



Local Evaluation Report

January 2003 to March 2004

Sure Start China Clay
May 2004

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Section 1

Annual Summary Report by

External Evaluators

Sure Start China Clay Local Evaluation

Annual Summary Report 2003 / 2004

V Wiltshire
May 2004

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ERIC's Mission

To improve access to robust evaluation research

ERIC's Key Values

Objectivity and independence
Rigour and sensitivity in research
Partnership and trust
Constructive approach
Respect for people and their experiences
Innovation, effectiveness and efficiency

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Introduction

This document provides a summary of the progress and findings of local evaluation activity undertaken by the Evaluation Research and Innovation Centre (ERIC) on behalf of Sure Start China Clay. The summary covers the period from approximately February 2003 (when both research posts were filled) to March 2004 (when the last of a series of reports was written).

As well as describing the range of evaluation research activities that took place the report highlights the main findings and, where known, describes how these findings have been utilised by the programme. This report should be read alongside another document prepared by programme staff, which will give an outline of the evaluation strategy for the following two years.

The ERIC Research Team

ERIC is a specialist research centre currently consisting of around six researchers and a Director. Two of these researchers were assigned specifically to the China Clay programme. A senior researcher was involved for one day per week and a research assistant was specially recruited and employed for two and a half days per week. Recruitment and selection of the research assistant took place jointly between ERIC and Sure Start China Clay. ERIC's Director has also been involved with the research, particularly in planning and in ensuring research quality. Other ERIC researchers have had peripheral involvement with programme, for example when involved in shared tasks such as secondary data collection and analysis. In the first instance enquiries about the work already conducted should be directed to the senior researcher who is also author of this report. Whilst ERIC continues to be associated with the China Clay programme in other capacities, we are not the programme's evaluators for 2004/2006, therefore enquiries about current and future evaluation should be directed to the programme in the first instance.

Research Activities 2003/2004

In the context of a Sure Start Local programme, many research activities lead to clearly tangible outputs in the short term, for example outputs may include various reports or annual baseline data. The following table details much of this output for the Sure Start China Clay programme. Other activities however are aimed at establishing an evaluation culture in the programme and/or building

up a bank of background information. This second type of activity is also very important but tends to be more long term and ongoing in nature and as a consequence is less visible. In the event, ERIC was only fully involved with the programme for a little over a twelve months. Given this time frame and the fact that there were some key staff and other changes within the programme itself, it is debateable how much progress has yet been made with this second aspect. However significant progress was made in the first aspect with a range of different outputs as outlined in the following table.

Research Outputs

<h1>Major Reports</h1>	
Output	Outline
Satisfaction with Existing Services Report (July 2003)	Baseline information about families' satisfaction with a wide range of local services for children and families. New data was cross-referenced against existing information where possible.
Working for Healthy Families Report (December 2003)	An evaluation of the activities of the family health team. Includes details of the process and short-term outcomes together with baseline information to facilitate further assessment of impact in the medium term.
Annual Family Survey Report (March/April 2004)	Report on the findings of a survey of all local Sure Start families. Covers various aspects of the programme as well as features of family life in the area and demographic information about residents.
<h1>Other Reports</h1>	
Output	Outline
Men and Sure Start China Clay (January 2004)	Presents findings from research conducted with men and their partners attending a series of family fun events. Has a particular focus on participation, need and barriers to service use.
Business Planning; Training and Support (March 2004)	Evaluation of training and support given to community groups preparing for involvement in Sure Start capital projects. Captures innovative good practice.
Childminding in the China Clay area (November	Short report of findings from survey of local childminders. Focusing on

2003)	availability of service, local demand and associated training needs.
<h1>Other Research Outputs</h1>	
Output	Outline
Annual baseline data	Collection and collation of more than 40 items of statistical information required for Sure Start returns. Includes technical advice on validity and reliability of the data.
Review / summary	Early review of pre-existing documentation and consultation materials produced by programme staff.
Feedback on Survey of Board Members	Informal feedback on findings of a survey of Board members. Looking at representation and attendance at Board meetings.
Ongoing feedback	Various incidental feedback has been given to wide a range of service providers and other programme staff. Often incidental information is gathered in pursuit of other information. It is important to capture and make use of this where possible.

