

Local Evaluation Draft Final Report

Sure Start Fossway

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Submitted by
The Centre for Public Policy
Northumbria University

Acknowledgements

(To be included in final report)

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Fossway Area

The Sure Start Fossway programme area is located in east Newcastle, but does not have a collective or historical identity for local people, as it consists of a number of different communities living in a mixture of housing and tenure types and does not have a natural heart such as a shopping centre. The area contains parts of three different council wards which are amongst the most deprived in the city: Byker, Monkchester and Walkergate, and as the programme's delivery plan identified there are few activities and facilities for families with children aged four and under. Prior to the introduction of the programme provision included:

- St Oswald's Community Centre, a local authority owned building, which ran youth clubs and had playground.
 - St Martin's Church, which was linked to a community development project and was keen to develop more community facilities.
 - Byker Play Centre, which hosts the Abbie Leighs playgroup and had a play area that was only accessible when the centre was open.
 - St Albans RC Primary School and nursery.
 - Walkergate Early Years Centre, which provided a playgroup, parent and toddler sessions, parents group, courses, some holiday activities, a nursery and outdoor play facilities for the use of children attending the Centre.
 - Daisy Hill Youth Centre, which had soft play.
 - St Oswald's Church Parent and Toddler Group.
- The area also contained the Renwick Street, Allendale and Ray Gray Community Centres, but they did not provide any activities for under 4's.

1.2 Key issues in Fossway

The following issues identified in the delivery plan and through consultation with members of the Partnership Group help set the context for this report:

- The need for the programme to address the support needs of a wide range of parents, particularly young parents, single parents who want to work, those facing behaviour management issues, parents of children experiencing early difficulties such as developmental delay, and those needing respite during the holidays.
- The limited nature of childcare provision in the area – particularly full day care and provision for under 2's.
- The need to support asylum seekers and refugees moving into the area and to work with the existing community to address negative feelings regarding the new families.
- The differing levels of day-to-day involvement in close family and friendship networks, which can have an impact on the take-up of local services and cause people moving to the area to feel excluded.

- The lack of central shopping centre, park or leisure centre, which leads people to travel out of the area for social and retail activities, contributing to the feeling that the programme area lacks a vital central meeting point.
- Although transport in an east west direction is good within the area, there is no easy way to travel from north to south in order to access key facilities like playgroups, family centres, and the Welbeck Road shops, GP practice and dentist. This led partners to call on the programme to ensure a greater spread of provision across the area and more service choice for families.
- Recognition that families living in parts of the area face multiple problems including drugs, domestic violence and mental health issues.
- Concerns about the growing drug and crime culture among young people in the area.
- High levels of male unemployment (averaging 40%) and economic inactivity due to long-term sickness and disability, resulting in men sharing the daytime care of children.

1.3 The Programme

Fossway is a round five Sure Start programme targeting provision at the families of approximately 475 0-4 year olds (Health Visitor Records December 2001). Barnardos is the lead body, while Newcastle City Council Social Services Directorate acts as accountable body.

1.3.1 The Partnership

Fossway shares a Partnership Group, with its adjoining larger Newcastle East (round 2) sister programme. It was originally intended that the Partnership consist of 20 members 12 of whom would be local parents, who together with staff from local family and community centres would also sit on Operational Groups (these would ensure the delivery plan was being implemented at the local level and consider issues affecting their Centre, capital plans, activities and evaluation). Other partners would include representatives from Barnardos, Social Services, Education, Community and Housing, NCH and the PCT (Primary Care Trust). The Partnership was to be supported by the Programme Manager, two Assistant Programme Managers and the Finance Manager (from the Accountable Body).

To date the partnership has largely retained this structure, although draft terms of reference submitted to the Partnership Group in December 2003 suggest the following changes: a core membership of 24, including 8 parent representatives from the new Partnership Parent's Group which has replaced the Operational Groups, no Community and Housing representative, but members representing Health Visitors, the Library Service and Job Centre Plus (the latter being a suggestion of the CYPUP).

1.3.2 Operational Structure

Barnardos employs the Programme Manager, who oversees both the Fossway and Newcastle East programmes, and two Assistant Programme Managers.

It was originally intended that the Assistant Programme Managers would not only have responsibility for overseeing work specific to their own programme area, but that each would manage a team of workers working across both programme areas. Under this model the Fossway Assistant Programme Manager would take responsibility for the Community Development Team consisting of the Community Development Worker, Volunteer Co-ordinator, Baby Equipment Loans Worker, Parent and Toddler Group Worker, and a Family Support Assistant. While the Play, Early Learning and Childcare Manager would manage childcare staff in both programmes and the Health Team Co-ordinator would oversee Sure Start health visitors/workers, midwives and speech and language work.

However as Model 1 shows the structure has been amended. This has been due to:

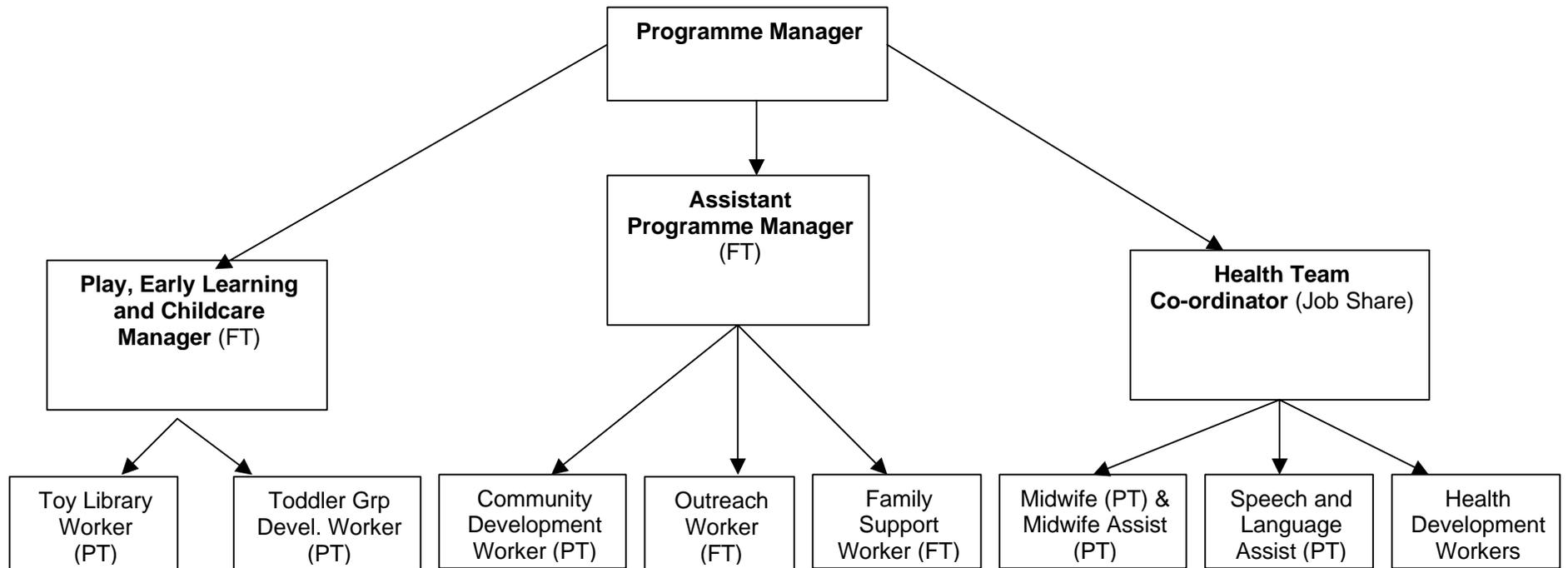
- rationalisation caused by the Newcastle East Assistant Programme Manager's maternity leave
- delays in the capital programme leading to a short term short fall in the number of childcare staff to be managed by the Play, Early Learning and Childcare Manager
- recruitment difficulties encountered when advertising for Health Visitors or Social Workers, resulting in the decision to appoint and train (largely local) people to posts that offer a start point in a specialist field.

1.3.3 Service Provision

As Table 1 shows the programme supports a range of activities for Fossway families:

- Family Drop-in - a group which introduces families, including those who have received individual support from the Outreach Worker, to each other and a centre where they can access additional services and support.
- Toy Libraries – allowing parents/carers of pre-school children to borrow up to two toys per child for up to two weeks free of charge.
- Waterbabies – free swimming in term time for parents/carers of pre-school children.
- Baby and Toddler Play and Learn – a group providing fun play and learning activities for pre-school children and their parents/carers.
- Family Breakfast – providing a healthy breakfast and activities for pre-school children and their parents/carers.

