



Annual Report December 2003



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From the Sure Start Cambridge Chair

Sure Start Cambridge is almost one year old. Over the last year a lot of people have worked extremely hard to start turning Sure Start Cambridge from a plan to real things happening on the ground. As with many one year olds Sure Start Cambridge has reached many of its milestones, but our expectations have been high and we have not achieved all we had hoped. My heart felt thanks goes to the parents, the Sure Start core team, voluntary groups and people working for local health, council and other services who have stuck with us and are preparing feverishly for year two. I hope every-one will join me in wishing Sure Start Cambridge good luck for its second year.

Dorothy Gregson

Chair Sure Start Cambridge

Acknowledgements

We appreciate the patience of families living in Abbey & Kings Hedges during the set up period as the excitement generated in the early days led to high expectations which we are yet to meet.

The vision & commitment of the partner agencies, the parents and carers who have worked so hard to establish the Sure Start Cambridge Partnership deserves recognition for their dedication to the work of the programme.

The core staff members of the management team also deserve recognition for tolerating the stresses & strains of working in a new initiative which by its nature presents so many challenges to those working within the programme.

Report writer's note

As the Programme Manager I am aware that I am not the best placed person to be writing an Annual Report which takes an evaluative approach to the work of the programme. But as we are required to produce a report, & our Action Researcher has only recently come into post so is therefore not in a position to produce such a document yet, I intend to use this as an opportunity to take stock of the work of the programme thus far.

1. Summary

Introduction:

- 1.1 This report covers the period from October 2002 – December 2003 for Sure Start Cambridge which is a 5th Wave programme. Approval was received from the Sure Start Unit in March 2003. The main body of the report is divided into 5 sections with the first looking at process, the second describing services & activities to date, the third focuses on the families & the fourth looks at barriers while the final section contains recommendations.

Evaluation:

- 1.2 Only limited evaluation work has been carried out to date and this has been largely due to the fact that there has been no Action researcher/Evaluator in post. There has also, until quite recently only been few services provided. We do now have an Action researcher/evaluator in post.

Section One: Management & structure

Programme management

- 1.3 There is a real commitment to the programme from the Partner agencies involved and a considerable contribution is made by the local parents/carers who are members at the Partnership Board level. However there is a great deal of concern about the amount of commitment expected from Board members particularly through their roles within Working groups and how best to attract new parent/carer members.

Parent Forums

- 1.4 Due to the separated nature of the areas covered by the Sure Start Cambridge Programme there is a Forum organised for each month in each area. There is a need to involve more parents in the Forums as, for various reasons, attendance has greatly reduced recently. A mechanism for election from the Parent Forums has been developed with the members of the Forums but this needs to be put into practice to increase the parent/carer membership of the Board.

Partnership working

- 1.5 There have been many frustrations encountered by the Partners. Initially these were largely due to the delay in set-up pending the approval process for the Programme Plan required by the Sure Start Unit. Time taken to recruit to the core team to enable a confident entry into the current implementation phase of the programme has also led to frustrations being felt by Partners.

Mainstreaming

- 1.6 The programme is working with a wide range of local organisations and groups both locally and at strategic level and plans to disseminate models of good practice within these. The process of providing funding to local groups and services will be carried out with mainstreaming consideration for future provision.

Section Two: Services & Activities

- 1.7 While the programme has been going through a largely implementation phase some services have been provided. Prioritisation has been given to 'early win' type provision in an attempt to make the programme more visible for local families. The Interagency working groups have used the parent/carer consultation [Appendix 1], which will be referred to again later to shape provision development. Listed under the four main objectives of Sure Start the services & activities are as follows:

1.8 **Objective One: Improving Social & Emotional support**

- Kings Hedges Family Support group provides Drop-ins for local families
- Midwives & Child & Family nurses are delivering leaflets and registering
- ABC Parent & Toddler group
- Newsletter & leaflets

1.9 **Objective Two: Improving Health**

- Breast Feeding support Drop-ins & Breast feeding mentor training
- Safestart – cost price safety equipment for local families
- Brazelton training for front-line workers
- Brushing for Life

1.10 **Objective Three: Improving ability to Learn**

- Childminder network
- Play training for local families
- Pre-school music group at the Fields
- Rhymetime
- Sure Start Language Measure underway & collecting base line data
- Seesaw Playgroup in Abbey

1.11 **Objective Four: Strengthening Families & Communities**

- Community crèche course
- Parent & carer forums, Family fun days
- Parent & carer Board members training & development
- Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative

Section Three: The Families

- 1.12 Local parents & carers have been involved in the Partnership since it first began 2 years ago.
- There are 186 families registered with the Programme, 292 parents/carers and 197 children.
 - Of these parent/carers 10 have reported themselves as Lone Parents and 10 have special needs.
 - The 186 families have 197 children aged 0 to 3 years old, and of these 13 children have special needs.
 - Of the 292 parents/carers who are registered, 250 are registered as white British with the remaining 42 carers being from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 1.13 Parents have been consulted on various aspects of the programme arising from baseline survey work being carried out prior to approval, which has begun to shape the programme.
- 1.14 Hard to reach families remain largely un-reached by the programme as a small proportion of the families as a whole are registered at present.

