

Sure Start Report 1

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Wave 2 Programme

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## **Introduction**

When Ribbleton's programme was initiated three years ago it was one of only two Sure Starts in the county. Today there are 17 programmes in Lancashire, eight of which, like Ribbleton, have the County Council as the accountable body. The lead organisation at Ribbleton's Sure Start is the local Primary Care Team. Although Ribbleton Sure Start was initiated in January 2001 it has not undergone an external local evaluation to date. The recently appointed evaluation team from Lancaster University are awaiting full ethical clearance from the South Ribble and Chorley Medical Ethics Committee, the Governance Unit at the Primary Care Team and the Research and Development Unit at the local Acute NHS Trust. Until these have been obtained the evaluators are unable to interview anyone who is registered with the NHS. However, for this report, the National Evaluators of the Sure Start programme gave special dispensation to interview the programme manager. Other sources of information accessed for this report include: the programme's Delivery Plan; minutes of the Management Board meetings; reports of events by members of staff at the Sure Start; any evaluation material that has been drawn together by members of staff and users. These documents give a picture of events at Ribbleton Sure Start over the last 12 months. It is intended that once ethical clearance has been obtained, a second report be produced looking at the history of the programme from its inception to present day through the experiences of users, board members and staff. The reports will not comment upon day-to-day monitoring data which is submitted to the National Sure Start Unit on a monthly or quarterly basis.

This report is intended to give users, potential users, members of the partnership boards and of staff at Ribbleton Sure Start an outline of events that have taken place at the programme over the last 12 months. A copy of the report will be sent to the national evaluators of Sure Start (NESS) based at Birkbeck College, London.

## **Types and sources of information – evaluation and monitoring**

Sure Start programmes are required to collate two types of core data: aggregate monitoring data and information on individual aspects of the programme. Such information falls into two categories of data: monitoring and evaluation.

### *Definitions of monitoring and evaluation*

*'These terms are often used interchangeably, but although they may overlap it is useful to make clear a difference of emphasis:*

- *monitoring refers to the regular collection of basic statistical information about a programme, such as the number of referrals, starts and completions, attendance and programme integrity checks. Targets can be set on this basis e.g. number of referrals, successful completion rate. It allows routine reporting which can raise questions if targets are not being met.*
- *evaluation is the more in-depth process of looking at whether a programme is achieving its objectives. This may involve collecting new data as well as analysing existing monitoring data. Evaluation should provide explanations*

*and answer questions and not just raise them. Because of the work involved, evaluation reports are usually produced as one-offs rather than routinely.'*

*(taken from Simon Merrington's book, 'A guide to setting up and evaluating programmes for young offenders.' ISTD. 1998. ISBN 0 901541 555 9.)*

### **Monitoring data**

Monitoring data is intended to give an overall picture of the National Sure Start programme and as such is regularly collated and submitted as aggregate data to central government. It records:

- the numbers of people who are potential programme users living in the area;
- how many people attend each group;
- basic first contact information.

This type of data is collated regularly by the programme administrator and viewed by staff who constantly monitor the progression of individual projects and the programme as a whole.

To a degree this kind of information is useful both at a local and a national level. Nationally it should give an idea of what is happening at every Sure Start across the country. At a local level certain trends relating to how many people are using the service could inform staff as to the most popular parts of the service they are providing.

However, although this kind of information has its uses it is not without its problems. Certain types of data can only be collected once users give their permission in accordance with the Data Protection Act and thus this level of data can only be collated once users have signed the relevant forms. Other situations that limit the usefulness of data collection are inherent in the type of data the programmes are required to collate. The best example of this is the issue of 'Programme Reach'.

'Programme reach' is the term used to refer to the number of families that a Sure Start programme works with. Monitoring data collated by the Programme Administrator notes how many families have been reached each month. As noted in the Programme Managers report to the Ribblesdale Sure Start Management Board (November 2003) the definition of the number of people contacted by the Sure Start may well vary between programmes from a telephone call to a face-to-face meeting. Another problem noted by the Manager about this system of recording is that it does not allow for the counting of contacts with anyone other than the parent of a child, thus contacts with grandparents, carers, childminders formal or informal foster parents are not counted. This situation may well be having an important influence over the data.