<h1>Other (less tangible) Research Activities</h1>	
Activity	Outline
Evaluation and research support	Evaluation team have provided research and evaluation advice and support to personnel involved with the programme on demand.
Evaluation training	Formal and informal training in evaluation techniques offered at the

	University and in-house.
Background activity	Building up good relationships with practitioners and families locally, developing background picture of the area and the programme, case studies etc.
Programme Meetings	Attending programme meetings as requested (e.g. Boards, subgroups, parent forums, networks etc).

Methodology

Overall the evaluation methodology was pragmatic-eclectic using a range of quantitative and qualitative techniques to address specific research situations. Typically these have involved the following methods – interview (of various duration and depth), observation, participation, focus groups and meetings, postal surveys and analysis of written sources. Use has also been made of appropriate technologies to assist the researchers, key amongst these have been the quantitative software package SPSS and the qualitative analysis package N5.

ERIC believes in the importance of close working with front line workers, families and other local experts in order to build trust and gain a full and accurate picture of the programme. The ‘resident’ researcher worked hard to achieve this trust despite occasional contextual difficulties. The research team also recognises the importance of evaluation of the input, process, context, output and outcome of interventions and has tried to avoid evaluation that focuses entirely on one aspect. It should be recognised that different levels of evaluation will become more readily accessible as the programme develops and matures. For example, medium and long-term outcomes cannot be measured in the short term.

As the specific methods used have varied dependant on the specific research item the reader is encouraged to consult individual reports for additional information and to contact the authors where more information is required.

Summary of findings

For convenience the key findings of each of the various research activities are summarised and briefly discussed in this report. Where possible findings are placed under the heading of which output they relate to. Thus findings from the Satisfaction with Existing Services Report will be found under that heading. It is necessary and

desirable for this report to keep findings as brief as possible. Again readers wanting more information are therefore advised to consult the full reports or to contact the programme or the authors if additional information is required.

Satisfaction with Existing Services Report	
Key Finding	Discussion
Satisfaction with services varies greatly from service to service.	Consequently the scope for measurable improvement in satisfaction is less for services that already have high satisfaction ratings.
Some services are not widely available in the local area.	The report discusses this in more detail, for example it appears that some services are particularly difficult to access from certain villages.
Demand for (and experience of) services varies.	Experience of some services such as GP appears to be almost universal; others such as audiology are less universally used.
Some services are highly rated (over 90% of those expressing an opinion were satisfied or above).	Satisfaction is particularly high with the following services. General Practitioners, Midwifery, Health Visiting, Library services and early years settings (preschools, playgroups, nurseries and crèches).
Many services had moderately high satisfaction ratings (75%-90%).	The following services were rated as satisfactory or very satisfactory by between 75% and 90% of respondents who expressed an opinion. Audiology, speech and language, childminder's services, parent and toddler groups and social services.
Some services were more lowly rated (less than 75% of those expressing an opinion).	Satisfaction was less than 75% for Dentistry, Services for children with behavioural problems, Support services for parents and families and befriending services.
There is greater scope for the programme to have <u>measurable</u> impact on the satisfaction with some services than others.	This is discussed for individual services, as it is important to recognise that very high satisfaction ratings are difficult to improve. The report points out that this does not mean that the programme should not seek to help to improve those services, merely that measurable increases in satisfaction are less likely.

Existing consultation materials are available and are of great value to the programme.	The community development workers and others have compiled a large amount of information from consultation. This should be widely distributed to workers and projects so that use can be made of it.
Communication between the programme and some families may sometimes be problematic.	Evidence exists of both good and bad communication with families. Some complain that they do not have enough information about Sure Start services.
There is a perception among some local families that Sure Start China Clay is developing too slowly.	A small number of respondents were impatient to see more development of Sure Start services in the area.
Demand exists for a range of other services.	Details are given in the report. Some of these services may be beyond the direct remit of Sure Start but may provide evidence for other partners.

Working for Healthy Families Report	
Key Finding	Discussion
The health team has had many early successes; it is reaching a growing number of families and working towards targets.	The team has become quickly established in the area, running a number of groups and out-reaching to individuals in their homes. Health promotion activities form a major part of the work.
The team is filling gaps in services.	The team is meeting some needs that are not being met elsewhere. This outcome is of particular benefit to families who were unable to access services previously.
The work of the team strengthens social networks and develops social capital.	In particular the varied groups have enabled families to meet together, many parents are now participating in running qualities groups themselves and some show interest in being involved in other aspects of the programme.
Local communities are able and keen to be involved in service planning and delivery.	There is a considerable pool of ability, knowledge and interest. This presents a major opportunity to the health team and indeed to the programme as a whole.

