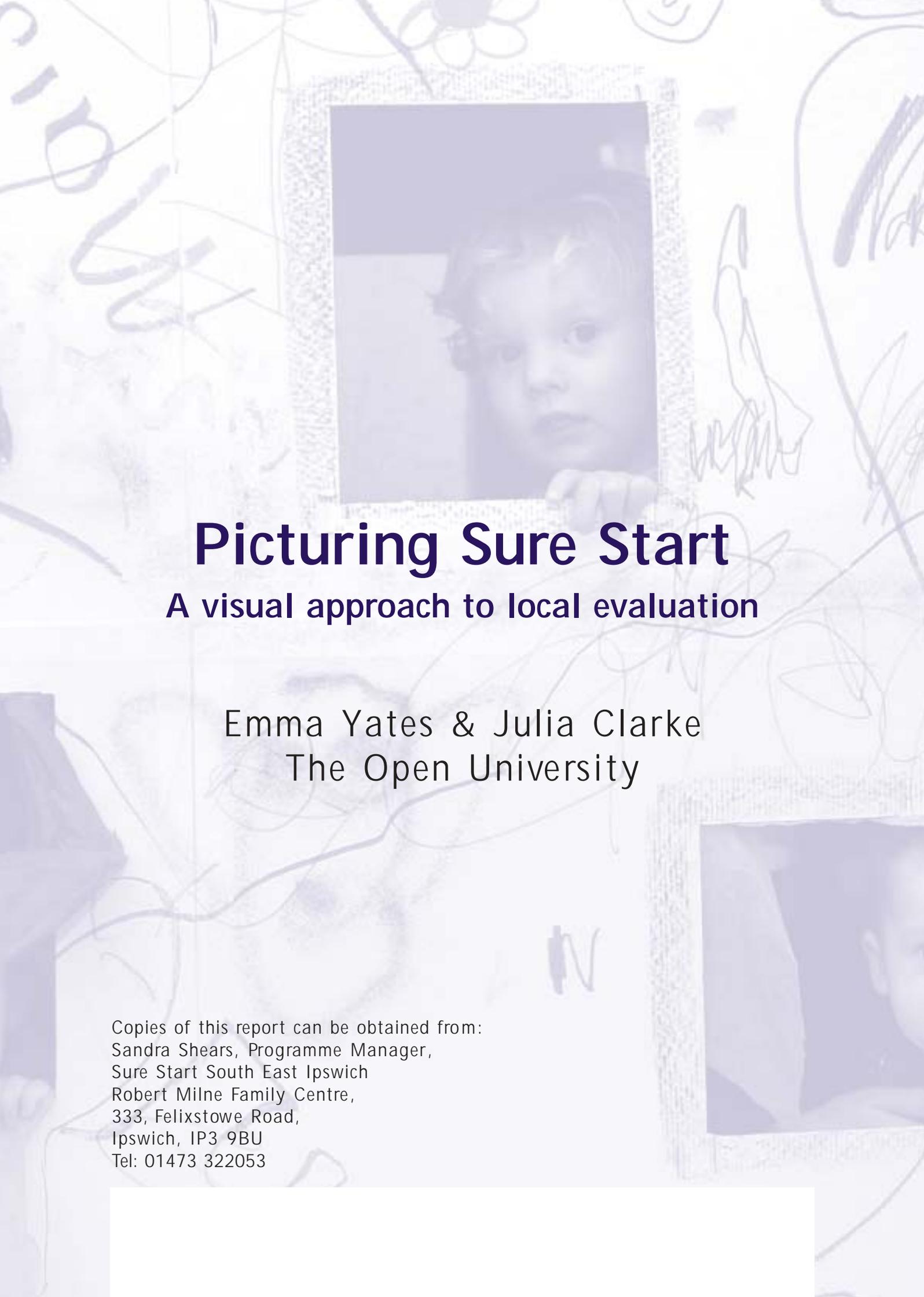


Picturing Sure Start

A visual approach to local evaluation



Emma Yates & Julia Clarke
The Open University
for
Sure Start, South East Ipswich



Picturing Sure Start

A visual approach to local evaluation

Emma Yates & Julia Clarke
The Open University

Copies of this report can be obtained from:
Sandra Shears, Programme Manager,
Sure Start South East Ipswich
Robert Milne Family Centre,
333, Felixstowe Road,
Ipswich, IP3 9BU
Tel: 01473 322053

South East Ipswich Local Evaluation Report 2002

Introduction	1
Places: different ways of looking at a place	3
People Pages: explaining our use of photography for this research, 9 and introducing some of the parents, staff, volunteers and children who have chosen images that represent what Sure Start means to them	
Projects: descriptions of 7 Sure Start projects	23
Sewing group	24
Community lunches	27
Playdays	29
Footprints	31
Dads Messy Play	32
Teenage Sexual Health Project	33
Five Alive Art Project	34
Parents' Vision: How far have we come? Where are we going?	
Evaluation Summary	37
Healthy, Happy Children	39
Starting school with confidence and skills	43
Recognition and support for parents	47
Information, Services and Help	51
Working alongside each other	55
The community will care about everyone	59
Making decisions and making things happen	65
Sure Start will run for 5-10 years	69
Methodology	71

Introduction

This is not a final report. The pictures in these pages show some of the places, people and projects that represent the work of Sure Start in South East Ipswich. This work has only just begun, but we can already see that Sure Start¹ has made a difference. The shop in Clapgate Lane is bursting at the seams and the popularity of the community lunches can be measured in decibels! This report celebrates these successes, and shows what people value now and what changes they still want to make. We also record some of the problems and difficulties, and look for reasons why particular groups and individuals have not yet joined in with Sure Start activities or used the services offered.

Two years ago, a group of parents translated the national Sure Start objectives into a Vision Statement for Sure Start in South East Ipswich. This is the vision that we set out to evaluate in this report:

- **Children in the Sure Start Programme will be healthier and happier.**
- **They will start school with the confidence and skills they need.**
- **Parents will have recognition and support for their role.**
- **They will be able to find information, services and help when needed.**
- **Parents, teachers and community groups will know how to work alongside each other.**
- **Members of the community will care about everyone within it. They will have knowledge of local issues and how to make their voices heard.**
- **They will have ways of making decisions and making things happen.**
- **Sure Start projects will run for 5 to 10 years. After this, some of the projects will no longer be needed. Others will be taken on by local people, or by local service providers.**

Over the past few months, Emma Yates has spent one day a week in South East Ipswich, visiting projects, walking around the area with mothers and children, sharing food at a community lunch, crawling under tables in the "Five Alive" art project, listening to what staff, parents, carers, children and volunteers told her about their experience of Sure Start. Extracts from Emma's journal, and the photographs she took, are presented here to stimulate more conversations about what is important for children growing up in South East Ipswich, and for the adults who care for them.

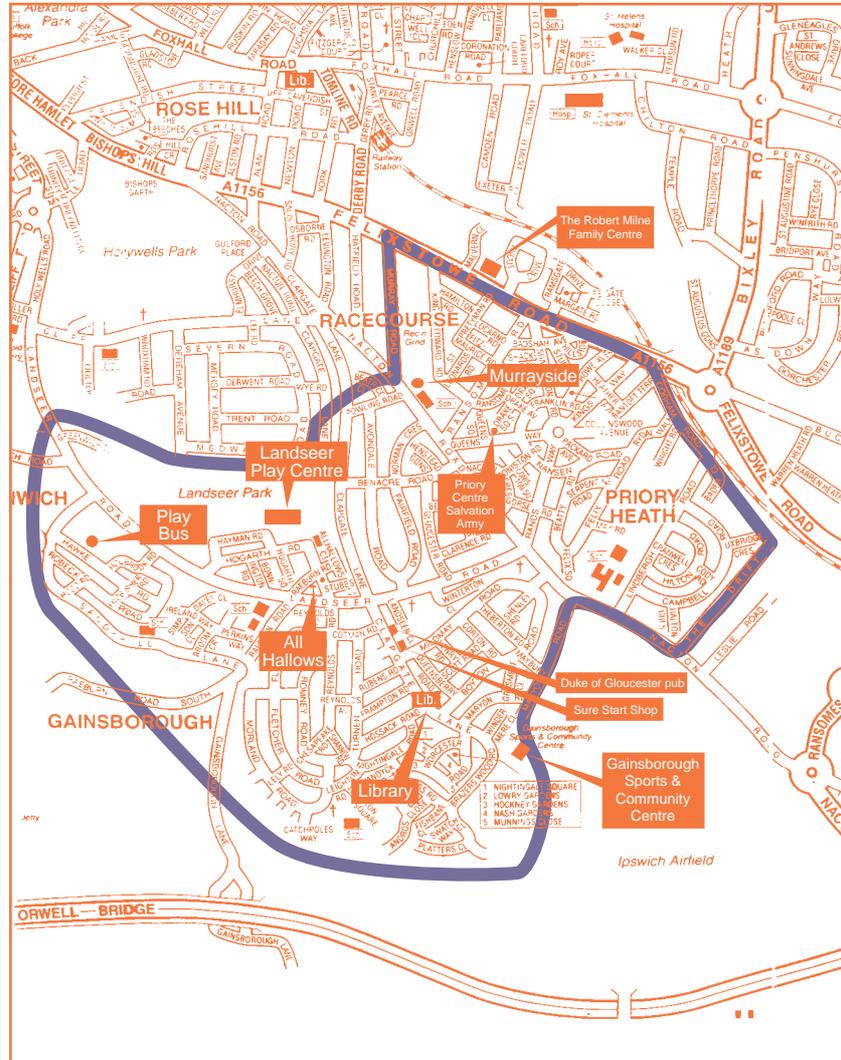
We hope you will want to add your own words and pictures to this report, or you may want to change what is already here. So the plan is to put this report onto a web site with space for it to grow and change along with the Sure Start projects and the people who live and work in this area. You will find the web site on:

<http://surestart.open.ac.uk>

¹ Throughout this report "Sure Start" generally refers only to Sure Start South East Ipswich and not to the national Sure Start programme.

Places

The Sure Start area in South East Ipswich covers Gainsborough, Greenwich, Priory Heath and Racecourse.



This map shows some of the places where Sure Start projects are working with parents and children. The 1998 Deprivation index showed that although Suffolk's health, employment and educational attainment are above the national average, Gainsborough and Priory Heath were amongst the 10% most deprived wards in the country.

Evaluation has to begin from a "baseline assessment". This means asking how things look before Sure Start, so we can see how much difference Sure Start projects have made. Facts and figures are being collected locally and nationally every month, so changes can be recorded in numbers of domestic accidents, for example, or children needing extra help at school. For this report, however, we have been looking at the changes that can't easily be measured and counted, and in this section we show different ways of looking at the places where people live, work and play.

- ✓ Higher than national average level of teenage mothers and children born of low birth weight
- ✓ Lower than average number of children achieving Key Stage level 2 or above at primary school
- ✓ 6.5% ethnic minority population compared with 2.2% in the rest of Suffolk
- ✓ Double the national average of single parent families and families in local authority rented housing
- ✓ High levels of unemployment



Information collected for Sure Start South East Ipswich baseline assessment¹

Graffiti wall - Is this the local community's "baseline assessment" of the facilities provided at Queensway Rec?

Sure Start have bought and plan to renovate an old pub, The Duke of Gloucester, and make it into a Sure Start centre. This will create a visible, accessible presence in the area. However, due to planning delays the building has been empty and was recently damaged by fire.