Another problem is inherent in the way that data is collected. The present system of collection requires that a record be kept of how many contacts have been made with children and not how many children have been contacted. In simple terms this means the scheme is recording each *contact* not each *child* and so the programme does not know if one child has been contacted 100 times or if 100 children have been contacted once. The implications of this are important. For example, although it could appear

that the Ribbleton Sure Start, between July and September last year saw 340 out of the potential 584 children from its catchment's area (numbers based on the initial Delivery Plan document and the Programme Managers report November 2003), this conclusion could be incorrect as the monitoring is only intended to record the number of contacts and not the number of children. Thus, in effect, the Sure Start programme does not know how many children out of the potential 584 children it has made contact with. Because of the mismatch in data collection it is not possible to say what percentage of children are being reached by Sure Start. The estimate at present is that about 19% of the children in the area being reached by the Sure Start services.

After the collation of quantitative data there remain a number of aspects of the programme that remain invisible to the monitoring process. For example, it does not tell us much about the quality of the contact between users and programme, simply that a contact has been made. Each contact is registered individually but it is unlikely that the data will reveal, in its present form, if the person involved in the contact was a repeat user or a new visitor to the programme. It also will not tell us if there is continuity of contact between the programme and its users. To answer this kind of question there is a need for qualitative information.

### **Qualitative information on individual aspects of the programme**

Qualitative information offers an in-depth insight into the individual aspects of a programme. The emphasis of the evaluation will be on the qualitative aspect of the programme and its individual components. Although this too will involve some quantitative data it will be different from that produced for submission to the National Sure Start Unit as it will focus on local, individual events rather than the wider national picture.

To date some small scale evaluations have taken place within the programme but not enough to call a full evaluation. It is intended that once ethical clearance has been achieved, the evaluators move forward with their intended plan of action (see below).

Parallel to the local evaluation is the national evaluation of the Sure Start programme carried out by NESS.

### **Baseline data, evaluation activities and information presently available**

Because of problems faced by the scheme in its early days a substantial baseline of data has not been established. Baseline data usually tells us the basic facts about a local population for example the number of people who smoke or how long they have lived in the area. Although some of the more general information can be collated from public records much of the required detailed information can not. For example, the National Census could tell us how many people lived in the area, but it could not tell us how many residents take exercise on a regular basis. The purpose of a baseline is to have statistical profile against which Sure Start can measure any change in the health and habits of the local population over the duration of the programme.

It is commonly noted that even with a quality baseline it is challenging to be able to attribute any changes in a given population solely to the intervention of one programme. Nevertheless, it is a tool commonly used in the evaluation of some types

of programme. However, it is not possible at this late stage to establish a baseline because of the changes that may well have taken place since the arrival of Sure Start to the area. Therefore, the best that can be done is for the evaluators with the users and staff to look closely at the data that was recorded at the start of the programme, at what is taking place now and ask if the present delivery of services is the most effective way of achieving the Sure Start objectives. It is the intention of the evaluators to start this process once the history and present position of the Sure Start has been recorded in the initial two reports.

### **National objectives and local projects**

All of the local projects were designed to address the national targets. Over time several of these targets have shifted or have been replaced, amended or deleted from the programme by central government. At present the core national targets are:

Objective 1: Improving Social and Emotional Development.

Objective 2: Improving health.

Objective 3: Improving the ability to learn.

Objective 4: Strengthening families and communities.

Specific schemes within Sure Start are related to particular national targets (see Appendix One Management Board Update – December 2003/January 2004). Many of the schemes serve a number of the national objectives. This relationship between the national and the local is demonstrated in the attached information (see Appendix Two) relating to the ‘Great Outdoors Art Event’ held by Sure Start Ribbleton. Although the event was a national one, celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of early education, the local event run by Sure Start at a local park aimed to cover all of the national Sure Start objectives. The short report on the event included in this report lists costing and comments from the children who took part. Similar reports included in the Appendix: courses for parents; evaluation reports on language development sessions for parents.

Future evaluation reports will be able to offer an analysis of the individual schemes and their effectiveness. The present information is drawn from: a report to the Management Board in January 2004 by the Community Development Team Leader; reports compiled by other members of staff over the last 12 months.

