
Interim Evaluation Report

Sure Start Ladywood

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1. Introduction

This interim report focuses mainly on updating progress to date. The main report in March 2005 will contain background material and more information on methodology, but this interim report will concentrate on giving the Board information about what has been done so far, and what is still to be done.

1.1 Outline plan of the evaluation

The evaluation has been split into two parts.

1.1.1 Group work within the Programme

One part involves an investigation of group work within the Programme, although not in much depth. Questionnaires are being used, both for those attending the group sessions and staff running them. These questionnaires are being given out periodically by members of staff, who are then also completing their own questionnaire. All are being returned to the evaluator who is analysing each group as the questionnaires are received and returning findings to the Programme. At the end of the evaluation (for March 2005) there will be an overall section prepared for the main report, pooling the information on each group, and drawing conclusions about group work within the Programme. These overall conclusions will include recommendations and should suggest areas for further evaluation, where a more in-depth study can take place.

1.1.2 Work of the outreach team

The second part of the evaluation involves an in-depth look at the outreach service. To collect necessary data various methods are being used and are listed below.

- A postal questionnaire to all members who have used services. This is sent out twice. Once in July 2004 to ask about the previous three months and again in December 2004 to ask about the previous three months. This should cover the months of April, May and June 2004, and September, October and November

2004. The questionnaire asks about services, help given by the Programme and how satisfied users are.

- Interviews with all outreach workers.
- Telephone interviews with referrers to the outreach service.
- Documentary analysis – particularly of records of the outreach service visits.
- Case study evidence, particularly looking at one case study for each outreach worker with a view to adding video evidence to this written case study material.

1.2 Timetable

A copy of the timetable is attached to this report. Briefly by September 2004 the evaluation should have:

- Sent out the postal survey
- Analysed the returns of the postal survey
- Almost completed the interviews of the outreach workers
- Started the telephone interviews of referrers
- Collected case study data from the outreach team and discussed video evidence
- Analysed some questionnaires from groups – this is an ongoing process
- Completed an interim report for the Board meeting 23rd September 2004

2. Summary of some data collected to date

2.1 Analysis of questionnaire data from main survey (July 2004)

First the quantitative data are analysed. Tables have been produced, but are not reproduced here in an attempt to make this interim report shorter. Instead figures are used to summarise the main findings. Then qualitative data are given, with some quotations, to illustrate comments about the Programme and its services.

2.1.1 Sampling and response rate

The main questionnaire was sent out in July 2004. Around 250 copies were sent out – being sent to all members who used services in the three-month period before July

2004. 44 replies were received, which is a response rate of around 18%. The standard response rate for postal questionnaires is around 20% so it is felt that this percentage is acceptable. Also, as there was no sampling (all users were surveyed) this does improve the likely validity and reliability of the responses. More about validity and reliability is given below. This is the first time the questionnaire will be sent out. It will be posted out again in December 2004. A summary of the analysis is given below.

2.1.2 Analysis of quantitative data

2.1.2.1 What Sure Start services have you received /attended?

53 services were mentioned in total. There were many different categories and parents clearly saw what was offered in many different ways. These can loosely be summarised into the categories below.

Individual specific support	=	08
General advice for family	=	18
General advice for child	=	03
Groups for child	=	16
Other	=	04
Groups for parent	=	04

2.1.2.2 Contact with the Sure Start Team

22 (50%) are clear about what is offered by the Programme and what it is for, 3 were unclear and 12 (27%) said they would like to know more. This suggests that more information is needed, although as the Sure Start initiative is not easy to make clear – the long list of services that people say they receive underlines that – being ‘clear about what it is for and what can be offered’ is not easy. Also the respondents may have known what it is for, but not what can be offered, so that may be the emphasis they gave to the question. 24 (54%) said someone from the team approached them to offer support, 15 (34%) went to Sure Start to ask what was available and 9 (20%) said they found out from a friend or neighbour. 21 (48%) said they found out from their

Health Visitor. This is what might be expected given the role of the Health Visitor on the birth of a new baby.

24 (54%) would like more contact, 9 (20%) said no, and 8 (18%) said they did not know. This seems to suggest that overall there is some satisfaction about the level of contact, but that more would be appreciated. This could reflect that respondents feel neglected, however, it could equally well mean that they appreciate the services and the contact, and would like more.