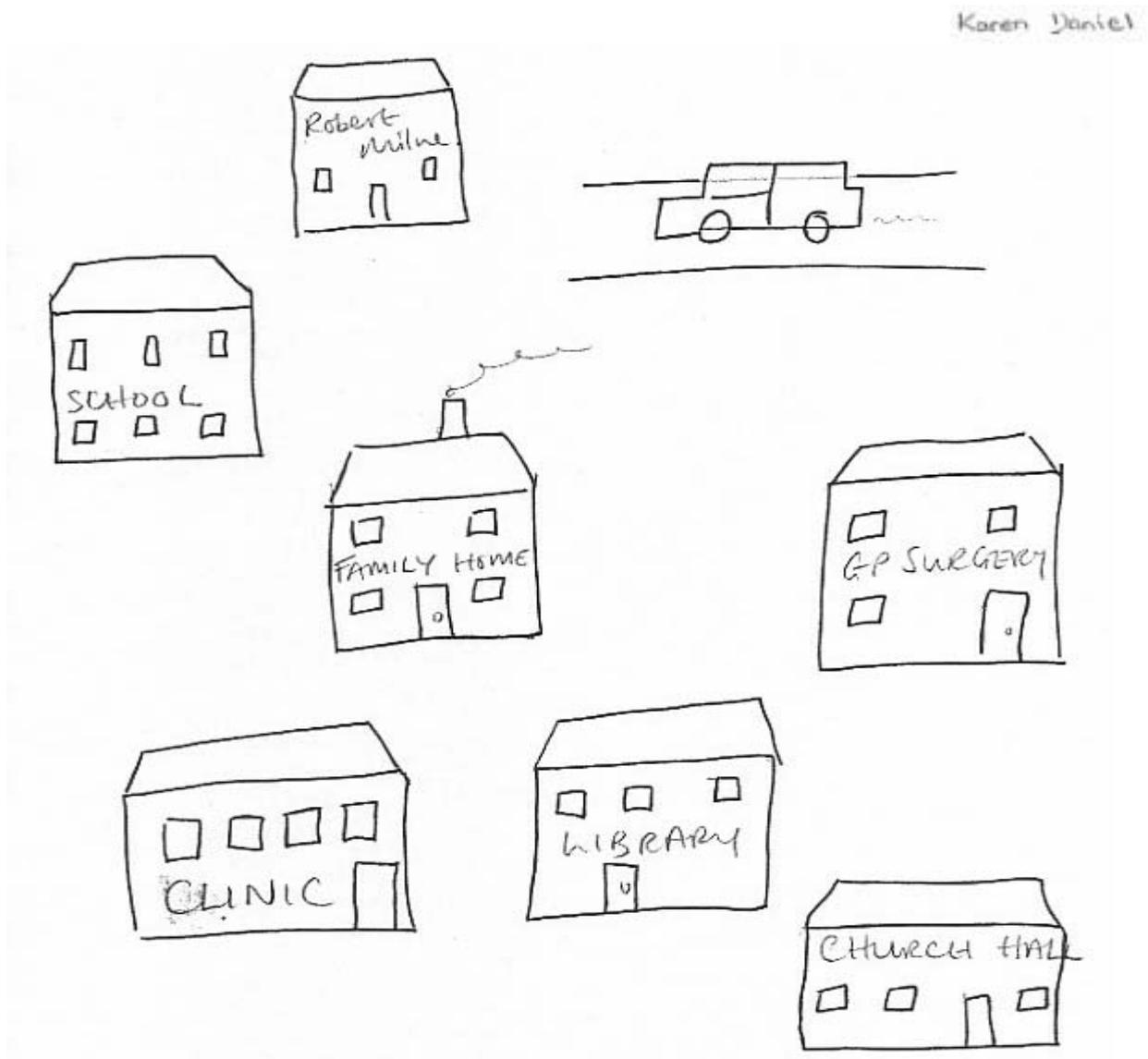
"When is the centre going to happen? I've watched the teenagers break in... all because Sure Start haven't started yet..." (local mum 30/5/02)

¹ Statistics from South East Ipswich Profile at <http://www.suffolkobservatory.info/>

Some of the home owners are worried that the Sure Start program is showing the area as disadvantaged and that this will affect their house prices,

'A lot of the mums on the new estate get cross because they think it's being portrayed as a bad area...they feel that's giving them a bad name when they've paid a lot of money for their homes' 30 /5/02

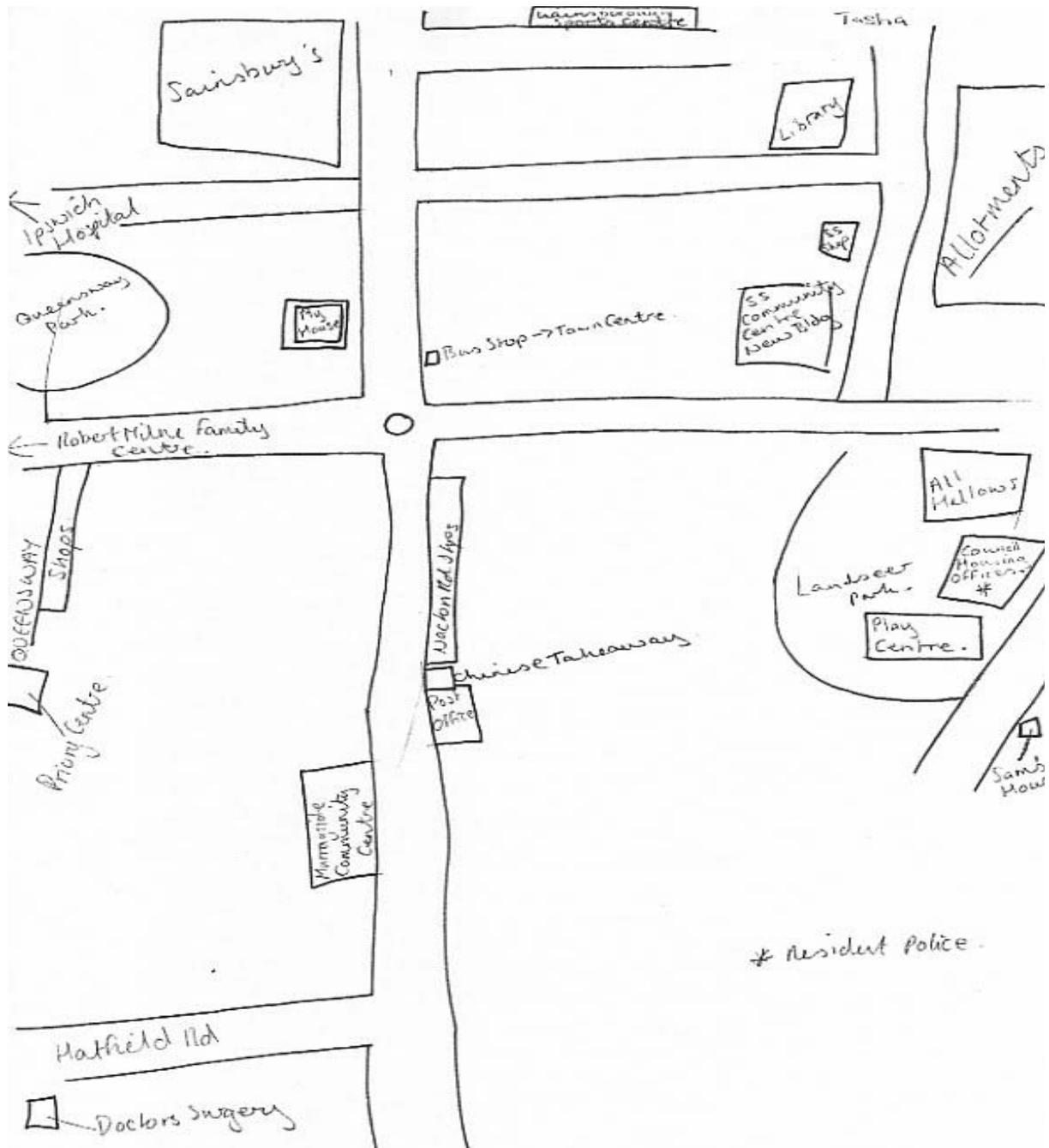
Emma asked people to draw maps of how they saw the area and the things that were important or stood out to them. Below are two examples, one from a Health Visitor (Karen Daniel) and one from a parent (Natasha Osbourne-Wales).



Karen Daniel's Map

Karen's map has everything in an inside space. There is a car, which is how she travels between her various places of work. Everything is contained within discrete, separate places, each with their own function i.e. G.P surgery or Library and each building plays its part in her particular working environment.

Compare Karen's map to Natasha's map below:

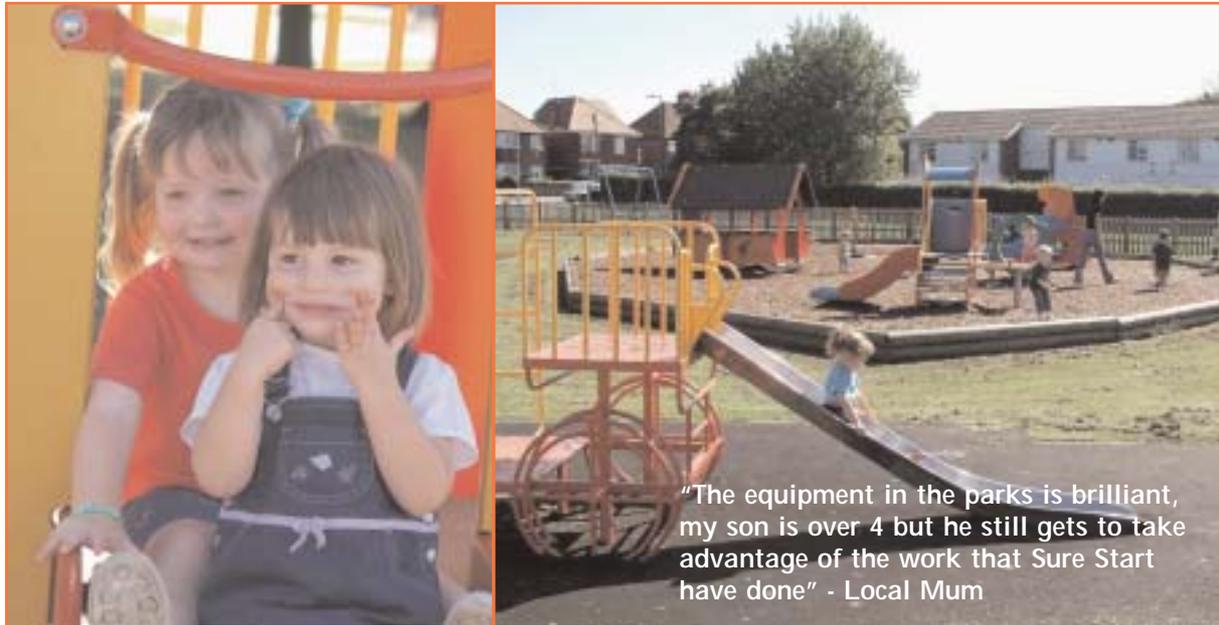


Natasha Osbourne-Wales' Map

Natasha's map has lots of green space marked (parks and allotments). She obviously walks a lot as she has marked the bus stop as important and all the various shops over the area. All of the community/ play centres are marked, showing how important these are to a parent, as are the police station and the housing offices. She has also marked her friend's house as important. She has drawn the area as much more of a joined up space that she walks or gets buses around.

Changing Places

The children's play parks at Murray Road and Landseer Park have been upgraded by Sure Start and have new play equipment.



However, there is still work to be done. One mother said,

The parks aren't being maintained very well. We're still finding glass, we have to do a recce before we let the kids out of the pushchairs".



Queensway Rec

A visible achievement of Sure Start in the area is the Sure Start Shop. The shop is open every morning as a drop in with various other sessions in the afternoon. People can buy safety equipment (stair gates, smoke alarms, cupboard locks etc.), clothes and toys for a small donation and also get information on other Sure Start services or immediate help if they need it. There is also a room for parents to sit and chat and toys for children to play with.



Drop In Shop, Clapgate Lane



"The biggest benefit I've had is to be able to go into the shop and just talk to someone" - Single parent with two children and no family support

Anna and Carly are volunteers with Sure Start's 'Teen Team' "We just started going to the shop on a Monday to talk and hang out"



People

We decided to use photography for this evaluation because pictures are generally more immediate and accessible than the written word. Emma began this process with the Bangladeshi women's' sewing group:

Using the Polaroid was very successful. At first everyone stopped doing any sewing and stood posing with arms round each other. Everybody liked using the camera. After a while people picked up the camera every so often and photos were much more natural
(Emma's notes. 7.2.02)



Emma then gave out disposable cameras to people in this group, asking them to take pictures of their daily lives, choosing their own subjects, and the ways they wanted other people to look at them. They came back with some lovely pictures.



But we soon realised that it would take several months to develop this work, if we wanted to help one small group to produce a photographic account of the impact of Sure start on their lives.

We decided that, at this stage, it would be more useful to take a wider view, including people from all the different groups involved in Sure Start.

So Emma used a digital camera to photograph the people, places and projects that she was able to visit in the time available.

Under the portrait on each of the next 12 pages, we have written some of the things people said in response to a question, "What can Sure Start do to make South East Ipswich a better place for children to grow up in?"

Each person was then asked to choose a photograph that represented what Sure Start means for them. Their chosen photograph appears below their portrait, together with their reasons for choosing that particular image. We don't have space to include all the "people pages" that we have made. So we left out those people whose chosen photographs have been used elsewhere in this report.



Clara French - Children's Worker

Clara would like to see more green space and less traffic so that kids can play outside. She says there is still a need for full day care, a neighbourhood nursery and more groups and venues for Sure Start projects



My work being all about play and getting parents to play with children, this photo says exactly what I'm trying to aim for, I'm trying to get parents on the floor and play with their children, join in and have fun. This is what I was trying to make happen and it has without the parents even realising they were doing it.