### **Sure Start projects and schemes**

#### *Drop In Sessions*

Sure Start staff have initiated a programme of activities for the Drop In including: visits from a herbalist and a dental hygienist; and craft activities. The Loan Parent advisors and the CAB continue to be regular visitors to the Drop In. The group and staff are looking at ways of supporting parents using the Drop In by offering short (20 to 30 minute) ad hoc child care to allow parents to talk to advisors or take part in activities.

A publicity group is under development at the group and it is intended to produce a newsletter and design a new information leaflet.

### *Dad's Den*

The Den is for male carers and includes, for example, grandads. They meet twice a week once at a local community centre in the evening and at the Sure Start building on Thursday afternoon. These times are currently under review as the evening event and location has proved to be the better attended.

The Dad's Den also operates the Tool Library, a facility that is proving to be very popular with local families, and arranges a programme of family activities and trips out. A new project that is currently under consideration is a Dads' Photo Album to celebrate fatherhood. It is intended that members of the group will work with a professional photographer to produce work for an exhibition at the Harris gallery (the main museum and gallery in Preston) during June 2004.

Members of the group are planning to give a talk on their work to Area Forum this month.

Future Dad's Den events include: a family picnic; a 999 Day; the fitness project; workshop s at the tool library; a DIY course.

### *New Roots*

Children and parents are invited to plant a new tree in the local park for each new baby that is born in the Ribbleton Sure Start area.

### *Reindeer event*

An event leading up to Christmas that involved babies, toddlers, parents, carers, reindeer and a lot of dressing up.

### *Learning Zone*

For several weeks prior to Christmas a crafts workshop was held by a community artist in the Learning Zone. It is intended that in the new year a credited Holistic Health course will start looking at all aspects of: health, nutrition, stress management, personal development and health lifestyles.

First Aid Course. This course has been provided after requests for help and advice regarding First Aid from a number of parents and carers and will be run in conjunction with Dad's Den on Monday evenings.

As noted above the tool library operated by Dad's Dan has proved very successful and has included training on tool safety from a tool supply company. Following this thriving enterprise another loan scheme is being created that will hold a supply of camping equipment for use by Sure Start families.

### *The Acorn Group*

The Acorn Group is based at a local community centre and draws parents and carers from the local community. The services and courses run at the centre by the group are in co-ordination with Sure Start but with the impetus coming from the group members. For example a trip out during the half term school holiday week. Parents are assisting Sure Start staff to plan and publicise future events.

### *Other regular events at Ribbleton Sure Start:*

- the library story time during term time at Ribbleton library;
- parent and toddler sessions at community facilities;
- 'Breast Friends' breast feeding support group continues weekly;
- individual behaviour management consultation offered to parents;
- parents groups;
- a child-minders drop in;
- Messy Play.

### *Support interactions:*

- Mid-wives supporting and advising families through ante-natal clinics or visits and group work;
- Family Support Workers informing people about events at visits and groups;
- Nursery nurses distributing leaflets at Nurseries, Parent and Toddler Groups, the library and playgroups;
- Men's worker arranging home visits to ensure all fathers are registered;
- Child care workers – offer role model good practice at drop in sessions;
- Support for families on the 'at risk register';
- Family Support Worker to attend GP baby clinics.

### *New sources of interaction and information:*

- news letters to all registered families and the community in general;
- the 2004 Sure Start calendar completed and distributed;
- volunteer programme to include new 'buddy' system to support new parents;
- car and home safety to be incorporated into ante-natal drop in;
- development of leaflets addressing issues around children's health by 'Mum's Knows Best' leaflet group;
- newsletter;
- Homestart co-ordinator working closely with staff to have input into families wishing;
- access to this service;
- attendance at the local domestic violence interagency forum;
- language groups in nurseries and home visits.

### *Courses presently running:*

- Positive Parenting;

- baby massage;
- aerobic sessions for parents and carers.

*Future courses and events:*

- establishment of post-natal group for January 2004;
- speech and language therapist to deliver 6 week course – Jan 2004;
- several language courses;
- basic food hygiene course;
- involvement with the Health School Initiative.