The health team workers have many skills and abilities.	The quality and enthusiasm of the staff is of great importance to local families and is likely to be a key factor in the early success of the team. It is vitally important that as well as professional skills Sure Start workers have appropriate 'people skills'. This is the case with the health team.
There is an increasingly close working with other local practitioners.	Despite early suspicions the health team are now accepted and welcomed by local statutory workers. This is now helping the health team to access families and also to cascade lessons learnt in Sure Start to other local services.
Workloads for staff are high and increasing.	As more demand is met there is potential for the current team to become overloaded. Additional staff, perhaps with a wider range of skills would increase the capacity of the team. Completion of the capital builds may ease the workload problems slightly due to less transportation of equipment etc but conversely the increased visibility and accessibility of the service may also increase demand. This needs to be monitored closely.
There are a number of additional benefits associated with the work of the health team.	A range of additional outcomes have been identified in the main report. These include improvements in interagency working, better uptake of services, increases in adult and child self-esteem, increased financial security of local venues, increased decentralisation of local provision.

Annual Family Survey Report	
Key Finding	Discussion
There is a diversity of opinion about the Sure Start China Clay programme.	Many respondents are very enthusiastic about the programme and value it highly, however a number feel they lack clear and sufficient information whilst others have particularly negative views of the programme. These negative views are likely to be ameliorated to some extent upon completion of the capital

	programme.
Local services for children and families are seen to be improving.	There is evidence that families report some improvement in services for families over the last year.
Active participation of parents is a priority for the programme.	To date the programme has had considerable success in including parents in aspects of the programme governance. Many parents share this priority and desire input into the programme in different ways.
The demographic of the families demonstrates a number of family forms.	Sure Start needs to be aware of this diversity to ensure that appropriate services continue to be delivered.
Lone parenting <u>may</u> be less common here than in some other Sure Start areas.	Supporting evidence for this finding should be found from other sources. If corroborated this will have an impact of planning of services. This data may provide a valuable baseline.
Children living in workless households <u>may</u> be less prevalent than in some other Sure Start areas.	Supporting evidence for this finding should be found from other sources. If corroborated this will have a major impact of planning of services. This data may provide a valuable baseline.

Most people identify as 'White British' however a large minority identify as 'Cornish'.	Additional monitoring of service use by Cornish people may be necessary if equal access is to be assessed. For this a 'Cornish' category needs to be included on registration and monitoring systems.
Overall communication between the programme and families is good.	In particular the newsletter is seen as good and has the potential to develop further. Some families do require more information from the programme, particularly detailed information about the services available. Other methods of promoting services have been identified in the report.
Programme reach <u>may</u> be relatively low at this stage (possibly significantly less than 30% per month) but looks likely to increase over the next year.	A reliable monitoring system is now in place and this finding should be corroborated using monitoring statistics. The health team currently see most of the families who are in contact with the programme. The completion of capital works over the next year may facilitate significant increases in 'reach'.
A number of recommendations are identified in the report to increase 'reach'	Key areas include removal of barriers to participation, some reshaping of services and additional promotional work. The annual survey report contains sufficient detail to help implement some of these measures.
Families have a number of priorities that have been identified in the full report.	Opportunities for parents to relax, for children to socialise and for children to attend nursery are seen as high priorities. Demand for training is high and a number of subjects are identified in the main report, many of these are vocational. The full report discusses a wide range of attitudinal responses given by respondents.
Some characteristics of the Sure Start China Clay programme are unique.	The history and geography of the Sure Start China Clay area have led to settlement patterns and transport systems that make service delivery particularly difficult (and expensive). The programme should be seen as one of a number of special cases in this respect.
Most families seem to have good social networks but a few do have very restricted	Those with poor social networks are likely to experience significant isolation compounded by poor local transport systems, lack of services and rural

networks of friends and family.	isolation.
Breastfeeding is popular in the area and is well supported.	Intention to breastfeed and initiation of breastfeeding seem to be high, support for families that are breastfeeding is widely available and generally perceived as being good.
Smoking rates are approximately 25% for adults. Support for smoking cessation is somewhat lacking.	Less than half of respondents who wanted to give up felt they had received appropriate support to do so.
Baselines have been identified for a range of measures.	Future applications of similar surveys should be able to use the findings in this report as baselines against which future impact can be gauged.

