

EVALUATION REPORT

SURE START TAUNTON 2003

ANNUAL REPORT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. BACKGROUND

The Sure Start Approach

- 1.1. Sure Start local programmes were launched in 1999 and aim to improve the development of pre-school children in order that they can flourish when they reach school age. Funds are provided by central government to improve services for families with young children in order to tackle the following objectives.
 - Improving Social and Emotional Development
 - Improving Health
 - Improving Children's Ability to Learn
 - Strengthening Families and Communities
- 1.2. Sure Start programmes have been influenced by the National Head-Start programme in the United States which has been running since 1965.
- 1.3. Sure Start local programmes aim to break the cycle of deprivation that may exist in particular areas, and to increase the uptake of a range of children and family services so that long term gains can be made for children living in low income families.
- 1.4. Sure Start local programmes are area based initiatives. This means that services are provided to the target group living within the boundaries of a Sure Start programme.
- 1.5. The Sure Start approach offers a one stop approach to access a range of different services, for example, health, education and social care.

Evaluating Sure Start Taunton

- 1.6. Sure Start Taunton was launched in Oct 2002.
- 1.7. The evaluation for the Sure Start Taunton local programme is carried out by the Community Evaluation Unit which is based within Dorset and Somerset NHS. There are benefits to this approach. Sure Start Taunton is able to benefit from a locally focused but independent evaluation approach.
- 1.8. Evaluation staff are full members of the Sure Start Taunton team, taking part in team events and attending team meetings. However, as they are based in a separate organisation to Sure Start Taunton, and separately line managed, the programme is able to benefit from evaluators which are familiar with the aims and objectives, yet able to offer an independent and unbiased opinion as evaluators.

2. SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FOR 2003

- 2.1 The evaluation that has been carried out by the Community Evaluation Unit on behalf of Sure Start Taunton has responded to need and used a mixture of different types of research methods. A summary of the evaluation work that has been carried out and how the evaluation has been used to shape the development of the programme is detailed below.

Community Questionnaire and Video

- 2.2 This was one of the first pieces of evaluation that was carried out for Sure Start Taunton. A postal questionnaire was designed and piloted in conjunction with local parents. The questionnaire was sent to residents in the area to establish the priorities for the programme, and a baseline measure at the very start of the Sure Start Taunton programme. The questionnaire will be repeated at a later date in order to measure changes in the local area.
- 2.3 In addition, a video was developed by local parents in conjunction with a local art worker in order to provide a more qualitative insight in to what it is like to be a parent in the Sure Start area, and the key issues for them.
- 2.4 Findings of this research have been shared widely with local agencies and decision makers. The findings of this report will provide important evidence and information to shape the priorities of the programme as well as serve as a good basis to identify key areas for partnership working.
- 2.5 In particular, this first stage of the evaluation has highlighted that there is a need for the programme to have a strong focus on the strengthening families and communities objective, especially with regard to fear of crime, dealing with anti social neighbours and a desire to move from the Sure Start area. This will not be easy to achieve, however, it is essential if the programme is to make an impact on and improve circumstances for families with young children.

Young Persons Drop In Study

- 2.6 A questionnaire was carried out with young people in the local area as part of the commitment by Sure Start Taunton to the objective Improving Health. Questionnaires were distributed through local schools and youth workers. The results showed that there was demand for access to health advice in a format that was accessible to young people. The evaluation has helped to shape the format and shape of health services for young people in the Sure Start Taunton area.

Library Study

- 2.7 As with all Sure Start local programmes, one target under the Improving Children's Ability to Learn, is to increase membership of libraries by Sure Start families. It was felt that it would be beneficial to carry out a study to

establish whether there were particular barriers facing Sure Start families in accessing library services. This part of the evaluation will help to advise the programme how it can best develop in order to meet its target to increase the use of libraries in the area.

- 2.8 The first stage of this study has involved consulting with families and children at Priorswood fun day, using a toy pond into which children were encouraged to throw their ideas which we had placed on stickers on beanbags for them.



- 2.9 The second stage of this study has involved recruiting a number of parents in the Sure Start area to act as mystery shoppers for us. The shoppers have been asked to carry out a range of different activities, such as borrowing books, joining the library, attending a Story Sacks sessions. We will then discuss with parents their findings and identify possible barriers to library use.

Evaluation of the Home Safety Scheme

- 2.10 An evaluation of the home safety scheme is currently underway. Sure Start Taunton provides home safety equipment and advice to a number of households in the local area. We aim to assess the impact, and outcomes of this work by undertaking telephone interviews with users of the service, and face to face interviews with key staff delivering the service. In addition, we will assess the costs of the service and the use made of the home safety vouchers.