*Innovation for next 12 months:*

- Family Support Worker to develop follow-up system to visit at 6 months;

*Event ideas for the next 12 months:*

family trips out;  
 a cheese day;  
 the Sunday Bunny Run in April;  
 camping trips over the summer months;  
 family picnics;  
 a Gala in July;  
 a fruit picking day;  
 Halloween events;  
 a bonfire trip;  
 a visit to the illuminations;  
 creating a group to make a quilt;  
 Christmas events.

All of the above schemes and projects are under constant review by users and members of staff. To date none of the initiated schemes have been cancelled but the review and revision process will be expanded once the evaluators have completed their second report.

## **Working with people in communities**

### *The Acorn Family Centre*

It is hoped that a Family Centre can be established next to Acorn House. This has been a long term intention of Sure Start and local residents. Staff are currently involved in working with Acorn and Preston City Council to produce bids to the Community Action Fund for £20,000 to support the project. This proposal has already undergone quantity surveyor costing and it is intended to gather quotes for other aspects of the work that need to be done in the near future. It is possible that developments will start to take place in April this year.

### *Jobcentre Plus referrals*

Sure Start Ribbleton is working in partnership with Jobcentre plus to develop a referral and tracking process to support parents back into employment and training. This scheme is intended to include a jointly funded post between Jobcentre Plus and Ribbleton Sure Start.

### **Recruiting parents and sustaining their involvement**

#### Working with parents and other Sure Start users

Several of the events held by Sure Start Ribbleton over the last two years has involved working with parents as potential and active members of the Management Board, a parent's group called 'Parents' Forum' and the recruitment of local people into the programme. A recent event, the Forum Promotion and Hot Pot Lunch, was a good example of this type of engagement.

At the event parents were invited to comment through small group activities, on statements relating to the central objectives of the Sure Start programme:

- providing extra support for families when and where they need it, such as – family support, parenting courses, home visiting, Relate, Home Start, Dad's group;
- providing quality learning and play experiences through – playgroups, crèches, story sacks, parent and toddler groups, story time, links with school and nurseries;
- making sure that parents and the local community are involved in what Sure Start is trying to achieve – supporting and enabling parents to achieve their own personal goals, access to courses, the Parent's Forum, community activities and events, consultation and involvement;

A few parents involved 'Parents' Forum' helped to run the session along with members of staff and between 16 and 20 people attended the event, quite a number of whom were aware of Sure Start but did not use the services regularly.

During the small group work a number of issues arose relating to how and why parents used the Sure Start facilities. This was valuable data for the programme. Information was also elicited about:

- the facilities, courses and services that parents and carers felt they needed;
- times that were considered to be best to run courses and events;
- confirmation that specific schemes were inline with parents needs or ways in which they could be changed to better meet needs;
- further information that was needed by individuals and groups;
- ideas about publicising Sure Start and widening community contact;
- the further development of 'Parents' Forum';

- problems that prevented a fuller engagement with Sure Start;
- residential problems – antisocial activities by young people;
- the lack of responses for help from other agencies – the local authorities; police.

Following on from this event there was a training day for present members of, and those parents interested in becoming more involved with, the ‘Parents’ Forum’ group. Once again this was a useful day as it was not only a chance for new people to find out more about Sure Start and ‘Parents’ Forum’, it also set the priorities for the group for the next year – subject to confirmation.

These events in turn linked parents into the wider Preston Parent’s Network by ensuring that each new ‘Parents’ Forum’ member was aware that they could attend this wider group and offering them the chance to attend the meetings and training days with people they had already met and worked with.

Everyone involved with the Sure Start programme at Ribbleson is aware of the need to engage and involve more parents and carers from the community. Many other aspects of the Programme are aimed at engagement at a variety of levels from attendance at the playgroups to involvement at Board level and in many different ways from being a volunteer with the Programme to the future possibility of being a sessional worker with Sure Start.