Model 1: Current Fossway Structure



- Baby Social – a group for parents/carers of babies who are not yet walking. Providing play and learning opportunities for babies and the chance for parents/carers to socialise.
- Toddler Group – provides play and learning opportunities for pre-school children and gives their parents/carers the chance to socialise – refreshments and snacks are usually available.

Table 1: Sure Start Activities (December 2003)

Monday		
9.30-11.00	Family Drop-in (by invitation) and Toy Library	Walkergate Early Years
Tuesday		
10.00-10.45	Waterbabies	East End Pool*
10.15-12.00	Baby and Toddler Play and Learn	East End Library*
Wednesday		
9.30-11.30	Baby Social	Walkergate Early Years
9.30-11.30	Toddler Group and Toy Library	
Thursday		
9.30-11.00	Family Breakfast	St Oswald's Community Centre
10.00-10.45	Waterbabies	East End Pool*
Friday		
9.30-11.30	Baby Social	Walkergate Early Years
	Toddler Group	
10.00-12.00	Special Needs Toy Library and Play and Stay	Walker Library*
10.00-12.00	Twins and Multiple Births Group	East End Library*
10.00-12.00	Toddler Group and Toy Library	St Oswald's Community Centre
2.30-3.30	Toy Library	Walkergate Early Years

* is located in the Newcastle East area

- Special Needs Toy Library – has toys selected specifically for children with special needs, but can be used by any parent/carer of a pre-school child (run by Sure Start Newcastle East but open to Fossway families).
- Twins and Multiple Births Group – for parents/carers of twins, triplets and more, providing fun play and learning activities for children and support for their parent/carers (run by Sure Start Newcastle East but open to Fossway families).

In addition the programme provides:

- Short courses and training in for example baby massage, food hygiene, health and safety, IT and befriending.
- Campaigns, for example around fire safety and smoking cessation as part of quarterly health promotion campaign, plus encouraging use of libraries and benefits take up.
- Weaning parties to which parents are invited when their child is 3-4 months old.
- Holiday activities such as family fun days.

While core services include:

- Outreach – for anyone who would prefer individual support, although there is a focus on de-registered families and women at risk of postnatal depression. It also provides play and stimulation sessions for families unable or who prefer not to access services outside the home.
- Community Development – providing advice and support to parents/carers who want to be involved in Sure Start by developing their own groups and services.
- Speech and Language Therapy – supporting parent/carers and children from birth with identified speech and language concerns. This service also provides training on speech and language interventions to mainstream childcare settings and other Sure Start staff, and undertakes language measures.
- The Health Team – whose core provision focuses on speech and language therapy, health campaigns and the implementation of the Visiting Strategy – antenatal contacts and contacts with all children within two months of birth to raise awareness of Sure Start.

1.3.4 The Capital Programme

As Table 1 also illustrates at the time of the evaluation although parents and carers can access activities in the Newcastle East programme area, most Fossway provision is centred on either Walkergate Early Years or St Oswald's Community Centre. Originally, both these and St Alban's School, were identified in the delivery plan as sites that would receive capital investment from the programme:

- At Walkergate Early Years – the development of a new wing at the Centre was planned to enable the provision of extra nursery places, a sensory

room, a training room, a base for the toy library, a crèche space and playgroup provision.

- At St Oswald's - refurbishment was suggested in order to provide a crèche, a base for out of school activities and to support the provision of new services including a toy library, parenting courses, training in food hygiene and first aid, a toddler group and family breakfast.
- At St Albans – a substantial refurbishment was envisaged to enable the provision of a playgroup, a crèche, an external play area, a training base and office accommodation.

However the capital programme has not been implemented as planned:

- Walkergate Early Years - There have been delays in the development of the new wing at Walkergate Early Years, mainly due to the discovery of a large water tank under the proposed site. Construction is now due to start in January 2004 (a November 2003 start would have been possible but was considered too disruptive by the Centre) and existing Sure Start services are being relocated to nearby venues.
- St Alban's School - Following initial negotiations, the Sure Start Partnership has decided not to proceed due to emerging value for money issues. This has not only had implications for direct service provision but also for the accommodation of the programme team.
- Staff Accommodation - Since its inception the team has been based in temporary accommodation outside the programme area in Ouseburn. The nature of the accommodation has affected staff moral and concerns about accessibility were raised in the 6-month risk assessment. However in summer 2003 the programme identified suitable accommodation on the edge of the programme area at Cragside House – which is also the base for the City Council's Family Support Services. It plans to move there in January/February 2004, once work to ensure DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliance and install computer terminals is completed. The accommodation will provide office space and a meeting room, which could also be used as a training venue, although crèche will have to be provided in a separate but nearby building. The new base has a shop window, which Family Support have agreed can be used to promote Sure Start activities, however the programme will continue to place an emphasis on staff/parent contact being undertaken in community venues.
- St Oswald's Community Centre - Although as Table 1 shows some Sure Start activities are being run from the Centre, following a year of some times fraught negotiations with the Centre's management committee, there is uncertainty over whether it will be appropriate for the programme to make any further investment in the Centre. As Partnership minutes reveal 'the management committee do not appear robust enough at this time to

commit to a capital build'. Furthermore, Newcastle City Council is currently reviewing the sustainability of the centre.

A number of other potential service venues are therefore being explored including Walkerville Library for temporary playgroup and nursery provision, the Ray Gray Centre as a venue for a baby social and training, and St Martin's as a base for a range of services.

1.4 Conclusion

As the above and the 6-month risk assessment undertaken in April 2003 acknowledge issues relating to 'recruitment and capital have had an overall impact on services being delivered'. Indeed, they have also set the context for this report, because the refocusing or delay they have caused in the development of some projects and services, has affected what was available for the evaluator to explore.

2. The Evaluation Study

2.1 Aims

The aims of the evaluation were:

1. To begin the evaluation process by providing participatory training for local parents and key staff to equip them with the skills to become actively involved in an ongoing evaluation process.
2. To consult with parents, local people, key staff, associated staff and key stakeholders in the Sure Start Fossway Partnership in order to contextualise and inform the evaluation process.
3. To draw on trained appraisers in order to implement a participatory appraisal framework capable of assessing the effectiveness of Sure Start Fossway in relation to:
 - involving local parents
 - service planning
 - service provision
 - value for money, and
 - responding to local needs.
4. To engage in further debate with appraisers, local parents, staff and the Partnership in order to identify and evaluate specific examples of effective practice within Sure Start Fossway.
5. To feed back the evaluation findings at each stage to the Partnership, key staff and local parents in order to help shape future developments.

2.2 Method

The evaluation was undertaken in three inter-related stages.

Stage One ran from October 2002 to March 2003 and involved:

- The recruitment and training of local parents and Sure Start workers in Participatory Appraisal (PA) techniques.
- Research to contextualise and inform the evaluation, this included:
 - Interviews with a sample of Partnership members
 - Interviews with the Programme Manager and Assistant Programme Manager (Fossway)
 - A workshop with key local Sure Start workers
- The design of the evaluation framework.

Stage Two was undertaken from April 2003 - October 2003 and focused on the implementation of the agreed evaluation framework.

Stage Three ran from November 2003 to January 2004 and centred on report writing, discussion of the evaluation findings with parents and workers, and feedback to the Partnership.

The process and lessons learned from Stage One are outlined in Chapter 3, Chapters 4-11 focus on the findings from Stage Two, while the outcomes of Stage Three form the basis of Chapter 12. Further information on Stage One can be found in Progress Report (March 2003), while Interim Report (November 2003) contains more detailed findings from Stage Two.

3. Stage One Outcomes

3.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the approach taken to and findings arising from the participatory appraisal training and consultation with stakeholders.

3.2 Participatory Appraisal (PA) Training

Initially eight parents (identified by local workers), three Sure Start workers, a local community worker and the evaluator attended a training course in PA research techniques (see Appendix A for further explanation). Based at Walkergate Early Years it ran over seven sessions from late October 2002 until early January 2003. Although all three Sure Start workers and the evaluator completed the training, due to health and family problems participation by parents diminished over the course of the programme to two.

The experience of undertaking the training led to the following lessons being learned:

- The need to ensure that the parents invited to take part in the training and those that ask them feel confident they will be able to complete the whole course.
- That training courses should take place over a shorter period and seek to avoid major holiday periods.
- The need to ensure that any parents undertaking the course are willing to become Sure Start volunteers and complete all of the necessary checks entailed before taking part in the main evaluation study.
- The need to ensure that during the fieldwork phase there is clear communication and co-ordination between the members of the evaluation team, and between each evaluation team leader and the placement settings.
- The need to 'check out' placement settings prior to research visits.
- That some tools and settings require a full evaluation team of three people, whereas others only require two.

3.3 Consultation with Stakeholders

Meetings with the Programme and Assistant Programme Manager, interviews with partners and a workshop with Sure Start workers were used to identify the context for the study (see section 1.2) and to inform the development of the evaluation framework.