Gordon Munnings - Volunteer Parent Helper

Gordon Munnings is hoping that he can get more fathers introduced to Sure Start, Gordon feels there is a need for more trained play workers and an understanding of how kids minds work. He would also like to see more places for kids to play, better schooling and 'when the kids get to 13 or 14 get them a big social hall like they've got in London where they can fix cars and play snooker and get off the streets'





Parvan Begun - Student in Sewing Class

Parvan would like more playgroups and equipment in the parks for children. She also wishes there were more job opportunities for Bangladeshi women to work from home and earn money.

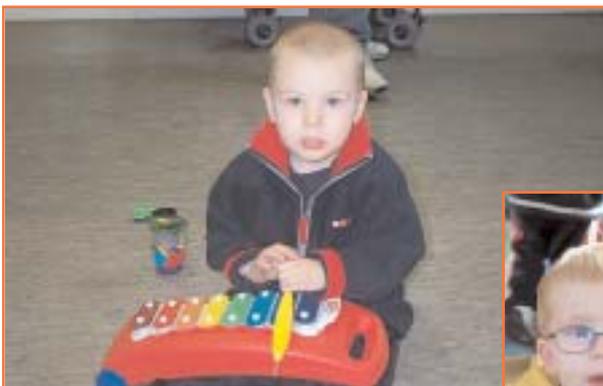


I have chosen this photograph because it shows the whole group and everyone is proud of what they have learnt



**Sevenia, Bailey, Yasmin, Esther and Oliver
Open Gate Playgroup**

What do you do when you are not at playgroup?
 I play with my Henry, he turns with his wheels
 I've got a friend who's a next door neighbour
 I go to the park, I've got my bike
 I play with my toys upstairs
 I play at home with my till
 I like the wood slide



He's playing music,
 I do that sometimes -
 Oliver



I like that one because he's
 wearing glasses - Esther



I like this one because
 they've got dressing up
 clothes - Sevenia



Shelim Miah - Sure Start Dad

Shelim Miah comes to the Bangladeshi fathers group, where there are opportunities to use a computer, play cards and spend time with their children. Shelim Miah would like to see more mixing between children and better opportunities for education and play. He also thinks that it is good to provide trips away, to show children different places.



If you give children the opportunity they will have time and fun with each other, this is good for the area, to get everyone involved

Samantha O'Donnell - Volunteer Parent Helper



Samantha is a volunteer helper on several Sure Start projects. She is concerned about vandalism and safety in the local parks and would like to see more integrated activities involving different groups in the community. Samantha would welcome some 'time out' crèche provision for her two children so she could get some sleep!



I chose this photo because it's got me and both my kids in it and we love music, that's one of the things we enjoy doing on a Monday and Friday

Eyunez Turay - Community Development Worker



Eyunez describes herself as a 'local girl' who already knows lots of people in the area. She would like to see agencies providing services that are more accessible to this community, at the same time, Sure Start can help all sections of the community to become activists, making sure there are adequate resources for children and enabling adults to gain the confidence to access opportunities for work.



There's all members of the community in this photograph and that's my remit really, to make sure that happens and people socialise together, the Community Lunches are really important for that

Natasha Osbourne-Wales - Chair of Family Forum



Natasha would like to see Sure Start getting out and speaking to the older community, to make them feel more involved. She is also concerned about safe play facilities in the parks for older children and would like to see more beat police on the streets.



Sure Start gives everyone in the community a chance to learn new skills with their children and then they can take them with them. It's not only the white people or the black people it just helps everyone who's related to a 0-4 year old, not just the 0-4 year old

Stacey Ford - Family Learning Worker



Stacey believes that parent support groups will help children in the future because parents won't feel they are struggling alone. She would like to see more opportunities for both parents and children to have fun together. Sure Start can make communities aware that they have the power to change things for themselves. An immediate aim should be to make the area a cleaner, friendlier place for people to live in by cleaning up the rubbish; dog mess and children's play areas.



I think the Community Lunches are a really good idea in drawing the Community together. People that pass each other every day on the street and don't give each other a second glance can actually be in the same room together and know that they've got things in common with each other and a shared link

Mrs Keeble - local mum



Mrs Keeble has done some childcare courses through Sure Start and is hoping to become a registered childminder. Mrs Keeble feels there is still a lack of good childcare provision in the area and she is concerned about vandalism and safety in the parks. She would like to see a children's play park in front of the pub but feels that this should be protected with security cameras.



It shows that Sure Start have not made as much progress as they had hoped. There's been a lot of talk about the building, what was going to be in it and all sorts of hype and nothing's surfaced yet.

Max Thomas - family worker



Max Thomas works with families who have children of mixed parentage or are themselves of mixed parentage. He is particularly concerned about communication, finding out where people visit the most and "getting the message across so that people come to us". Max also wants to provide communities with tools that empower people to support themselves and other communities around them.



It's a multi-cultural society we live in and we're trying to get people together, children are the fundamental area that we need to improve in. This picture reflects that children in their innocence will come through if we give them the nurturing they need

Sandra Shears - Project Manager



Sandra wants to build on what Sure Start are doing with South East Ipswich Partnership and start to deliver some of the things that parents and the community are asking for across the board, she believes Sure Start has to work with all parts of the community to make a real difference. What is needed is a real willingness and activity on the ground from the mainstream agencies and voluntary agencies working together to do things differently, to change the way they are looking at the community and deliver services that connect.



This encapsulates for me the kind of open activities we are trying to offer to show what inclusive means in Sure Start in South East Ipswich. When I first got into this post in Jan 2002, the first community lunch that we had, all the professionals that we'd invited stood down one end of the room with their chains and badges on and I remember clearly one of the health team said 'oh that's one of my clients' about a parent. There was a separation between parents and staff, and looking at this photograph here I can see how far we've come. There are parents and staff together here listening to and respecting each other

Projects

Over thirty projects have been set up or supported by Sure Start in South East Ipswich. Records are kept of the numbers of people attending each project or event, with details of age, ethnic background and so on. These are collected and analysed by the monitoring officer, and the statistics are included in progress reports against quarterly milestones. You can ask for copies of these, and other reports, from the Sure Start Office at the Robert Milne Family Centre (see address on the title page of this report). Throughout this report you will find references to day trips, parties, speech and language sessions, home visits, safety equipment schemes, toy libraries, volunteer training programmes and other Sure Start initiatives. Here we introduce some of the projects that have paid particular attention to reaching diverse groups of people, or where local people are working together to address their own particular needs and interests.

The Sewing Class provides opportunities for Bangladeshi and other Asian women to learn practical skills with direct economic benefits, and no language barrier. At the same time, these women are meeting socially and sharing their experiences of living and raising children in South East Ipswich.

The parents who organise the **Community Lunches** have also learnt new skills, and achieved catering qualifications to prove it. The fact that over 200 people of all ages turn up to eat, talk, help each other and play together on these occasions is a clear indication of their success.

Free refreshments are also a feature of the **Playdays**, where parents and carers may be re-discovering forgotten skills as they get down on the floor to play. It has been more difficult to round up the men for **Dads' Messy Play** sessions, but we could easily have filled this report with all the wonderful pictures of paint-spattered adults and children enjoying the **Five Alive Art Project**.

An account of the **Footprints** breastfeeding support group has been included in the course materials for the Open University's "Early Years Practitioner Certificate" (advertised at the back of this report) as a model case of parents working in partnership with professionals.

Finally, the **Teenage Sexual Health Project** has been remarkably successful in reaching significant numbers of young people, through a relaxed, informal and generous approach to meeting the practical, emotional and social needs of this age group.

These descriptive accounts are generally positive, providing points of reference for a more critical perspective in the section that follows. When we turn to questions arising from the "Parents' Vision", we will evaluate shortcomings as well as achievements, and consider the work that still needs to be done.

Bangladeshi Women's Sewing Group

The sewing class is held in the Murrayside Community Center. There is a crèche with three workers and the sewing class is held in a separate room. Six to eight women attend the class, with the teacher, Mrs Khan and Nur Sulama, the Bangladeshi Support Worker.

When I attended the first class the women were learning how to make Shalwar Kameez (Trousers suits). They told me, through Nur Sulama, that there was only one shop in Ipswich that makes them and it is very expensive, so if they can learn to make them in the class it would be very helpful. According to Nur Sulama the women enjoy the class immensely 'they don't want to stop, not even for a break'



Learning to Cut Patterns

Although most of the women attending the class were Bangladeshi, who represent the largest Asian community in South East Ipswich, there was one Pakistani woman and one Sikh woman. Generally the women tend to leave their children at home with relatives but there were always between two to five children in the crèche. One mum said that although the older women and Grandmas in the community like the mums to leave the children at home with them, she felt that they were better off and could learn far more in a crèche or playgroup. (Emma's notes 7/2/02)

Community Lunches

The Community Lunches happen once a month on a Thursday from 12.30 - 2.00. Parents and staff jointly run the lunches. Sure Start has trained a group of parents in food preparation and hygiene. They are given a budget each week and they do all the cooking and clearing up as a team. The staff provide the toys and help to set up the information needed for the theme of the lunch.



The parents also choose the themes for the lunches, which cover a range of topics such as Teenage Mums, Alcohol & Drug

Awareness and Women's Health. Guest speakers are sometimes invited and the lunches are seen by everyone as an opportunity for the community and professionals to come together in an informal manner. The idea is that they are as open an activity as possible and everyone in the community is welcome to take part on whatever level they wish.



Community Lunch at All Hallows Church Hall

Sandra Shears said of the lunches,

'What matters about the community lunch is that it is an open activity, that anyone can go along, it creates the feeling that people can drop in'

All the parents I spoke to said that they really enjoyed the lunches, they felt under no pressure to 'perform' in any way and could just relax and chat with other parents while their children played together. I noticed a lot more adults than children, and there was a definite sense of community of people looking out for each other's children. I asked a couple of people if I could take a photo of them with their children to which they replied 'they're not mine!' (Emma's notes, 14/2/02)

One mother told Emma that for a lot of mums, their socialising is done at the school gates, so the lunch was the only other time they would see each other. She also said that she could 'relax a bit and take my eyes off the kids.... It's a safe place for them to play', because everyone is in the same room, both children and parents, there is a party atmosphere and it can get very noisy.



Playing tents at a Community Lunch

For parents with little or no money, the holidays can be an expensive time, especially with no free school meals. When Emma asked why there were so many people at the lunch that day, a mum pointed out "A lot come for the food, especially as it's half term so there's no school dinners".

Both parents and staff feel that the lunches have been a great success in getting the community to come together, access Sure Start and provide another opportunity for children to play together in a safe, stimulating environment.

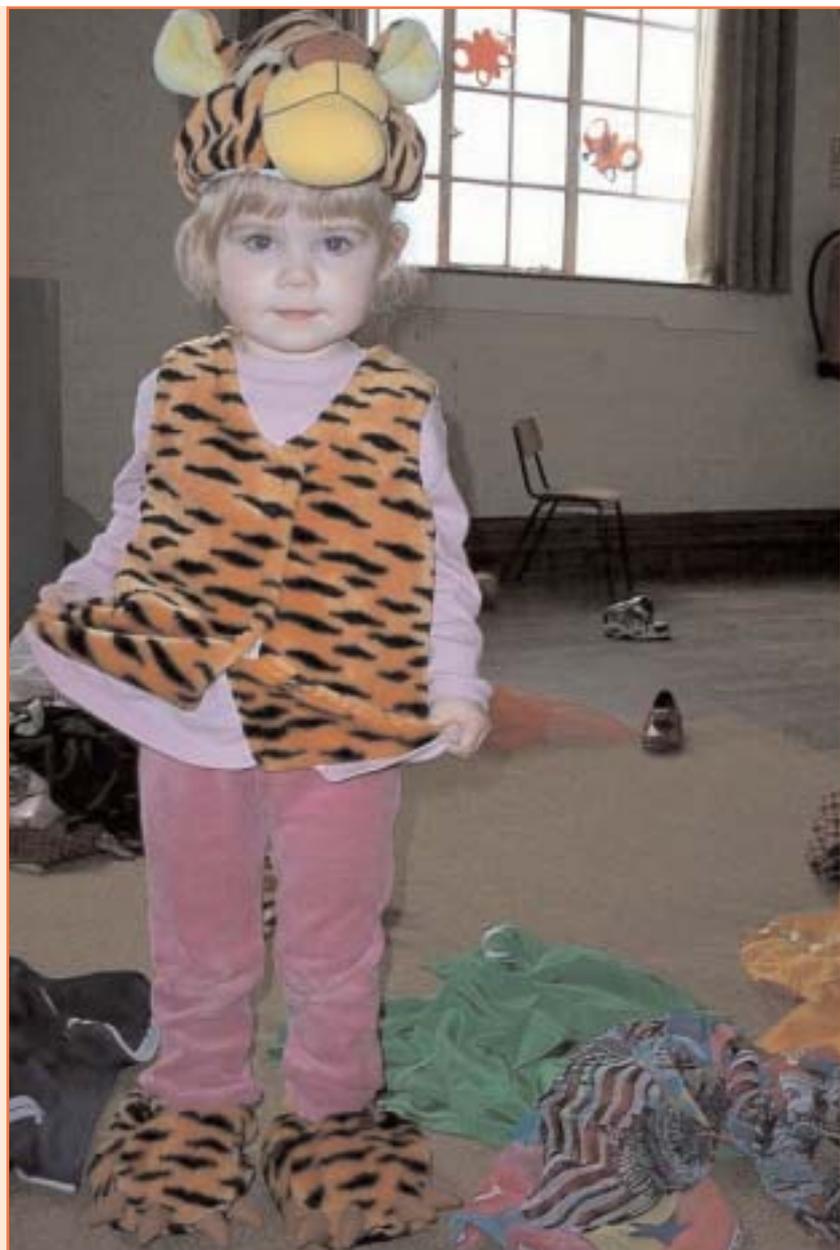
Playdays

Run on Wednesday and Friday afternoons in the Priory Community Centre and All Hallows Church Hall, these sessions are designed to give children the optimum in play experiences. Clara French is the Sure Start children's worker running the sessions along with three or four parent volunteers sharing an 'equal power base' who all meet regularly to discuss improvements and problems with the group. All the volunteers are doing the Community Work Skills course and have completed the volunteer training. There are fifteen to twenty parents regularly at each session and about twenty-five children, but numbers vary. At the end of each session there is a singing and music time where everyone sits together in a circle. The session is free and there are snacks and drinks available.