2.1.2.3. The helpfulness of the team

40 (93%) agree that the Sure Start team are always friendly, which speaks for itself. 3 said they were unsure – so this is a very strong vote of confidence for the team.

29 (72.5%) said it was not hard to get help needed from the team but 10 (25%) were unsure and one said it was hard to get the help needed. One person said it was not hard 'if you ask'.

34 (83%) said that the Sure Start team is helpful and has helped the family. 6 (15%) were not sure and only one said it was untrue. There was one respondent who did have negative comments and this is the same person. They are from the local area and feel they did not get the help they needed. As this same person said that the team was not helpful, it was hard to get the help they needed and also gave negative comments, this is evidence of reliability and validity – their answers were consistent. Also if 83% said the team is helpful and 72.5% said it was not hard to get help needed, then this is evidence of reliability too, as this was a similar question so you would expect similar replies. It is also evidence of validity as a similar question was asked in a different way and yet still produced similar results.

26 (65%) said they found out what was available from the outreach team. 7 (17.5%) said they were unsure and 7 (17.5%) said that they did not find out what was available from the team. Perhaps they found out what was available in some other way. On the other hand it appears that 35% might not feel that they find out what is available – unless they don't think that the Newsletter is part of the team.

2.1.2.4 Help from other agencies

Regarding other agency help the Health Service seems to be the most involved with 11 (25%) saying that and 6 (14%) saying Education. Many respondents did not answer this question though, so they may not have known how to answer this section. A list of services offered by Sure Start and a list of personnel was sent out with each questionnaire, but it is still not an easy task to separate out agencies. Indeed, that is what would be desired perhaps, given the idea of multi-agency working.

22 (50%) said Sure Start had given help they could not get from elsewhere and 19 (43%) said they had been offered help by Sure Start on top of what other agencies offered. This again suggests reliability as the questions are similar and the response rate is very similar. This also supports the Sure Start initiative.

15 (34%) said they would like to know more about what support is on offer and this reinforces the claim that 12 said they would like to know more when asked previously. This again is evidence of reliability. It could mean that members do not feel they know enough, or it could mean that they appreciate what is offered and are very ready to hear about more. Given the positive responses on other questions, it is likely that the latter interpretation is the case. Although it should be noted that many felt they would like to be contacted more as well, so there are quite a few occasions when respondents ask for more information. This does suggest that they feel there is more to know – even if they are not dissatisfied about the information they receive. The respondents that say they would like more information are quite happy to ask for information by Newsletter and there is no suggestion that the information they currently receive is not well communicated. Indeed it seems that they appreciate the Newsletter.

8 (18%) said they were not sure who worked for Sure Start, which may not matter, as it is quite difficult to categorise different agency workers, however, this may point to a need to raise awareness. 6 (14%) said they could not see the difference between Sure Start and other agencies. Again this may not matter – after all it might mean that

multi-agency working is taking place – on the other hand the Programme may wish to highlight more clearly the work they do, so that more can take advantage of it.

2.1.2.5 More about help received from the Sure Start team

There was a varied opinion about how far they would have had difficulty without Sure Start, with 17 (42%) out of 41 answering that they would have had difficulty, 8 (19%) being unsure and 16 (39%) saying they would not have had great difficulty. This could suggest that they felt other agencies would have helped instead. Earlier, 22 said Sure Start had given help they would not have got elsewhere, so these figures could support one another. On the other hand perhaps many families do not want to admit that they would have had great difficulty, which is understandable. This might suggest that it is important to bear in mind people's wish to manage for themselves.

19 (50%) were not sure if they would have found help elsewhere, which is understandable. 6 (16%) said they were unsure whether they would have found help elsewhere and 13 (34%) said they would not have found help elsewhere.

31 (74%) agreed that the team does what it says it will and 8 (19%) were unsure. Only 3 (7%) said this was untrue. This supports the finding that overall people were pleased with what is on offer. However, it also suggests that there are some people (26%) who seem to feel that they have been let down. This is an issue worth focusing upon.