The Programme Manager and Assistant Programme Manager suggested that the evaluation should focus on:

- Services that will be in place during the Stages Two, including: outreach, the toy library, baby massage and social, holiday activities and the work of the NAPI worker.

- Analysing the effectiveness of a range of projects including those developed solely in Fossway and those rolled out from Sure Start East.
- Value for money

While the interviews undertaken with partners highlighted:

- The need to identify ways to offer tailored support and flexible involvement opportunities to parents wishing to join the partnership in order to increase parental involvement.
- A concern to ensure Sure Start services are accessible to and used by people across the Fossway area, especially because families tend to use facilities in their immediate neighbourhood and may not be willing to travel to new facilities in other parts of the area.
- Key questions for the evaluation such as:
 - Have parents' needs changed since the consultation and is the programme responding to that?
 - Is the programme reaching families who feel they cannot go to groups or family centres or is it delivering better services to those already accessing them?
 - How can the programme get more parents involved and keep them involved?
 - How successful are services from parents' point of view?

3.4 The Evaluation Framework

The views of the partners and programme managers were then fed into a workshop with Sure Start workers during which the evaluation framework was developed (see Table 2).

Table 2 - Evaluation Framework

Subject and Location	Focus	Methods and tools
<p>Easter Event: Walkergate Early Years Centre Tuesday 22 April 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issues facing families with under 4's in the area and what needs to be done to address them. • Awareness of existing Sure Start provision and ideas for the future. • Childcare and holiday provision needs • View and ideas on local parks and play areas • How to involve parents in Sure Start 	<p>PA tools: graffiti wall, bean counter, H form, weekly activity chart, seasonal planner, mapping, spider diagram, drawing, ladder of involvement and force-field analysis.</p>
<p>Awareness of Sure Start: Various public places/service points used by parents May-June 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of Sure Start logos • Awareness of the programme • Perceptions of Sure Start • Use of Sure Start services • Barriers to service use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured Interviews • Show cards • Sort cards • Maps
<p>Toy Library: Walkergate Early Years Centre July-September 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it developed? • How does it work? • Is it working? – what difference has it made? • What's good about it? • What could be improved? – How? • Awareness/use of other Sure Start services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews with worker and parent volunteer • PA with parents: H form, impact ranking, bean counter and spider.
<p>Baby Social: Walkergate Early Years Centre July 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it developed? • How does it work? • Is it working? – what difference has it made? • What's good about it? • What could be improved? – How? • Awareness/use of other Sure Start services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews with worker • PA with parents: graffiti wall, H form, bean counter and spider. • Observation

<p>Waterbabies: East End Pool July 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it developed? • How does it work? • Is it working? – what difference has it made? • What's good about it? • What could be improved? – How? • Awareness/use of other Sure Start services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews with workers • Telephone and face to face interviews with parents/carers
<p>Holiday Events: Fun day at Ray Gray Centre Fun day at St Oswald's Community Centre August 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How participants had found out about the day? • Identifying families' service needs and ideas for services at the venue • Views on the fun day – what participants had enjoyed and learned, ideas for improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA with parents: bean counter, graffiti wall and H form • Participant observation
<p>Partnership Working and Operational Groups November 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views on the effectiveness of the partnership • Ideas for improvement • Relationship with operational groups • Sustaining (parental) involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on semi-structured interviews completed in stage 1 • Documentary analysis (governance documents and minutes) • Observation of partnership planning day
<p>Outreach Worker Programme Wide October 2003- January 2004</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was it developed? • How does it work? • Is it working? – what difference has it made?, barriers • What's good about it? • What could be improved? – How? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interview with worker • PA with parents: graffiti wall, H-form, bean counter, force field analysis.

4. Partnership Evaluation

4.1 Introduction

As explained in 1.3.1 the Partnership Group covers both the Fossway and Newcastle East Programme areas and is chaired by a representative of Newcastle Primary Care Trust.

Using interviews with partners, observation of a Partnership Day and analysis of Partnership minutes, this study aimed to gather views on:

- The effectiveness of the partnership – is it achieving its objectives?

Partnership Objectives

- Preparing the delivery plan and strategic vision
- Ensuring the delivery, monitoring and review of the delivery plan by: identifying and mapping local needs, resources and gaps in service; achieving targets, objectives and performance; and managing both the revenue and capital budgets.
- Ensuring that the delivery plan addresses the needs of children and their families.
- Ensuring that good practice is shared nationally and locally.
- Ensuring the development and implementation of a communication strategy to ensure all key agencies are involved and fully informed.

(Taken from the partnership's draft terms of reference)

- The relationship between the Partnership and Operational Groups
- The Partnership's approach to sustaining parental involvement
- Ideas for improvements.

4.2 Key Findings

Preparation of the 2002/4 Delivery Plan: In partnership with local people the vision that 'Together we will provide a better future for children in the East End' was created and a sound delivery plan developed. However, when interviewed some partners expressed concerns that:

- Some decisions had been made outside the partnership at a Regional level and were to some extent 'predetermined due to the nature of the frameworks Sure Start must work within, which should have been made clearer from the outset'.
- The timetable set by the Government for the development of the delivery plan had been too rushed, so that 'decisions were made quickly and we needed more time to think'.

Creation of the Joint Partnership Board: When the Sure Start Newcastle East and Sure Start Fossway Partnership was established in 2002 a training day was organised, which partners considered to have been 'very useful', with one commenting:

'after the day's partnership training there was a big difference - an increased awareness of our roles, what each other does, our views of needs, their targets etc, all of which have helped us work together better'.

While another added:

'We've jelled as a group – it never felt right having the East without involving Fossway'.

Indeed partners highlighted the benefits of bring East and Fossway together:

'The East can provide some specialities as can Fossway, if they can mesh there'll be a good balance – a broad spectrum of specialists concentrated in a few areas'.

We have been 'able to recognise positives from the East – the shared services, parental involvement, we've looked at lessons from the East and that's strengthened Fossway'.

Structures: Unusually compared to other programmes Newcastle East and Fossway have not chosen to create a Partnership Executive and under the new terms of reference the number of partners on the Group is due to increase from the original 20 to 24. Furthermore, as identified earlier (see 1.3.1) the Operational Groups that once fed into the Partnership Board have been replaced by a Partnership Parent's Group (supported by the Sure Start Community Development Worker) and direct representation of staff from local family and support centres. In addition, the Partnership has four sub-groups focusing on the Capital Strategy, Publicity, Training and Sustainability.

Membership: Evidence from the minutes and partner interviews show that local people and all of the key organisations are represented on a Partnership Group which has chosen to remain independent of local political involvement.

Parental Involvement: Even though partners are keen to 'get new parents on board in addition to those who are already active' and to identify ways to 'offer tailored support and flexible involvement opportunities to parents wishing to join' and the risk assessment identified that parents' views are 'actively sought' in the Group, parents involved in the partnership identified the following issues:

- The local perception that being on the partnership is boring.
- Continuing confusion over who can be a member – 'can you only be involved until your child is 4?' and the roles of partners and officers.
- Concerns about representation – 'feeling you've nothing to bring or take'.

- Worries about ‘upsetting people by asking questions... not feeling you had the right’

However, parents are hopeful the Partnership Parent’s Group (created in October 2003) will help to overcome these issues, for as they commented although ‘we knew the partnership was meant to be parent driven, we haven’t felt it was until now’.

Yet as mentioned above, while the draft terms of reference seeks to increase the size of the partnership from 20 to 24, they suggest reducing parental membership from a majority of 12 to 8 – a third of the membership - possibly reflecting the difficulties this and other partnerships have experienced in attracting and sustaining parental involvement. However, this is balanced by the proposal to take a significant step towards the achievement of the goal of having a parent chairing the group in 2004, by appointing a parent as Vice-Chairperson early that year.

Commitment: As the following comments illustrate partners believe the Group demonstrates commitment, strength and the ability to learn:

‘There’s a lot of commitment from the agencies and an element of trust – we are there for the same reasons and although we may have our organisational hat we take on a different role within the partnership’.

‘Stakeholders should expect transformation through involvement’.

‘There have been some critical issues around capital and development of projects – but we address it in the whole partnership group – we get a good attendance and decisions are made together’, plus ‘we may not have had consensus but the partnership is strong’.

Processes: Overall, the Partnership Group appears to be operating effectively:

- The six month risk assessment undertaken in April 2003 identified that: the ‘decision making processes for the partnership are documented, agreed, clear and transparent’; ‘processes have been communicated to all staff and agencies’ and are ‘subject to regular review’.
- Partners believe the Programme is able to discover and meet needs –

‘There’s been a lot of progress in discovering and meeting needs and developing the programme’ and ‘it gives us [other service providers] feedback on how to develop our services’.