Section Four: Barriers

Delays in staff recruitment

- 1.15 The programme has been constrained arising from delays in recruitment during the past year. Delays in appointing a Programme manager, the interim measure of the temporary development post and the search for suitable staff have had an impact on progress. The Data Handler was recruited in March 2003, then the Administrator and Programme manager came into post in May and the Finance manager joined us in July. More recently, the Development Co-ordinator & Action Research/evaluator workers started in November. The new Parent Involvement worker joins the team in February 2004 which completes the full core team.

Delays in finding a base for the core team

- 1.16 The initial office space allocated, at East Barnwell Community Centre, proved to be vulnerable to vandalism and the move to the Community rooms at 74 Ditton Fields have both impacted on the core staff. The recent move to the new base at Old Ditton Fields Nursery, while it brings with it additional responsibilities for the core staff also provides an accessible point of contact for local families to the Programme team. As well as developing some services here we are also able to use it as a base for Partner agencies & employees accountable to the programme. There is also space available to accommodate a crèche, which we

plan to register in the coming months, for meetings of the Working groups & Board, training, events and the piloting of new provision.

Finance

1.17 Since the appointment of the Finance manager in July 2003 (shared post within the PCT), systems and processes have been created to ensure full accountability for all aspects of Sure Start Cambridge spends. Prior to then, though there was access to finance expertise, it was limited due to the heavy workload already faced by person allocated the task. Now that we have a robust Schedule of Delegation more recently the systems for devolving the grant to approved projects are being developed to ensure organisations receive funding following approval and that they dovetail with the monitoring and other reporting requirements. We still have further procedures to implement to ensure transparency of our systems to everyone coming into contact with Cambridge Sure Start.

Section Five: Outcomes, Conclusions & Recommendations

Outcomes

1.18 The programme has achieved four of the twelve SDA targets to date

- Parent/carer representation on the Board
- Programme is working with the EYDCP – Cambridgeshire Care and Education Partnership
- Links have been made with Jobcentre Plus
- Parenting support and information is available to all parents in the areas.

Conclusion

1.19 Sure Start is a challenging programme to deliver because partnership working requires a wide range of agencies to learn how to collaborate as well as covering a broad and complex agenda through this work. It also necessitates that all staff need to learn new ways of working. Considering how few core staff there have been available to launch the programme and the commitment required from members of the Working Groups the effort required to have got thus far has been enormous.

Recommendations

- 1.20 *Recommendation One:*
The programme needs to increase the rate of the provision of improved and new services
- 1.21 *Recommendation Two:*
The programme should provide more support for parents & carers to join the Working groups
- 1.22 *Recommendation Three:*
The Programme needs to reduce the time commitment required of Working Group members. By adopting a model which shapes the Working Groups around the main objectives of Sure Start, focus can be placed on the key objectives of the programme resulting in streamlining from existing service focused groups.
- 1.23 *Recommendation Four:*
The programme should ensure the work already undertaken by the Special Needs working group to target hard to reach families does not get lost in the proposed re-shaped management structure.
- 1.24 *Recommendation Five:*
The programme should consider improving its administrative capacity.

Finally

- 1.25 The first Regional Sure Start Risk Assessment in September (six months) found the programme to be at low risk and identified areas requiring work to ensure the programme remains in this low risk state. While the assessment is only a 'snap shot' of the programme at that stage it does indicate that generally the programme is moving in the right direction.

Sure Start Cambridge Annual Report Year One

2 Introduction:

- 2.1 This report covers the period from October 2002 – December 2003 for Sure Start Cambridge. Sure Start Cambridge is a 5th Wave programme & received approval from the Sure Start Unit in March 2003.
- 2.2 The main body of the report is divided into 5 sections with the first looking at process, the second describing services & activities to date, the third focuses on families & the fourth looks at barriers while the final section contains recommendations.

Evaluation:

- 2.3 Since recruitment to an evaluation role has been recent, services have been taking a self-evaluative approach to provision which has included feedback by participants as well as reflective analysis by providers. An extensive consultation was carried out with local parent and carers prior to the approval of the programme and this has been used to direct the implementation of early services [Appendix 1]. Local Sure Starts are able to choose their own evaluative methods providing that they assess process and service delivery. The local evaluations are intended to help local programmes understand how well services developed are performing, to track progress in meeting the Sure Start objectives and to allow programmes to make changes as a result of evaluation.
- 2.4 The recent appointment of an Action Researcher/evaluator to the core team means that as we enter a period when many new services & activities are coming on stream. Evaluation advice & guidance is readily available to providers. Planned methods of evaluation will be varied and will include face to face interviews, telephone surveys, observation & document analysis. Photographic & video evidence will also be used to record evidence with plans in place to involve local parents & carers to assist in evaluation processes. The parent & carer members of the Board are currently honing their skill in digital photography techniques and have started to collect evaluation evidence by this method.

