

Sure Start Newcastle

Annual Evaluation Report
2003

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The authors would like to thank the programme manager, the programme staff and all parents and children who took part in the evaluation.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

- This report provides a summary of the evaluation activities carried out during 2003 by Sure Start Newcastle

1.2 Methods

- The evaluation involves a range of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to assess the work of Sure Start Newcastle

1.3 Findings

- 460 children were registered with Sure Start Newcastle in December 2003 this is 81% of all eligible children in the Sure Start area.
- 11.26% (17) of mothers were identified as having Post Natal Depression in the first 12 months of their baby's life during 2003. 100% of these mothers received appropriate care.
- 100% of families were contacted by the Sure Start Enhanced Health Visitor team within the first 2 months of birth during 2003. This enhanced service provides information about Sure Start services and activities including an information pack for each family.
- A paid Home Start worker was appointed to work in the Sure Start Newcastle area during September 2002. During 2003 16 referrals were made to Home-Start this is a 100% increase on the previous year.
- There has been a 45% increase in the number of mothers breastfeeding at 6 weeks from 20% in the baseline data to 65% for 2003.
- Sure Start Newcastle provides a wide variety of opportunities for children to access high quality play and learning aimed at improving children's development, creative play skills, speech and language skills and music and movement development.
- During 2002-2003, 411 children aged 0-3 years lived in the Sure Start area. Of these 14.36% (59) were active members of a library. This is an increase of over 8% from the baseline data. In addition 121 children under 5 in Sure Start area are members of the library service. Issues at Silverdale Library have also increased by 700%
- Very positive verbal feedback on Sure Start Newcastle has been obtained from parents and carers through a variety of methods including anecdotal and group evaluation gathered during sessions.

1.3 Recommendations

- Sure Start Newcastle is successfully working towards achieving the PSA and SDA targets. The evidence for this is predominately qualitative. There is a need for more quantitative evidence, this is one of the main objectives for 2004/5 evaluation. A new monitoring system is currently under development this will provide hard evidence for future planning in the programme.
- Overall the programme received a positive response from the parents that access services, people were pleased with existing services.
- Information concerning the success of one off events should be disseminated to all those involved with Sure Start. Information could be sent out to families that both did and did not attend on the day. To both advertise the success of the day and to thank those that did attend.
- Information should also be sent out to the business organisations that helped with the planning of the day. This ensures that they feel the impact of their input and helps to maintain links with the business community.
- The programme could consider involving various specialist workers, such as the Speech and Language worker in projects such as the gardening project to enhance the scope and develop the project further.

2. Background

The Sure Start Programme covers the urban villages of Silverdale, Parksite, Knutton, Cross Heath, Lower Milehouse and the Meadows. The area has a population of about 14,000 and lies in the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme within the North Staffordshire conurbation. The communities grew mainly because of the development of traditional industries such as coal mining and clay working, from which bricks and tiles were made. There was further growth in the 1950's with the development of mainly local authority and National Coal Board housing at Cross Heath, Lower Milehouse, Knutton and Parksite. It should be noted that, following a ballot of tenants, the former local authority housing in the area is now managed by ASPIRE Housing Limited, a registered social landlord.

The post-war residential growth was complemented by industrial growth, of which only Leoni AG (*manufacturer of Electrical wiring harnesses for cars*) still exists but it now employs significantly fewer people than in the past. Former major industries such as electrical engineering, coal mining and brick and tile manufacture have all ceased.

The area suffers from social and economic deprivation with low incomes, low levels of educational attainment, poor vocational qualifications and low staying-on rates at school. There are poor levels of general health and many households contain someone with a limiting long term illness. Some people have unhealthy lifestyles and there is lack of access to leisure facilities. Levels of crime are traditionally higher than the County average. Much of the open land adjoining Silverdale and Knutton is despoiled because of past and present mining, mineral and tipping activities.

The programme is currently based in its temporary offices in Knutton Infant School. All sessions and events take place in community venues around the Sure Start area. In May 2004 the programme will relocate to its permanent base in the Children's Centre in Knutton

3. Methods

3.1 The evaluation of Sure Start Newcastle is carried out by the evaluation team based in a central resource team within Staffordshire County Council working with 6 Sure Start Programmes in Staffordshire to provide expertise on evaluation methods and techniques. The evaluator is based part-time at the programmes central office. A participatory evaluation approach has been adopted, this ensures that the programme evaluation has a local focus. Initially the evaluation involved a core group consisting of parents, front line service providers, the programme manager and the evaluation co-ordinator however this group did not take off, the views of parents and service providers were still sought when evaluation decisions were needed. Subject to Board approval, the core group will be re-established in 2004 as a board sub-group. The Core group is vital to ensure that the evaluation is grounded; contextually relevant and driven by local programme priorities. The evaluation also incorporates key elements of the Action Research approach. The main aim for the local evaluation is to produce practically useful findings and to enable the programme to reflect upon and remodel services where necessary.

The evaluation work that has been undertaken has involved the use of a range of methods to assess the impact of Sure Start Newcastle. Both quantitative and qualitative information has been involved and the evaluation officer has worked with the programme's monitoring officer to provide feedback on the programme's progress towards national and local targets. All monitoring data used in this report was collected by the programme and its partners and passed to the evaluation team for use in this report.

3.2 This report incorporates the evaluation work carried out by Sure Start Newcastle during 2003. These topics were decided on in consultation with the programme manager and parent groups.

- Carry out an evaluation of the service provided by Home Start
- Develop and provide a training course for parents on evaluation skills

- Evaluate the See Us Grow gardening project
- Carry out a consultation of local children's views of childcare
- Evaluate the 'Wheely Good Fun' event

The original evaluation plan has been modified and amended throughout the year to mirror the needs of the programme.

3.3 Document Analysis

An assessment of both National and programme based documents was carried out to gain a clear insight into the programme, background information on service provision and current activities nationwide. This information helped to shape interview schedules and questionnaire formats. The analysis included methodologies and research found on the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) website, and various other Internet sites

Documents acquired from programme staff included:

- Details of service provision
- Strategies
- Delivery plan
- Business Plan
- Welcome packs
- Newsletters

3.3 Interviews

Interviews were chosen as the most appropriate data collection method for the evaluation of Home Start (See appendix 1), allowing participants to reflect on their thoughts and feelings. Semi structured interviews were undertaken, where the main questions are fixed to direct the interview but subsequent questions can be improvised to explore lines of discussion. The structure employed allowed the participant to raise areas that they perceive to be particularly important.

The idea of undertaking an interview was broached with the Home Start clients to firstly determine whether they would feel comfortable with participating in an interview and subsequently to obtain their permission for

the researcher to schedule a time for the interview to take place. Interviews were arranged, using the project worker as a mediator to introduce the evaluator to the interviewee. This was felt to be an important aspect as it verified the researcher as a legitimate person and put the interviewee at ease. This was a crucial aspect of the evaluation, as some of the participants approached may not have felt comfortable with the concept of participating in an interview.

All of the project worker's present clients were contacted to inquire whether they would be willing to participate in an interview. All of the clients agreed to participate in the evaluation. Prior to all interviews being conducted the client was again asked if the present time was suitable for the interview to take place. This was done to respect the changes that occur on a daily basis for some of the families accessing the Home Start service. Clients were reassured that if this time was not suitable another interview could be scheduled. All interviews were recorded on a digital Dictaphone. The use of a Dictaphone was discussed with the participant prior to conducting the interview. All of the interviews were confidential and the participants were made aware of this and that the Dictaphone files would be kept in password protected files on the researchers Personal Computer and would not be accessed by either of the programmes involved. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and a method of open coding was applied when analysing the data. The themes that were identified were compared and contrasted across all of the transcripts.