Men and Sure Start China Clay	
Key Finding	Discussion
Men are not all the same.	A particularly strong and important finding of the research is that men should not be seen as a single hard to reach group. Men's lives are very diverse and their needs and interests reflect this. Diverse services are likely to be needed to significantly raise participation of men.
Involvement with young children is still thought by many people to be generally seen as 'women's work'.	One underlying reason why men feel uncomfortable accessing Sure Start services is because this is largely (not exclusively) seen to be perceived as a female domain. Even those who do not share this view believe that others hold it and consequently feel that they may be 'judged' as inadequate or abnormal if they are very involved with the care of their young children.
Structural factors including national legal and fiscal factors as well as local conditions reinforce the view of males as breadwinners and females as carers.	This is particularly true in relation to family law and local facilities. Men feel that changes at local and national government level would promote and accelerate cultural change.
Portrayals of fathers in the media also	Media is seen as influential on changing cultural beliefs.

reinforce this view.	
There is a small proportion of dads who are 'very involved' in the care of their children, many others are involved to a greater or lesser extent.	Most men <i>want to</i> be involved in the lives of their small children. A number of factors make it difficult for some men to have as much input as they would like. These included work, other commitments and issues around access.
The prevailing image is that men are less isolated than women, however this makes the experience of isolation more acute for some men.	Men are seen as more likely to work and to be mobile (especially having access to their own transport). However men who are isolated feel particularly excluded from society and may find involvement in Sure Start particularly difficult. Some local men feel that they belong to sub-cultures (especially biking culture) that are automatically excluded by other local people.

<p>There is a pragmatic view among some respondents that men use fewer services <i>because they need fewer services than women.</i></p>	<p>This view is justified by 'common sense' and 'in real life' explanations where low male participation is not seen as necessarily problematic. Respondents expressing this view often promote concepts such as equality of access to services above equality of uptake.</p>
<p>Men especially want to help their children develop and be happy. They also want to help partners and other family members.</p>	<p>At this stage many men are particularly interested in activities that are seen to benefit their child or to help their partners. They seem to feel it is more 'acceptable' to address the needs of children and partners rather than to prioritise their own needs. However in in-depth interviews some men do express their own needs and others may become more comfortable doing so as the programme develops and more men become involved.</p>
<p>Low levels of existing male participation make further male involvement more difficult.</p>	<p>Many (not all) male respondents feel that they might 'stand-out' at Sure Start activities. Many find this uncomfortable for a number of reasons. Some men presume that events will be female dominated and avoid attending because of this. Activities that are designed to be attended with partners or the whole family were seen as one way in which more men could participate without 'standing out'.</p>
<p>Promotional materials need to explicitly mention men or dads. Promotion needs to take place in a wide range of formats.</p>	<p>Even terminology such as 'parents' can be read as 'mothers'. It is necessary to use the words 'men' or 'dads' and to show pictures of men at events. A number of suggestions for communicating with men are included in the report.</p>
<p>Other issues important to male participation included – Transport Communication, Facilities (especially open spaces), Money.</p>	<p>Further detail can be found in the report.</p>

Business Planning; Training and Support

Key Finding	Discussion
A range of high quality support and training for business planning has been offered to community groups.	The report presents 'process', 'context' and 'outcome' information for a range of activities; the main activity described is a two-day training course for community groups.