The staff team:

- 2.5 Initially there were some problems encountered with recruiting a manager for the programme which led the Partnership to take an alternative approach to the recruitment process. As a result a temporary Development Worker post was created prior to the appointment of a Programme Manager.

- 2.6 As of December 2003 the programme has 6 members of staff, 3 full-time (Administrator, Data Handler & Programme manager) & 3 part-time (Action researcher/evaluator, a Development Co-ordinator & a Finance manager) [Appendix 2] The Parent Involvement worker is due to join the team in February 2004, a role which until now has been filled by a temporary employee. There are also 4 sessional Crèche workers and 3 sessional Lactation advisers. These are all directly employed through the Cambridge City PCT.
- 2.7 There are several other posts which have been approved recently that are about to be advertised, these include a Libraries worker, Play worker and a Health co-ordinator. While the latter will be employed through the PCT the Libraries & the Play worker posts will be employed through Partner agencies. As the programme grows and the numbers of staff involved expand all current staff are aware of the need to ensure adequate communication & co-ordination. To meet some of this identified need regular monthly meetings of the 'virtual team' are being planned.
- 2.8 The Supervisory body, working on behalf of the Partnership Board (the Lead body for the programme), has now changed from Parents First! to Cambridgeshire Care & Education Partnership (the Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership). Both organisations take a whole team approach to their management role. The change over took place in November 2003.
- 2.9 Team meetings are held every two weeks with every second one being attended by the Head of service for the Care & Education Partnership the Supervisory organisation. Individual supervision is provided by the Supervisory organisation for the Programme Manager. While every two weeks individual supervisions are provided for all members of the Core team by the Programme Manager.
- 2.10 The staff team is fully committed to the principles of Sure Start and the full involvement of local families in all aspects of the programme. Frustration has been felt at the limited capacity we have had to be able to fully support parents & carers in their involvement to date, particularly within the work of the Inter-agency Working groups, and actions are being taken to address this situation. There is also concern reported by the core team regarding the visibility of the programme and the speed at which we are able to roll out additional and new services. The team is closely involved with local agencies and committed to partnership working and in taking a multi-agency approach to service provision. Such an approach can be both rewarding and challenging, particularly in community settings.

3 Section One: Management & structure

Programme management

- 3.1 Following several Stakeholder events a Steering Group was formed in September 2001 which later developed into a Partnership Board and included 5 local parent/carers, with representatives from 5 voluntary not for profit agencies and 5 statutory agencies [Appendix 3]. Membership has remained fairly constant since then and the Board meets every month and taking both a strategic position and guiding implementation.
- 3.2 The Accountable body for the programme is Cambridge City Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the core team are employed by the Trust on behalf of the Board. The chair of the Board is drawn from the senior managers of the Trust. Tom Dutton, Commissioning Officer for the Cambridge City PCT was the Chair until other commitments forced him to hand over the role to Dorothy Gregson, lead for Public Health, in July 2003.
- 3.3 The Lead body for the Programme is the Partnership Board with the role of Management supervision being contracted to one of the Board member organisations. From October 2002 until November 2003 this role was undertaken by Parents First!, a Voluntary agency working with parents with young children living with disadvantage. As of December 2003, that role is now been taken by Cambridgeshire Care and Education Partnership (EYDCP).
- 3.4 The Partnership Constitution, which was revised in July 2003, lists the responsibilities of the Board as established to:
- Review the arrangements put in place.
 - Assist with the determination of the tasks of the Sub Groups
 - Stakeholder Events and Annual General Meeting
 - Engage and continue involvement of Sponsors
 - Monitor progress with the Programme and make sure that it continues to meet the needs of the communities involved by carrying out regular evaluations
 - Determine the functions and responsibilities of the Accountable Body
 - Direct the Accountable Body as to the timing of payments
 - Determine the management structure of the Programme
 - Decide the services and activities of the Sure Start Programme

Commissioning/Implementation

- 3.5 It should be noted at this point that delays in approval of the programme were largely around concern expressed by the SureStart Unit about the Commissioning process adopted by the Board. Many issues have been raised about the most appropriate way to do this. In July 2003 the service of a Consultant from Partners

- in Change was brought in to facilitate an Away Day for the Board during which it was agreed to adopt a method of selection by peers via the Working groups rather than the competitive tender model which had been at the centre of previous plans. Since then, through a Delegation of Authority scheme created by the Finance manager and endorsed by the Board, Working groups have had the authority to request & approve proposals up to a value of £3,500 with higher costing provision requiring Working group approval before consideration by the Partnership Board.
- 3.6 There are at present 4 parent/carer members of the Board. While they are very loyal to the Programme & attend all the Partnership Board meetings with few exceptions there are limits to their involvement in other aspects of the Programme management particularly input into the Working groups. Following the ethos of Sure Start, the Partnership plans to have a parent/carer as chair and half of the Board to be local parents/carers by the end of 2004. Systems and processes which are developed are done so with this ultimate aim in mind. Meanwhile considerable efforts will be made to encourage parents & carers who attend Parent Forums to volunteer to join the Board with support and appropriate training to enable their participation.
- 3.7 Currently there are 8 Interagency Working groups [Appendix 4]. The vast majority of the Working groups have been meeting once a month since early 2003. These Working groups were originally established, for ease of reporting, around the budget headings local programmes are required to report against to the Regional & Central Sure Start Unit. Each Working group has as their Chair a Board member with expertise in each related field with the exception of the Operations Group which is chaired by the Programme Manager. The Working Groups are Parent & Family Support; Outreach & Home Visiting; Play, Learning & Childcare; Special Needs; Community Health & Training, Learning & Employment. The latter group has unfortunately met far less frequently than the former ones. There is also a Capital Working group formulated on the same principles. [See Appendix 5 for Partnership agency list]