Any names that occurred during the evaluation have been omitted when being discussed.

Event evaluation Methods

An evaluation of the 'Wheely good fun' event was carried out in August 2003 (See appendix 2) in which families were approached to give comments and answer questions concerning their thoughts about the day. These families were approached on an opportunistic basis and permission was first given before the questions were posed. The responses were noted down for

subsequent use. A Dictaphone was not used for two reasons. Firstly, it was felt that it might impinge on the comments that the families would feel able to make and secondly, due to the variety of background noise it was thought that the quality of the recordings may have been affected.

One family was approached to use a disposable camera during their visit to the event to attempt to obtain an alternate view of the day. Both the adults and the children within the family used the camera to take pictures of what they experienced during the event. Permission from the family to use the photographs was obtained before proceeding on the day.

A digital camera was used to document the different activities taking place.

Observation

Observation were carried out during the evaluation of the 'See us Grow' gardening project (See appendix 3) which took place between August and October 2003. Observation offers the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of an activity than can be gained through interviews. The evaluation aimed to document the progress and investigate the impact of the 'See Us Grow' project using the collection of visual and verbal data.

Discussions were undertaken with the service providers running the project concerning the structure and approach of the garden sessions. The researcher visited the garden to understand the environment in which the evaluation would be taking place.

The researcher made observational notes during and directly after the sessions, a digital Dictaphone was also used to record comments made by both adults and children during the sessions.

During the evaluation sessions, a digital camera was used to take images and to document the different activities that were taking place. The evaluation was explained to participants and permission was obtained before taking

images of the families and in particular the children. The researcher provided disposable cameras for the children to take photographs of their experiences of gardening. Families were approached during the sessions and asked if they would help their children to take images of the garden. The emphasis was placed on the adult facilitating the child to use the camera, however parents were not restricted from taking photographs of their own children if they wished to do so.

3.7 Child consultation

A Consultation with children aged 3-5 year olds is currently being carried out throughout Staffordshire in disadvantaged wards and Sure Start areas. The project began in December 2003 and is due for completion at the end of April 2004. The aim of the project is to find out what things children enjoy doing and what things are important to them. The sessions involve a maximum of 7 children per group with two groups being conducted in the Newcastle area. Individual children are selected with the assistance of staff who are familiar with the children.

The researchers ask the children a variety of simple questions such as 'what do you like playing with at nursery' and 'what is the most important thing about going to nursery' The aim is to start to build a rapport with the children and get them thinking and talking about their routines and likes / dislikes. Asking the children about their daily routine, will highlight the things they remember and therefore what stands out in their mind as a major part of childcare, indicating what may be important and can also lead to further discussion.

The methods used are drawn from the Mosaic approach (Clarke & Moss 2001) and involve:

- Children drawing pictures
- Children taking photographs with disposable cameras of what they like & don't like to do
- Researchers observe and make field notes during these sessions
- Child led tours in which children can reveal their favourite places/activities/people and discuss their daily routine will also be carried out.
- Short informal interviews with parents and staff to gain their perspectives of the child's experiences of childcare

The use of cameras was piloted with 2 year olds however they found the equipment too difficult to use therefore it was decided that only children 3 years and over should be included in the study.

The researchers visit the setting on two occasions initially to carry out the activities returning to discuss the photographs and clarify what is important to the children and how they felt about the results. It is particularly important that the children are at the centre of the analysis process to avoid misinterpretation of the photographs by the adults. The researcher records the information and themes discussed by the children on a record sheet (See appendix 4) and takes field notes and observations of the children and the setting. These notes will be transcribed and analysed using a system of open coding to identify any themes that emerge.

Day Nurseries were chosen as the setting in which this research should take place, because they predominantly provide full time childcare provision and have indoor and outdoor facilities, thereby allowing the children to illustrate their likes and dislikes from a variety of different forms of play. The Day Nurseries involved were selected through purposive random sampling this method was selected because it allows for the deliberate or strategic selection of specific cases where the overall potential purposeful sample is larger than that required for the study. This method also reduces bias within the purposeful category.

Ethical issues were particularly important when working with young children. Researchers attended child protection training and prepared a strategy to deal with any potential issues that could be uncovered by the research.

Consent forms were sent out to all parents regardless of whether their child was involved in the consultation process; this was important because the children were using cameras and could potentially have taken photographs of any of the children. An information sheet was also provided with the consent form to give parents as much information about the research as possible

giving details of how to contact the researchers if they had any questions or queries. If the parents declined consent the children did not take part in the exercise. The children were also asked on the day if they wanted to take part, the research was explained in child friendly language and the children were able to withdraw at any time. A key worker was also present at all times during the research process.

In the situations where consent had not been gained from parents the researcher and setting manager examined all photographs and any containing those children that had not consented were destroyed. No photographs containing children will be used or displayed.

3.8 Sure Start Detectives: Parents as researchers training programme

A 12 week a training programme in basic research methods for Sure Start parents is currently taking place. The training consisted of face-to-face interactive workshops, lectures and small group work. The course is run in association with Staffordshire University and run by Dr Liz Boath of the School of Health. The sessions took place in a community venue in the Newcastle Sure Start area. The topics covered by the course were:

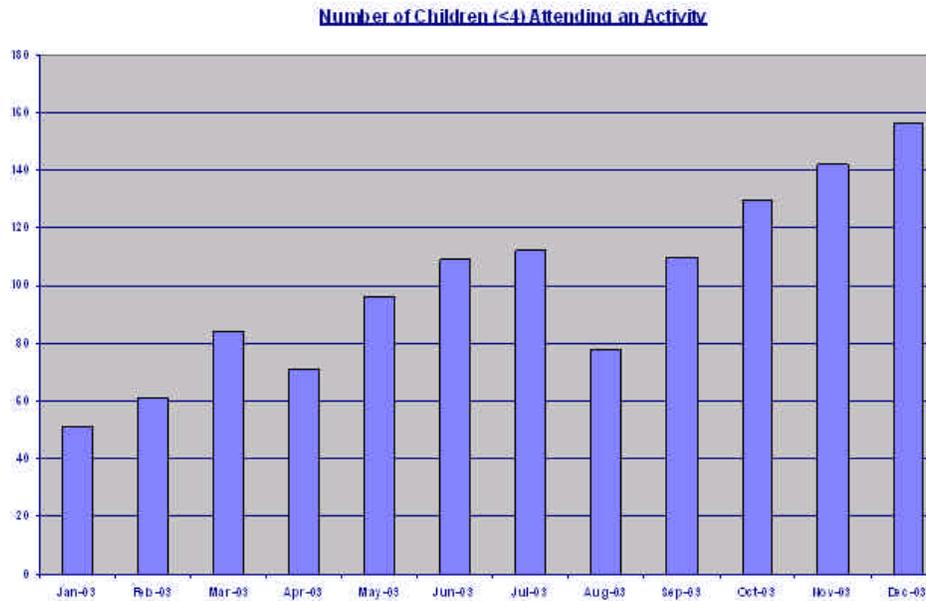
1. Introduction to research and critical appraisal
2. Literature searching, research questions, and developing a research protocol
3. Sampling
4. Data collection, interviews
5. Data collection, focus groups
6. Research / evaluation project support
7. Data collection, questionnaires
8. Data analysis
9. Dissemination
10. Ethics
11. Research / evaluation project support
12. Programme summary

A flyer was developed to facilitate recruitment (see appendix 5) in conjunction with Sure Start staff and parents. This was placed in Sure Start venues and included in Sure Start Newsletters, mail shots and handed out to parents. Sure Start staff also telephoned and approached individuals who they felt would be interested in attending the group.