Pretend Play at Playdays

Parents are encouraged to get really involved with the play sessions and be as creative as possible with their children, to work with them on their level, something which doesn't always come naturally, as one parent put it,

'It's important to get down on the same level as your kids, I never used to do that'



Clara explained that when she first started running the sessions none of the parents were playing with their children,

'The kids would all be in the middle of the room and the parents would sit on chairs along the edge, there was little or no involvement from the parents'

Clara has worked very hard to combat this and get parents involved in the sessions more and has seen significant changes in parents' attitudes in the past year,

'What I'm trying to aim for is to get parents on the floor and play with their children, join in and have fun. This is what I was trying to make happen and it has without the parents even realising they were doing it, which means I'm achieving what I set out to do'

Each session is based around a theme that changes weekly. The themes include things like Physical Play, Junk Play, Pretend Play and Messy Play. Children are encouraged to make the most of the space available and get involved with everything within that space.



Making Music at Playdays

Footprints

Footprints is a group that provides drop-in breastfeeding support on Wednesday mornings for mothers with babies. It was set up by Sally Jeffs, Amanda Fellgett (who has since left) and Samantha Brace, who were all mums with small babies. They had experienced problems with breastfeeding themselves, and felt they would like to offer support to other mothers in a similar position.

The group is entirely run by the mums with professional support given by Sure Start project workers when needed. With their help they are now going into hospitals to help new mums to get started and give any information and help they may need. They have all undergone a ten-week training course to ensure they have the skills to offer the best support for a particular situation. Sure Start has given them a commitment that their training will be ongoing to make sure they can provide up to date support.



Sally said of the ten-week training, "The course provided skills in breastfeeding management and support, communication in both the medical and emotional aspects of breastfeeding including, pumps, latching on, positioning, mastitis, how to cope with exhaustion and feeding etc."

Sally has also completed various other courses through Sure Start including: Breastfeeding for Special Care Babies; Child Behaviour Management; Volunteer Training; UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative and a course in nutrition. She is about to start the NCT Breastfeeding Counsellor's Course

Sally, Amanda and Samantha went to Sure Start and suggested the idea and Sure Start provided them with all the support and means to get started. They were given £250 for toys, equipment and books etc and the Health Visitors, Midwives, Teenage Worker and Playworker gave out their information packs to people, Sure Start provided office support: photocopying, printing, telephone etc. Suffolk County Council also matched the initial £250. Sally found the premises to hold the group in and says of the help they received,

'Sure Start offered encouragement, and support throughout... not just financial, when we went through a rough patch they helped us to keep the group going by their ongoing support'.

The group has now been running for a year very successfully and a second group is about to start. Sure Start paid for the group's' 1st birthday party and has just given them another £350 to buy new toys and equipment which was very needed.

'We were using the toys in the Salvation Army premises and they were very old and a bit unhygienic to be honest, we just thought 'would we let our own children play with them?' the answer was no so we had to buy some new toys. We chose the toys according to the Early Years points of learning, the emphasis was on enhancing toys for babies, for older siblings we bought a tower with different platforms, a Noah's Ark, tents and tunnels and books. We blocked off one half of the room for the older children to play'



Footprints Drop In Session

Sally felt that the older siblings gain an awareness of breast feeding being a 'normal' activity and an emotional awareness and a sense of themselves as being part of that process. They learn things from each other and realise that having a new baby happens to other children as well. They also have books to accommodate different levels of learning for siblings. Sally felt that all this in turn brought awareness back into the community as a whole, which then supports other families. It was felt that providing a safe environment was essential to the group, 'We wanted to provide a safe, secure environment so it had to be mums and not partners, we wanted to provide time out for the mums'. The importance of this is not underestimated,

'For some of the mums it is their only chance to get out of the house, they can feed their babies and know that older children are in a safe environment'.

Dads' Messy Play

This project was established to encourage more fathers to get involved in playing with their children after Bill, one of the fathers had mentioned that he would like to have some time on his own to do something creative with his children. It was run on a Friday morning from 10 -12 in All Hallows Church Hall. The group has since folded and it was decided that more consultation with Dads was needed, it will hopefully run again in the autumn.

There have been problems in general in getting fathers involved in Sure Start even with a worker employed specifically for that purpose (who has since left). New initiatives include a Bangladeshi fathers group and Gordon Munnings' "fab dads".



Painting at Dads' Messy Play

Clara set up the messy play sessions but sadly only a few dads had been making use of the sessions.

'The idea was to provide a space for dads to have time with their children without mums there, dads often take a back seat and it's important that they play a valued part in their child's life' the problem, was that dads seem to be often shy of coming to groups and just wouldn't turn up'. Clara would often be left with an empty room. 'They say I'll come along and then they don't turn up, you have to just accept that when it happens'

Teenage Sexual Health Project

In June 2001 Sure Start project workers Gina Joyce and Louise Elmy, conducted an extensive survey amongst the young people of South East Ipswich. There was a high teenage pregnancy rate in the area, so sexual health services for young people needed to be reviewed and developed. Young people were interviewed all around South East Ipswich including the parks and outside local schools. 37 young people offered their opinions without completing the questionnaire and 163 completed the questionnaire. Gina and Louise's overall findings from the report were:

- **A sexual health service needs to be established. The prime need was accessibility, (e.e. local and convenient opening times)**
- **The staff operating within the service should be young, approachable and non-judgemental**
- **The environment should be relaxed and non-threatening**

Based on the report, a drop in service funded jointly with the Suffolk Teenage Pregnancy Unit was established at the Sure Start Shop on Clapgate Lane on a Monday evening. Gina Joyce runs the sessions and the service has been so well received by the young people of South East Ipswich that it has had to be moved to a bigger venue at the Murrayside Community Centre. Over 30 young people regularly attend the session and it has at times been as many as 60. According to Gina,

'They are forgotten about these kids, there's nothing for them to do, nowhere to go, a lot of them have brothers or sisters who are babies, so their parents haven't got much time, it's no wonder they hang out on the streets'.

Gina has worked hard to provide somewhere for them to go where they feel comfortable. There's a private space for a confidential chat, Gina can prescribe the 'morning after' pill, give out condoms and contraceptive advice, but says the more open the young people are to talking about sex the more interested they are in talking about relationships. She says,

'I let them play their music as loud as they like, we make it their space and they respect that'

The teenage pregnancy rate is being tracked and there is some emerging anecdotal evidence that the numbers of teenagers who are getting pregnant are falling since the drop-in was established.

The young people themselves say that they don't feel as embarrassed to ask for advice on sexual matters now.



'It's definitely made a difference' said one young woman, 'We talk about sex and all that now, Gina's really good, she never judges you and it's boys and girls together which is good'.

Contraception advice at the Monday night drop in

The parent volunteers have helped to start a 'Teen Teem' where young people can get involved in other aspects of Sure Start. Emma spoke to four young people who were helping at the community lunch. Anna and Carly are part of the Sure Start 'Teen Team' and Sinead and Anna go to the Monday night drop in. Gina had asked them if they would like to help out at the lunch that day. Emma asked why they thought so many young people in the area enjoyed going to the drop in,

'We like it cause we've got nowhere else to go, we're just on the streets otherwise doing nothing'.

The drop in is more than just advice on sex and contraception, it's somewhere for them to socialise

'We just chat to Gina, not just about sex, about everything, We listen to music'

Parents on the forum had asked for more baby-sitters in the area so Sure Start facilitated the provision of a baby-sitting service could be provided. Over 20 young people have completed the Red Cross course which gives them a certificate and means that they can earn money and volunteer to help on Sure Start trips and other projects.

Five Alive Art Project

This is a project in Christchurch Mansion funded by Eastern Arts. Through liaison with the Arts Resource Officer it was incorporated into the Playdays sessions with great success. Clara French the children's worker then introduced the project to local playgroups and school nurseries. The idea was to create a hands on, interactive exhibition of art for children to explore through play.

The exhibition has works of art from the Ipswich Borough Council collection of five established contemporary artists: Anthony Green, Maggi Hambling, Langlands & Bell, David Ryson and Bridget Riley. Each of these works was then reinterpreted into an interactive piece by five other artists.



At the end of the exhibition the interactive works will be put into loan crates with a large reproduction of the original which can then be loaned out to schools and groups along with a resource pack. The idea is to also send artists out into the community to work with these groups of children at the same time, hopefully reaching and giving confidence to a wider section of the community, especially people who wouldn't normally venture into an art gallery.



At one session I attended at all Hallows church hall the people consisted of various playleaders, a lot of whom were parents working voluntarily, Jevan, a local artist and Catherine Richardson who is the Arts Resource Officer at the Gallery. Jevan got everybody to lie under the table where he had posted an A4 sheet of paper saying 'The World is a Wonderful Place'. We all then wrote our names on a piece of paper and he spoke about how everyone had created something unique and how important this is to instill in pre school art experience as it gives children the confidence to experiment with their 'uniqueness' and develop their self confidence. 7/2/02



Making a cake at the Art Project

Parents' Vision

How far have we come? Where are we going?

In this section, we have organised Emma's field notes into themes related to Sure Start Objectives. In the early stages of Sure Start in South East Ipswich, these objectives were translated into the "Parent's Vision" statement which appears in the introduction to this report. The questions below each statement weren't formulated in advance, although Emma did ask some of them, like "What do you think 'school readiness means'?" in the course of open-ended conversations. They are questions that reflect the concerns of the people who took part in these conversations, identified through a thematic analysis of Emma's notes. Some answers to these questions are suggested in the following sequence of pictures, descriptions and anecdotes. However, there will always be other possible answers, and further questions to explore in the coming years.

"Healthy, happy children"

- **The value of play: how have play experiences been developed?**
- **Safety, risk and intervention: how does Sure Start negotiate different perceptions on these issues as well as offering practical support?**

Health improvements are clearly important objectives in all Sure Start programmes, and these are monitored through the national evaluation. Happiness is also a key to good health, but this is not so easy to measure, and the trips and social events that adults and children enjoy can also involve an element of risk.

"Starting school with confidence and skills"

- **'School Readiness', what do parents think this means?**
- **What difference has Sure Start made?**

Here we include the views of parents on the notion of school readiness, and on the benefits of different kinds of pre-school experience. We also point out that there is still a serious shortage of such provision, while illustrating the value of early intervention and teamwork in identifying and addressing needs.

"Recognition and support for parents"

- **How does Sure Start support parenting?**
- **How do professionals recognise different ideas about good parenting?**

While the intention is to recognise different ways of parenting, there is a warning here about hasty assumptions, and an account of the point where judgements will be made, and action taken, if a parent resorts to physical violence.

"Information, Services and Help"

- **How is Sure Start developing new approaches to service delivery?**
- **To what extent is Sure Start accessible to all?**

The open door of the shop, and the warm welcome that is offered to those who come through it, is recognised by many as an essential feature of Sure Start's work. We mention those who might be excluded for various reasons, although this question is addressed in more depth later on.

"Working alongside each other"

- **What does it mean for professionals and parents to work in partnership?**
- **How effective is the volunteer programme?**

Teamwork, trust, and empowerment are some of the benefits attributed to the work among Sure Start professionals, volunteers and parents. We report on mixed feelings about the volunteer training programme, but a very positive view of volunteers from parents who can turn for support to "one of us".

"The community will care about everyone"

- **What is a sense of community?**
- **Who is included in or excluded from particular projects and places?**

Since only half of all families in the target area are using Sure Start services, it's important to keep asking who is not here? Which groups and individuals feel left out, or choose not to join in? We can only offer suggestions from different people who are involved, although these include dissenting voices.