Parent Forums

- 3.8 Due to the separated nature of the areas covered by the Sure Start Cambridge Programme there is a Forum organised for each month in each area. They were originally established in the winter of 2002-3, before formal approval of the Programme, following parental consultation and led by a temporary Parent Involvement worker who had also managed the consultation. Each monthly pair of Forum meetings has an update on the programme and a topic for discussion with a crèche and lunch provided. Matters under discussion have ranged from making recommendations on where to invest Sure Start capital monies; deciding on the contents for the home information visit welcome pack and examining the potential for the development of existing play areas. The development and sustainability of two Parent Forums presents particular challenges for the implementation of the

programme particularly as there is a need for clear methods of communication between the 2 Forums, the 8 Working Groups and the Partnership Board.

- 3.9 There is a need to involve more parents in the Forums as, for variety of reasons, attendance has greatly reduced in the last few months of 2003. We know however that there has been a general drop in attendance at local activities for people with young children lately. In discussion this has been seen as related to high levels of illness and the recent rise in availability of early years places for 3 year old children enabling parent and carer Forum members to seek employment, training and other pursuits. Though as regards attendance at Forums it is highly likely that the lack of a dedicated worker to the role, to encourage & support involvement as well as the relatively low visibility of local Sure Start provision have had a considerable affect on Forum attendance. As, contrary to reports from other local Sure Start programmes, the Cambridge ones started with relatively high numbers of parent/carers attendance & have slowly declined through the year as dedicated Parent Involvement worker time has reduced.

Partnership working

- 3.10 There have been many frustrations encountered by the Partners. Initially these were largely due to the delay in set-up pending the approval process for the Programme Plan required by the Sure Start Unit. Then there were problems encountered in recruiting members to the core team to enable a confident entry into the current implementation phase of the programme. More recently the Partnership has sought the expertise of a consultant from Partners in Change, to support further partnership development. As a starting point for this work the consultant led a session at the January 2004 Board meeting which took the format of a review of how the Partnership is working from the positions of the parent/carers and the Working Group chairs. The evaluation of partnership working is a requirement of the Sure Start Unit, to meet this detailed evaluation is planned in the second year of the programme. Meanwhile what follows are notes from points raised at the Board review, covering factors that were appreciated, things that were a problem and aspects that we may need to change. Reactions are summarised from the perspective of parent and carer Board members then from Working group chair Board members:

3.11 Parents & carer Board members:

Positives: The Board development day; Photography course/team building and the contribution made to the programme with the Christmas Card. Working groups were felt to be good providing there was time to take part in them. Breastfeeding group in King's Hedges is going well and parents have been involved as 'equals' in this.

Negatives: Parents are not funded to attend Board meetings, nor are we 'delivering' members. What are we there for? Meetings don't feel relevant to parents. Not clear about who does what in Sure Start Cambridge (roles of

agencies etc). Not sure what parents can deliver and what expected to deliver on Board. Difficult to represent families because of slow registration. Local knowledge – not being made good use of.

Change: Parents Forums often don't work. We champion as parents but other "big political guns" out there can overcome our voice. If parents raise issues often lost around 'fuzzy edged carpet' i.e. often fobbed off /taken no further. Not sure what knowledge gained is for and how best to use it. Time commitment becoming onerous. No financial recognition.

3.12 Working group chairs:

Achieved:

Reference was made to the services which are running, including those planned by partners to dovetail with SureStart aims and those approved recently including the Play worker post, Health Co-ordinator post, enhancing a new ante natal home visiting service, funding for Parent to Parent course.

The training for staff in Post Natal Depression, Brazelton etc. That some activities are reaching some families and the Parent Forums. The Board development day in July was referred to as having enabled procedures that helped Chairs to take action.

Review of approach to smoking cessation. Smoke free homes and 'I don't smoke in front of my child' campaign; Smoke detectors.

Development Day, joint working with parents/families/health – good alliance.

Training has gone well and good joint working across health/outreach/parents and family support working groups

Not Achieved:

Inadequate monitoring of needs, user views on services by families. Insufficient training for everyone involved in Sure Start. No system for lending resources.

What is baseline? Difficulties with statistics, for example how can a % reduction be achieved/assessed? Haven't started to think about using Action Researcher.