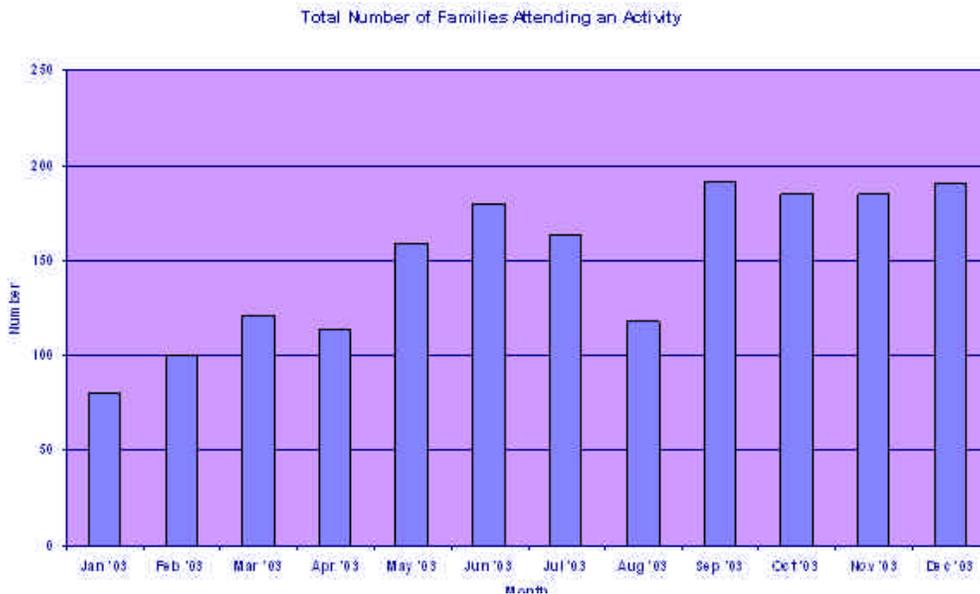
4. Sure Start Newcastle Contact Figures

At the end of December 2003 460 children were registered. This is 81% of original number of children under 4 in the area (M1) and 89% of families registered at the end of March 2004

The programme made 5899 contacts in the 12 months up until December 2003



The number of children seen by the programme from Jan 03 to Dec 03 was 397 at activities and 111 babies were visited at home



150 families were seen on average per month between January 2003 and December 2003

100% of registered children were seen between January and December 2003

5. Findings

Objective 1: Improving social and emotional development

PSA Target

To reduce the proportion of children aged 0-3 in the 500 Sure Start areas who are re-registered within the space of twelve months on the child protection register by 20 per cent by 2004

SDA Target

All local Sure Start programmes to have agreed and implemented, in a culturally sensitive way, ways of identifying, caring for and supporting mothers with postnatal depression.

100 per cent of families with young children contacted by local programmes within the first two months of birth

5.1 There were 5 children on the child protection register in the Sure Start area when the baseline figures were recorded during 2002/2003 there have been no re-registrations.

5.2 11.26 % (17) of mothers were identified as having Post Natal Depression in the first 12 months of their baby's life during 2003. 100% of these mothers received appropriate care.

A community mental health support worker is offering a flexible local service in the Sure Start area providing both one to one and group support sessions. Training is also offered to the Sure Start staff team to raise awareness of the service and increase the referral rate to the service. In total 30 women have been supported by the community mental health support worker and 1 father. Work is now being carried out to develop the support for partners however a large number of the women receiving support are single parents.

5.3 100% of families were contacted by the Sure Start Enhanced Health Visitor team within the first 2 months of birth during 2003. This enhanced

service provides information about Sure Start services and activities including an information pack for each family. During the last quarter of 2003, all antenatal mothers have been offered/visited prior to the birth of their baby.

A paid Home Start worker was appointed to work in the Sure Start Newcastle area during September 2002. During 2003 16 referrals were made to Home-Start; this is a 100% increase on the previous year. 10 families were supported during the last 6 months of the year. 2 families have now moved on having benefited from support. The project worker now also provides telephone support to families whilst they are on the waiting list for home-visiting. It is felt that the families have received more intense support from the paid Home Start worker than they previously would have been given by a Home-Start volunteer.

An evaluation of the work of Home Start took place between September and November 2003. The aim of this evaluation was: to explore the experiences and perceptions of the Home-Start clients during the first year of the contract.

The objectives of this evaluation were:

- To indicate the number of people from the Sure Start area accessing the Home-Start service.
- To assess Home-Start client's feelings concerning the service provided.
- To indicate the number of Home-Start clients aware of Sure Start and its activities.

The evaluation of Home Start found that the support offered to families was extremely important however simple this support may first appear, the extent to which it was crucial to helping the families function was apparent. The support helped some to gain more self confidence. For others, this support was related to the achievements of large personal goals or overcoming individual hurdles.

“Before, I would never have dreamt of going outside and meeting people like that.”

“Before I used to be in tears all the time. Since Home Start has started with us, they've always been there for

me. I feel more confident to go out and tell people what I think then sort of sitting saying, well, I wish I could do this, I wish I could do that."

"If I'm really depressed, I can talk to her on the phone or she comes out to see me on a Friday so I don't feel as depressed as I used to, but with the other problems I've got at the moment, I do get a bit depressed occasionally, but it does make a difference and it does help a bit."

Additional phone support was described as important to respondents and visits were seen as something to look forward to. Both parents and children benefited from Home Start support in many cases the support worker was described as a friend a reliable source of support

"So if we see anyone in Newcastle or if we go across Morrisons to do a bit of shopping and they say who is this with you, we just say its 'X,' a friend, not 'X' from Home Start. If people ask where do you know her from, we tell them We're not embarrassed."

"Yes, its gone from 'X' being a part of a company, to 'X' being the family friend who comes in, provides that bit of support that we found we needed."

Many families discussed how the child enjoyed the time they spent with the project worker and the activities and opportunities to engage in different activities that were provided. The positive impact that this was having on the child was also stated by the families.

"We've got two older children and in the school holidays, 'X' did cooking, made cakes and they enjoyed them. So it was nice support for three of them. Like I say, she's just like a very good friend. Its difficult for us to think that it's just a service that's being provided."

All of the Home-Start clients were aware of Sure Start, with some accessing activities and a few that were directly involved with the project. The project worker attends Sure Start meetings and the information regarding activities appears to be being communicated effectively.

From this evaluation it was clear that each individual client has different needs, many of which are very complex. However, the service provided appears to be impacting to help the clients both directly and indirectly.

The recommendations from the evaluation include:

- That careful monitoring and evaluation continue to ensure the progress of this method of working.
- The possibility of training volunteers may be considered for future families within the Sure Start area although the complexity of the needs of the families would be a determining factor.
- Future evaluation could involve both Home-Start clients that are accessing the project worker and those that are accessing a local volunteer. This would allow comparisons and contrasts to be evaluated.