2.1.3 Analysis of qualitative data

2.1.3.1 General comments about what services have been used

Comments can be categorised into three main groups. The first group concerns comments about 'they are very good people'. The second group details some specific areas of help. Then there are some comments about the provision of information.

Comments about the team being 'very good people' include:

"They have helped my baby and me and my family"

"Sure Start services are very good"

“You get such friendly and helpful staff”

“They have been a great source of support and have always encouraged me to achieve”

“You only have to pick up the phone”

Comments about individual services include:

“Lunch is absolutely delicious”

“It is a pity it is only for kids under 5”

“They have helped me with emotional and moral support”

“They have been extremely helpful in finding a course for my career and work placement”

Comments about information include:

“They will send you any information they have”

2.1.3.2 Comments on being asked what they would like in the way of more help

Respondents said they needed more help with:

- Affordable day care and nursery provision (this was said by a few)
- Nursery problems
- Understanding what rules apply / facilities are on offer at the Sure Start Centre
- Parenting skills

2.1.3.3 Comment when talking about support from Health Visitors and Social Services

One person mentioned help that they had had from other agencies. They said:

“A sense of professionalism was present. Even after I had my baby the follow up was excellent”

2.1.3.4 Comment about what is known about Sure Start and other agency help

One person mentioned lack of information, which seemed to be a theme in this analysis:

“I don't know how to get help from Sure Start and other services. I think to ask for help I need to know the different services and activities that I can ask for help”

2.1.3.5 Comments about how Sure Start has affected the family

There was praise for specific services for the child, and some examples are given below:

“Speech and language support has been very useful”

“Helping my child to interact more with children his age”

“Helping to get him into a nursery”

“I have received invaluable support from ‘kids’ with both my daughter and crucially when we adopted our son they gave us help at a very difficult time”

“The Home to School worker has been important for us this year and very much appreciated”

“My son now goes to play group. He did not speak much English now he can speak English”

“They also take my children out often because I cannot do that”

“When my baby play with other children she so happy and she learn so many things”

There was praise for support for family/adults, and some examples are given below:

“Having people to talk to in confidence if you have a problem”

“With my depression I found Sure Start Centre have pulled me out of it a little. They have been a lifeline for me”

“It is nice to know you can go there have a laugh, good meal and enjoy friendliness and have a good chat with friends and the children can play”

“Sure Start has helped me when Social Services have never bothered or told me what I was entitled to and where to get help. I need Sure Start”

“By providing courses Sure Start has helped me by giving me a reason to leave the house and meet other people”

“Sure Start has given me so much confidence in myself and my ability”

“Always knowing that there is somewhere to go e.g. groups or drop in if I need to get out”

“The fact that I can just walk in at any time, get questions answered or simply sit and chat with other mothers and enjoy a meal at very reasonable prices has made me realise that being a mother is quite rewarding”

“Because I am a foreigner and have no friends and family it is good for me to get some information and tips about children’s development when I am chatting with the outreach worker”

There was praise for specific services for the family/adults and some examples are given below:

“It helps in the way that if they do something re coursework or cooking and so on they put on creches which is very helpful”

“They come to visit you and give you so much help if you need it. They can even help you back to work”

“Through the drop in centre and café I have met local mums and toddlers and this has helped me get out and about”

“Red Cross link to finding my family”

“I can now actively look for work”

“Money advice gave support to purchase a washing machine”

“Karis Neighbourhood Scheme painted my bathroom and plumbed in my new washing machine”

“I find each staff member to be very helpful in their field of work and are very thorough in their assistance to my family”

“They helped me when I had to go out especially for my children’s immunisation and regular check”

“Gave information regarding training and part time work”

“They help me with ESOL”

There were comments about what the Programme still had to tackle

“Sure Start has not affected my family or myself. I thought it could have but just like all the other so called agencies that are supposed to be there to help people/parents they didn’t. Sure Start Ladywood is not there for born and bred Ladywood people”

“Only one area helped me, which is money advice. She was the only one who I could relate to and helped me personally”

“I have had one bad experience in the last three months but this was due to poor communication and nobody/no agency can get it right all the time”

There were other comments too – when asked if they wanted to add anything. Comments were about how Sure Start helps, including quite a few respondents saying it helped to overcome barriers and make friends. Comments also talked about things that were still to be done, and services that could be offered. The other comments are outlined below:

a) praise for Sure Start

“I think all Sure Start services are very good and very helpful”

“Baby massage has really helped settle my baby. Dawn is very knowledgeable and helpful. Great advice”

“Offers services to help my daughter grow and learn and helps with information going back to college”

“The staff at Sure Start Ladywood are informative, responsive, friendly and caring. They are an excellent team of people to be around. They certainly go over the top to assist. Excellent group!”