Clear information needs to be given at an early stage about the whole process so that the right people can be involved and know what to expect.	Groups welcomed the chance to be involved in the training but were unclear about its part in the overall capital process. Some respondents were confused about the part they or their groups needed to play in the capital process and initially did not understand what was signified by the training.
The training and other support enabled groups to refocus their projects and produce written business plans	Most groups were able to produce high quality business plans. A small number of groups decided that their projects were not needed or viable and decided that they should not proceed. They did not feel that this was a negative outcome.
Materials, data and information should be presented to groups at the earliest opportunity.	Groups felt that they should be given all available background information early on to save them from duplicating effort or from seeing the task as bigger than it was.
Timescale for the production of the business plans needs to be extended.	Whilst deadlines can be helpful it is recognised that community groups need time to organise themselves so that the whole committee and community can be involved.
The training was seen as high quality but more information on financial aspects was needed.	Plans for further presentations of the 'course' were adjusted to take account of this.
The training and support provided has enabled community groups and Sure Start to better understand each other.	Most of the 'accommodation' has taken place on behalf of the groups as they have come to understand the restrictions in which Sure Start has to operate.
The process as a whole has promoted local ownership of business plans.	Despite short time scales that have militated against extensive consultation local people have been involved in the development of the capital plans to a large extent.
One outcome of the process is a general raising of business skills capacity in communities.	This additional outcome should be helpful to individuals, businesses and other community groups locally.
Some groups felt that they benefited by	Some felt that they gained information, contacts and support as well as forming

being able to form links with other neighbouring community groups.	practical alliances.
It is evident that the programme tries hard to be community led and 'bottom up'.	However it is important to accept that there are restrictions in practice (not least Sure Start targets and regulations) and consequently Sure Start's agenda or priorities may differ from local communities. This fact needs to be openly acknowledged in order not to raise expectations that cannot be met.

Childminding in the China Clay area	
Key Finding	Discussion
Existing childminders appear to have sufficient work.	All respondents were providing a service but none wanted to extend their service e.g. to include more children or further evenings and weekends.
The level of demand currently seems to be finely balanced with supply. (Finding needs corroboration).	Only one child was on a waiting list, no childminders had been asked for services they did not supply (evenings, weekends etc). Consequently if demand did increase greatly then services may not have capacity to respond.
Three models of childminding were identified.	Childminding as a way to earn some extra money, often whilst being compatible with own family's needs. Childminding as part of a longer-term career in childcare, often moving on to childcare settings. Childminding as a profession in its own right.
Many childminders are keen to work in other childcare settings.	Although they may eventually be lost to childminding many childminders express an interest in remaining in the childcare system.
Investment in training and support for childminders may have an impact beyond their occupation as a childminder.	Childminding is often relatively short-term occupation (although this is not always the case) many childminders appear to want to move on when their own children have moved on to school.
Further recruitment and training on a relatively small scale appears to	The fact that many childminders move on and also that there does not seem to be significant spare capacity in the system

<p>be indicated.</p>	<p>would suggest that ongoing recruitment, training and support for childminders is necessary. However this is not indicated on a large scale and may damage the business of existing childminders if numbers grow too quickly.</p>
<p>Childminders have a wide range of qualifications and transferable skills. Many childminders are interested in pursuing further qualifications.</p>	<p>These are identified in the full report.</p>
<p>Satisfaction with childminding service is moderately high amongst families using them.</p>	<p>From previous satisfaction questionnaire (81%).</p>

Annual Baseline Data	
Key Finding	Discussion
Availability	Data has been gathered for the measures. However this frequently is difficult to obtain and the closest available data has to be substituted. Data providers have a number of problems (e.g. excessive workloads, data sharing issues) some of which cause delays in provision of information.
Approach	Co-ordinated approaches to data providers on behalf of all local programmes have eased data supply problems to some extent. Where possible triangulation with other methods is used to corroborate data. Where possible and relevant additional data items have been gathered which may provide baseline indicators for future work on the impact of Sure Start.
Validity	The evaluators have advised that a number of problems exist in relation to the validity of the measures as indicators for the targets. The evaluators have made representations locally and nationally with regard to these.
Reliability	The evaluators have advised on a number of technical difficulties in the collection of data that make it less reliable. The evaluators have made representations locally and nationally with regard to these.
Interpretation	The evaluators have advised locally and nationally how data should be interpreted, for example some measures should only be used in aggregated national data and not as local indicators.

Review / summary of existing sources	
Key Finding	Discussion
Existing work	The programme possesses a large quantity of valuable information, which should be used to its full potential. This includes significant early consultation work conducted by the community development

	workers.
Information sharing	This information should not be considered 'out of date' as it can still be used by the programme and future evaluators to guide practice and monitor progress. Additionally service providers (Sure Start and non-Sure Start) would benefit from access to and familiarity with this material.