6. Objective 2: Improving Health

PSA Target

Achieve by 2004 in the 500 Sure Start areas, a ten per cent reduction in the number of women who smoke in pregnancy

SDA Target

Parenting support and information available for all parents in Sure Start areas

All local programmes give guidance on breast feeding, hygiene and safety

30% mothers breast feeding at 4 weeks by 2003 – 4

10 per cent reduction in children in the Sure Start area aged 0-3 admitted to hospital as an emergency with gastro-enteritis, and respiratory infection, or a severe injury

6.1 15.4% of mothers continued to smoke to delivery in the Sure Start area during 2002/03 according to the North Staffordshire NHS Trust. The baseline data collected by the programme is based on different data and therefore not directly comparable however there is a decrease from 24% of mothers who reported smoking during pregnancy in 2000. The Sure Start Midwife saw 39 women and partners who wish to quit smoking in 2003 and has supported them intensively. A further 20 people have been seen, to discuss the effects of smoking upon their unborn child and existing children and upon themselves. These people did not want to quit but have the Midwife's contact number in case they change their mind. The Midwife also discusses the effects of second hand smoke with those not wishing to quit. Anecdotal evidence of the achievements of this service include a family who had previously experienced a cot death all managed to stop smoking around their new baby. Another mother who was receiving smoking cessation support had managed to quit smoking, however her carbon monoxide levels were still rising; this was very concerning. The Midwife discussed the possibility of her having a faulty gas fire and the Midwife encouraged her to have it checked. The whole family were very lucky to be alive due to the leakage of carbon monoxide. Word of mouth of the service is also spreading: one mother rang

the Midwife to give up smoking because she had heard about the service through talking at the school gates. She hadn't even seen the GP or community midwife.

6.2 Sure Start Newcastle provides parenting support and information in several different ways including the provision of parenting courses run in the local area by Sure Start team workers. Transport is also provided to those otherwise unable to travel to the venue. A parentcraft course called Bumps 2 Babes is run by the Sure Start Midwife in association with a health visitor. These sessions cover such topics as labour, feeding, healthy eating and family planning. This course has successfully accessed mums and dads who traditionally would not attend parentcraft. The sessions are informal and mums feel very relaxed to discuss various issues and problems. Parentcraft can also be done on an individual basis in the family's own home if required. Time in Time out sessions provide an opportunity for parents to spend quality time with their children and attend sessions on play, parenting, health issues and relaxation in return gaining an equal amount of child free time.

6.3 A home safety risk assessment tool has been developed for use during health visitor contacts with families. A low-price purchase scheme for safety equipment has also been established by Sure Start Newcastle, advice and support for parents is available throughout the Sure Start area and information packs have been developed for antenatal, postnatal and toddler stages.

6.4 Data regarding the number of mothers breastfeeding at 4 weeks has not been available from the PCT. However there has been a 45% increase in the number of mothers breastfeeding at 6 weeks, from 20% in the baseline data to 65% for 2003. This well exceeds the SDA target of 30% and can be attributed to the ante-natal programme developed by the Sure Start Midwife. This programme includes the Mum 2 Mum course, a peer support breastfeeding group. The first course has just finished and 5 mums have completed the course. The Sure Start Midwife is currently working with a health visitor who is running a mum to mum course outside the Sure Start area to utilise the volunteers to their full potential, with the aim of attaching the volunteers to a GP surgery so that they can work closely with the midwife and

health visitor. The Midwife aims to visit all antenatal mums at home during their pregnancy to discuss breastfeeding, smoking and any other health issues.

6.5 There has been a significant decrease in the number of children admitted to hospital with gastroenteritis, respiratory infection or severe injury from 256 admissions in the baseline data to 42 during 2003.

7. Objective 3: Improving the Ability to Learn

PSA Target

Achieve by 2004 in the 500 Sure Start areas a reduction of five percentage points in the number of children with speech and language problems requiring specialist intervention by the age of 4

SDA Targets

All children in Sure Start areas to have access to good quality play and learning opportunities, helping progress towards early learning goals when they get to school

Increased use of libraries by families with young children in Sure Start area

7.1 The programme does not currently have a Speech and Language Therapist in post .In 2003 the target was to support delivery of free book packs to all babies and children aged 18 months old, with 3 additional reading related events. This took the form of 'Very Hungry Caterpillar' parties at: Cross Heath, Knutton and Silverdale. Approximately 130 children were reached. The Parents' Committee helped to plan, organise and deliver these events. All the children who attended were given a present of either butterfly wings, a caterpillar rattle or butterfly antennae.

Children practise their language and reading skills through delivery of a range of groups including: Babble, Bounce and Rhyme, Story Sack sessions in the parent/toddler groups and Story Sack training sessions for the parent/toddler group leaders, and Sure Speakers - a themed reading and craft and rhyme sessions. These usually run for 6 x 2 hour sessions, 6 – 10 parents attend with their children. Sessions in the swimming pool involve educational play in the pool followed by refreshments and story time after the children and parents have got dressed. This group is very popular; 25 parents attend with their children and there is also a waiting list. Library box visits are carried out to parent and toddler groups, there are currently 8 boxes operating. This scheme has lead to a 700% increase in the issue of children's books at Silverdale library.

Home visits to complete the speech and language assessments for 2 year olds are carried out by the staff team. Displays are also produced by parent/toddler group and these are then exhibited in Silverdale library.

7.2 Sure Start Newcastle offers children a number of opportunities to access high quality Play and Learning experiences. These include the gold standard crèches provided at Sure Start activities which offer an activity programme. 4 crèche staff recruited and 6 additional “bank” staff are trained to NVQ level 2 or above, 75% staff have been trained on ACPC, with a rolling training programme set up for the other any staff who have not yet received this training.

Sure Start Newcastle runs a Toy Library and 3 regular Stay & Play sessions have been set up. These are Fit Kids, Sticky Start and Sure Movers Sure Groovers. Stay & Play sessions include music, physical and creative activities delivering a wide range of learning-through-play opportunities At each session, a healthy snack of fruit and fresh juice or milk is provided to encourage healthy eating. Support with creative arts and music has also been provided in local playgroups; these have been developed by staff/volunteers that have followed up with their own programmes

7.3 Sure Start Newcastle ran a ‘See Us Grow’ gardening project as part of the Community Growing and Gardening Project in partnership with Newcastle Day Services, Lower Milehouse Community Development Association and the Directorate of Health Promotion. Sessions took place one Sunday every month with each session lasting approximately two hours and involving a variety of activities. A final session during September was undertaken indoors to culminate the summer activities. At the end of each gardening session the fruit and vegetables that had been harvested during that session were distributed to the families that attended on that day. This was done to encourage the use of the vegetables for cooking at home and to indicate how what was grown in the garden could be transferred once the families had left the garden and returned home. Children and families were encouraged to attend the garden on a regular basis in order to be able to appreciate the

changes that had occurred and to experience the different activities as the garden developed

An evaluation of the gardening sessions was undertaken during the summer of 2003. It was felt that it would be beneficial to reflect on the changes that have occurred during the first year of the project and to explore the impact of the garden sessions on the families involved. The evaluation found that the families had enjoyed the gardening project; children were encouraged to become involved at all stages within the garden and when they indicated particular enthusiasm for a task, they were encouraged to continue. This flexible environment gave the opportunity for children to feel supported to continue rather than being pressured to change to a different activity. The use of child friendly tools within the garden gave the children the chance to be directly involved in the gardening tasks whilst not having to struggle with adult sized tools. This gave them the autonomy to do things themselves whilst also ensuring that safety remained a priority.

Families had the opportunity to spend quality time together All members of the family were encouraged to become involved and to help the children with the activities within the garden. This inclusive approach not only allowed all family members to enjoy the garden but also gave more direct and individual support for children. Adult family members were able to spend quality time with the children in an environment that encouraged learning and development.

The project also facilitates literacy, numeracy and sensory-based learning, whilst being an exciting activity for children to participate in. Of importance to the project is encouraging families to attend the garden on a regular basis so that the children can observe the changes that have taken place in the garden since their last visit. The children can also observe how plants grow and what they look like when they are harvested, and compare this to what they observe when they go to the supermarket or at home.