"Making decisions and making things happen"

- **What has Education/ Training contributed to individual change?**
- **How does Sure Start promote community action**

It is clear that working with Sure Start is seen as a learning experience for professional staff, volunteers and parents. Some have taken up opportunities to attend courses to develop language, literacy and vocational skills. Others have acquired skills and confidence through a combination of training, active participation and support provided for volunteer helpers and members of decision-making groups like the Family Forum.

"Sure Start projects will run for 5 - 10 years"

- **How is Sure Start building social capacity?**
- **What lasting changes are being made in the community and environment?**

The chair of the Family Forum explains how the experience of being involved in every stage of a community project, from initial planning to final evaluation, has helped to develop confidence among those who have participated. Sure Start staff continue to provide practical help for parents wanting to take action on community issues. But parents are increasingly able to act on their own initiative while Sure Start withdraws to take a back seat and this begins to raise new questions about the politics of sustainability.

'Healthy, happy children'

How does play contribute to health and happiness?

There has been a great deal of work done within Sure Start to promote play experiences with parents and children. Clara French, the Sure Start Childrens' worker runs the Playdays, which are described in the "Projects" section earlier. When Emma visited a Playday in March, Clara was ecstatic because she had managed to get the parents to sit on the floor. There were about 50 parents and children, all busy making music shakers. Clara explained that usually they all sit on chairs while the kids played on the floor, she felt that it was really important for developing play experiences with parents and children that they sit together.



Getting down on the floor

A mum at the session explained how the Playdays had helped her with her son,

'My son has developmental problems, he used to do nothing but whinge and stick to me, and now he's just free, through play access and that he knows other kids and when I tell him what we are going to do for the day he's really happy'.

Another mum said that Playdays had given her more confidence to play with her children more at home,

'It's important to get down on the same level as your kids, I never used to do that'

Playing at home

A 'play pack' has been developed by the Speech Therapist, Health Visitor and Childcare Team to send to parents when a child is 7 months with the Health Visitor, then on their 1st, 2nd and 3rd birthdays. This contains a toy, a book and ideas for easy play at home on bright laminated card, which can then be stuck on the fridge. This will all be sent in a rucksack, which the child could also use. Clara explained the purpose of the playpacks,

'It's about getting different play activities and ideas for use in the home which will in turn give children an early start and help parents to recognise their child's developmental stages'

This can often come from very simple ideas

'People don't always realise or have the time to realise how easy it is to play with your kids at home, if you've got a bucket of water and a couple of pots you can have a great time'

For the Bangladeshi community, play is also an issue. Many parents felt that they would like the opportunity for more quality play experiences with their children. One mum said she was using a playgroup but would like to have somewhere where Bangladeshi parents and children could come together specifically to play.



In a conversation at a community lunch, the parent of a little boy with partial hearing commented on the value of opportunities for social play,

'My son, the 4 year old he's partially deaf, he's had real problems, I couldn't leave him at all, he'd scream and scream, at least here he can go off and play and he knows I'm right here if he needs me... he loves it here, he really does, he asks me for days before is it today?' 11/4/02

The lunches attract such large numbers, however, that staff and parents may feel they are treading a fine line between healthy chaos and the need for crowd control!

Safety, risk and intervention: how does Sure Start negotiate different perceptions on these issues as well as provide practical support?

The community lunches attract over 200 parents and children and the Sure Start shop is often bursting at the seams. This is clearly a mark of success for a project in which the aim is to keep a number of activities open-ended and welcome to all. But this open door policy can also be risky. The shop is usually run by one member of staff and a couple of parent volunteers. Staff are often stretched when trying to supervise the front and back rooms in the shop at the same time. Clara explained that she found it difficult to combine giving out safety equipment, taking money, trying to welcome new parents and give out information at the same time as looking after children whose parents are often desperate for a break and don't always keep a close eye on them. She felt they needed someone else in the shop just to supervise the children.

Sandra told Emma about the day when Sure Start took 150 people on a trip to the seaside in the summer of 2001. Some of the parents did not bring swimming costumes, one mother fell asleep and Sandra and Clara spent the entire time supervising the very young children, whose parents weren't watching them from getting sunburnt. There was a degree of risk on this trip that was shared with the parents. Sandra believes that the popularity of the trips helps to establish good relationships with Sure Start among families who might be put off by too many restrictions and precautions. She explained,

'We live in a very risk adverse culture, so in order to connect to these families where they are, there is a certain degree of risk' 28/3/02



While taking calculated risks in order to include as many people as possible in community events, Sure Start provides real practical support with reducing the risk of accidents at home. The Sure Start Shop has given out over 150 stair gates and a range of safety equipment including smoke alarms, bath thermometers, cupboard and fridge locks. Families make a token donation of 50p or £1, and people said that this scheme has made a big practical difference to their lives,

'They're putting their money where their mouth is ... we've all got safety gates and smoke alarms now' 15/3/02.

However, there is a widespread concern among parents about health and safety in the parks and streets. This is documented in Sure Start monitoring reports and the minutes of several Family Forum meetings as well as in the People Pages of this report. Sure Start volunteers have cleared gardens and fixed fences. Dog bins are now provided in local parks, but several parents said the parks were not safe for young children. This feeling was expressed by a Bangladeshi mum at the community lunch, who said,

'I want my children to be able to go outside and play anywhere,'

Another mum, when asked what she'd do if there was unlimited money to improve the area, said,

'I'd build something for the teenagers so that they're not just hanging out at the shops terrorising everyone'

Several parents who were asked the same question pointed to the need to improve Queensway Rec.

'I'd sort out Queensway Rec., make it safe for kids to go on . . it needs cameras, lights, somewhere decent for the teenagers to hang out down the other end, it needs to be fenced in and gates closed at night...'



Queensway Rec

Starting School with confidence and skills

School Readiness, what do parents think this means? What difference has Sure Start made?

Emma asked Sally Jeffs, who is a mother of four children between the ages of one and ten, what she thought School Readiness meant. "How do you get your kids ready for school?" She said the number one factor for her was instilling confidence through social skills and getting them used to playing with other children, and explained how Sure Start had helped with this,

'My older two didn't have nearly as much confidence as the younger ones, they've been able to socialise so much more'



Sally Jeffs with her two youngest children

Sally also said that Sure Start had helped her to gain in confidence herself and that this in turn had helped her children,

'If I'm getting more for myself, I've got more to give my kids'. 22/3/02

A mother at Playdays said how important the sessions had been for her and her son, building his confidence before he is ready to play without his mother. Her son has some speech and hearing problems and she pointed out that, 'If there is a child with a disability, it's good for them because you're here as well' and added,

'He's at nursery now, and he loves it, but to come here, it starts him off from somewhere, and I'm here as well, it's scary for a child when you first leave them'

Affordable daycare and free play opportunities

For a lot of parents on low or no income, their children's first experience of child care is when they go to nursery at 3 and a half or 4 years old. There is a serious shortage of affordable playgroup and daycare places in South East Ipswich and the ones that do exist have extraordinarily long waiting lists.



Children at the Open Gate Playgroup

Sure Start has begun to fill the gap with some crèche provision and free play opportunities with parents, to start building children's confidence and social skills. The Open Gate Playgroup in the Robert Milne Family Centre has a really nice well-equipped main room and a light, airy art and craft room with doors that open onto an outside space. There have been long waiting lists of up to 50 children, Sandra says that this is typical of the area, as there aren't enough playgroups and stressed that "40% of children under 4 in the Sure Start area have no access to registered playgroups"

'They pick up English more easily'

The issue of instilling confidence in children was raised by a couple of the Bangladeshi parents, who felt that it was about the need for tolerance and communication within the whole community. Parvan Begum, one of the Bangladeshi mums from the sewing class, told Emma why she felt it was important to bring her children to the crèche at Murrayside Community Centre,

'Here the children come, they meet other children, they play and then they all go to school together' 11/4/02

Parvan felt that this was especially important among children for whom English may be a second language, so that school would not be such a huge shock. She also said that although the older women and Grandmas in the Bangladeshi community like the mums to leave the children at home with them, she personally felt that it was better for them, and they could learn far more in a crèche or playgroup

'It's not that they don't learn at home but they pick up English more easily at playgroup and this makes it easier for them to learn and mix with other children when they go to school. There is also more for them to play with' 23/5/02

Getting in Early

Carol Davey is the Portage worker who co-runs the Friday morning Early Years Play & Language group, for children and parents in the Sure Start area. These are all children who have also been seen at home on a one to one basis and appear to have speech & language difficulties, developmental delay or other special needs. The group gives the children and their carers a chance to meet together and interact, learn some play skills and get help and support for their particular difficulties. Carol explained that there is a big waiting list for people to be seen by a Portage worker in East Suffolk but because she is employed just for the Sure Start area she is able to see children who perhaps aren't so delayed or have such severe needs. Emphasising the value of team work, Carol pointed out that children are being identified and seen earlier than they might have been, because a lot of the Sure Start team have the expertise to identify problems and refer children to her for help. So these children are getting more opportunities to start school with the same confidence and capacity to learn as every other child.

'Because people are out there and seeing younger children, they're getting to them a lot earlier. Jobs I've done in the past, children would start playgroup or even nursery and suddenly there'd be all these problems' - (Carol Davey 22/3/02)

Carol told Emma about a scheme in Oxford called PEEP where they get a list of all the babies born in the area and set up singing/ rhyming workshops that everyone can go to. Each family gets a visit and an invitation to one of these

sessions when their baby is 6 or 7 weeks old. Then they have a group for under 1's, then 1's, 2's and 3's. She is really keen to get something like this going in South East Ipswich, and feels this would also help to encourage early language skills for all children in the area during the very important early years period.



Recognition and Support for Parents

How does Sure Start support parenting?

Becoming a parent can be a very isolating experience. According to the Sure Start Health Visitor's survey of 173 families (June 2001), the most important factor for new parents (88%) was to socialise more. This was rated more highly than better play experience, or more informal post-natal care. A mother with little support told Emma that,

'When you are a single parent on your own with two young children, the biggest problem is always the isolation. My family don't live in Ipswich so I'm really on my own. Having somewhere you know you can go to for support when you've got a problem, when you're feeling low, that's what your family is there for, so for me Sure Start has become my replacement family .

This parent has since become a community volunteer and continues to be more and more involved in her community through Sure Start.

Practical support: Credit Union

The Credit Union is a saving scheme endorsed by Sure Start. It allows people to borrow up to four times their savings and when you pay the money back a small amount goes back into the savings at the same time. All profit is shared among the members and the interest on the money borrowed is 1%. Stacey, the family learning worker, feels the scheme is very beneficial for people on low or no income,

'It's a good idea as it encourages saving, even in very small amounts, you can save as little as 50p and children can join as well, so you are always saving even when you are paying money back'

Emma spoke to a single parent of two children with no family support and a physical disability, which prevents her from working. Her experience of Sure Start has been extremely positive, as she explained,

'I've got a physical disability so I can't work, Sure Start have helped a lot... like the Credit union and money management, instead of sitting there worrying about everything on my own I've got someone I can off load things onto and start solving problems'

How do professionals recognise different ideas about good parenting?

Questioning Assumptions

Sometimes situations occur where professionals have the wrong idea about what parents are actually doing. Sandra mentioned, for example, that, 'I was told by staff in a local school that none of the Bangladeshi children are using the parks' - 28/3/02. The Sure Start support worker suggested an outing for the Bangladeshi families as 'when nurseries and playgroups visit the parks the children are unsure of the equipment'. However, when Emma spoke to some of the Bangladeshi mums at the sewing group they all said that they took their children to the parks and often used them. This is one example of how one piece of information can lead to misconceptions about a group of people.



Thinking differently about parenting

At one of the Parent Volunteer classes held at Gainsbrough Sports Centre, Emma spoke to Donna McCoy, a mum who has three teenagers and a 3yr old. She said that coming to the course had made her think differently about parenting her youngest child,

'Even the way I'm looking after him is different from coming to these classes... the way I'm correcting him, I'll give myself time out now, I'll leave him in the room and come back. Before I would lose it and shout all the time' 17/5/02

Eyunez, the community development worker, told Emma that Sure Start's approach to parents was different from that of the usual Social Work or Health professional,

'Usually professionals go in with their own agenda, they're worried about meeting their targets. My approach is that if you build a relationship and work with parents, you'll meet those targets'

However, the line is clearly drawn when a parent resorts to violence, as Emma observed. Sure Start subsidises places for children to attend Open Gate Playgroup. The mother of one of these children was telling Emma that she still shares a bed at her parents' house with her 3½ year old son, who has some behavioural problems. Sure Start have been helping her to write to Housing and Social Services departments to try and get suitable housing. While they were talking, Emma found herself caught up in an incident that posed a challenge to both her own, and the Sure Start worker's reluctance to pass judgement on different approaches to parenting. Emma recorded in her notes,

While I was talking to her, her son was holding a little girl by the throat and she was crying, I took the little girl away from him and the boy's mum hit him really hard three or four times. The playworker dealt with this by saying, ' I understand that he is your son, but we don't allow anyone to hit children in this room, we think it's wrong and you mustn't do it here in front of other children OK'....