- They feel the partnership is working well together and is ‘democratic’ - ‘everyone’s views are well considered’.
- The evaluator has observed that effective monitoring against national and local objectives is in place and quarterly reports have been submitted.

Achievements: Partners highlighted the following as key achievements:

- Raising awareness of the lack of childcare in the area, particularly for under 2's.
- The identification of issues linked to the health of young children.
- Developments at Walkergate Early Years.
- The creation of a real focus on matching need with appropriate solutions.
- The ability to recognise local good practice and then build on it.
- The independence of partnership members with regard to local politics.

Improvements: Any suggestions from the evaluation for potential improvements have been superseded by two well-timed partnership development days. Held in autumn 2003 to assess the structure and effectiveness of the partnership, they have resulted in a number of improvements including the development of:

- Draft terms of reference for the partnership
- The Partnership Parents' Group, which aims to increase parental involvement, confidence and ensure effective representation of local views.
- A clearer agenda on which parents have a prominent place.
- A partnership handbook which includes a copy of the partnership's terms of reference, an overview of the programme and information on partners – who they represent, how they feedback information to and from the partnership and their role on the partnership.
- A time line of the challenges facing the partnership.

5. Consultation Findings

5.1 Introduction

As the evaluation was being undertaken at a time when the programme was still in the early stages of development the evaluator was asked to complete a range of consultation exercises in order to:

- update the programme on local issues and service needs
- test awareness of Sure Start provision
- explore local views on participation in the programme.

5.1.1 Consultation at the Walkergate Fun Day

The first took place at an Easter Fun Day on Tuesday 22 April. It was hosted by Walkergate Early Years and approximately sixty parents/carers and children attended. The consultation focused on gathering information identified by the programme team as necessary to the development of provision in the Fossway area and included:

- Issues facing local families
- Awareness of Sure Start provision and ideas for the future
- Childcare and holiday provision needs
- The use of local parks and play areas
- Views on parental involvement

The consultation was undertaken by the evaluator and members of the programme team using a range of PA tools (see Interim Report for details).

5.1.2 Awareness Study

The second study took place in June and July 2003. Undertaken by the evaluator, Community Development Worker and Volunteer Co-ordinator, the study interviewed 60 residents at a range of locations across the programme area. Mapping, pictures, sort cards and a proforma were also used in order to discover what local people knew about Sure Start and to raise their awareness of the programme.

5.1.3 Summer Fun Days

The above were added to in summer 2003, when parents attending two Sure Start Fun Days were asked for their views on the needs of pre-school children and their families in the Fossway area and, in particular, what they would like to see being provided at the Ray Gray Centre and St Oswald's Community Centre, both of which hosted a day.

5.2 Key findings

The key issues emerging from the consultations are summarised below:

5.2.1 Easter Event

- Issues in the local area – the consultation highlighted that many of the needs identified in the delivery plan (such as full day care, employment, local play areas, equality of provision and access across the programme area, information, and better transport) continue to be pertinent. However, one constantly occurring theme was the need for provision for older children outside the Sure Start remit – something which the programme should raise with other agencies and initiatives.
- The low awareness of Sure Start services at the time of the Easter event reflects the programme's early stage of development and lack of physical presence in the area. However those services that parents were aware of, such as the toy library and baby massage, were viewed positively.
- When asked to prioritise what Sure Start should be providing in the area the need for out of school activities; safe supervised play areas, and a new park were identified.
- Children asked about holiday activities had a strong sense of what was appropriate to different seasons, but football and general play were constant themes. Meanwhile, although parents had a broader vision, face painting, theme days, soft play, drama and seasonal craft activities were consistently suggested. The idea of trips/visits was also very popular, as was the promotion of physical exercise and gardening during the spring and summer months.
- Families were found to be using a range of local childcare provision – particularly on weekday mornings, with few taking part in weekend activities. When considering new provision parents expressed a preference for more play schemes, more activities for mixed age families and after school activities – highlighting once again the need for Sure Start to work in partnership with other providers to meet cross-cutting local needs.
- As Sure Start workers and the delivery plan had identified parks and the provision of safe play areas were key issues for local people. However, only one play area, The Quarry, was identified as being within the programme area, with no one referring to the facilities at Walkergate Early Years or St Oswald's Community Centre, possibly because access to them is limited. None of the parents felt that Walker Park was a safe place for them to take their children, with many preferring to travel to better resourced, safer parks much further away, which could effect the any local sense of community. Such issues suggest that the programme still needs to work with parents and other partners to improve safety, access and provision within local parks and that once this is in place Sure Start could have a vital role to play in facilitating local ownership.
- The parents consulted at the Easter Event demonstrated a broad spectrum of involvement in Sure Start and in a number of instances a willingness to

play a more active part as volunteers. However the need for greater clarity about who can become involved, what it might entail and the support available to enable involvement were highlighted and must be addressed by the Programme.

5.2.2 Awareness Study:

- Although Sure Start Fossway must continue to target parents/carers of children aged 0-4, there is still a need to raise awareness amongst the general population, so that the programme can draw on their skills and experience.
- Respondents failed to recall seeing Sure Start materials in the majority of the sites currently used by the programme and most associated the logo with the Sure Start shop in the Wallsend programme area. Although it is likely that such findings reflect Fossway's lack of a visible, physical base in the area, they also raise questions about the effectiveness of the programme's publicity campaigns.
- Most respondents, including some of those who do not care for a child aged 0-4, said they would like more information on Sure Start. While those with such caring responsibilities who are not currently in contact with the programme echoed consultees at the Easter Event, by saying they would particularly welcome more information on what their involvement would entail and on the support available to them in terms of crèche provision.

5.2.3 Summer Fun Days:

- The parents attending the fun days again highlighted the need to provide more: parks and play areas, toddler groups, adult learning opportunities, nursery provision to enable people to work, soft play, fun days and sports activities.
- Ideas for future provision at the Ray Gray Centre included: fun days, toddler groups, courses (such as beauty, cookery, health and safety, first aid, yoga, DIY, sewing skills, and arts and crafts) with crèche provision, toddler and play groups, family and social activities, and information on services and support.
- People at the St Oswald's fun day were keen to see the community centre open more frequently, but as one acknowledged this would require more volunteers to come forward (also see chapter 8). However issues linked to the atmosphere, image and security of the centre were also mentioned, with for example one parent saying she thought there was a click at St Oswald's and that she would do more if it were friendlier.
- Thoughts on future provision at the Centre included more toddler and playgroups, more holiday and term time activities, a baby social, more youth clubs, more sports activities and the provision of cheap meals at fun days.

6. Toy Library

6.1 Introduction

Sure Start has funded the development of toy libraries in the programme area by providing capital funding for toys and equipment and paying for a part time Toy Library and Baby Equipment Loan Service (BELS) Worker. Employed by the East End Baby Equipment Loan Scheme and line managed by the Sure Start Play, Early Learning and Childcare Manager, it was intended that the Worker:

- Initially develop three new weekly sessions in Fossway.
- Recruit and support a team of volunteers who will assist in running the sessions.
- Develop supporting activities such as advice on play, play sessions and fun days to promote early learning and the use of the toy library and BELS.
- Promote the service across the programme area and ensure it is accessible to all families.

In this way the service would contribute to objectives 1, 3 and 4 (see Appendix B for details of the objectives).

The evaluation focused on the Wednesday session at the Walkergate Early Years Centre, one of three run there every week in term time that are free to parents and carers living in the Fossway area. The Wednesday session first began at Easter 2003, is run by a parent volunteer and operates at the same time as the Centre's parent and toddler group, and baby social.

Using semi-structured interviews with the Sure Start Toy Library Project Worker and parent volunteer, a PA group with four parents/carers who use the project, and observation of the venue, the evaluation sought to discover:

- the origins of the project
- how it operates
- parent's views on the provision
- their ideas for its improvement and further development
- and their awareness of other Sure Start services and activities.

6.2 Findings

The evaluation found that:

Demand: With 72 families registered the Walkergate Early Years Toy Library says it is the most successful in Newcastle. However, with only 70 toys available it is struggling to meet demand and is having to seek toys from other projects.

Users: Because the Early Years Centre attracts families from localities outside the programme area (including Gosforth and Whitley Bay) and the toy library is run in partnership with BELS, which is willing to loan toys to any users of the venue, questions about how many of the project users are from the Fossway area must be raised. It also highlights the need for Sure Start and BELS to achieve clarity about who is eligible to access the project and how this should be managed.