7. 4 During 2002-2003, 411 children aged 0-3 years lived in the Sure Start area. Of these 14.36% (59) were active members of a library. This is an increase of over 8% from the baseline data. In addition 121 children under 5 in Sure Start area are members of the library service. Issues at Silverdale Library have also increased by 700%

8. Objective 4: Strengthening Families and Communities

PSA Target

Reduce the number of 0-3 year old children in Sure Start areas living in households where no-one is working by 12%

SDA Target

75% of families report personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of services providing family support

All Sure Start local programmes to have parent representation on local programme boards

All Sure Start programmes to ensuring links between local Sure Start partnerships and Employment Service Jobcentres

8.1 In the Sure Start Newcastle area 35.85 % of children 0-3 live in households where no one is working.

The programme works closely with the Citizens Advice Bureau with dedicated services set up for the Sure Start area. A local advisor has been appointed and outreach sessions are carried out in Silverdale, Chesterton and the Travellers' site. Appointments are also held at the Bureau. During 2003 there were 635 contacts with clients, consisting of 338 new contacts and 297 repeat/follow-up contacts. These covered a range of topics the majority of which involved improved money management in particular relating to debts (69%) and to benefits (22%).

Since November 2002 the service has seen a rapid growth in take-up, with referrals from partner agencies [Health Visitors, Home Start, Newcastle College, Social Services, Sure Start office] as well as self-referrals. The service is strengthening weekly as both Sure Start families and partner agencies realise how much the CAB service can offer

8.2 The programme has received positive verbal feedback from parents and carers through anecdotal evidence and session/event evaluations.

“I’ve gained loads. I’m more open and I don’t feel like I’m wasting my life.”

“Really helped me to build my confidence.”

“I meet and socialise with other Mums. It gives me a break from my daughter and gets me out of the house.”

“I would recommend it to a friend. It’s local and gets my child interacting with other children.”

The community satisfaction survey to be carried out in 2004/05 will provide a deeper insight into the attitudes of the local community towards Sure Start Newcastle. The questionnaire will be developed and carried out by the parent researchers currently undertaking the training course.

8.3 Sure Start Newcastle participated in the Sure Start Parent Conference in April 2003 with five other Sure Start Local Programmes from Staffordshire. The event took place at the Cannock Early Years and Sure Start Centre and gave parents from different programmes the opportunity to meet, explore ideas and experiences of the Sure Start local programmes.

The event involved both networking and learning sessions across the programmes. Parents had the opportunity to discuss the range of services they had access to within a Sure Start local programme compared to what was available before the programme. These were plotted on a time line that went from conception to the age of five. Parents were able to identify those services and activities that really helped them and share ideas with each other.

The day included presentations by Rita Wiseman from Sure Start GOWM and parents from the local programmes who talked candidly about their experiences giving many powerful and personal messages about the impact their Sure Start Local Programme is having. Parents also took part in various activities including discussion groups dealing with

- Engaging hard to reach groups,

- Healthier children,
- Parental participation
- Play and learning.

The event received a positive response from both parents and Sure Start staff.

“I enjoyed spending time with other Sure Start members, listening to what they do, some the same, some different...All interesting.”

“It was very good; a lot was achieved with everyone participating. It was Informative and interesting and it made you talk to other parents and swap information”

8.4 Sure Start Newcastle employs local community arts group B arts to carry out community development through arts and craft activities and one off community events. They work to engage parents, raise awareness of the Sure Start Programme, and develop a flexible framework which gives room for initiatives arising from parents and Stimulate creativity in the local community. The ‘Wheely Good Fun’ day was a one-off community event carried out by Sure Start Newcastle during the Summer Holidays 2003. An evaluation of this event was carried out. The summer break for schools can be very long and it was recognised that many families do not have the opportunity to take a vacation away. In addition, many of the usual term time activities such as play/toddler groups are not active and therefore the event was designed to provide a recreational day for Sure Start families, but including activities that older siblings could enjoy also.

The ‘Wheely Good Fun’ day was designed to encourage fathers to participate in Sure Start activities. A core group of fathers were involved in the planning and preparation of the day by creating ideas, helping the expansion of the event and providing practical expertise. Methods of involving other fathers were considered in order to expand their involvement. The inclusion of the remote control cars appeared to encourage the presence of fathers at the event.

The planning of the event day provided children with the chance to experience a variety of different activities, some of which they may not have experienced before. Increasing families' awareness of road safety was a key aspect of the event with cycle proficiency for the children and car safety for parents/carers.

Children were given the opportunity to interact with other children, to share in the activities that were present and to explore new experiences together. One parent said, "*events like this help in preparing children for school*" and "*it lets kids mix with other kids.*" The children were given choices about where they wanted to go and what activities they wanted to participate in. A parent commented on the benefit of the day being, "*not having to say no when they ask to do something.*" When asked about the day they responded that they "*liked being out and about, with no restrictions on the children*" and that this created, "*freedom for the child*" and made them, "*more independent.*" This indicated an environment that nurtured the development of the family relationship and encouraged bonding between children and carers.

The evaluation indicates that the 'Wheely Good Fun' day helps the achievement of all four Sure Start objectives. Both parent and children enjoyed the day and a number of unregistered families were able to engage with Sure Start. Recommendations for future events include:

- The aims and objectives of an event need to be kept at the forefront of all planning and implementing activities. Care should be taken that a unique event does not detract from the planning of regular activities
- Greater participation in competitions or activities could be achieved by facilitating links with playgroup and toddler groups to design and make the competition entries or costumes for the day.
- Information concerning the success of the day should be disseminated to all those involved with Sure Start. Information could be sent out to families that both did and did not attend on the day, to both advertise the success of the day and to thank those that did attend.
- Information should also be sent out to the business organisations that helped with the planning of the day. This ensures that they feel the impact of their input and helps to maintain links with the business community.

The Sure Start management board currently has 10 parent representatives making up 50% of the total board. The board chairperson is also a local father living in the Sure Start area.

Sure Start Newcastle provides a range of learning activities for families, 34 learning events took place during 2003 ranging from learning to Face paint, parenting, Christmas cracker factories and making toys and games for children. Informal learning sessions have taken place at a variety of venues throughout Sure Start area. The training has had very positive results including:

- 62 parents have helped their children to learn
- 61 parents have improved their own learning
- 5 parents are actively involved in the Sure Start programme
- 4 parents have moved into employment
- 7 parents have been trained as volunteers
- Supported 4 parents into College

10. Sure Start Newcastle Local Evaluation Plan 04/05

Introduction

The evaluation of a Sure Start Local Programme must provide substantial evidence of the successes and limitations of services and ways of working. This will involve asking the question, 'What are we doing and how well are we doing it?' The answers this provides will shape local activities and policies. To ensure this evidence is both useful and meaningful for the programme a combination of both qualitative and quantitative information is needed. This will involve the use of monitoring information and asking people to share their experiences and opinions.

Establishing a county wide evaluation team will provide a number of benefits for the Staffordshire Sure Start local programmes.

- A part-time individual researcher will act as a contact for the programme, coordinating all programme evaluations, providing research and evaluation advice and support and chairing the evaluation core group meetings.
- The evaluations will be conducted by a team of research professionals with a varied range of expertise.
- Regular meetings will be held between the evaluation team and all of the Staffordshire Sure Start local programmes' individual monitoring teams to share cross county themes and best practice.

Evaluation Core Group

The evaluation will be led by a core group established by the Board. This group should consist of representatives of the programme including parents and front line service providers along with the Programme Manager and the Evaluation Co-ordinator. This core group guides the evaluation from the choice of the topics and questions for the in-depth evaluations right through to the dissemination of findings. The core group is vital to ensure that the evaluation is grounded, contextually relevant and driven by local programme priorities.