Annual data collection and review of working groups,

Parent involvement + representation (training has not been addressed),

Views of parents not recorded as per targets Sponsor Forum Hygiene and Safety – who does what?

Drop-ins – extenuated process to identify range of provision needed and provide it – implementation very slow. Have not engaged parents sufficiently – role of Board members in this.

What needs to change?

Vision of the programme needs developing; greater deployment of user satisfaction surveys.

Activities should reflect diversity of parents and families, put on fun activities/not 'worthy activities'. Drop-ins established and training should be available for all staff.

Strategies need developing for capacity issues including increase in parental involvement in Parent Forum, Working Groups and other aspects of the programme, focus on 0-2s and re-think approaches for babies and toddlers. Communications and liaison with Working Groups and the core team, with providers, with partners and strategic agendas including *Every Child Matters*.

- 3.13 Arising from the feedback it was agreed a number of key issues should be addressed:

Processes/systems – to be put in place to allow transparent and robust monitoring and review and to give everyone confidence that there is a straightforward procedure to be followed for e.g. implementing a project; ensuring funding is available etc.

Board development – Board decision making is cumbersome and involves a number of 'layers'. The working group system should be streamlined to enable a fuller consideration of the targets and milestones to be met within the four Sure Start Objectives. In practice, three working groups are already liaising well on joint targets.

Review of activities – will they/can they achieve the targets and milestones set out in the Delivery Plan. There are no means of knowing this in place currently.

Change – the things flagged up as in need of change or review must be tackled. Some of this will be part of the work the consultant and Programme Manager will be carrying out. The Board will have to give its attention to some other aspects of change which is needed.

Mainstreaming

- 3.15 The programme is working with a wide range of organisations and groups both locally and at strategic level and plans to disseminate models of good practice within these. The process of providing funding to local groups is carried out with mainstreaming consideration for future provision.

4 Section Two: Services & Activities

4.1 While the programme is going through a largely Implementation phase some new services have been provided others have been awarded sustainability funding to maintain their current services. Prioritisation has been given to 'early win' type provision in an attempt to make the programme more visible. The outcomes of an extensive parent / carer consultation already referred to (183 parent/carers were interviewed), has been used to shape the work. All the established services do carry out their own internal evaluations of their provision

Objective One: Improving Social & Emotional support

The targets under this objective are:

- *Reduce the proportion of children aged 0-3 in the Sure Start area who are re-registered within the space of twelve months on the child protection register by 20 per cent by 2005*
- *All local Sure Start programmes to have agreed and implemented, in a culturally sensitive way, ways of identifying, caring for and supporting mothers with post natal depression*
- *100 per cent of families with young children contacted by local programme within the first two months of their baby's life*

4.2 Groups/activities supported

ABC Parent & Toddler group

Provides parent & toddler group for local families in the Abbey area and has received funding from the programme since October 2003. They are now also developing Outreach work to support the group.

Early visits

These are currently being carried out by Midwives and members of the Child & Family teams in the areas. As well as leaving a leaflet outlining services they are encouraging families to register with the programme.

Kings Hedges Family Support group

Provides a Drop-in family support service for local families in the Kings Hedges area and has received funding for this provision from the programme since April 2002 when funding from a discretionary grant awarded by an agency came to an end. The provision is seen as a model of good practice in the delivery of family support services in a community setting.

Newsletter & leaflets

The first Newsletter was sent out to all families we have contact details for in late November 2003 – we plan to send out a Newsletter every 3 months with the next one due to be ready to posted out in mid to late February. Leaflets have been developed for the early visits, Breast feeding Drop-ins, Parent Forums and events.

Objective Two: Improving Health

The targets under this objective are:

- *Achieve by 2005, in the Sure Start area a ten per cent reduction in the number of women who smoke in pregnancy*
- *Parenting support and information available for all parents in Sure Start area*
- *All local programmes to give guidance on breast feeding, hygiene and safety*
- *per cent reduction in children in the Sure Start area aged 0-3 admitted to hospital as an emergency with gastroenteritis, respiratory infection or a severe injury by 2005*

4.3 Groups/activities supported

Brazelton training

Brazelton training has been arranged for local providers and Board members, and organised across three of the interagency Working Groups. The course has proven to be so popular that there is now a waiting list for another one to be started up. Concentrating as Brazelton does on communications between babies and adults it has proved very popular with front-line staff who will then be able to use the approach in their work and demonstrate to parents ways in which their babies are interacting.

Breast Feeding support

Drop-ins have been set up in both areas and recruitment of Breast feeding mentors and training courses for them has started. There are three experienced Lactation consultants working on the project and take up of the Drop-ins is increasing week by week.

Brushing for Life

Dental health packs for local children which are now starting to be distributed through the health centres in both areas, via the Sure Start Cambridge office.

Safestart

An established project providing much needed safety equipment for local families at cost price, which has been funded since April 2003 till March 2004.