Toy selection: The toys were selected by the Toy Library Worker in conjunction with (BELS) volunteers using the criteria of value for money, educational value, robustness and probable popularity. The views of parents from existing toy libraries in Sure Start East were also taken into consideration. However evaluation findings suggest that the initial selection of toys for a library should be more tailored to the needs of the groups and venues that use them and that future purchasing strategies should be informed by the systematic analysis of current usage and parent/child feedback.

Benefits of provision: The following were highlighted as benefits of the toy library:

‘It’s free’ (parent)

‘You can test a toy and your child’s reaction to it’ (parent)

‘You can use a variety of toys, when you might not be able to afford all of them’ (parent)

‘You are coming to the nursery anyway for the toddler group.’ (parent)

‘Kids love it, they know they have to look after things and that they can’t keep them. It gives you an insight into what to buy for your child and what not to buy. My son loved coming over to play’. (parent volunteer)

‘The children get their own membership card which helps them start to learn what it is like to be part of a library and encourages the development of their social skills’. (Worker)

‘Parents get advice on the age suitability of toys, child development and milestones, advice on the type of toys, how to use them together and what will help their child’s development’. (Worker)

User satisfaction: Parents rated the toy library 7 out of 10 and suggested that it ‘have more of the same kind of things that are popular for 2-3 year olds’ because ‘the things for older children may be go out early, so if you get here late they’re gone’. However they were all happy with the time and venue of the toy library and the way it was run.

Keys to success: The key elements of the toy library’s success were identified as: it is free, parents know there is a range of high quality toys available, the Community Liaison worker introduces parents to the project and reminds them to return toys, and parents know the parent volunteer. Indeed the role played by the Centre’s Community Liaison Worker demonstrates the importance of good partnership working in the development of Sure Start

services. Furthermore, while the project illustrates the benefits of working with volunteers- it remains something the Programme must seek to achieve both at Walkergate and other venues if the aim of developing a team of volunteers is to be achieved.

Publicity for the toy library has been limited to promotion in the Sure Start registration packs, verbally via the Community Liaison Worker and Sure Start Outreach Worker, and distribution of the programme's activity sheet. This has been due to a number of factors including the high existing demand for the project, restricted access to the venue and plans to relocate the activity during the construction of the Sure Start funded extension to the Centre. However, once the new building is complete the project must be promoted to local parents in addition to those who already use the Centre, but this will also require more toys to be made available.

Awareness of other Sure Start Services: Toy libraries can play a vital role in introducing Sure Start to a new area and acting as a stepping-stone to other services and partnership working, however the consulted parents appeared to have a low awareness of other Sure Start provision (only mentioning registration and safety equipment), something which the Toy Library Worker and programme need to address.

Proposed future developments: The Toy Library Worker plans to:

- Promote the project more widely within the community and explore volunteer development.
- Expand the Friday session into a play and stay session.
- Improve links with Born to Read and to increase children's membership of the library
- Develop new provision for asylum seekers and children aged up to 8 years old, if bids to external funders are successful.

Sustainability: The future of the Walkergate Toy Library appears positive as:

- it is located with an Early Years Centre that is keen to develop more provision for 0-2s
- it is supported by a committed volunteer (although the involvement of others would enhance sustainability)
- it is associated with an existing service (EEBELS) which is experienced in fundraising
- because parent's appreciate the opportunities the toy library presents for them and their children they would be willing to support it through fundraising and paying to loan toys once Sure Start funding begins to taper. However, if charging were introduced careful consideration would need to be given to parent's differing ability to pay.

7. Baby Social

7.1 Introduction

The Baby Social runs every Wednesday and Friday in term time from 9.30 to 11.30am in the training room at Walkergate Early Years. It is attended by nine mums and their babies and is organised by the Community Liaison Worker, who is employed by Education and line managed by the Head Teacher of the Early Years Centre.

The Wednesday group began meeting in April 2003, two months prior to the evaluation being undertaken. It runs in adjoining room to a toddler group, with the interconnecting door open with a safety gate in place, so that parents with babies don't feel excluded, can chose to join in with activities like story time and feel comfortable moving into the toddler group once their child is mobile.

The provision of the group contributes towards the achievement of objectives 1 and 2.

Based on the collection of background information, observation of the venue, a semi-structured interview with the Community Liaison Worker, a PA group with four mothers (undertaken by the Sure Start Community Development Worker and evaluator) and additional feedback from participants, the study aimed to discover:

- the origins of the group
- how it operates
- parent's views on the provision
- their ideas for its improvement and further development
- and their awareness of other Sure Start services and activities.

7.2 Findings

The evaluation found that:

Users: The baby social is open to any parents with young babies in the Fossway area and the Sure Start Outreach Worker offers transport to the social for those who need it. As of October 2003 eight of the babies were registered with Sure Start.

Parental involvement: Parents were satisfied with their level of influence over the project and welcomed the range of activities provided. Indeed it was evident that new activities are constantly being developed, e.g. the baby massage, baby signing, the breakfast club etc. in response to their requests.

Staffing: Although supported by the Sure Start Outreach Worker and by the toy library parent volunteer on Wednesdays and Health Visitor on Fridays,

responsibility for running the project rests with one person, the Community Liaison Worker, who also runs the toddler group at the same time. Ways should be found to provide cover in order to ensure service continuity should the worker not be available.

Activities: Mothers attending the social identified 'Chatting and meeting people' and 'having a break from the house-work and routine and relaxing' as the most important aspects of the group. While other key elements included 'letting our babies play with toys we don't have at home', 'watching the babies play and communicate together' and 'drinking coffee'.

The Community Liaison Worker also highlighted meeting information requests, presentations on weaning and toy safety, use of the toy library on Wednesdays, visits by the local Health Visitor on Fridays and one-off activities such as a hairdressing and pamper day and an outing to the NAPI fun day.

Benefits of provision: The following were highlighted as benefits of the baby social:

- 'Being able to call in straight after dropping older children at the nursery' (parent)
- 'The range of activities' (parent)
- 'Being able to sit down and have a hot coffee' (parent)
- 'It feels like having a morning off' (parent)
- 'You talk about different things and can check you are doing things right and share any worries' (parent)
- 'On a Friday the Health Visitor is here and you can get your baby weighed' and 'it is better than at the GPs where there is no where to change your baby' (parent)

The opportunity to discuss any anxieties parents may have and to 'not feel alienated because they find out others have encountered the same problems' (Worker)

'It is social and maintains a link with the nursery for both mother and child' (Worker)

'They can get a lot of information and as they are really comfortable here they sometimes don't realise what you are giving them'. (Worker)

User satisfaction: None of the mums expressed any dissatisfaction with the baby social and did not request any changes to it. Indeed they all rated it 10 out of 10 because 'there's everything you want' and 'it keeps your baby happy – they don't cry here'.

Keys to success: This project demonstrates the value of effective partnership working between Sure Start Fossway and Walkergate Early Years Centre by enabling the Centre to begin working with a new age group which has benefits for all. The lessons learned from the evaluation of Newcastle East have been applied as the baby social combines well with other activities the parents undertake such as dropping older children off at the nursery, using the toy library and attending the baby clinic - indeed the parents believed that the

environment provided by the baby social was more appropriate than a surgery. Indeed The Community Liaison Worker believes that the involvement of other professionals, the comfortable atmosphere and the opportunity to see the Health Visitor were key to the success of the project.

Publicity: The group was initially developed from parents attending the toddler group and nursery. However, word of mouth, promotion by the Centre, Sure Start, Health Visitors and Outreach Workers, and new developments such as baby showers are raising awareness amongst other parents.

Awareness of other Sure Start Services: The parents were aware of a range of existing Sure Start services (baby massage, multiple births group, the library, the toy library, registration with Sure Start and training courses) and were benefiting from the sign-posting available from both the Community Liaison Worker and Sure Start Outreach Worker; however the negative perceptions of Waterbabies and Byker pool (see chapter 9) should be addressed.

Proposals for future developments: The Community Liaison Worker plans to:

- Provide training in baby massage at the Friday baby social
- Invite pregnant women (identified by the nursery, Sure Start, Health Visitors and ideally midwives) to attend the baby social.
- Run a breakfast club.
- Develop a play and learning programme with babies and toddlers.
- And hopes to establish provision for working parents/parents, perhaps through a monthly early evening parent's social group to discuss issues such as weaning, smoking and behaviour.

Sustainability: Concerns were expressed about the short-term implications of having to relocate such newly developed provision during the building of the new Sure Start funded wing. However, in the medium and long term the prospects for the sustainability of the project appear positive as it:

- Is already run in partnership with the Early Years Centre
- Provides early contact with parents who may go on to use other services within the Centre
- Is supported by parents who are willing to fund-raise and pay for refreshments and activities.