Parents' conference

In April 2003 a parent's conference was held at Cannock Chase Early Years and Sure Start Centre. Parents from all of the Sure Start local programmes within Staffordshire were invited. The day consisted of presentations from the Sure Start team and parents, discussion groups and group activities. Parents attending the conference were very positive about the event. The most positively received was the opportunity to meet parents from other programmes and hear about what they had done.

We are now planning to repeat this successful event in May 2004; the agenda will be set by the parents of the Staffordshire Sure Start local programmes, to ensure it meets their needs. It has been suggested that the chief executive and heads of departments of statutory services should be invited to attend a session where parents share their experiences of Sure Start and the impact it has had on their family environment. This session would provide the opportunity for Sure Start parents to have their views heard by key decision makers.

Monitoring progress

This will focus on how the programme is working towards the Public Service (PSA) and Service Delivery (SDA) targets and other locally agreed targets set out within the delivery plan.

These goals are the main focus of the programme:

- Improving social and emotional development
- Improving Health
- Improving Learning
- Strengthening families and communities

To assess the extent to which the programme is achieving these objectives, the evaluation will focus on services and projects working towards these aims and how they are helping to contribute towards particular objectives.

Monitoring data will be fed from the Information/Monitoring Officer into the evaluation. This will ensure that the larger picture of the Sure Start programme is captured, showing what the programme is able to achieve against the overall targets. The individual services and projects that are over-

or under-achieving against the PSA and SDA targets will also be highlighted. This will ensure in-depth evaluations are carried out to assess the reasons for the success or limitations of those services and how they contribute towards those particular objectives.

In-depth evaluation

These evaluations will provide a more detailed account of Sure Start activities and how those involved in them perceive and experience them. The combination of the monitoring data and the in-depth evaluation will provide local programmes with evidence that is essential to support the mainstreaming of Sure Start approaches. It will allow best practice approaches to be shared with other agencies providing evidence for dissemination locally, regionally and nationally, thus publicising the quality of Sure Start Newcastle. Three in-depth evaluations will be carried out per year these will be selected using the monitoring data and in consultation with the core group. These evaluations will focus mainly on services that are over/under achieving against the targets, innovative practice and intensive services offered by the programme that work with small numbers of parents such as one-to-one post natal depression support. These services require in depth case study analysis to highlight their impact. This approach will involve the use of a range of research methods including focus groups, interviews, case studies and observations etc.

Cost-effectiveness

Cost effectiveness evaluations will be carried out to look at the intermediate outcomes of a particular service or project over the short term. This evaluation identifies projects and services that have succeeded in meeting their objectives with economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The cost-effectiveness analysis will allow us to define the objectives of the intervention: identifying and costing all of the inputs, identifying and quantifying all of the outputs to allow for comparisons of costs with outputs. This evaluation will involve the programme's monitoring team and will contribute towards developing their evaluation skills.

11. Recommendations

11.1 Sure Start Newcastle is successfully working towards achieving the PSA and SDA targets. The evidence for this is predominately qualitative. There is a need for more quantitative evidence, this is one of the main objectives for 2004/5 evaluation. A new monitoring system is currently under development and this will provide hard evidence for future planning in the programme.

11.2 Overall the programme received a positive response from the parents who access services; people were pleased with existing services.

11.3 Care should be taken to ensure the planning of a one-off event does not detract from the planning of regular activities.

11.4 Information concerning the success of one-off events should be disseminated to all those involved with Sure Start. Information could be sent out to families that both did and did not attend on the day, to both advertise the success of the day and to thank those that did attend.

11.5 Information should also be sent out to the business organisations which helped with the planning of the day. This ensures that they feel the impact of their input and helps to maintain links with the business community.

11.6 The possibility of training parent volunteers for Home Start may be considered for future families within the Sure Start area although the complexity of the needs of the families would be a determining factor.

11.7 It is important that projects such as the gardening project emphasise to families the benefits of attending on a regular basis. In future the programme needs to encourage families to attend the sessions on a regular basis.

11.8 The programme could consider involving various specialist workers, such as the Speech and Language worker in projects such as the gardening project to enhance the scope and develop the project further.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Home Start Evaluation

Appendix 2 – Wheely Good Fun Day Evaluation

Appendix 3 – Gardening Project Evaluation

Appendix 4 – Child Consultation Record Sheet

Appendix 5 – Parent Training Course Flyer

Sure Start Newcastle

Home Start Evaluation

1. Executive summary

1.1 Background

A contract between Sure Start Newcastle-Under-Lyme and Home-Start Newcastle was formulated during 2002, to recruit a project worker to focus on the Sure Start area. A project worker for Home-Start was appointed in September 2002. Since the contract was formulated many developments have taken place and it was felt that the current position, a year later, was an appropriate time to undertake an evaluation of the progress made.

1.2 Methods

Interviews were chosen as the most appropriate data collection method for this evaluation. This method meant that all clients could give their personal experiences and opinions.

Semi structured interviews were chosen to provide structure whilst allowing any issues that may have arisen to be developed.

Ten interviews were carried out in total, eight with the Home-Start clients, one with the Home-Start project worker and one with the Home-Start Co-ordinator.

1.3 Findings

The project worker appears to be having a considerable impact on the Home-Start clients. Numbers of referrals and families that have been accessed from the Sure Start area have increased since the implementation of the post. All of the Home-Start clients were aware of Sure Start and their services and activities. Some were attending activities and one or two had become directly involved with the scheme.

1.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

To continue to assess future changes and developments that take place. Future evaluations could compare and contrast those clients accessing the Home-Start project worker and those accessing a local volunteer.

2. Background

Sure Start Newcastle covers the five areas of Knutton, Silverdale, Cross Heath, Milehouse and Parksite.

Home-Start provides support for families with a child or children under the age of five. The box below states more specifically the support that a volunteer for Home-Start may provide.

“A Home-Start volunteer will visit you regularly (usually once a week for a couple of hours) and offer:

- **Friendly support** through difficult times for as long as you need help
- **Understanding** that when bringing up children, problems are not unusual
- **Reassurance** that you are not alone
- **A listening ear** and a shoulder to cry on
- **An extra pair of hands** to help you cope with everyday situations
- **Practical help** with activities like playing or story time.”

Prior to the contract between Sure Start Newcastle and Home-Start there were no families within the area that were receiving support. Although Home-Start has a number of volunteers ready to support families the complexity of some of the familial situations meant that it was difficult to place volunteers with the families. Therefore, it was felt to be crucial that a plan was formulated to make contact with local families and to provide them with the support they required. The most appropriate method of approaching this was to recruit a project worker whose position was funded by Sure Start. This is an innovative way of working that has undertaken a different approach to the usual methods of operation. The project worker's post began on the 11th September 2002 and much work has been done in the following year.

3. Aims and objectives

The aim of this evaluation was:

To explore the experiences and perceptions of the Home-Start clients during the first year of the contract.

The objectives of this evaluation were:

- To indicate the number of people from the Sure Start area accessing the Home-Start service.
- To assess Home-Start clients' feelings concerning the service provided.
- To indicate the number of Home-Start clients that are aware of Sure Start and its activities.

4. Methods

Interviews were chosen as the most appropriate data collection method. This was chosen because it allowed participants to reflect on their thoughts and feelings. Semi structured interviews were undertaken, where the main questions are fixed to direct the interview but subsequent questions can be improvised to explore lines of discussion. The structure employed allowed the participant to raise areas that they perceive to be particularly important.