This incident was recorded on a database kept by Social Services, and the mother was referred to a behaviour management course. Two weeks later, Emma saw this mother at a community lunch and asked her how she felt about this intervention,

"... the mother told me she had felt humiliated by the workers who had told her off when the incident had happened. However she also spoke about the parenting course that Sure Start had sent her on and that it had helped her to learn ways of controlling her son's behaviour without using violence, 'Basically, they said you don't hit the child back and that there are other ways of punishing them'.

The mother also commented that,

They're (Sure Start) starting up a support group for parents with problem children, that would be good' (11/4/02)

This reflects the Sure Start approach of trying not to take away power from a parent, but offering an alternative way of dealing with things. As Stacey, the family learning worker put it

'This is about empowering people. You can't say to someone 'you cannot hit your children' without providing them with another method to deal with the situation'

Information, Services & Help

How is Sure Start developing new approaches to service delivery?

In her approach to Community Development, Eyunez has found it helpful that she already knew a lot of people in the area. Initially she walked around the streets asking people with buggies if she could visit them to talk about Sure Start. She believes that if she can identify and deal with their immediate needs, people would keep coming back for help,

'Communities like this have been let down a lot of the time, I like to address things and do it quickly, you have to act on what people are saying so you build that trust' (22/3/02)

Gina, the Sure Start midwife, also combines a relaxed approach with a commitment to addressing people's immediate needs and providing practical help. We have already described the success of the Teenage Sexual Health Project, and Sandra tried to sum up a style of work that accounts for such success in reaching out to people who might be reluctant to approach the usual professional agencies for help,

'It's simple things like does it mean you greet people with their first name, does it mean you use your first name, does it mean you speak to the child, does it mean you operate without using words like should, would and can't, does it mean you don't judge people, you accept them for who they are and where they're at... It's the idea of listening to people and always responding with warmth, sensitivity and compassion, in every situation' (22/3/02)

This approach is certainly recognised by people for whom the Sure Start shop has been a particularly accessible point of contact. When Emma spent a few hours in the shop, she heard several accounts of people getting involved in various Sure Start projects and activities through wandering into the shop. One woman said that since coming into the shop, she has started a computer course at Murrayside, where there is a crèche for the children, and she goes to the community lunches. Another woman said that she had been going mad at home and had come to the shop, 'to get out of the house as the kids were driving me up the wall'. It was important for this woman that there were parent volunteers in the shop who '...were on the same level as you and wouldn't judge you'. (21/2/02)

Gemma, one of the parent volunteers, admitted that,

'If I hadn't gone into the shop with the Mothers and Toddlers group, I wouldn't have got involved' 15/3/02

Gemma sees her role as helping to make other parents feel more at ease, and explained her approach to those who were unsure about coming in,

'All you can say is 'look it's not all health professionals, there are normal people there, and they're not going to come round your house' (15/3/02).

One woman who suffers from depression told Emma that she had called into the shop and spoken to a Sure Start worker because she was passing and the door was open. She summed up the warm welcome she always finds there,

'They're all friendly and they nearly always make you a cup of tea when you come in'



'Another said that, before Sure Start,

'There was nothing really before, we just used to stay indoors, there was nowhere to go nearby' 11/4/02

An open door may be all that is needed for people who feel isolated, depressed and unable to deal with their very real problems

To what extent is Sure Start accessible to all?

Some parents felt that a lot of people were still suspicious of Sure Start,

'There are plenty of people who don't come to any of it. My neighbour she doesn't come and what her problem was, was she thought they were all professionals and that she was going to get judged.... they don't want to be railroaded into it... you get enough of that from Social Services and it scares people. She thought people would give her all the looks and that if she told her children off. And then she realised we all tell our children off'
15/3/02

A single mum at the lunch, who has five children, said that,

'If you've got one or two children, I think it's easier but when you've got spaced out ages, some at school, some at nursery it's awkward because you're trying to make time around the kids, and because I'm on my own it's more difficult anyway' (11/4/02)

Some of the Bangladeshi women appreciated the special swimming sessions that Sure Start arranged at a local pool,

'Sure Start had a swimming trip to the pool in town for women from our community and I wore my Shalwar Kameez ... it's the first time I swim in this country with my little girl'

Sandra talked of the success of the swimming classes but said that she would like to see some of the community groups coming together more, noting that the Bangladeshi parents rarely came to the community lunches.

Emma asked some of the women at the sewing class if they knew about other Sure Start projects. Two knew about the Bangladeshi parents forum, but one didn't know what it was for, while the other explained she went along sometimes to hear different points of view within the Bangladeshi community and what they would like to change. One woman was Pakistani and didn't know about the forum at all or much about Sure Start. Most of the women had taken part in Sure Start activities including a post natal course, computer course, sewing group, Arabic classes, swimming group and a trip to Buckingham Palace. They all said that they would like more trips and hope to go to London Zoo in the summer.

Linda Rowell, the Sure Start Nursery Nurse, has been doing home visits and one to one play in homes where there are problems such as post natal depression, or developmental delay. Linda is concerned that there are families in real need who aren't getting help because they live outside the catchment area.

Working Alongside Each Other

What does it mean for professionals and parents to work in partnership?

As well as building partnerships between professionals and agencies, Sure Start is committed to working alongside parents and other members of the community. Working in partnership means treating each other with equality and respect. That denotes an open dialogue on both sides, according to Eyunez the community development worker

‘It’s about how you build relationships with others and the relationship you have with yourself... you need a high level of empathy, that’s really important’



Sandra Shears at a Community Lunch

The Family Forum, run by Natasha Osbourne-Wales, is now an autonomous group, Eyunez reported that she had stepped back her involvement and the group now did its own minutes, organised its own agenda and was entirely self regulating. This is a clear example of parents being able to take a lead in the partnership.

For Carol Davey the Portage worker the benefits of working in partnership means better results for the child and a sense of empowerment for the parent,

'The families I see, I'm working with them right from the start from the first visit I'm saying look I'm not here to tell you what to do with your child, it's very much working together because you know your child better than me. We work together on the developmental checklist to see where we are and where we need to be moving them on to. (22/3/02)

One of the benefits of working in a team like Sure Start is that workers can refer people to other professionals when different services are needed. For example, when a Bangladeshi mum had a problem at the hospital, she told Karen, the Health Visitor, who arranged for an interpreter to go with her. This team work doesn't just mean sharing skills and expertise, but it also helps to challenge the false assumptions that can so easily be made when a Health Visitor, for example, is working alone. Maisie Allen, Head of the Health Improvement Partnership in Ipswich, remembers a time when Health Visitors would come back to the office saying things like 'Oh but they've got a microwave' or 'they had an expensive TV' and assuming this meant that there wasn't a health issue. This was the kind of thing that happens when problems were compartmentalised and professionals lose sight of the whole person. This view was seen to be very outdated by Karen Daniel who felt that current training for Health Visitors would challenge these assumptions.

The needs and driving forces of parents are often different from those of professionals. According to Sally Jeffs, who started the Footprints breastfeeding support group,

'I started by going to a breastfeeding workshop myself, then I decided to start a support group...you get some really nice friendships out of it as well' 15/03/02

Sally is happy to volunteer and is not looking for paid work with Sure Start, although she felt that some more professional help was needed to reach more people,

'I don't want a job, I just want to give something back. I had nothing as a kid, I wasn't happy, if I can help make one child happy than as far as I'm concerned Sure Start is working'. (22/3/02)

Another volunteer got involved through a chance visit to the Sure Start shop,

'We all went down to the shop one-day... I offered to volunteer, I spoke to Helen and she found all the info for me and here I am'.

Tina Morford, who has three children aged 15, 13 and 22 months, is doing the volunteer training, and said,

'I got involved through my midwife, I had said to her that I was really interested in doing voluntary work and she told me that Sure Start were running courses'

Tina has become more interested in Sure Start since starting the training,

'The reason I approached the midwife was that I had always wanted to work with teenage pregnancies... I didn't know anything about Sure Start and didn't know that it was about under 4's, but now I'm here I'm really interested'



Tina Morford and Sam at a volunteer training session

Gordon Munnings is one of very few men on the volunteer training programme, who sees his role as helping out with anything he can,

I'm a volunteer trainee, it's going all right, I'm the only dad, the women are all really friendly, they treat me more like a woman than a man, I'm really proud of that. At the beginning I was really nervous... I've laid the concrete at the back of the shop, I've done gardening, I've cleaned up Greenwich... for me it's just community service at the end of the day, the council won't do it'. (7/6/02)

How effective is the Community Volunteer Programme?

The Community Volunteer Programme is a three-week introduction course for parents to the concept of volunteering and what Sure Start offers. Parents can go on to further training when they have finished the three-week introduction.

There were five volunteers at the session that Emma visited at the Gainsborough Sports Centre. They were working on how to deal with difficult situations and what level of responsibility should be taken by a volunteer, how reliable they need to be, what support is expected of them. Two workers facilitated the session, using situation cards and prompts to move the discussion along. The workers kept stressing that if someone felt that they didn't have the skills in place to deal with a situation they shouldn't try to deal with it alone, but pass the information on. More training could always be put into place later on to provide them with those skills.

Some parents felt that the training was repetitive at times

'I have just done the Volunteer Training, we did go over the same stuff each week, it was a bit boring' 15/3/02

Another woman said of the training that,

'It didn't tell me anything I didn't already know... but I think it was a necessary thing' 15/3/02

Sandra thought some of the volunteers may have found the course a bit boring because the trainers wanted people to 'own' the issues by the end of the course. They wanted people to understand why selection, police checks, confidentiality and so on were important. So perhaps points were made again and again to make sure that everyone understood precisely what was expected of them.

Some volunteers go on to do a community skills course, and Eyunez says that this enables them to think of themselves as 'workers', which helps to build up self-esteem. She says,

'I want people to become community activists, to have the power to affect change in their own community'

Parents at one of the community lunches told Emma that they found the volunteers approachable, and can gain people's trust because they are mostly in the same position and have a real understanding of the problems faced by people in the community,

'I mean Judy (one of the parent volunteers) she's good, if I need anything she's always at the end of the phone.... I've been on the phone to her many times saying 'I don't want to do this... I want to die' she just says 'no you don't'... I know she knows how I'm feeling' (single parent of five 11/4/02)

The Community Will Care about Everyone

What is a sense of community?

It is probably impossible to achieve a sense of belonging to a community without excluding particular groups and individuals. What is important is to note the factors which contribute to experiences of inclusion and exclusion for different people in relation to the various projects and services provided in a community. The Sure Start Health Visitor reported that 49% of target families were using Sure Start Services by January 2002. How are the other 51% being targeted?



This report has shown that hundreds of parents, children and young people have participated in community lunches, day trips, creative play sessions and other Sure Start projects. According to Eyunez the only way to really reach people is through the community itself.

'The community has the links, we don't have the links to get to people, the idea is to empower them to help themselves' (22/3/02)

But quite a number of mothers mentioned how difficult it was when they first started going to mother/ baby or parent/ toddler groups,

'When you don't know anyone and no-one speaks to you, you just want to turn around and go home again' (15/3/02)

Speaking to mums at the school gate and walking around the area has really helped to see the effects that Sure Start is having in the community. Emma was talking to a parent volunteer at a local school when another parent came up to them and showed them a leaflet that had been given to her about a Friday Morning Tea, Toast & Toys drop in session run by Sure Start.

Another woman came up to them and said that Sure Start had paid for her fence to be put up in her back garden after she had gone to them for help.

Who is included in or excluded from particular projects or places?

There is a Sure Start sign outside the shop, and posters in the window saying that it is a drop in shop for information and help. Emma felt it would still be quite daunting to just walk in without knowing anyone. The health visitor and some parents confirmed this.



The shop is definitely a welcoming place for some and an excluding place for others, and a lot of parents felt that they didn't have the confidence to just walk into what they saw as a 'club', where everybody knew each other. For some it seems to hold false promises for the community:

'It seems to me and a lot of other mums that they're doing a lot of talking and putting people's hopes up but nothing's really happening. They've got the shop I suppose but they even seem muddled about that'

One parent described the Sure Start drop in shop as a 'Drop Out shop' and said that in her opinion a lot of the mothers there 'aren't exactly mother of the year'. Sandra pointed out that as a professional you have to bear in mind that people already have existing relationships with each other that precede Sure Start. Someone had complained that they couldn't access Sure Start because they had a past problem with someone that is very involved, so didn't feel that the door was open for them. Sandra also spoke about the shop being excluding for people who weren't in the parent 'club' in the shop, but described these as 'necessary issues' that go along with community building work.