Feedback on survey of Board members	
Key Finding	Discussion
Representation	There is good representation from a range of organisations and from parent reps. Parents in particular are 'active' members of the Board. Most Board members were female but there was a wide range of ages represented.
Barriers to attendance	Barriers for Parents included transport and the availability of childcare (although both are always provided a few parents suggested at that time that they did not want to use it in its current format, NB changes have now been implemented). Barriers for other representatives included the long duration of meetings, frequency of meetings, location of meetings, own workload and other responsibilities etc.

Emergent Themes

It is possible to identify a few themes that occur with particular regularity in many of the research areas. One is the extent to which the programme values parent and community participation in the governance and running of the programme. This appears to be for a number of reasons, firstly it is a nationally defined key principle of Sure Start as well as a value held by most programme staff, secondly it is seen as a way in which the right services can be developed and targeted more effectively and thirdly high levels of participation are seen as one mechanism that will be particularly important in the extended life and mainstreaming of the programme's services.

Communication was another theme that was mentioned in different contexts. The importance of effective communication with families and indeed within the programme is underlined. This is another

area where the programme already enjoys considerable success although scope exists for specific improvements.

One theme that has been apparent from a few of the research projects is that historically there has been some 'bad feeling' between some sectors of the community and Sure Start China Clay. However it is also clear that this situation has begun to show considerable improvement now that more services are being delivered in the area and is likely to improve further upon completion of the capital projects. The main risk to this would be if any of the capital projects become seen as a threat (competition) to other local facilities. The programme has made considerable efforts to overcome any remaining bad feeling and for the most part is highly valued by the local community.

One further characteristic of this programme that is evident in many of the research areas is the utilization of systems. Much thought and planning has been given to the development of systems that can be transparent, fair and consistently applied. Whilst this is also major strength of the programme it may have some drawbacks. It is thought necessary to maintain reasonable flexibility for two main reasons; firstly it is unlikely that all newly developed systems will be created perfect, some may need to be transformed as they are put into practice. Secondly a programme such as Sure Start needs to remain responsive to changes in the local context, not least to the changing needs and demands of the communities it services.

Conclusion

A wide range of evaluation activities has been completed. Whilst some have produced visible outputs such as reports others have provided formative feedback to programme workers. The findings in the main are robust, where contingencies have allowed less certainty this has been highlighted. It is felt that these findings will be of both immediate and lasting benefit to the programme. For example whilst some of the findings have already changed practice or delivery others will act as a baseline against which future impact can be gauged. In addition all robust evaluation will add to the pool of evidence required to inform the mainstreaming debate.

The researchers at ERIC would again like to register our thanks to all of the Sure Start staff and families that have supported and facilitated our work. The researchers have at times been concerned about how evaluation is perceived within the programme. It is hoped that the programme will proceed to value the input that robust and objective evaluation research can have and that all parts

of the programme can build constructive and trusting relationships with future researchers.

Section 2

**Other Evaluation/Audit Work
Undertaken by the Programme**

Other Evaluation/Audit Work - Undertaken by the Programme

This section captures other work, which has been undertaken by staff or volunteers working in the Programme. Further information or copies of reports can be obtained upon request.

Date	Work Undertaken	By Whom	Comments
Quarterly since Spring 2003	Evaluation Sub-Group Meetings	Evaluation Sub-Group Members	A sub-group of the Partnership Board. Remit is: - direct some areas of the research and to set priorities. - to look at research outcomes and see how best to use these
October 2003	Family Health Team - Service Review	Family Health Team	
January 2004	Childcare Places Audit	Childcare Development Worker	
February 2004	Speech and Language Therapy Referral Patterns Audit	Speech and Language Service	
February - March 2004	Speech & Language measure	Staff working for SSCC	Submitted to the SS Unit
February 2004	Review of Language Builders Training	Speech and Language Service	
March 2004	Evaluation Training	National Evaluation for Sure Start - Local Programme Support	A one day event open to all Partnership Board Members. Support to

			develop a Evaluation strategy
April 2004	Evaluation Strategy for 2004 -06	Management Group of the Partnership Board/Parents Committee	Used as the Service specification for External Evaluation Service for 2004 - 06
April 2004	Analysis of REACH for 2003/04	Systems Manager, Services Manager and EStart	
April 2004	Evaluation of Marketing Event for Community	Community Development Worker	

Section 3

Planned Evaluation for 2004 to 2006

Planned Evaluation for 2004 to 2006

This section outlines the work planned on evaluation over the next two years. The strategy is quite detailed for 2004 to 2005.