"I have received so much support from the outreach team workers which is invaluable"

"I would like to thank Debbie and Ruth"

"I only found out about Sure Start when my daughter was about two years old. She is nearly five now. But I wish I found out when she was a couple of months old I can see that they have so much help for expectant mothers and young babies, it is brilliant. When I had my older children years ago you did not get much help but now you get help with everything. People come and do your gardening and it is excellent. I don't go to all the things but I have been to two Christmas parties, Telford wonderland, I have had visits, phone calls, letters, even had someone to talk to me at my daughter's nursery. What else could you ask for? This is the best organisation I have seen ever. Keep up the good work. I bet you all have helped so much people just like me!"

b) overcoming barriers and making friends

"I have made many new friends who have helped me to overcome barriers"

"Has given me the option to meet other mothers in the same situation as me"

"Sure Start provides days out and activity days that some people would not be able to provide for their children - if Sure Start were not available. Some people have no family or friends to help with their children but Sure Start provides this family and friends for people – it is great!"

c) things still to tackle

"We have to have no discrimination"

"Every time I come to Credit Union to get my child benefit money on Tuesday they either cannot find where my money is. So far it has happened every week. Other than that keep up the good work"

"I think Sure Start Ladywood is great because they support people from their pregnancy. I just wish that the entrance of the building were off Plough and Harrow Road as the road is quite busy"

"Activity days at the centre to be changed every so often to allow working parents to attend with their little ones on days off – e.g. no activity on a set day every month every week"

"The outreach team needs to get more information out e.g. about benefits for parents not working"

"Some outreach workers do not tell you everything what is going on nor do you hardly ever see them"

"I feel that having structured sessions at the centre has made the drop in less accessible. You have to remember when it is open and what is on and this can put you off going. Also it seems to be less full now and other mums who go to non-Sure Start playgroups have mentioned it has put them off too. Perhaps there could be days when it is still a drop in open to all at any time of the day"

d) ideas for further services

“It would be great to do aqua aerobics of some kind of exercise now it is impossible to exercise and care for your child”

“I would like to see a day nursery up and running in Plough and Harrow Road” (More than one person mentioned this)

2.1.4 Validity, reliability and generalisability

2.1.4.1 Reliability

Some questions were asked more than once in a similar way to check for reliability and there was very close correspondence between the answers to these questions, so it is thought that the results are reliable. Examples of where this has happened are given in section 2.1.2 above.

2.1.4.2 Generalising

The response rate is reasonably high and it is thus thought that the results are generalisable to the whole population – the 250 families surveyed. All families that have used services in the recent time were sent a questionnaire so there was no real sampling as all were sent forms, and findings can be generalised to that population – the membership.

However, the sample is a volunteer self-selected one as only those motivated to return the surveys were included. There was a raffle prize for returning the questionnaire, which would have motivate people other than those who had something definite to say perhaps. It should be noted though that it is possibly mainly those that are very pleased with what is offered that will take the trouble to reply – or those very unhappy with what is offered. There seemed to be really only one of those, which speaks for itself perhaps. On balance it is thought that a fair sample returned the questionnaires. There were some who clearly did not have very good written English, but their replies were clear enough and it was pleasing to see that this was not a barrier to replying. Having said that, those who really have a problem with the language would not have replied, which is a consideration. One

respondent, trying to explain how they were affected by the Programme said “I am not very good in English to explain”, which helps to highlight that issue. The evaluation has included a survey of groups alongside this main survey, and a sewing group for Somalian women has been included, which does at least give some members who may not have been able to complete the main questionnaire an opportunity to give their views. Any other similar groups will also be surveyed or a focus group will be set up.