8. Parent and Toddler Group

8.1 Introduction

St Oswald's Community Centre Parents and Toddler Group meets on Friday mornings and is one of three groups supported by the Fossway Support Worker for Toddler Groups. Her post is funded by Sure Start to provide a total of eight hours support a week. She is jointly line managed by Sure Start's Play and Early Learning Manager and Newcastle Action for Parent and Toddler Groups Partnership Initiative (NAPPI) and aims to:

- Advise on issues around safety, good practice, management of the groups, funding, equipment, publicity, equal opportunities and access.
- Provide information and support to enable groups to offer good quality play and learning opportunities for children, and positive social opportunities for both children and carers.
- Provide opportunities for groups to make links with NAPI and other organisations who can provide training and support.
- Offer information to parents/carers about other Sure Start activities and services.

Thereby contributing towards objectives 1, 3 and 4.

The Community Centre group was already operating when the Worker came into post, but its Leader (a community volunteer) had only taken up the role three weeks prior to the evaluation. The Leader sits on the management committee that runs the building, however some current and former, but still influential, committee members want to continue the Centre's existing focus on youth and social provision and are not keen to work with Sure Start. Nevertheless the Leader, with support from a majority of committee members, started the parent and toddler group and wants to develop further activities for 0-4's and their families.

Using a semi-structured interview with the Support Worker, additional information from the Sure Start Community Development worker, a PA group with six parents/carers including the Leader and observation of the venue, the evaluation sought to discover:

- the origins of the group
- how the Support Worker works with the group
- how the group operates
- parent's views on the provision and their ideas for its improvement
- their views on Sure Start
- their awareness of other Sure Start activities and services.

8.2 Findings

Users: Although the parents said there was not a click and that the group was open to anyone to attend, the Support Worker believes that all of the mothers live very close to the building and are friends of the Leader.

Staffing: The Leader who runs the group, receives support from the Support Worker whose primary aim is 'to develop a good practice group to attract new involvement - to make it as attractive as possible so people want to get involved', and by the Sure Start Community Development Worker, whose remit is to widen community involvement and promote the group.

Support offered by the Worker: This is has a dual focus:

- Demonstrating good quality play and learning opportunities - telling stories, doing song time, crafts, water play, encouraging use of the library and providing information on other services and activities.
- Talking to the Leader about the general organisation and running of the group, for example specific play with children, equipment needs, health and safety, monitoring and registration, and room layout. The Worker has written a programme of activities for each term, which the Leader comments on, plus she provides a weekly sheet for parents about what is planned.

Activities: During the PA consultation the mums explained that a typical parent and toddler group session involved: painting, using play dough and doing craft activities; letting the children play; having a chat; getting information; and having tea and toast.

Parental Involvement: Although the Leader not only runs the toddler group, has instigated the development of a toy library and equipment loan scheme, helps run the Centre's youth club, has a young family and a job, she does not receive support from the whole management committee or from the parents attending the toddler group, who wont even help to make the room safe before the group, and tidy it and the kitchen afterwards. As the Support Worker commented:

'They aren't prepared to help her and take on any leadership responsibilities - they wont commit so she feels quite alone - no one else shares the same ideas or they are on the committee and don't want to take on something else - local people are despondent and wont get involved - they only want to receive without responsibility.... it needs new people to get involved.'

Benefits of the provision: The following were highlighted as benefits of the provision:

- 'Toast and tea' (parent)
- 'The range of different toys' (parent)
- 'The children play and leave you alone' (parent)
- 'You get to meet new people' (parent)
- 'You and your children can do different activities together, e.g. painting, play dough, crafts such as Easter baskets' (parent)
- 'The chance to find out more about other activities and services in the area.'
- 'Information, advice and ideas about your child' (parent)

'It's a new service and it's close to home' (parent).

'For the parents it is a meeting point, they get adult company and are with their children - hopefully they learn the importance of play and what they can do with their children, although I think they struggle with certain parenting skills' (Worker)

'Children benefit from good quality play activities, song-time and their parents enjoy taking home the things that they make and value doing things with their kids as others are doing it as it makes it not embarrassing - no one laughs and makes them feel silly'. (Worker)

User satisfaction: The parents did not think there were any negative aspects to the group and rated the provision at 7 or 8 out of 10.

Awareness of other Sure Start services: The parents demonstrated a reasonable awareness of other Sure Start services and activities including, the toy library and BELS at the centre, Waterbabies and fun days, while one who helped run the crèche used by the programme had a very detailed knowledge of other provision.

Sure Start practice: As this study highlighted there is a need for clear communication between workers supporting groups to ensure the whole team is aware of and prepared to address issues such as the clear support needs of the toddler group leader - something the Community Development Worker was unaware of.

Proposals for future development: Any future developments and indeed the future of the building depend on the resolution of issues with the management committee and the outcome of the Council's Buildings Review. In the meantime the Support Worker planned to support speech and language development, complete a proposed library visit and assess the sustainability of the group.

Sustainability: At the time of the evaluation prospects for the programme's future involvement in the Centre therefore the toddler group and appeared very uncertain:

- Looking at the viability of the Centre itself, although the programme was working with the City Council who own the building to support and train the management committee, this appeared to be having little impact. The programme did not have the full support of the management committee for its involvement in the Centre and the City Council was reviewing whether or not to continue funding the venue.
- Even in terms of the toddler group itself the Support Worker identified 'gaps in practice' and the need for 'a lot of long term work to be done'. Indeed the group did appear reliant on the support and expertise of the Support Worker and on the commitment of the leader, although the latter was being challenged by the parents' unwillingness to take an active responsibility for the group.

Ultimately, this venue and group would require a high degree of on-going support in order to improve their practice, profile and achieve a sustainable impact, however it remains for the Programme to decide whether this would be the best use of its resources.

9. Waterbabies

9.1 Introduction

Waterbabies was a project originally developed by Tyne and Wear Health Action Zone (HAZ) and adopted for a year by Sure Start Fossway from April 2003. It runs every Tuesday and Thursday in term time and provides a free swim at the East End Pool for parents, carers and children who are aged under four and live in the programme area. Sure Start pays for a lifeguard to be in attendance, while the cost of entry is met by the City Council. It contributes toward the achievement of objectives 1 and 2.

At the time of the evaluation, the Sure Start Health Team Co-ordinator and a Healthworks Link Worker were also undertaking research into the project in order to identify whether parents would be interested in taking part in further activities after their swim. In the meantime however, a Sure Start Health Worker had begun to run a parent and toddler play and learn group that was meeting every Tuesday from 10.45am to 12 noon in the library, which is part of the same complex as the pool.

Using semi-structured interviews with the Sure Start Health Team Co-ordinator, a Sure Start Health Worker and a Healthworks Link Worker, and telephone and face-to-face interviews with eight Fossway parents/carers the evaluation sought to discover:

- the origins of the group
- how it operates
- parent's views on the provision
- their ideas for its improvement and further development
- and their awareness of other Sure Start services and activities.

9.2 Findings

Users: Three of the eight attend both the Tuesday and Thursday session. Most take a single child, although one takes two, most of the children are aged one year. Most parents/carers attend with another adult (usually a friend or relative who is taking their own child), but three go alone with their child. Half had been regular users of the pool before Waterbabies began, the remaining parents/carers had chosen to attend because 'it's good for my baby', a friend recommended it, 'I wanted to ensure that my daughter got used to the water early and could swim, because I could not swim by the time I went to school and was frightened of the water' and because the Healthworks Link Worker told her about it when she visited the pool.

Staffing: The lifeguard is the only worker supporting the session, although as some of the parents identified users would benefit from advice on how to interact with their babies in the water – even if this support was available once a month.

Parental Involvement: At present the only way parents can share their views is via one-off consultation initiatives, therefore if regular support staff are not provided alternative ways of collecting parent's thoughts and ideas should be found. Also considering parental requests for advice in the pool, the volunteering opportunity presented by the finding that one of the parents has experience of working with children and knows about water play should be explored.

Activities: The following were typical: splashing his face, kicking the water, singing, splashing about, paddling in the toddler pool, swimming with the baby in the big pool, floating the baby on her back, playing with boats and watering cans, chatting to other parents/carers, playing with the other babies, trying to encourage the baby to swim and playing in the waves.

Benefits of the provision: As the following comments illustrate participants in Waterbabies recognise benefits of attending for both themselves and their children:

'It's good for your baby to get used to the water, stops them from being afraid of water'

'It is free or would have to pay £3.75' with one adding 'so if we're late I don't feel I've wasted my money if I have a short stay'

'Its an opportunity to meet people and children'

'It's a nice thing to do together with your baby away from the house'.

'It helps you to bond with your baby'.

'It's a session were you can focus on your baby'.

'Its good for your baby's social skills and being able to see what other babies are doing increases their confidence'.

'It's nice and relaxed and the water is warm'.