Cordis Bright Consulting were appointed as external evaluators for the Programme on 28th May 2004 and a schedule of work to be undertaken by them over the next few months will be agreed soon.

Sure Start China Clay

Evaluation Strategy 2004 to 2006

1. Background

Sure Start China Clay (SSCC) is a round 3 Sure Start Local Programme covering the rural China Clay Villages, north of St Austell, Cornwall. Sure Start China Clay aims to improve the quality of life for children under the age of four in the programme area by working with parents to be, parents of 0-4s, the 0-4s and those who work with them in the fields of early years education, childcare and family health support. The programme works towards the national Sure Start objectives and targets which are:

- Improving the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare
- Improving learning
- Improving social and emotional development
- Improving children's health
- Strengthening families and communities

The programme is managed by its Partnership Board, which has active parent participation. The accountable body is Central Cornwall Primary Care Trust. The programme has been setting up and delivering services for around 18 months. Services include childcare co-ordination, family health support, mentor scheme, training, speech and language development and resource bank. Support for young parents commences in April 2004. These services are delivered either by staff directly employed by SSCC or on a contractual basis. SSCC is also part way through its Capital Build Programme, which includes facilities in seven villages, scheduled for completion by the end of 2004.

SSCC are required, like all SS local programmes to include programme evaluation as part of its activities. This evaluation is used to inform the programme regarding planning and programme development, thereby continually improving the programme.

The programme wishes to develop an integrated approach to evaluation making use of monitoring, process and outcome data. A range of research methods will need to be used, qualitative and quantitative, to ensure that such an approach realises reliable and pertinent data.

2. Management Arrangements for Programme Evaluation

An Evaluation Sub-Group (a sub-group of the Partnership Board) is responsible for managing the programme evaluation. This group meets quarterly and its remit is to set priorities and direct areas of research and evaluation, look at findings and recommendations from the evaluation undertaken and advise the programme on how to implement these.

The performance of external providers of programme evaluation is reviewed against delivery plans agreed between the programme and the provider, on a quarterly basis by either the Programme Manager or the Services Manager, who must then report progress to the Management Sub-group of the Partnership Board.

3. Involvement of SSCC Parents and Children in Planning and Contributing to Programme Evaluation

The ethos of Sure Start places parents and children at the heart of service planning and developments. Accordingly parents will be involved in contributing to the Programme Evaluation Strategy and the design and planning of individual pieces of programme evaluation. In addition the programme will require evaluators to endeavour to offer opportunities for parents to participate as 'researchers' if they wish to and where it is ethically appropriate.

When possible children, particularly older children will be invited to express their views and feedback as part of the programme evaluation. The Programme will ensure that any such research or evaluation with this target group is age appropriate and ethically permissible.

Participation in Programme evaluation by adults and children is voluntary. The programme will facilitate consent from the person with 'parental responsibility' for the child before any child takes part in evaluation.

4. Ethics

The evaluators must be conversant with the current ethical and research governance arrangements that may be applicable to some aspects of the evaluation. Any evaluation and research undertaken by Sure Start China Clay will adhere to the Accountable Body's Ethics guidance.

5. Presentation and Dissemination of Findings and Recommendations from Evaluation.

Reports

Written reports will include the following:

- Finding reports- these relate to any individual piece of evaluation activity which is undertaken
- Annual Reports- this relates to an overview and syntheses of the annual evaluation activity and will outline the forthcoming evaluation plan.

All reports should detail the purpose of the evaluation, how it was undertaken, what was found and recommendations for the programme will normally be expected. Written reports should be as concise as possible and should include a summary of no more than 2 pages of A4. The inclusion of charts, diagrams and other graphics is encouraged. Plain language must be used.

Presentations

Those undertaking the evaluation may be invited to present the outcomes of their work to the Programme, its sub-groups or committees, SSCC families or the SSCC community. Presentations should be appropriate for the expected audience. The use of visual material is encouraged.

Dissemination

The Programme Manager must agree the dissemination of the evaluation findings in advance.

The programme is committed to sharing the outcomes of any research with the wider community and non - approval to disseminate will only be applied when it is not in the best interests of the programme or the China Clay community or is not a sound piece of work.