2.1.4.3 Validity

There is thought to be validity too. For example, one respondent had clearly not had good experiences with the team and consistently gave ‘negative’ responses, which would be expected. It would not be expected that one form had both strong negative responses and strong positive ones at the same time – this would be contradictory and suggest a lack of validity. Also the correspondence between answers to similar questions suggests that responses are valid, as it is likely that the questions are measuring what they seem to measure.

2.2 Summary of some interview data from outreach workers

Interviews with outreach workers are about to be set up, with their co-operation of course. One interview has been carried out and has been very useful. Results are not given here, as that one individual’s comments would then clearly be identifiable, which is not in line with ethical guidelines. Also much of the data gathered has given historical background, which is very useful, and will be included in the main report so is not given here.

Some comments, however, will be very useful and are given below. These are comments that are not attributable to a particular source, and give an idea of the sort of data that will be gathered:

“Trying to link between government targets and what parents want might seem difficult, but there is not really so much of a gap here as you might think”

“We work on the basis that all parents want the best for their children but they sometimes need some help and support to deliver that”

“It has been hard work engaging parents but not impossible”

“It is always busy. In summer we do a lot of family support and in term time we run groups”

“Child protection on the whole seems to have gone down according to health visitors, which is good”

“There is communication but less with Social Services - they are under a lot of pressure”

“There are a lot of aspects to the work, there is the paperwork and you have to monitor and get your monitoring in. It is quite busy. I think referrers are very happy that we get back to them when we need. Actual contact with families in need is very good”

“There are a wide range of issues that I deal with – an extremely wide range”

“I find the work extremely satisfying. It is because I agree with the philosophy of Sure Start – which includes parents, and services which parents are asking for. It treats parents as partners and equals”

“For some families the difference has been extremely large. Part depends on need, part depends on our ability to engage them and their willingness to build up a relationship and work with us”

“The building has helped without a doubt. It is attractive – nice bright and neutral, things to play with – families have found that good”

2.3 Analysis of some questionnaire data regarding groups

Groups that have contributed so far include:

- Somali group
- Computer group
- Let’s Talk
- Time to Play
- Cookery group

Other groups are now in the process of gathering data as well. Not all the above have yet been analysed, but analysis is in process. Numbers were small in this group and four questionnaires were received. An example of data gathered is given below.

2.3.1 Findings from some of the data gathered so far, and conclusions drawn – from the Somali women’s group

Out of the 4 responses all agreed that the groups were enjoyable and that what was learnt was useful. They all looked forward to the sessions and felt included, and found the most useful part was meeting others. Most felt they learnt a lot from attending and most found the group helpful, with only one not really sure about that. Most felt their needs were catered for. There was just one group member who was not sure that what was needed was provided, although it was not clear what else was wanted.

All respondents felt that staff members are welcoming in the group and all felt included. This suggests that the data are reliable, as all said they felt included when asked previously too. There was a general feeling that more planning was needed, even though most felt that the activities were well planned. 1 person was not sure whether the group was known about, but the others felt that it was. Perhaps there is a suggestion here that more publicity would be useful, as well as more planning with regard to the activities. This might be what was hinted at in the first section when one member was not sure that the group provided what was needed.

This is clearly a popular group in that all 4 had been going for at least 6 weeks to the group. The group clearly encouraged children as all had at least one child with them. All respondents said that the group leaders are friendly and welcoming, which reinforces what was said earlier, and all felt that the other group members were welcoming too. This backs up the claim that meeting the others was one of the main things that was welcomed about the group. All felt that they knew enough about the group, its purpose and what was happening. This shows that communication between the group leaders and the members is good.

It appears that the crèche facility is popular, is booked and is used. The one that did not use the crèche had a very small child who was able to simply stay with them. Therefore, it seems that the crèche facility is a very important part of this group and it enables the members to be involved in the group without having to pay attention to their child/children.

It seems clear that the women enjoy the group. They particularly like meeting each other and the social side of the group, and they particularly appreciate the friendliness

and helpfulness of the group leaders. They are happy with having the crèche and happy with how the children are treated too.

They are happy with what they are learning although there is a suggestion that they would like to learn more. They feel that the venue is suitable, although there is a suggestion that having more facilities (in the form of machines, interpreters and teachers) would be very welcome. This suggests that they are keen to get the most out of their sessions, which in turn suggests that they welcome the existence of the group.