User satisfaction: When asked to give Waterbabies a score out of ten, one parent/carer gave it 10, while five gave 8 and two said 7-8. The main changes that parents/carers said they would like to see were 'more baby changing facilities' and 'more support when changing', staff 'to help parents know what to do with their child in the pool' and 'more toys'.

The Health Team Co-ordinator also noted that parents would like the water temperature to be higher and the returnable deposit for the buggy park key to be less than the current £5.

Parents attending the baby social (see Chapter 7) added that they do not use Waterbabies because they perceive it to be 'cold', 'filthy - both the pool and the changing rooms - there are plasters in the water', 'there's nowhere to sit', 'the Jacuzzi is not working' and 'the staff are miserable'. However, three said they would go if it was clean and warm, and suggested running a session on a Sunday and providing swimming lessons for children under five at the same time – as there are currently none available.

Publicity: Waterbabies is currently publicised through Sure Start and the City Council's Leisure Services. However, any new publicity should:

- Seek to address the negative image some parents have of the pool.
- Ensure parents are aware that it is safe for babies to use a public pool once they have begun their immunisations.
- Make clear that as long as parents are at the Pool between 10 – 10.45am they can stay as long as they want.
- Consider joint promotion of Waterbabies and the play and learning activities in the library.

Parental Awareness and use of other Sure Start services: Seven of the eight participants were registered with Sure Start and believed the benefits were the opportunity to meet other parents and children, access to services and up to date information. However, two expressed dissatisfaction about communication with the programme, one not having heard from Sure Start since their registration and another not having received a response to a service query. While two raised concerns about their ability to access activities – such issues need to be addressed.

When asked what other Sure Start services and activities they had used, the parents/carers: play groups at Walkergate Early Years, St Oswald's Church, Appletree Gardens and 'at the library after the swim'; baby massage at Walkergate Early Years; soft play and crèche at Tyne View School; Christmas activities at Byker Sands; a toy library; and their library ticket. While others said that although they had heard of various activities at Walkergate Early Years (including the baby social, parent and toddler group, toy library, play group and coffee mornings); Monkchester Family Centre parent and toddler group; and family breakfasts; they had not used them.

Sustainability: The programme initially planned to fund this project for a year until succession funding was identified, however the Programme Manager considers it to be providing value for money and therefore at present plans to continue funding. However a number of issues, particularly around joint working with Leisure Services need to be addressed, the programme should therefore:

- Ensure the Pool are clear about who is eligible for a free swim (as parents from outside East and Fossway are also currently benefiting) and how many adults wishing to claim a free swim can accompany a child.
- Make Pool staff aware of parent concerns regarding the temperature of the pool, the lack of toys and the availability and maintenance of baby changing equipment.
- Jointly review and address with Leisure Services requests for additional support which have staffing implications.
- Highlight the social, health and developmental benefits the project brings to both parents and children in order to encourage Leisure Services to sustain and enhance the provision.

10. Outreach

10.1 Introduction

The Outreach Worker interviewed is one of two working in the Fossway area. Both are employed by the management committee of Walkergate Early Years, but one is part time and works with any parents involved in the Centre, while the one who forms the focus of this study works is line managed by Sure Start and has worked full time with parents from the programme area since May 2003.

Generally, Outreach Workers aim to work preventatively by providing a high level of support and early interaction with families experiencing periods of stress, for example during separation, loss, domestic violence or after having a baby, and thereby contribute to the achievement of all four Sure Start objectives. They offer friendly advice and support where ever the family feels comfortable and work with the family as long as is needed while introducing them to other appropriate support. Families needing such support can self-refer via nurseries and through liaison with Health Visitors and Social Workers.

However, the Outreach Workers working in the Fossway area form a team with workers already based in Sure Start Newcastle East and each is expected to develop and lead the programme team in a specialist area. Those in the East have already developed interests in domestic violence and children with behavioural difficulties, while it was anticipated that those in Fossway would develop work with teenage mothers, and drug and alcohol issues, the later being the focus for the Worker interviewed in this study.

The work around drugs and alcohol was expected to entail:

- The development of a training programme to be delivered to the Sure Start team and other local staff
- Supporting young women with drug and alcohol problems by looking at the stresses and difficulties in their lives and the support they need with parenting.
- Developing links with existing services such as the citywide Midwife for mothers and mothers to be with drug and alcohol problems and the specialist Drug and Alcohol Social Worker.
- Working closely with other members of the programme team to run support and smoking cessation groups.

Using a semi-structured interview with the Sure Start Outreach Worker and case-studies of two parents who had worked with the Worker, the evaluator sought to discover:

- how parents first came into contact with the Outreach Service.
- how the service operates
- parent's views on the provision and their ideas for its improvement

- their awareness of other Sure Start activities and services.

10.2 Findings

(To be included in final report)

11. Holiday Provision

11.1 Introduction

Informed by the findings from the Easter event, the programme ran two fun days during the summer holiday period. One was at the Ray Gray Community Centre and the other at St Oswald's Community Centre, as following the event at Walkergate Early Years both presented the opportunity to raise awareness of the programme in other parts of the programme area and both had the potential to be venues for more Sure Start activities.

The day at the Ray Gray Centre offered: a display by a fire engine, puppet shows, a story teller, face painting, water play, out door painting activities, biscuit icing and information stalls. While at St Oswald's Community Centre there was: a display by a fire engine, a puppet show, face painting, painting, gardening, outdoor play, football, and information stalls

With the support of a Sure Start worker the evaluator used a range of PA tools and observation techniques to discover:

- How participants had found out about each fun day.
- How much they had enjoyed it.
- What they had enjoyed most.
- Their ideas on how future events could be improved.

(The opportunity to further explore local perceptions of service needs for families with children aged 4 and under was also taken. Findings from which have been included in Chapter 5)

11.2 Findings

Participants: 32 adults (mainly women) and 62 children (a third of whom were aged 0-4) attended the Ray Gray Fun Day. 91 were from the Fossway area, with the majority being from the Daisy Hill estate. 19 of the adults said that they regularly care for a 0-4 year old and the day resulted in 7 new registrations with the programme.

Fewer people attended the St Oswald's fun day, with 20 adults (including one man) and 34 children (over a third of whom were aged 0-4) taking part. All a part from two people were from the immediate area. 14 said that they regularly care for a 0-4 year old, but no new registrations were completed.

The above highlights: the small number of adult males attending both events, that consideration should be given to how fun days can best cater for both under 4's and their older siblings, and as most participants were from the immediate area, the importance of, at least initially, providing activities/events in localities.

Publicity: The leaflet drop conducted by Sure Start staff during the week before each fun day proved to be the most effective means of publicity in both instances. However, while local word of mouth had also contributed to the turn out at the Ray Gray Centre, no one mentioned it at St Oswald's.

However, comments collected at the Ray Gray Fun Day while discussing how people had found out about the day highlighted issues relating to the wording of the leaflet, for example some older women arrived early to 'get the bargains' as they thought the stalls advertised would include cakes and bric-a-brac, the leaflet did not mention a focus on under 4's, nor did it say children had to be accompanied by an adult. Nevertheless these lessons were quickly learned and applied to the St Oswald's Fun Day.

Benefits of the day: The children and parents at the Ray Gray Centre highlighted the face painting, puppet shows, outside painting activities and biscuit icing. While the puppet show and visit by the fire engine were highlighted by participants at St Oswald's. Although very few people thought they had learned anything new from the fun day, however in reality the profile of Sure Start had been raised.

User satisfaction: Over half of those attending the Ray Gray Fun Day rated it 10 out of 10, while the majority of the rest gave 7 or over. Indeed many thought no changes needed to be made because they 'liked everything', there was 'lots to do', it was 'run brilliantly' and 'catered for everyone'. Just under half of the participants questioned at St Oswald's rated the day at 10, while 9 gave 7-8. However, only parents at St Oswald's raised issues relating to atmosphere, image and security, plus the evaluator observed the environmental issues faced by the venue, as condoms and bottles had to be cleared from the grounds and play area surrounding the Centre before the Fun Day began.

The main addition requested by both groups to future fun days was the provision of a bouncy castle, indeed this would have been provided at St Oswald's if there had not been a last minute disagreement amongst the Centre's management committee – something which appeared symptomatic of the difficulties associated with attempts to provide Sure Start services at the venue.

Interestingly, at St Oswald's two people commented that the day 'was not as good as the one at the Ray Gray Centre' although they were unable to explain why.

Ultimately however both days helped to raise the profile of Sure Start in both localities and provided learning opportunities for both the programme and the young children it seeks to support.

12. Conclusions

12.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the report by considering the effectiveness of the programme in relation to service planning and provision, responding to local needs, value for money and involving local people.