The idea of undertaking an interview was broached with the Home-Start clients to firstly determine whether they would feel comfortable with participating in an interview and subsequently to obtain their permission for the researcher to schedule a time for the interview to take place. Interviews were arranged, using the project worker as a mediator to introduce the evaluator to the interviewee. This was felt to be an important aspect as it verified the researcher as a legitimate person and put the interviewee at ease. This was a crucial aspect of the evaluation, as some of the participants approached may not have felt comfortable with the concept of participating in an interview.

All of the project workers' present clients were contacted to inquire whether they would be willing to participate in an interview. All of the clients agreed to participate in the evaluation. Prior to all interviews being conducted the client was again asked if the present time was suitable for the interview to take place. This was done to respect the changes that occur on a daily basis for some of the families accessing the Home-Start service. Clients were reassured that if this time was not suitable another interview could be scheduled. All interviews were recorded on a digital Dictaphone. The use of a Dictaphone was discussed with the participant prior to conducting the interview. All of the interviews were confidential and the participants were made aware of this and that the Dictaphone files would be kept in password protected files on the researchers Personal Computer and would not be accessed by either of the programmes involved. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and a method of open coding was applied when analysing the data. The themes that were identified were compared and contrasted across all of the transcripts.

Any names that occurred during the evaluation have been omitted when being discussed.

5. Findings

Data information

Table one below shows the number of referrals following the appointment of the project worker in 2002. It can be seen that the number of referrals to Home Start has doubled in the Sure Start area.

Table 1: Area of Newcastle and referrals.

Area	September/March 2003	September/March 2002
Knutton	2	3
Milehouse	3	-
Silverdale	5	2
Parksite	1	-
Cross heath	5	3
Total	16	8

Table two below shows the number of referrals and the number of families supported by the project worker.

Table 2: Referrals

	Twelve month indicator	Actual (six months)
New referrals received	16	16
Families supported by project worker or volunteer	14	10

Responses

There were a number of different areas that emerged from the interviews and these are discussed consecutively. Specific cases have been highlighted within boxes to distinguish particular thoughts that were raised.

Project worker/Coordinator

From the interviews with the project worker and the co-ordinator this particular method of working was perceived as successful, "*it has definitely filled a gap.*" The collaboration between Home-Start and Sure Start was perceived by the project worker to have "*helped the role I play within the family.*" It appeared that a supportive team was crucial to the success of this method of working.

Support

Respondents indicated a number of areas that the project worker provided help with. The purpose of Home-Start is to provide practical support for families to deal with situations that arise on a daily basis. This support was seen to differ for each family and varied according to individual requirements. However simple this support may first appear, the extent to which it the topic was developed by the respondents indicated that the impact of this provision was crucial for helping the families to function.

"She was helping me out with the housework and she was helping me out with the children"

"I know I've got friends, but I can actually talk to 'X' more than I can to friends and it will be confidential."

"Well, she comes round and its just someone to talk to, its someone to, you know. Because I do a lot of different things, I'm never really at home. She sort of helps me because I get upset quite a bit and stuff like that, so she really helps. She was baking with 'N' and doing fun things like that. I mean 'N' thinks the world of her."

"Before, I would never have dreamt of going outside and meeting people like that."

"I've got a few friends now and a mothers group that I go to. Before I had nothing, just her, but now I go out a bit more."

"I think, with being blind, the things that I need from 'X' are different from the thing that other parents need from 'X.' for instance, when we've just been out, 'X's' actually, even though I'm there, she's acted like mum to my child because I can't see them in the soft play area, so she is stretching her job more than really she should do, do you know what I mean. She's taken my children swimming with me because I can't take them swimming. So she has actually gone beyond the actions of duty really. I think its brilliant"

The support provided also seemed to impact on how the respondents felt emotionally. For some this was greater confidence or what appeared to be a feeling of having a person that they could rely on. For some of the respondents this support was related to the achievements of large personal goals or overcoming individual hurdles

"It's made me feel a much better person in myself."

"That thing of not feeling that I'm on my own, that I can turn to her if nobody else...confidence."

"I lost all confidence and now I'm just getting confidence back to go out and be in public. I haven't been out and today when I go out with 'X,' it will be like God, I've been out in Newcastle."

"If it wasn't for 'X' I would be just be sitting in now, not going out doing anything. I think I'd be scared."

"If I'm really depressed, I can talk to her on the phone or she comes out to see me on a Friday so I don't feel as depressed as I used to, but with the other problems I've got at the moment, I do get a bit depressed occasionally, but it does make a difference and it does help a bit."

"I think I've got more confidence in meeting people that I used to ever have."

"Before I used to be in tears all the time. Since Home Start has started with us, they've always been there for me. I feel more confident to go out and tell people what I think then sort of sitting saying, well, I wish I could do this, I wish I could do that."

Something that was discussed by most of the respondents when asked about the service that Home-Start provided was that they did not perceive Home-Start as providing a service. The respondents appeared to see the project worker as a friend and in some cases a member of their family. This implied that the service provision by Home-Start was seamless in operating as a structured organisation whilst appearing to the individual as simply a person that was someone they knew.

For some this was having a person they knew they could trust and rely on while for others the project worker was someone they appeared to perceive as being a family member and fulfilling that role.

"She talks to me, she becomes a friend"

"I find myself talking better about my problems to other people than I do with my family"

"So if we see anyone in Newcastle or if we go across Morrisons to do a bit of shopping and they say who is this with you, we just say its 'X,' a friend, not 'X' from Home Start. If people ask where do you know her from, we tell them. We're not embarrassed."

"Yes, its gone from 'X' being a part of a company, to 'X' being the family friend who comes in, provides that bit of support that we found we needed."

"She's more like a friend than a caller"

Telephone support when visits were not possible and to supplement home visits were also mentioned as being an important aspect to some of the respondents.

"She calls me, if I can't see her because she knows how busy I am. If I can't see her, she always calls me."

"If there's something big, 'X's' rang us up in the evening to see how we've gone on and that's nice – that phone call, that's someone you've had the service from."

"We can just phone them up and ask what we can do about all this lot."

"X's' always there, always there on the other end of the phone."

"Well, what 'X' does for me – she's brilliant. I don't see 'X' as much as I'd like to because I'm always busy, I'm a volunteer. So any time she comes to me is really valuable to me."

For many of the respondents it appeared that the visit by the project worker was something in the week to focus on.

"I look forward to them coming. I look forward to 'X' coming every week."

"I've got someone to talk to."

"I look forward to it, to be honest with you I really do. It's the only thing I do. I really look forward to 'X' coming."

"Just breaks the week up."

Support for the children within the families seemed to be important for the respondents both directly and indirectly. This may mean that the project worker gave the parents greater time to spend with the children or by relieving some of the pressure on that person meant they had a greater ability to focus on the children. More directly, many families discussed how the child enjoyed the time they spent with the project worker and the activities and opportunities to engage in different activities that were provided. The positive impact that this was having on the child was also stated by the families.

"I feel like I've got some of the responsibility lifted"

“She helps me with the housework, takes me where I want to go, we have a chat, so I find it really benefiting. But more when the children are here, because while I’m doing the housework, she’ll look after the children. She’s great with my other daughter, she’ll play games, bring toys out with my daughter.”

“I’ve never felt stressed out when ‘X’s’ been here, but I do feel if it was another day when I’m in a bit of a state, I do cry for it because I haven’t got the help then.”

“We’ve got two older children and in the school holidays, ‘X’ did cooking, made cakes and they enjoyed them. So it was nice support for three of them. Like I say, she’s just like a very good friend. Its difficult for us to think that it’s just a service that’s being provided.”