Training and Support for Practitioner Evaluation

- 2.11 Two evaluation support days have been scheduled for the early part of 2004. The first day will provide an overview and introduction to evaluation and encourage staff to consider what issues or services they would like to see evaluated in the forthcoming evaluation programme. The second day will give staff the opportunity to raise evaluation issues and questions with regard to their particular service. The involvement of the evaluation team in this way, will help to ensure that reflective practice becomes a key part of the style of working of all team members.
- 2.12 Evaluation support has also been provided to staff within the programme, for example, designing consultation posters in conjunction with library staff to support the review of the mobile library service.

Review of the Weekly Drop in Sessions

- 2.13 A review of the weekly drop held in Sure Start Taunton is scheduled to take place in the new year.

Conclusion

- 2.14 The Community Evaluation Unit will continue to support the development of the programme through the evaluation of services and consultation with families. It is important that findings from the evaluation are accessible, relevant and timely, so that the needs of local families are able to shape the Sure Start Taunton local programme.

APPENDICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Background

A community questionnaire was carried out in the Sure Start Taunton area to provide detailed baseline and planning information for the Sure Start programme.

The baseline data collected by the survey will be used to inform programme development and to provide evidence of the impact of the Sure Start Taunton programme.

Methods

A postal questionnaire was sent to 3252 residents to gather relevant data from the local population. The questionnaire was sent to all households with Sure Start aged children, and to a random sample of households from GP records¹, in order to ensure that the wider community had the opportunity to participate in the survey.

In addition, a participatory arts project was commissioned to work with local parents to produce a short video film. This film raised and discussed local issues which were identified by parents as important, and a CD containing this work is attached to the front cover of this report. Alternatively, a video tape is available to borrow from Priorswood Library or the Sure Start mobile library van.

Results

In total, we received 1353 responses, giving an overall adjusted response rate of 41.8%. We had responses from 216 Sure Start households, which gave a response rate of 60.3% amongst this group.

Sure Start Taunton has been successful in raising its profile amongst Sure Start parents in the area. 67.4% (145) of Sure Start parents had heard of Sure Start Taunton.

There is a need for Sure Start Taunton to tackle issues raised by respondents which impact on their quality of life as part of the Sure Start strengthening families and community objective. A noticeable number of Sure Start respondents reported a fear of crime, a desire to move from the area, along with housing issues such as condensation and damp, draughty homes and anti social neighbours.

The main barriers that stop Sure Start households from increasing their intake of fruit and vegetables are time and money.

¹ Sampling fraction 1 in 2

Amongst Sure Start respondents that smoke, 45.1% (37) wish to stop. 36.9% (76) of Sure Start mothers indicated that they smoked at some point during their pregnancy with their first baby.

There is demand amongst Sure Start households for home safety equipment, in particular, cooker covers and fire blankets.

The top concern which stopped parents from using local play areas related to the poor condition of the play area.

Sure Start respondents can face difficulty in reaching appointments. Sure Start parents are likely to walk to many appointments, and therefore services should be placed within walking distance, or where appropriate, transport should be provided.

Currently, 27.5% (76) of Sure Start aged children live in households where no one is working.

Conclusions

The community questionnaire has provided a wealth of information about the local area, and will provide useful comparative data against which to measure change when the questionnaire is repeated in future years.

The issues raised by this questionnaire are wide ranging ones, many of which will require a multi agency approach. Tackling these issues will be key to the success of Sure Start Taunton, if it is to help make a difference to the lives of Sure Start families.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: YOUNG PERSONS HEALTH DROP IN

Background

There was a need to collect information in order to see whether there was a demand for a young persons' health drop in clinic in the area. The drop in service could be provided as part of the Sure Start Taunton commitment to the Improving Health objective.

Methods

The target group for the study was young people who lived or accessed services in the Sure Start Taunton area.

A self completion questionnaire was used to collect the views of young people. These questionnaires were distributed to three secondary schools and youth workers within the area.

Results

We received 1325 responses in total, of whom 51.9% (658) were male and 48.1% (609) were female.

44.5% (587) of respondents would like to see a young persons' health drop in clinic set up in North Taunton. 11.4% (150) would not like to see this service set up, whilst a further 44.1% (581) responded 'don't know'.

35.3% (452) would be interested in using a young persons' health drop in clinic in North Taunton, 17.2% (220) answered that they were not interested in using the clinic, and 47.5% (608) responded 'don't know'.

The service is more likely to be used by females than males. The typical non user for the service will be male and aged 12 or 13.

The most popular locations for the service would be in a doctor's surgery (40.0%/530), or on school premises (37.4%/496).

The most popular time that the service could be held, would be after school. 48.2% (638) of respondents would prefer to use the service after school.

The top three issues that respondents feel that the drop in should help with are bullying (78.0%/1033), alcohol and drugs (76.4%/1012) and family problems (72.1%/955).

The most popular things that would make young people use the service are confidentiality (54.8%/726), not having to make an appointment (53.8%/713), and the friendliness of those running the drop in (40.0% /530).

Conclusion

The research shows some very clear messages and guidelines about how young people would like to see the service developed. It is important now to see how best to accommodate the needs of young people in the area, with the different practical opportunities available to set up the drop in service in the North Taunton area.