'Inclusion/ exclusion isn't just going to be the debate around the agencies and the families it's going to be about the communities that feel included and excluded' (28/3/02).

Eyunez spoke about the fact that the black and mixed parentage community in SE Ipswich isn't really involved in Sure Start and that she is trying at the moment to build provision around that particular group by employing two new workers to do the ground work within those communities. Her main concern was that Sure Start might be seen to be too 'cliquey' which is why she felt there are no Bangladeshi, Black or younger parents at the lunches. She also mentioned that Sure Start need to have something in place for those people who don't access the lunches.

'For me it's about bringing the service to the communities, providing the right time, right venue, providing a crèche etc.' Eyunez 22/3/02

Several parents said that the community lunches were essential for all involved,



'There was nothing around here before. Everybody knows everybody now'

'Before Sure Start I only got to know other mums when my eldest started school. Before that I didn't know anyone

But one single mum at the community lunch said she didn't really feel a sense of community,

'Yeah, they may come to the lunches and that but when they get home they're their own private person again'

Sometimes there is a need to develop separate provision for particular groups, even if the ultimate goal is inclusion or integration. Members of the Young Mums' Group enjoyed having a time that was just for them, separate from other community groups. They told Emma that they often felt judged for being young in larger groups and felt they could relax more with their peers. One mum also said that she felt her daughter was happier with fewer children around and that going to the lunches was daunting. Clara mentioned that she has managed to get a couple of the young mums to Playdays but it was proving difficult to get

them to join other groups. One of the mums had been to a community lunch and said that she wouldn't go again, it wasn't her 'cup of tea'.

When Emma spoke with the Bangladeshi women at the sewing group, one knew about the community lunches but hadn't been, two others hadn't heard about it. Another remarked that,

'We don't come to the lunches because we can't eat the food...its ham sandwiches and sausage rolls' 11/04/02



Lunch with the Bangladeshi women's Sewing group

One of the mums at the sewing group felt that having a Bangladeshi community lunch would be a good idea. Nur Sulama told Emma that this was something that was being discussed with the community at the forum meetings. Meanwhile, on the last day of term in the sewing group class, the Bangladeshi women prepared food, which was very different from the sandwiches, jacket potatoes and cakes at the community lunches.

The Pakistani woman in the sewing group told Emma that the whole Pakistani community was maybe 20 or 30 houses spread apart, and people generally met in each other's houses and nothing was organised outside of this. She said that she had found out about the sewing class through coming to English classes at the Murrayside community centre, but didn't know anything about Sure Start.(11/4/02)

Tunu Miah, a Bangladeshi community worker, said it had been difficult getting fathers involved in Sure Start. They often work very long shifts in restaurants so they try to organise family events for Sundays. He has started an afternoon drop in session for Bangladeshi fathers at Murrayside community centre,

'Sometimes we get four fathers, sometimes none, it's very difficult to predict, it depends when they are working'.

Sarah, who has two mixed race children, said that she had experienced racist behaviour on Sure Start trips,

'There's a lot of discrimination through body language, people moving away, not sitting in the same place as an ethnic family. That is totally out of order, it's not on... There was an English family and a Bangladeshi family sat down next to them and they moved, you could tell it was racist' (1/4/02)

When Sarah reported this, one of the Sure Start workers spoke to the family concerned.

Of course, people living outside the Sure Start boundaries are excluded from a lot of the activities, although Tina Morford, who lives in a small village outside Ipswich, is training to be a parent volunteer. She felt that had there been a Sure Start in her area, she could have got a lot of support during a very difficult time.

'Recently my son has been diagnosed as having special needs, it's all happened within a fortnight and it's been devastating, I haven't known who to talk to. If we'd had a Sure Start they could have put me in touch with someone who had been through something similar who could maybe offer support, or to point you in the right direction immediately' 17/5/02

Emma spoke to one mother of two whom was very angry at Sure Start, as she felt they had not supported her in setting up a mother and baby group aimed at people who had a broader age range of children.

'At some things we were told that older children had to go to the playgroup which is a long walk from the church hall...people felt they were juggling their children too much'

This woman's account suggests that there may have been a breakdown in communications between the Sure Start worker, the mother and somebody from Social Services,

'Sure Start passed me from pillar to post and no one took it on board. Eventually it was passed to Clara who told me that Social Services would have to be involved. So I phoned Social Services who said that was rubbish... no one from Sure Start ever contacted me again, I felt totally let down... They say they want you to start groups but when you try you get the door shut in your face'

Despite this negative experience, this woman has been doing several childcare courses, some through Sure Start, and has applied to become a registered childminder.

These accounts of groups and individuals who feel excluded from different aspects of Sure Start suggest some of the possible reasons why only half the families in the area have participated. It is notoriously difficult to research non-participation, however, and here we have only been able to skim the surface.

Making Decisions and Making Things Happen

What has Education/ Training contributed to individual change?

Through getting involved with Sure Start as a volunteer, Gordon Munnings has gained the confidence to tackle a literacy problem,

'Sure Start gave me reading lessons, I'm learning to read and write now. I've had two sessions and I can spell my name and address now and the baby's name. It took a lot of confidence to open up that I couldn't read or write and now the others that can't read or write, they've voted me their spokesperson, so they tell me what help they need and I go to Sure Start and tell them' - 7/6/02

Stacey, the family learning worker, is working with families on a one to one basis to identify those who need help with reading and writing. Stacey also works with children and parents together to encourage reading, doing story workshops involving games and songs and making the story's characters come to life. Penny, a single parent of two described how coming to these sessions had affected her son,



Storytelling Session

'I was in the library getting some books for my kids and they started talking to one of the Sure Start workers, Stacey who was in there packing up after a session. We spoke for a while and she told me what she did with the stories in the library. The next week I brought my son down and for an hour we sat playing with clothes on the washing line and little animals and I was really amazed at the amount of effort that went into telling the story. My son was so impressed when we came out he said 'I like that lady mum, that's Story Time Stacey isn't it?' So now we have a Story Time Stacey instead of a worker down at Sure Start' -

Among parents where English is not a first language, the need was not just for extra support for themselves and their children with English classes but also with their own languages. The Bangladeshi mums told Emma that the Arabic classes were important for their children, while they all also wanted language classes to improve their English. One woman felt she would like a Bengali class for her children as well, and the Pakistani woman said she would like language classes for her children.

Sure Start has enabled parents to access different kinds of training, often for those seeking paid work in childcare, but also for those with other interests,

'Sure Start put me on the NVQ... now I help out at Playdays'

'I'm going to do my NVQII and then go to college...and hopefully when I'm qualified I'll come back to Sure Start as a Children's Nurse, that's my aim anyway' 15/302

'They're going to send me to do 1st Aid and my Bronze medallion so I can be a lifeguard' 15/03/02

'They're putting their money where their mouth is, they talk about courses and that and you think yeah yeah but it's actually happened'



Breastfeeding Support Training

Government funded education initiatives are currently putting a strong emphasis on paid employment as the primary goal, and for some parents there is a real desire to go into full time work. Donna McCoy attended the Sure Start volunteer training course and said,

'I've got a three and a half year old and I've always been out of work because I've got three other children that are older, and I just wanted some qualifications to get ready to go back to work, when he goes to school'.

Hazel Lowire had signed up for the Volunteers Course but has since started part time work so wasn't able to attend,

'My little un' started full time school at Easter so I decided to go back to work'

Hazel had previously done the Community Skills course run by Sure Start and found it very valuable in terms of finding out what was happening in the community and 'how you can help other people around you... and boost your own self confidence'. 16/5/02

However, parents may want to learn for reasons not connected to paid work, and one mother on the volunteer course said she felt that not enough value is placed on the actual job of bringing up children,

'I think that it's important to work but as mums we have such a important job to do bringing up a child and I don't think we're valued enough for it, I work one morning a week and all the money I earn goes to pay for childcare but we need that break from each other, it helps me do a better job the rest of the time' 17/5/02

Other parents have finished the training and are now pursuing their own goals. Beauty Chowdry is a trained Volunteer and hopes to become a childminder with the help of Sure Start, 'I also help in the Arabic Classes, this is a very good class' 11/4/02

According to Eyunez you have to start by building on the skills that people already have,

What I always say to people is that if you are on a low income or have no money you are very resourceful because you have to be and you therefore have a number of skills that are transferable in the workplace. 22/3/02

How does Sure Start promote community action?

The Family Forum is one of the more tangible expressions of Sure Start's commitment to supporting community action in South East Ipswich. Natasha Osbourne-Wales told Emma how she got involved,

'I was going to a playgroup at the library on Tuesdays, I started to get to know some of the staff members who popped in... we got asked to go to the implementation group, they needed some parents there, then Eyunez asked at that meeting if we could go to the Family Forum, she was trying to get it strengthened and moved forward and get new faces in there (12/9/02)

After a few meetings, Natasha volunteered to take on the role of chair,

I've always been very work orientated, I always worked, so I enjoyed the challenge and the fact that it was community based was a bonus because I could take my kids with me and involve them in what I was doing.

Natasha sees the purpose of the forum as a way of getting other people in the community involved which also helps Sure Start Staff to access people who are perhaps harder to reach for the professionals. When asked why it was important to have a group that was separate from Sure Start, Natasha replied,

Staff are all different in Sure Start. Not all of them have got young children... and the fact that the staff don't live in the area can be a big problem because they don't know what the issues are on the ground... they can't fully understand them unless they've got the parents and the community members saying to them look, this is what it's really like living on sixty pounds a week or whatever, if you haven't been there you don't know.

So the group provides a forum for communication between Sure Start staff, parents and members. If anyone has an issue or idea be it parent, staff or community member, they can let people know by either coming to the Forum, telling one of their friends who is on the Forum or telling a member of Sure Start staff who then pass information onto the forum. Natasha spoke about the direct action she felt the group was taking,

If it's something big that's happening the Forum create task groups of two or three people to let the rest of the community know what's going on and if there's a big issue we've discussed at the forum, we'll go out and say, we need to fix this, how can we do it?. We need to keep talking to the playgroups and the council and we build up the issues into a big report so it's not just one incident isolated, we collate all the information about all the different incidents together and we can say look, this is happening a lot, you need to do something about this.

Natasha felt that the success of the forum owes a great deal to the open-minded and accepting approach adopted by Sure Start staff, which meant they were "...getting through to people you wouldn't have imagined would have anything to do with it".

Sure Start will run for 5 -10 years

How is Sure Start building social capacity? What lasting changes are being made in the community and environment?

It is too soon to answer these questions with any certainty, although there is plenty of evidence that Sure Start is providing opportunities for adults to learn new skills and take over the management of specific projects. Extending and improving facilities for social interaction and play is likely to raise expectations and a demand for continuing improvement from all sections of the community.

The impression that Sure Start “puts their money where their mouth is” has helped to promote respect for the organisation as well as fostering good working relations among professionals, volunteers and the diverse community of South East Ipswich. Working in partnership with Suffolk County Council's community education team, Sure Start provides training in “Working within your community” for parents and volunteers. This covers the skills needed for active participation in meetings, teams and community organisations, and these skills are applied and developed within Sure Start projects and the Family Forum. Natasha Osbourne-Wales told Emma that the Family Forum was becoming a force to be reckoned with as members were becoming more confident in taking action for change,

We can go directly to the council or whoever and we have done. Like with the fires on Queensway Rec and the garden clearance we do. We needed the council to do some of the clearance because it was dangerous for volunteers so I went directly to the council offices but if we do that Sure Start let us know what office to go to or who we need to contact. It depends on the situation. If there's a family that wouldn't feel confident in making a call a Sure Start worker will do that. Everything in Sure Start is dependent on individual circumstances; each individual case is different. I wouldn't have got involved before Sure Start because I wasn't like that, I wasn't a 'community person', I wanted to work from home. (12/9/02)

Family Forum members drew strength from each other, and Natasha felt that these relationships would survive beyond Sure Start,

The people would stay together, we all know each other quite well now, we've all got a lot of similar interests. Sure Start is not the only people we have contact with, we also go to the South East Ipswich Partnership Board which is another forum, but it's a council run forum and although we discuss Sure Start issues and Sure Start ask us to raise things, we do talk about other community issues... Any action comes from the community, it doesn't come from Sure Start. Sure Start won't do anything unless we ask them to do it, they'll back us up and give us the right numbers to call and people to see but they won't do it all for us.... Because people are starting to get together, it's pulling the community together and it's getting people

interested in being friends and a lot of friendships are being built, that's not going to disappear if Sure Start does. Things are being put in place so well, because they've involved everyone in the setting up and working of the project, if they hadn't done that the area wouldn't have changed. They didn't have to involve everyone in the decisions and the planning, they didn't have to get on with the community necessarily. Because they've put so much work into everything that they do, they pull back when they need to, they let people run their own groups, like the forum. The staff really are there as a back up, the community if they want, can actually put in applications for funding, anyone can come up with a project idea.