### **Reaching the community**

#### *Volunteer programme initiation*

Staff at the Sure Start have been busy over the last few months setting up all the policies and procedures for the volunteer programme. A volunteer handbook and guidance file have been put into place and a recruitment event has been planned for January at the local high school. As part of the volunteer programme an Access All Areas pilot training course has been completed and is about to start once more. Six local parents will be attending the course. The Access All Areas course has been developed in co-ordination FACT and with Sure Starts in Central Preston and Fishwick and St. Matthews. Accreditation through the Open College Network is presently being sought so that the trainer can train others and roll out the course to an increasing number of people.

#### *Links with other local Sure Start programmes – the Preston Parents Network*

The Preston Parent’s Network has restarted after a break of some months with a training event hosted by the Sure Start in Fishwick and St. Matthews, Preston. The Network is developing an agenda looking at joint activities and events including training for parents and working together on a joint presentation of Sure Start in the city i.e. the float for the Caribbean Carnival on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2004.

## **Training**

Several different types of training have taken place at Sure Start Ribbleton. Some of the training has involved staff and parents/carers around specialist issues, for example Child Protection. Other types of training has been specifically for the parents/carers and could be seen as a way back into employment or employment related training, for example, accredited courses run by outside organisations. Members of the Parents' Forum and the management board will soon be receiving more training relating to this type of work, including how to chair a meeting and what being a member of the management board means. In the case of the management team, including parents, staff and other stakeholders, there have been team building events. Finally, there is the employment relevant training provided for Sure Start staff. Once again this can operate on two levels: staff being trained to deliver specialist skills to parents and other members of staff, for example the 'Training the Trainer' course that is central to volunteer recruitment. Alongside this is professional training on offer to staff members, for example, the NVQ 4 in Management Development with the Action Development Group that is presently being attended by one of the Sure Start Team co-ordinators.

Concurrent with this training is the National Evaluation of Sure Start training available to any member of Sure Start including the local evaluators.

## **Staff recruitment and retention**

Today Ribbleton Sure Start has 17 full and part-time members of staff in post. They are:

- Programme manager
  
- Senior administrator
- Clerical Officers x 1
  
- Team leader - Community Development
- Community Men's worker
- Community involvement worker
- Community development worker
  
- Team Leader – Learning and Childcare
- Nursery nurses x 4
- Speech and language therapist
- Speech and language assistant
  
- Team leader – Health and Social Care
- Midwife x 2
- Home start co-ordinator
- Tobacco control officer
- Family support worker x 3
- Community psychiatric nurse

It has not proved easy to recruit and retain staff for certain posts because of local conditions including the number of Sure Start programmes operating in the area. Nursery nurse staff, in particular, are in increasing demand in the city.

Several posts remain unfilled:

- part-time temporary Community Development Worker (for which, last time it was advertised, there was only one applicant);
- social worker;
- family support worker.

The present arrangement for Health Visitors attached to the scheme has proved too difficult to sustain and renegotiation between the programme and the local health team leader is currently underway.

Nevertheless, two new family support workers, two nursery nurses, a community involvement development worker, a community psychiatric nurse and a tobacco control officer (a shared post with another local Sure Start programme) have been appointed over the last few months.

One of the problems faced by the Programme Managers is that of office accommodation now that the Sure Start Team is coming up to full strength (see below – ‘Venues, buildings and accommodation’.)

#### *Jobcentre Plus Outreach Worker*

Sure Start Ribbleton is currently working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and Preston East to develop the post of Outreach Worker in the Deepdale and Ribbleton areas to work between Ribbleton and East Sure Start programmes. It is intended that the funding arrangements will allow for the new member of staff to be seconded to work with Jobcentre Plus for the first year, thus receiving training in outreach work, supporting people back into employment and training. After this time the post will be shared between Ribbleton and Preston East.

#### *Sessional staff*

Ways of employing local people on a sessional basis are being investigated by the Sure Start team. It has been noted that other Sure Starts have similar schemes and that often there is a bank of sessional workers available to: cover events, groups and crèches. This will also enable local people to gain experience and training that will help them to move on to better jobs.

It is the intention of the Programme Manager to try and ensure recruitment of the right people for the staff posts and to reduce staff turnover through accurate job details and personal specifications. A formal induction to the programme is now in place as are regular supervisions and support sessions.

The issue of recruitment and staffing will be more closely examined in a future report.