Objective Three: Improving ability to Learn

The targets under this objective are:

- *Achieve by 2005 in the Sure Start area a reduction of five percentage points in the number of children with speech and language problems requiring specialist intervention*
- *All children in Sure Start areas to have access to good quality play and learning opportunities*
- *Increase use of libraries by families with young children in Sure Start area*

4.4 **Groups/activities supported**

Childminder network

The network consists of a group of childminders who are assessed by a dedicated co-ordinator to ensure they work to the standards set out in the National Child Minding Association's 'Quality Childminding Charter'. This covers all aspects of care and learning from safety to working in partnership with parents. The co-ordinator visits each childminder regularly on a 6 – 8 week basis, as well as unannounced visits to ensure standards are maintained. She works with the childminders to ensure any training needs are addressed and further training is actively sought to build the childminder's knowledge.

Play training

Run during the summer term of last year these sessions for local families and local workers were well attended, in fact some were oversubscribed. Specific sessions were also provided for members of the Cambridge City Council Children's team who usually work with older children aged 5 and above to improve their skills in working with younger children. Each session included theoretical input and play in practice with a specific play theme.

Pre-school music group

An interactive music group for children aged 0-3 with their parent and carers which is led by an experienced music therapist was introduced at the Fields Early Years Centre in Abbey. The project aims to provide an opportunity for children and their parents & carers to interact, to develop social skills including listening and sharing and to enjoy making music together at home.

Rhyme time

Activity sessions for 0-3 year olds with sessions run weekly in the East Barnwell library in Abbey. This was launched at the Fields Early Years Centre with an event in the autumn. Further sessions are planned for King's Hedges.

Seesaw Playgroup

A recent re-launch following temporary closure last Easter this Playgroup was supported by the programme to become re-established as a community resource.

SureStart Language Measure (SSLM)

All local Sure Start programmes are required to participate in the National Speech and Language assessment. This is based on a parent/carer's view of their child's language development. The local Speech and Language Therapy Service has been contracted to carry out this work on behalf of the programme. While there has been considerable concern expressed at the limited 'pool' of families, who we have permission to contact through registrations, the information gathered during this initial year of the programme will be used to form the baseline data for language development in the Sure Start areas.

Objective Four: Strengthening Families & Communities

The targets under this objective are:

- *Reduce by 12 per cent the number of children aged 0-3 in Sure Start area living in households where no-one is working*
- *75% of families reporting personal evidence in the quality of services providing family support*
- *All local Sure Start programmes to have parent representation on local programme boards*
- *All Sure Start programmes to develop a local target to ensure links between the local Sure Start partnership and Employment Service jobcentres*
- *All Sure Start programmes to work with their EYDCP to help close the gap between the availability of accessible childcare for 0-3 year olds in the Sure Start area and other areas*

4.5 Groups/activities supported

Community crèche course

There have been two courses provided by Cambridgeshire Community Education Service, intended to increase the capacity to provide crèches in community settings in both areas. The courses have been supported with a crèche provided by a Partner agency, the Ormiston Trust. These were evaluated by the course provider with the latter of the 2 courses attracting far fewer learners than the first one which was attended by our sessional crèche staff who have now progressed on to a higher level childcare course. The second course suffered as result of staff shortages in the Community Education office prior to the start of the course and during recruitment.

Family fun days:

Following approval in March 2003 a Fun day was organised for both areas. Partner agencies and parent / carer Board members and the then small core team hosted the events with activities mainly aimed at older children. Many lessons were learnt from both occasions and they were evaluated after each one by the

interagency workers. As a result we now aim to run Family mornings every 3 months alternating between Abbey and Kings Hedges, activities are more focused on very young children, though we do still provide activities for older children but these are not the central ones. Christmas parties were provided in both areas with families who have come to parent forums attending.

Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative:

A Capital contribution of £110,000 has been made by the programme towards the new nursery which is now being developed on the Abbey Meadows site as part of the Fields Early Years Centre, in Abbey. The nursery will have the capacity to offer day care for 50 children and is part of national programme to increase access to nurseries in areas of high need. Places are to be offered at commercial level with the expectation that local families can meet the cost of a place through the Childcare Tax Credit in work benefit and comparable schemes for assisting parents accessing learning. The challenge for the programme is to enable all families living in the Sure Start area to feel they are able to access the nursery and all our other services. We are in the process of developing a strategy which aims to tackle access to early learning (before third birthday) and childcare for local families.

Parent/carer Board members training:

The wish to develop their digital photography skill was raised by the parent/carer Board members and a course organised. Dual objectives were set in that they wanted to improve their photography skills and learn to work together as a group. The group designed and created greetings cards which were printed and sent out to all the Sure Start Cambridge families. Having become competent photographers they are now doing their own projects as well as using their skills to assist in evaluating activities and events. From feedback from individual members it is also clear that they are functioning more as a group. The Digital Photography course is nearing completion and about to be evaluated by the participants.

Parent & carer forums:

These have been running since the winter of 2002-3 in both areas once a month. They take the format of an update and a topic on Sure Start theme and are supported with a crèche & lunch.

Trips and outings:

Various have been run and more are planned by Partner agencies and include trips to the seaside and to indoor soft play.