6. Work undertaken to date.

Over the last 18 months the Evaluation and Research Innovation Centre (ERIC) of Plymouth University have provided the programme evaluation. This has included a user satisfaction service, impact evaluation of the health outreach

service, research into men's views on SSCC, an annual survey, an evaluation of the capital build programme business planning process and the collection, collation and presentation of data from other sources required by the national Sure Start Unit for monitoring and evaluation.

Staff engaged to provide services has also carried out some evaluation and/or service audit work. This includes programme monitoring (REACH figures etc) collected via EStart.

7. Future Work for 2004 to 2006

i. Monitoring

This will continue to be carried out by staff engaged by SSCC. Estart will be used to generate reports for the partnership board.

Data from local sources for M1 and M5 returns will be co-ordinated in-house. The programme may invite ERIC from Plymouth University to collect and summarise this on the programme's behalf as they collect for all other programmes in the County.

Lead Person (s) – SSCC Systems Manager and SSCC Services Manager.

ii. Cost-Effectiveness

The SS National Unit requires this.

Lead Person(s) – SSCC Services Manager and SSCC Systems Manager

iii. User Satisfaction

A review is needed in 2005. However, it is hoped that some user satisfaction information can be incorporated within the parental perception impact evaluation question (see section 7.v.)

iv. Process and Outcomes

This will be carried out by encouraging staff, parents and volunteers to undertake evaluation and/or audit within the areas of work they are responsible for. The external evaluators to offer these individuals support, advice, training and expertise wherever possible.

Lead Person(s) – SSCC Services Manager and External Evaluators

v. Impact Evaluation

External programme evaluators, who will be recruited via a tendering process on a two-year contract, will undertake this.

A budget of £22,000 (maximum) per annum has been allocated for this work and the user satisfaction survey.

The Partnership Board identified the following areas in March 2004 for impact evaluation for 2004/05. The Evaluation Sub-group of the Partnership Board for 2005/06 in January 2005 will identify additional areas.

<p>IMPACT EVALUATION FOR 2004 - 2005</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What are the learning outcomes for children associated with Sure Start China Clay Programme activities for children?2. What are parents' perspectives of the way in which services work together for the benefit of pre-school age children in the rural Sure Start China Clay programme?3. Are there discernable benefits for those families who have participated in the SS China Clay mentoring scheme?
<p><u>In addition:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The external evaluators will also be asked to collect (or advise on the collection) of some baseline information on the aspirations and expectations of young parents for the Young Parents Support work starting in April 2004 in preparation for impact evaluation towards the end of the second year of the contract.2. It is likely that further evaluation of the health outreach service will be required in year two of the contract.

A timetable to implement this evaluation along with the methodology to be used will be agreed between the Programme and the external evaluator upon commencement of the contract.

8. Annual Programme Evaluation Report

The Sure Start Unit requires this each January.

The external evaluators will be expected to produce the majority of this report. An interim report on the work undertaken to date between the start of the contract and end of the calendar year is acceptable for 2004/05.

Programme Lead – Programme Manager.

Timetable for Evaluation Strategy – April 2004 – March 2005

	Lead Person(s)	BY Date
Appoint external evaluators	Services manager	End April 2004
Plan to deliver impact evaluation for 04/05 agreed	Services manager & External evaluators & Evaluation Sub-group	End May 2004
Summary of REACH figures 2003/2004 to Partnership Board	Systems manager/services Manager	May 2004
Attend NESS briefing on cost-effectiveness evaluation	Services manager	May 2004
Summary of REACH figures 2003/2004 to SS Unit (via annual report)	Programme Manager	July 2004
Undertake cost-effectiveness evaluation	Services manager	September 2004 (tbc)
Themes for evaluation for 2005/06 agreed for use in 05/06 evaluation contract and Annual Evaluation Report	Chair of Evaluation Sub-group	End December 2004
Interim report on impact evaluation submitted to programme for use in Annual Evaluation Report	External evaluators	End December 2004

Other evaluation/audit undertaken by service staff submitted to programme for use in annual evaluation report and good practice register	Services Manager	End December 2004
Annual Evaluation Report to SS Unit	Programme Manager	Jan 2005
Impact evaluation for themes for 2004/05 completed	External evaluators	End March 2005
User satisfaction survey	External evaluators	2005/06

Strategy Produced and agreed by SSCC. April 2004.