12.2 Service planning and provision

As Chapter 1 identified from its inception Sure Start Fossway has faced a number of challenges most notably:

- the programme area's lack of a collective or historical identity, which has been compounded by a lack of a central meeting place, limited facilities and activities for families with under 4s, and restricted north/south mobility across the area
- local people's reliance on family networks for support, making it difficult to introduce new services and practices, and causing families moving into the area to feel excluded
- finding alternative ways of working with those families facing multiple issues.

Following consultation with local people the programme identified that the best way to respond to these challenges was to provide a number of centres across the programme area offering a range of services appropriate to the immediate community and building on the programme's outreach approach. However as this report and the six-month risk assessment acknowledged issues outside the control of the programme relating to 'recruitment and capital have had an overall impact on services being delivered', by for example:

- Delaying the achievement of targets on childcare provision, access to play sites and some elements of the training programme such as first aid for babies, smoking, parenting and language development.
- Raising concerns about the impact of having to temporarily relocate newly developed services from Walkergate Early Years.
- Leading to questions about whether it was realistic to consider capital investment in St Oswald's Community Centre
- Resulting in the failure to establish two of the three planned Operational Groups, which were intended to play a key role in the involvement of local people in the planning and evaluation of services
- Affecting awareness of the programme due to its lack of a visible, physical presence in the area
- Causing the programme team to be located in accommodation that had a negative effect on moral.

All of which created additional challenges for the programme and impacted upon what was available for the evaluator to explore. However, despite this

the programme has responded well, proven itself a flexible and learning organisation, and has achieved most of the outputs and targets outlined in its 2002-2004 Delivery Plan.

12.2.1 Programme Strengths

As highlighted below and in other parts of this chapter, the programme's strengths have proven to be its: Partnership Group, provision of a well-balanced range of local services which respond to local needs, ability to reach out to local people, determination to find the best ways to involve and empower local people, persistence in striving to achieve an appropriate geographical spread of provision, and its ability to work jointly with other local service providers. These and other strengths are summarised below:

The Partnership: Is achieving its objectives, is free from political involvement, has a clear vision, and a sound delivery plan and processes which enable it to deliver local services and activities that address the needs of children and their families and contribute towards the achievement of national objectives. Furthermore there is a high degree of trust among partners, and a willingness to learn and adapt to the changing context in which the partnership operates, which has been further enhanced by well-timed and appropriate partnership development days. The partnership is wholly committed to achieving effective parental involvement and is actively working to achieve it (see section 12.5). Finally, Fossway has benefited from being part of a joint partnership with the Newcastle East programme, as this has created a more locally identifiable area, provided the opportunity to learn directly from the experiences of its 'sister' programme, and enabled the sharing services and maximisation of provision.

Service provision: Parents and children who took part in the PA evaluations generally expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the services and support they were receiving - indeed those attending the baby social revealed total satisfaction. Overall, parents highlighted how using services supported by Sure Start had enabled them and their children to: access new experiences and learning opportunities; improve their social skills; link with additional services; find reassurance and support; benefit new information, ideas and advice; use free, but valued services; have a break; and strengthen the bond between parent and child.

Joint working and sustainability: This study has highlighted the benefits of working in partnership with established, high quality centres such as Walkergate Early Years, whose workers and parents have been able to support the development of new provision such as the baby social, which in turn has become a springboard for the provision of additional services. Indeed, this partnership, the one developed with BELS to create the toy libraries, co-operation with Byker Pool around Waterbabies and (although not the focus of this study) joint working with health on the Visiting Strategy, together with the fund-raising support parents are willing to provide, all bode well for future sustainability.

12.2.2 Ongoing issues

This study also highlights a number of practical issues the programme needed to address in order to succeed. These centred on attempts to develop provision at St Oswald's Community Centre, joint working with other providers and publicity.

Provision at St Oswald's Community Centre: The programme's involvement with the community centre has presented many challenges and led to important lessons being learned which can be applied when working with other potential venues. However, exploration of the parent and toddler group also raised a number of issues: the question of whether the programme had the human resources to address the practice, developmental and support needs of the group; the need to tighten monitoring procedures with regard to how grants are spent and to ensure basic requirements such as appropriate insurance are in place; and the necessity of clear communication between workers supporting any community groups or provision – indeed this issue was also highlighted in relation to provision at Byker Pool and Library.

Joint Working: Although highly beneficial, findings regarding joint working around the provision of both the toy library and Waterbabies highlighted the need for the programme to achieve greater clarity about: the objectives of joint projects, who is eligible to access them and how this should be managed. Furthermore examination of the Waterbabies provision also identified the need to identify the best way to consult parents and address their support needs.

Publicity: Both the awareness study and questioning of parents during project evaluations suggested that publicity for the programme needed to be improved. Steps have since been taken to increase awareness of the programme, through for example the distribution of a regularly updated programme of activities, the creation of a publicity-subgroup involving parents, the use of the window at Cragside House, promotion at the fund days, etc. However it is also acknowledged that more should be done to: more widely promote the Walkergate toy library once, ensure that all of the toy libraries fulfil their potential as stepping-stones to other provision, and that action should be taken to address the negative perceptions of Byker Pool which are preventing greater use by Fossway families.

12.3 Responding to local needs

This section demonstrates how from the outset the programme has striven to and generally succeeded in being responsive to local needs by:

- Deciding to focus service provision on three venues in different parts of the programme area.
- Developing services specifically designed to meet the needs identified during the consultation that informed the development of the delivery plan.
- Providing the toy library as an early service and focusing on services reaching out to parents, either in their own homes or community venues, in

order to increase local confidence in the programme and parental capacity to engage with services and learning/employment opportunities.

- Seeking to reshape current services such as health, adult education, outreach and childcare to make them more accessible and responsive to local need.
- Undertaking additional consultation in order to identify any change in local priorities and ideas for the further roll out of services and activities.
- Continuing to work (see 12.5) to find the best way to involve parents in the programme and thereby keep up to date with local needs.

However, there continue to be some local needs that were identified within the delivery plan that still need to be addressed, for example more day care, access to safe play and the provision of family orientated activities which cater for older siblings. While the later would need to be resolved with other partners such as the Children's Fund and City Council, the remainder should be addressed once the capital programme is achieved.

12.4 Cost effectiveness

Following some initial work by the Programme Manager and discussions with the evaluator it has been decided that it would be most beneficial to continue this analysis as part of a wider, regional bench marking group. The group plans to report in March/April 2004, at which time the Fossway findings will be added to Appendix C.

12.5 Involving parents

As identified in 4.2 effective parental involvement has always been a key priority for the partnership and is something they and the programme team have sought to achieve in a number of ways, by:

- Encouraging membership of the Partnership Group, first via the proposed Operational Groups and now through the Partnership Parents' Group, which has increased the opportunity for all parents, not only those associated with a particular venue, to participate and enhanced parents' sense of ownership of the programme.
- Involving parents in the evaluation: This was attempted by offering training to parents in participatory appraisal techniques and although it was not successful important lessons were learned (see 3.2).
- Encouraging volunteering: Although this study only identified two volunteers (one at the Toy Library and the other at the Parent and Toddler Group), they illustrate both the programme's potential engage more volunteers and the different types of capacity building this may require. The need for the programme to give parents more information about who can become involved, what it might entail and the support available, was also raised by parents.
- Involving parents in service development: Differing levels of involvement and consequent satisfaction with services were identified from the highly successful baby social, to the toy library which could further enhance

parental involvement, and on to the members the parent and toddler group who were largely unwilling to offer any practical or emotional support to the volunteer leader.

As can be seen Sure Start Fossway has met with varying degrees of success in attempting to achieve effective parental involvement. However, the programme is still relatively new and community involvement is very much a developmental process. Nevertheless the programme has both the commitment and the skills to achieve its aspiration, something which will be very much easier with the implementation of its capital programme.

Appendix A – What is PA?

PA is a relatively new research method that was first developed for use in communities. It uses tried and tested techniques to find out and record local people's views. The techniques include a range of easy to use visual aids, such as simple maps, diagrams and charts, designed to enable respondents to contribute their ideas in a way that is stimulating and non-threatening.

It is 'participatory' because the 'appraisers' are people who live or work in the area where services are provided, and who seek to involve others from the community in evaluating local services and suggesting areas for improvement.

Techniques include:

- Timelines
- Daily activity charts
- H forms
- Mapping
- Causal impact
- Graffiti walls
- Bean counter
- Problem/solution matrix
- Forcefield analysis
- Spider diagrams
- Implementation matrix
- Pairwise ranking
- Impact ranking
- Evaluation Wheels
- Action planning

All of which were taught to the trainees.

Appendix B – National Sure Start Objectives

Objective 1: Improving social and emotional development

Objective 2: Improving health

Objective 3: Improving the ability to learn

Objective 4: Strengthening families and communities

Appendix C – Cost Effectiveness