As this program enters its second year of delivery, perhaps now is the time to think about the extent to which these good relations, and the high levels of energy and enthusiasm, might be sustained if current levels of funding were no longer available to support the groups, agencies and individuals promoting Sure Start activities. How many people would come along to community lunches if they had to pay for the food? As volunteers achieve qualifications, will they expect to be paid for their services? Will families have to buy their own stair gates and smoke alarms? Or should Sure Start turn its attention to encouraging people to participate in local government and political action to insist on raised levels of public funding to ensure the health, happiness and well-being of all children?

Methodology

A Visual approach to Local Evaluation

Whose reality?

In conducting this evaluation, we have used an approach more generally associated with ethnographic research than with project appraisal. This means keeping an open mind about the questions that need to be asked, while trying to get a sense of the day to day reality of people's lives. It also means recognising that reality includes subjective experience, and what we see depends on who is looking, what we want to know, and why. If you are a parent for whom school holidays mean that you or your children go hungry, then day to day reality is very different from that of the policy makers and professionals directing a Sure Start programme. At the beginning of this report we showed three maps of the same area: the published version, and drawings produced by a health visitor and a parent. These illustrate remarkable differences in subjective experiences of the same physical spaces, and yet we tend to think of streets, parks or buildings as part of an external reality that can be described in neutral and objective terms. This is why it is important to say something about the experience and interests of the authors of this report.

Emma, who conducted the fieldwork for this research, is herself the mother of a young child. Although a graduate with media research experience, Emma has only been able to work on this project because her income is low enough to qualify for help with her daughter's nursery fees.

In the very short time available for this research, Emma has been able to develop a good rapport with all kinds of people involved in Sure Start, as well as making contact with some who felt disgruntled or excluded.



Julia is a full-time academic researcher, who, after working in adult literacy and community education for 20 years, is particularly interested in forms of communication and representation that don't presume high levels of literacy or formal education.

Sandra, as Sure Start programme manager, needs to find out what works in relation to Sure Start's goals and targets, and to understand how particular strategies and approaches achieve particular results. However, her previous experience in media and education also predisposes her towards imaginative approaches to local evaluation.

Drawing out a research plan

Having agreed to explore new approaches for this research, Emma, Julia and Sandra spent a day together at a workshop organised by the Centre for Social and Organisational Learning as Action Research¹. We began by learning some techniques for writing and drawing on a large scale with chalk and coloured pens, and then embarked on a "group graphics" exercise. This enabled us to "draw out" our respective interests in the project, the questions that both Sure Start staff and service users might want to ask, and ways of exploring these questions.



This Research Plan, measuring approximately 1m x 2m was produced through a dynamic "group graphics" process. Two people talked about different aspects of the research, while the 3rd person drew what she was hearing. Each of us took a turn at drawing.

The plan may not look like a list of goals and targets, but it combines our interests in a common purpose, without losing the complexity of all the different perspectives and possibilities that we wanted to include in this evaluation. We agreed that Emma would start by visiting two projects that had been successful in reaching parents who might not have been using existing services for young children. These were the community lunches and the Bangladeshi women's sewing group.

¹ <http://www.northampton.ac.uk/solar/solar.htm>

In the introduction to the "People" pages, we explain how Emma started out with the Bangladeshi sewing group, encouraging the women to take photographs of their daily lives. The intention was to use the photographs as a starting point for discussion about the issues that were important to them and to support this group in representing their joint interests in a collection of drawings, maps and photographs. However, when Emma visited the community lunch, she soon realised that there were all kinds of other groups and activities clamouring for her attention. Within the limited time available, we had to make choices about who and what to represent, and decided to negotiate a compromise between full participation with one small group or selective representation of a larger sample. We chose the latter, but hope that there will be opportunities in the future, or in other Sure Start projects, to conduct a more sustained action research project in which small groups can be supported in developing their own forms of evaluation and representation.

Consultation and consent

The people and projects featured in this report thus represent an "opportunity sample" that is partly self-selected and partly a reflection of our own particular interests. The decision to report on as many aspects of Sure Start activity as we could cover in the limited time available means that this report has been produced **for** rather than **by** the people involved. However, the use of real names and photographs throughout the report obliges us to consult with everyone featured here about how they wish to be represented. Even in qualitative research, it is common practice to use fictitious names, leaving researchers free to select and edit extracts from interviews to support or illustrate an argument. A visual approach puts people in the spotlight, and places greater demands on us to ensure that they are willing to stand by what they said at a particular time and place.

Emma took most of these photographs with a digital camera, which allows for people to check that they are happy with images before they are saved. Parents' permission was always sought before taking photographs of children. Emma then took contact prints back to groups and individuals, and encouraged further discussion about the selection of images. A draft report was produced in the summer of 2002 and circulated among all those who appear in the report, and many of those who don't, together with a questionnaire requesting comments and feedback.

There's plenty more to see

On the positive side, most people liked the format, and several said that it was accessible to all and the photographs helped to attract the reader to the text.

'The use of quotes from the parents helped to keep the realism of the report and the focus of Sure Start's continuing aim to involve and consult parents' (Clara French)

'The pictures are an instant attraction, then people may read the paragraphs around the photos' (Helen Seager)

'It is obvious to the reader, that parents and children and the wider community have been included in all of Sure Start and the compiling of the report' (Natasha Osbourne-Wales)

'Pictures and comments are very useful in particular towards aiding Sure Start workers in reflecting on their work' (Judith Bourne)

'It's been an eye opener. I've learnt about other activities that I didn't know went on in the community' (Sally Jeffs)

Some people asked us to change the photographs, or to modify or leave out some of the things they said, and this has been done. Most of the negative feedback points to the things that have been left out, and this we take as confirmation that we were right to try and represent more than the two groups originally targeted. It's clear from the following comments that even this has been far from a comprehensive evaluation. There were several aspects of their work that Sure Start staff felt were under-represented or absent from the report. These include:

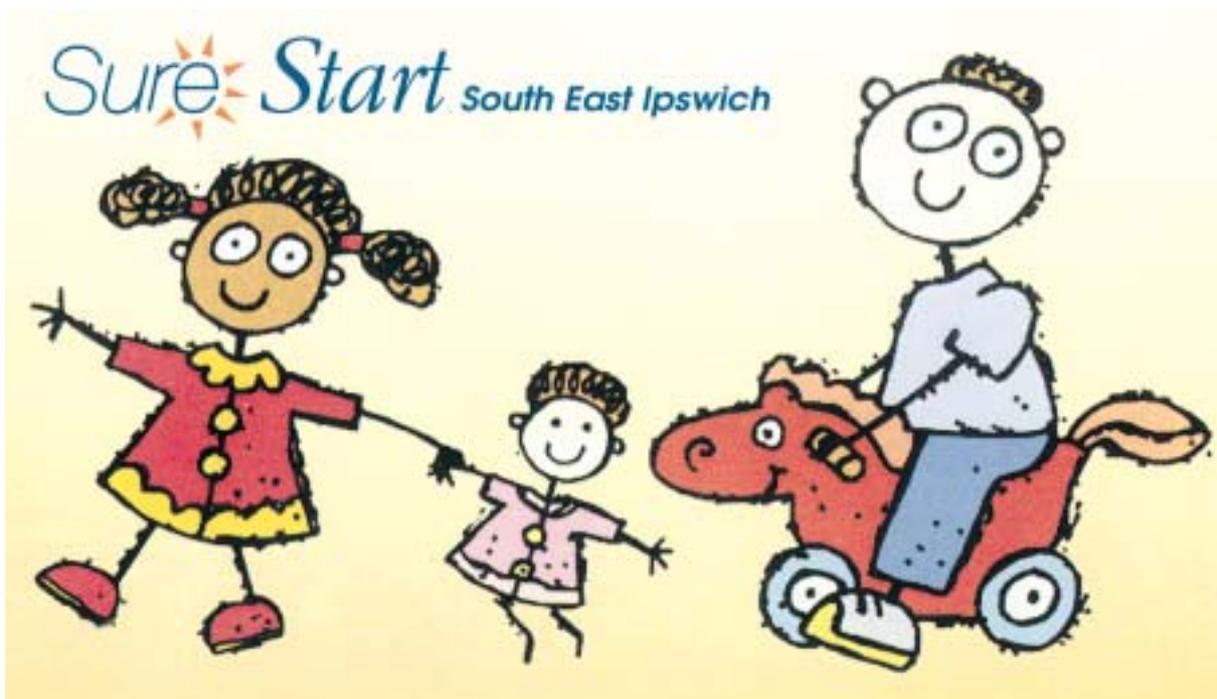
- **accident prevention, stopping smoking and other health work**
- **social, emotional, intellectual and health issues**
- **joint funded projects and work with partner organisations**
- **attempts to involve more Black families in Sure Start activities**
- **work done with parents on home visits**

Several staff members mentioned the speech and language work that has been going on. This may have been left out because the speech therapist was on maternity leave while data was being collected. Some of the parents would like to have seen more "before and after" pictures and success stories showing how Sure Start had helped parents coping with depression, child illness and behavioural problems. Both parents and staff wanted to see more reports on quality play opportunities that are being promoted through playgroups, toy libraries and other projects.

Some of the feedback was about things that have happened since the report was drafted. For example, Footprints is now running a second group thanks to the support of Sure Start and Parents. Changes had been made to the way the shop is organised, with parents being encouraged to sit at the back of the shop, while a member of the community development team is available in the front to help new parents and clear the notice boards. Stacey felt this had happened because Sure Start is continuously monitoring and evaluating itself, changing things that aren't working and building on things that are. Clara made the point that,

'Sure start staff can only do so much. As the community becomes more empowered they place increasing demands on the staff. Unfortunately we can't do everything, as much as we'd like to, it takes time to respond to every need the community identifies although we do get round to them all eventually!'

This reflects our own feeling about this report. There is only so much we can do, and the more widely we extend our efforts to consult people about what we have done, the more we find out about what we haven't been able to do. This report is just one stage in an ongoing evaluation process, and we hope it has offered new ways of looking, as well as new ways of thinking about evaluation.



Acknowledgements

The photographs of the Five Alive project (including the front cover photograph) were taken by John at "Kids for Keeps".

The idea for the "People" pages came from a site called (Es)senses of Place <http://www.cam.net.uk/home/aaa189/essenses/index.html>

This site was pointed out to us by Steve Gray at the Open University, who has been working on the web site for this evaluation on:

<http://surestart.open.ac.uk>

Check this web site for further details of this evaluation and our methodology, as well as the additional pages we hope to include in future.

Do you love working with young children? Would you like to develop your career?

The Open University's new Early Years Practitioner Certificate will help you to increase your effectiveness in your work with children aged 0 to 8 and support them in their learning. Perhaps you're working or volunteering in a nursery, playgroup, reception class or in the home as a childminder and you are wondering about the next step?

The Early Years Practitioner Certificate stands alone as a vocationally-oriented qualification which will enhance your existing role and give you a springboard to further professional and personal development. You can build on the certificate towards a wide range of Open University qualifications including a Foundation Degree. It's an ideal starting point if you want to train to be an early years teacher.

The certificate consists of two courses - Working with Children in the Early Years focuses on your roles and responsibilities in relation to working with young children and other adults including parents and carers. You can learn about the nature of the early childhood curriculum and the role of creativity, communication and play in children's learning.

The second course, Supporting Children's Learning in the Early Years develops aspects of your role in more depth including a focus on working with young children that are gifted, have special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language. You can explore the policy relating to children's status, welfare and learning and its impact on children and adults in the home, in early years settings and out-of-school contexts.

To complete Working with Children in the Early Years and Supporting Children's Learning in the Early Years, it is expected that you will have been working with young children, in either a paid or voluntary capacity in an education or care setting prior to starting the course for six months if full-time and a year if part-time. During both courses you will need access to workplace experience with children aged 0 to 8 for at least 5 hours a week.

The Open University offers you the opportunity to study without giving up work or personal commitments. You'll get all the support you need including a personal tutor who is a subject specialist - available on the phone, by email or face to face. You'll also get the chance to exchange ideas with your fellow students. Its real value for money and you can pay by instalments.

The Early years Practitioner Certificate is one of a range of vocationally oriented courses and qualifications offered by The Open University in the field of education and childcare. Working with Children in the Early Years and Supporting Children's Learning in the Early Years will also be two of the core level 1 courses in the new Open University Foundation Degree in Early Years. Foundation degrees are new, nationally recognised, vocationally oriented degrees introduced by the Government. They provide progression routes to Honours degrees and qualified teacher status (QTS), if you wish to continue studying.

To find out more call 0870 9000 304 quoting ref EYCAAE or visit <http://www3.open.ac.uk/courses/subjects/education.htm>