5 Section Three: Families

- 5.1 There are 186 families registered with the Programme, 292 carers and 197 children.
- Of these parent/carers 10 have reported themselves as Lone Parents and 10 have special needs.
 - The 186 families have 197 children aged 0 to 3 years old, and of these 13 children have special needs.
 - Of the 292 parents/carers who are registered, 250 are registered as white British with the remaining 42 carers being from minority ethnic backgrounds. From the most recent Household survey in 2002 we know that in Abbey & Kings Hedges there are in the region of an 11% minority ethnic population.

Initial involvement

- 5.2 Local parents & carers have been involved in the Partnership since it first began 2 years ago. Prior to these public Stakeholder events were organised where families as well as local providers were encouraged to share their concerns for the local areas. These are documented in the Sure Start Cambridge Plan 'Growing a community tree'. During the process of approval a detailed consultation was carried out with local families and the results from this were used to complete the details of the Activities plan which supplemented the Delivery Plan. As has already been mentioned a booklet analysing the consultation was then designed to provide local families with details of the outcomes of the survey – *What did you say?* This has also been a useful aid to disseminating information about local parents & carers views to partner agencies & giving easy access to information on the direction of the programme.

Continuing Involvement

- 5.3 During the past year parents & carers have been consulted on various aspects of the programme through the Parent Forums. Some parents & carers have been able to join Working Groups but for a variety of reasons both personal to the individuals involved and to the lack of available support required to encourage continued involvement this has been difficult to sustain. This has led to the four parent/carers who are Board members being put under considerable pressure to participate in all aspects of the programme. They have been involved in short listing and interviewing suitable applicants for core team posts as well as in the running of the Forums, Family events & Christmas parties, and in consulting other parents & carers. They are now all involved in the current campaign to increase the levels of registered families.
- 5.4 It is planned that the Parent Forums in February will involve attendees in reviewing the *What did you say?* document, detailing where we are now by taking a considered look at the programme as a whole, and what it is planned to deliver. Future Forum topics will be selected from the main concerns of the participants

and they will be consulted as we select suitable measures for the programme's local targets. Parent & carer satisfaction with the programme so far have yet to be gathered as evaluation until now has been limited for the reasons already discussed. Though evaluative feedback from Forums & events has been generally positive, with suggestions and improvements made, a more detailed analysis will provide a truer picture of family satisfaction with the programme. Hard to reach families remain largely un-reached by the programme as such a small proportion, around 25%, are registered.

5.5 The regional office has identified the following groups whose needs are less well met and require specific targeting to reach:

- Fathers
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- Young mothers
- Disabled parents and children
- Gay and lesbian families
- Asylum Seekers
- Refugees
- Travelling families

The Special Needs Working group and other work within the programme has identified additional 'hard to reach' groups as follows:

- Families with mental health problems
- Parents & carers with low levels of basic skills
- Families where there is violence
- Families with drug & alcohol abuse
- Families involved in criminal activity
- Families who are afraid of authority
- Families who are isolated in their local communities

The latter two pose the most serious barriers to vulnerable families participating in the work of the programme and will take a considerable amount of work to overcome.

5.6 Access to the families living in the Sure Start areas has been limited by a tension between the individual's right to privacy and the needs of the programme. Early permission was sought and given to write out to families and encourage them to register with the programme. Rather than opt for the default method of permission to stay in contact (families are asked to respond if they **do not** wish to hear anything more about the programme) the Partnership Board chose the alternative route - that is families sign a form giving permission for the team to stay in contact

and post it to us. Many of the families who did not respond will fall into one of the categories detailed in 5.5. Hence the real need for the programme to continue building on the foundations laid by the Special Needs Working group.

- 5.7 Clearly parent and carer involvement is central to the programme but does need dedicated work to maintain and develop further participation.

6 Section Four: Barriers

Delays in staff recruitment

- 6.1 The programme has suffered as result of being under staffed during the past year. Delays in appointing a Programme manager, the interim measure of the temporary Development post and the search for suitable staff have had an impact on progress to date. Appointment of the temporary administrators, the filling of the Data Handler post in March, the filling of the Administrator & Programme manager posts in May and recently the Development co-ordinator & Action research/evaluator posts mean we now have a more appropriately sized core team to take forward the work of the programme. We now urgently await the appointment of a new Parent Involvement worker to join the team in early February. While dedicated parent involvement work has been provided by temporary workers, parent / carer involvement is central to the programme and much more work is required.
- 6.2 While the programme has been understaffed, the staff in post have needed to take a flexible approach to their jobs and work well outside their job descriptions. Without this approach, and commitment to the principles of Sure Start the programme would have floundered and would not have reached the stage it is at now. Their co-operation and initiative during this time is much appreciated.