## **Venues, buildings and accommodation**

At the present time Sure Start operate in a variety of venues around the Ribbleton area. It is intended that, even when the new building is opened, that many of the current schemes and projects continue to use a local church hall and operate services for patients in the Ribbleton Medical Centre. The reasons for this a two fold. Firstly it is felt to be very important the Sure Start services are available within the various communities that it serves. Secondly, that the new building will not be of sufficient size to accommodate all scheme and programme staff.

It took some time for local people to start to use the venues in the communities but these are now well established and used on a regular basis for a number of activities. Indeed the church hall and medical centre account for 15.06% of all clients and 14.61% of all enquiries to Sure Start (figures taken from Monitoring data produced by Sure Start Ribbleton).

### *Staff accommodation*

Accommodation problems were identified early in the history of the programme. The programme manager is presently trying to find a compromise between recruiting the necessary staff and finding them appropriate desk space. It is generally acknowledged by the management board that the present situation is far from ideal. At present the programme manager has had to cease recruitment until this problem can be addressed.

### *The new building*

The programme manager's report to the management board (January 2004) notes that accommodation has been a 'constant challenge for the programme, especially since the start of the new building has been significantly delayed.' Planning permission for the building has been granted for a site approximately half a mile away from the high street site presently used by the programme and is better placed to serve Ribbleton's three main housing areas. The present projections for the new building are that it will be open in spring 2005. There has been a reduction in the funding available for the new building which has resulted in compromises having to be reached on a revised plan.

In the meantime it has become clear that the current Sure Start offices cannot accommodate the growing number of staff and therefore the programme will have to move into additional temporary premises in the near future. Negotiations with the Local Authorities are underway to look at the possibilities of using available facilities in the area.

## **Evaluation programme**

As noted at the start of this report, the evaluation team at Lancaster University are awaiting clearance from several ethical committees covering the Sure Start location. Once this clearance has been gained work will commence on producing a complimentary report to the present one, noting the qualitative evidence relating to the early years of Sure Start in the Ribbleton area. It is intended that this report will

look at: the development of the management board and of Parents' Forum; at the views of users, staff and of other stakeholders; at engaging the hardest to reach in the local communities; working in partnership with outside agencies.

Once the preliminary reports are complete the process will be moved forward into issues around the enabling of parents and staff to carry out certain aspects of evaluation with the help and guidance of the evaluation team. Other aspects of the evaluation will be continued by the team themselves. It is intended that this joint approach will enter into the spirit of Sure Start by promoting a capacity building process with local people and professional practitioners.

### **Timetable and milestones**

Certain milestones have not been achieved over the last 12 months mainly because of the problems associated with recruiting staff. Sure Start Ribbleton has been unable to recruit:

- a social worker because of the absence of the Health Team Leader.
- Health visitors have not been recruited and the Primary Care Team are reassessing these services.
- The Community Psychiatric Nurse is currently being appointed.
- A smoking cessations officer was also appointed only recently.

Although some of these members of staff are about to take up their posts, other posts cannot be filled because of the pressure on accommodation.

Several schemes and projects have been reviewed over the last 12 months and this has resulted in either delays or the removal of certain aspects of the specific projects. For example a Father's conference to discuss links with the arts was felt to be inappropriate at that point in time. Other aspects of schemes that have been delayed over the year are presently progressing and will be completed in the near future. For example, the information on the New Deal return to work courses has not been delivered but this is being addressed after review of the current process.

For further details relating to the milestones see Appendix One

### **Challenges and changes in the future**

One of the biggest changes for Sure Start Ribbleton will be its development as a Children's Centre. The programme is awaiting updated guidance on the Centres. A meeting is to be held on 4<sup>th</sup> February to allow all interested parties including parents, local voluntary groups, statutory and mainstream services to discuss the change and ask questions about what this will mean in practical terms.

Parents, staff and partnership agencies are also considering the possible planning implications of the government's Green Paper, Every Child Matters, on the future of services for children and families (September 2003). The national consultation period on the paper ended in December 2003.

*Many thanks to parents, members of Sure Start staff and the Sure Start manager for the information to produce this report.*

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## **Appendix**

1. Milestones for year 2003
2. Great Outdoor Event
3. Event Evaluation Reports