This is a new group and the conclusion is that it is very successful. It is fulfilling a need, which is not just a need to enable learning to take place, but a need for social interaction between this specific group, so that they can support one another.

It appears that the numbers attending are rather small (though this needs to be confirmed). It is possible that other women (from groups other than Somalian families) would benefit from this group. On the other hand there seems to be a strong suggestion that it is the support that the Somalian women offer to one another that is the most beneficial, so a special group is probably justified even if the numbers are low.

3. Comments on progress of the evaluation

3.1. Case study families and video evidence

There has been discussion about the video case studies and families have been asked. Understandably perhaps families have said they do not want to be on a video, but it is thought that they will agree to written case study evidence. It has been suggested that members of the outreach team be videoed presenting their case study, with the written evidence going alongside the video. The current idea is for each team member to write up a case study (with guidance that has been provided). Then, with permission of families of course, they will be videoed (by Sure Start staff so that they feel comfortable) talking about the case study, and, with editing, one video will be made. The written case study evidence can be published with this video as a pack, which can

be used to publicise the work of the team. Evidence from the other means (the main survey, documentary analysis and interviews with the team and referrers) will go with this video evidence.

3.2 Interviews with outreach team members

Interviews with the outreach team are a little delayed – purely because the evaluator has not yet made the appointments. One interview has taken place. The delay is partly due to wanting to make decisions about the case study and video evidence. The evaluator will now make appointments to interview the team members and can discuss the case study and video evidence at the same time. This will take place from October onwards.

3.3. Questionnaire data (main survey)

The first postal survey has been sent out, returned and analysed, with some of the data presented in this interim report. There is currently discussion about whether to change any of the questions or add anything. The second questionnaire will be sent out in December.

3.4. Documentary analysis

Some documentary analysis has been carried out, for example, using the Annual Report, to inform the introduction to the main report. The analysis of outreach team records will take place after the team has been interviewed and that should be during October 2004.

3.5 Phone interviews with referrers

Names of referrers have been collected. An interview schedule will be drawn up and phoning will start after the interviews with the team have taken place. The schedule will be designed as a questionnaire in case the interviewees prefer to respond by post, as they are likely to be very busy. This will allow for flexibility, or some can be interviewed face-to-face if they prefer.

3.6 Evaluation of group work by questionnaire

The forms that are awaiting analysis need to be done in the next week (by 23rd September 2004)

Staff are being reminded to use the forms and evaluate their groups. Some forms are being given out with envelopes for their return whereas it is likely that a better response rate would come from doing the forms within the group and collecting them in, so this could be tried.

Ongoing analysis is being carried out with a view to pooling the data for a final summary to go into the main report.

3.7 Conclusions about progress

It is thought that the evaluation is on target and an examination of the timetable confirms that all areas are being tackled appropriately.

By the end of September the evaluator needs to have:

- Made appointments with the rest of the outreach team for October interviews (or sooner)
- Completed analysis of all the group questionnaires awaiting analysis and sent off the findings to the relevant staff

In October 2004 the evaluator needs to:

- Interview outreach team staff and discuss case study evidence with them
- Make arrangements to carry out documentary analysis of records to see range of work covered by the team etc.
- Collect some more group evaluation data and analyse it (this is ongoing)

- Set up telephone interviews with referrers. This involves checking with the outreach team first, sending a letter of introduction to explain the process and setting up the interviews

Then the timetable will be followed to complete the process.

4. Issues arising that are likely to be conclusions/recommendations

It is too early to draw too many conclusions, but some issues are noted from data already gathered

Suggests are:

- Make clearer to the community what is offered by the Programme
- Make more contact with families
- Try to make clearer what the different agencies offer (if this is thought appropriate)
- Make sure that only what can be achieved is promised
- Check back with families afterwards to see if they are satisfied with what has been offered (26% in the first survey did not agree that the team does what it says it will do)
- Consider some particular emphasis on those 'born and bred' in the area – is this an issue that needs picking up?
- Maintain the friendly approach – it is clearly working
- Consider progression with regard to group work – have all groups a planned progression route for those families wishing to pursue issues in more depth?