Delays in finding a base for the core team

- 6.3 The initial office space allocated proved to be unsuitable as a base largely because of the vulnerable nature of the site to vandalism. The move to the Community rooms at 74 Ditton Fields suited the needs of the programme as an interim measure but was too small to accommodate more staff as they came into post. Now, with the most recent move to fixed term temporary accommodation at Old Ditton Fields Nursery in September, we can settle down & make the most use of the space available. We should have the new base for the next 2 years at least. We plan to develop some of the services for families and children from this building. As we are still in the process of negotiating the lease & carrying out modest improvements to the premises to date these have been limited to holding Parent Forums & Christmas parties. Old Ditton Fields Nursery is also a base for Partner agencies & employees accountable to the programme with suitable accommodation to run a crèche, Board and Working group meetings, training and other events.

Finance

- 6.4 Since the appointment of the Finance manager in July 2003 (shared post within the PCT), systems and processes have been created to ensure full accountability for all aspects of Sure Start Cambridge spends. Prior to then, though there was access to finance expertise, it was limited due to the heavy workload already faced by person allocated the task. Now that we have a robust Schedule of Delegation, the systems for devolving the grant to approved projects are being developed to ensure organisations receive funding following approval and that they dovetail with the monitoring and other reporting requirements. The finance and administration systems to support payment have taken time to develop and are now improving. Recent delays in a payment to a voluntary group caused severe cash flow problems and as a consequence we have now reviewed and improved our systems.
- 6.5 The Finance manager has experienced considerable frustration in reporting through the DfES Sure Start Unit IT system. While the IT system continues to be unreliable every effort is made to ensure the programme meets finance reporting deadlines. As there is no alternative form of finance reporting available, valuable time and resources are taken up in seeking the opportunity to send finance reports to the Unit. While we understand that every effort is being made to rectify this situation it does place the City PCT in a difficult position as the Accountable body for the programme.

7 Section Five: Outcomes, Conclusions & Recommendations

Outcomes

- 7.1 It is quite early to be considering outcomes as the programme only received approval nine month ago, in March 2003. With the present rate of expansion of the programme, as it becomes more visible and active in the communities, many more outcomes will be achieved in the coming year. So far the programme has achieved four of the twelve SDA targets:
- Parent/carer representation on the Board
 - Programme is working with the EYDCP – Cambridgeshire Care and Education Partnership
 - Links have been made with Jobcentre Plus
 - Parenting support and information is available to all parents in the areas.

Conclusions

- 7.2 Sure Start is a challenging programme to deliver for many reasons, especially in its requirement that a wide range of agencies have to develop effective new ways of working together and with local families. Considering how few core staff have been available to launch the programme and the commitment required from

members of the Partnership board, the Working groups and the voluntary work of local parents and carers the effort to progress this far has been enormous.

- 7.3 Having taken the opportunity to use this report to reflect on the programme so far the following recommendations would build on and support the achievements of the programme:

Recommendations

7.4 Recommendation One:

The programme needs to increase the rate of the provision of improved and new services. Clearly much of the current frustration with the programme is the slow rate of roll-out of provision. Since starting to write this report there has been an increase in the speed at which proposals are approved, this in turn should make provision more accessible and ensure we are able to meet the targets set for the programme.

7.5 Recommendation Two:

Support for parents / carers to join the Working groups. The lack of a core team member with responsibility for parent involvement has limited the ability of local parent & carers to attend the Working Groups. The Parent Involvement worker, on coming into post will be primarily concerned with running the Parent forums. It is worth considering employing a specific worker to support 'voluntary work' carried out by parents and carers in the programme.

7.6 Recommendation Three:

Reduce the time commitment required of Working Group members. By adopting a model which shapes the Working Groups around the main objectives of Sure Start, focus can be placed on the key objectives of the programme rather than a service focus. It is intended that this re-focus should make it easier to measure progress against the SDA targets set for local Sure Start initiatives. *The Board has agreed to this [January 2004].*

7.7 Recommendation Four:

The work already undertaken by the Special Needs working group with respect to 'hard to reach' families must be promoted in the proposed re-shaped management structure. While a commitment will need to be made to addressing 'hard to reach' groups through the work of each re-shaped Working group a specific focus needs to be kept to avoid issues of equality being lost.

7.8 Recommendation Five:

The capacity of the administrative staff within the core team is insufficient to meet current demand. As the core team and virtual team develop, robust systems need to be operated by responsible administrators in the Sure Start office.

8 Finally

- 8.1 The Regional Sure Start Risk Assessment of the first six months of the programme in September 2003 found the programme to be at low risk and identified areas requiring work to ensure the programme remains in this low risk state. While the assessment is only a 'snap shot ' of the programme at that stage it does indicate that generally the programme is moving in the right direction. Weaknesses identified were the need for easily accessible finance information, to register more families, to put in place a system for visiting all families within 2 months of birth, to compile a Data Protocol since then some work has been done to address these with more planned. Strengths which were noted included the focus on 'hard to reach' families through the Special needs group, parent/carer involvement at Board level, child protection procedures and data handling systems.
- 8.2 Sure Start Cambridge Partnership Board is currently reviewing the programme to date. While this process has begun much more work needs to be undertaken to complete the re-focusing of the programme around the Sure Start objectives and to better meet the needs of local families with young children and parents to be.

Mary Knox – January 2004
Programme Manager
Cambridge Sure Start