The personal emphasis incorporated by the project worker was important to the families and appeared to be seen as going beyond simply fulfilling a job role.

“We’ve had two birthdays and she even remembered the children’s birthdays and brought them a card which we think is brilliant.”

“I know that ‘S’ is going go out somewhere that he enjoys, where before it was just depending on friends to pick him up or family to take him out, where I know that I can be responsible for taking ‘S’ out once a week. Do you know what I mean – I’m doing it.”

“The elder two have probably found someone who has got time for them, that was able to stand in the kitchen and listen to them more than I would. I would probably get my hair off with ‘em. ‘F’ was standing on the street corner this morning waiting for her to come down the street. Its just amazing how he has gone. We have had a couple of worrying times and she’s been someone we can phone up to. With me having to have hospital appointment, she has even gone and spoken to the other families she has, and been able to rearrange them

“I can’t paint. And its keeping mess down to a minimum. They are good, but they still make a mess. Where ‘X’ can come and paint with them. So they look forward to ‘X’ coming.”

“She’s brilliant and she loves the kids. I can’t say anything else. Good service. I think she’s brilliant.”

“She cooks with them and that lot. Takes them out, takes them to the park.

“It gives us five minutes peace.”

"She brings toys for them to play with, keeps them amused."

"Its like another adult around, another person he can cuddle and do things with."

"I think he likes her an awful lot because he just goes crazy whenever he sees her."

A particular area that all respondents commented on was the trips that are provided for Home-Start families. This provision appeared to be extremely important for the respondents giving them an opportunity to independently take their children out for the day and to experience time away from the home where they could spend quality time together.

"I went to Llandudno and I went to the trip for Home Start. And I think the trips are really good as well. They've just done a trip the Home Start and I went on that, I loved it, my daughter loved it."

"The trips are really good because you're getting yourself out of the house and getting your children somewhere."

"Yes I know it was only Telford, but we haven't had to rely on my parents of 'D's' parents or family to take us out and get us home. Gave us independence back, because, like I say we've gone from a two car family to, at the moment, a no car family. That day gave us a bit of independence, we were taking the children out – no one else. That's was what we liked about it, wasn't it?"

"The trips have been smashing."

"We went on a trip with them not so long ago which was very nice. It was a nice day out because I couldn't afford to do stuff like that. So it was nice for all of us to go out."

"For people like me, and I know there are some other families, we couldn't, just couldn't, wouldn't be able to do things like that. It was very, very nice, and nice day out. It was brilliant."

The trips were also shown to be important for the family members to have the opportunity to meet and interact with other families.

"Its just nice to go out for the day. Its just nice to be with the other mums and dads."

"And having some fun with the children."

"They go out and come back all excited."

Signposting to other services

Awareness of the project worker of other available services that may be helpful was mentioned by a few clients as being an area that they had experienced. For some advice was important whereas for others it was support to contact professional services for information or to resolve a particular issue.

“Not only her job, she can introduce me to other things, other support that she might not be able to give me.”

“I think if she didn’t know, she would be able to point us in the right direction for somebody that did know.”

“She knows things that I don’t know. She’s helped me a lot. She’s told me about things. I’ve asked her advice about stuff.”

“Its very good because it passes the time for me. I know on a Thursday, ‘S’ will go out. I mean, since ‘X’s’ come I’ve got ‘S’ into nursery as well and she’s helped get ‘S’ into nursery and things like that.”

Sure Start

Some of the questions within this evaluation asked respondents about their awareness of Sure Start and their thoughts about the services and activities they operate. All of the respondents were aware of Sure Start and some were currently accessing the activities. Many had comments to make about the services from their own experiences.

“They sing, play games, they have a drink of juice – really good.”

“I know all that and about the groups that go on. I’ve started going to sticky start with Sure Start.”

“I haven’t done any of the activities at the moment because my other little boys in the nursery, but I did actually say that when it comes along, I’ll actually start doing the activities that are available to get me out. Then maybe there’ll be people I’ll meet there.”

“She said if you don’t fancy going out on your own, just let her know and she’ll go with me.”

“Sure Start though is a good idea, because, as I say, nothing was there when ‘A’ and ‘T’ were young. Its fantastic.”

“So maybe by doing this, keeping the family support going on, it might make the kids better in the future.”

“There’s always something going on, always. There’s trips, there’s activities.”

“I’ve noticed that now I’ve made loads of new friends because I didn’t have nobody before. I’ve made loads of friends now.”

“So its inspired people, it really has, its inspired people to do things.”

“People are getting involved where they would never have done before. And that’s the truth. These people here especially are very very hard to get to, you know, but people are just sort of coming out and doing things now.”

“It made people get involved with things because they just wouldn’t have done before, but now because we’re all friends with each other, they don’t hesitate to come along and help you out.”

“It gets young mums involved.”

“I like just going out. I just like to be out and enjoying and getting the confidence as I need for it all. Without Home-Start and Sure Start, I was just one of these people who just sort of sat in the background and never said anything, but now, since I’ve been with them both...you cant shut me up if I’ve got something to say and I want to get my point over and that.”

“Its helpful, it just good because it gives you something to do. With me being stuck at home 24hrs a day, seven days a week, I can get out, I can meet people, I can do things. It’s a lot more nice and happier to do that than stay at home all the time.”

Positive points

During the conversations with the Home-Start clients many made statements about their thought about Home-Start. These thoughts are shown below.

“Its great. I think it’s a great service”

“They are absolutely brilliant.”

“It’s been an invaluable service.”

“They are just brilliant in everything that they do. It’s just nice that there are organisations out there that support young mums or mums of any age really. Supporting families – its brilliant.”

"I just think they're brilliant, absolutely brilliant. No other word to describe it."

Talk to/listen

Having someone to talk to and to discuss ideas with was indicated to be important for the families. For some families both parents were present and were accessing Home-Start. Emphasis was placed on 'us' having someone to talk to and within one particular family the father felt able to access the service and gain support for himself, rather than as part of the family, *"I can talk to her and she listens."*

"I've got a break and 'X's' coming in and we have a chat"

"You wouldn't believe how nice it is to actually talk to another woman."

"Getting about, support, somebody to talk to."

"She's there to listen to us."

Person

Some of the respondents discussed the importance of the person that was employed to undertake the project workers role. Clearly the person was recognised as being the important aspect of the service provided.

"Its strange having somebody come in and share your home even though it's only a couple of hours every week once a week. You've got to feel right with the person that's coming in to share your home."

"I personally think that Home-Start is about the person that you send out and I can't judge Home Start on what it does because. On what 'X' does there's nothing at all that I would change because she's absolutely brilliant, but Home-Start is all about who you find to send out to you because Home-Start is that person."

"It's a very special person to come and share your home."

"I was a bit nervous at first, about somebody coming in the house especially where my kids are."

"She'd get along well with anyone."

"She's just that kind of person to adapt."

"At first I was very sceptical didn't know much about and was probably worried. Then 'X' came the first week and that was OK. Like I say, it was a bit nerve racking, but since then they're brilliant."

For one particular respondent it was important that they had contact with the same person for each visit.

"Its nice to have someone who's here all the time, the same person.

She's brilliant."

The project worker appeared to fulfil a role that maybe some of the families did not have or provided another person on whom they could rely, which took the pressure off other family members or friends.

"Go shopping. Just little things you'd do with your mother. That's how I see 'X' - someone to tell me what's right or wrong really. Taking me out, doing little things, going out to do shopping, just normal things."

"Its made life a lot better. You're not relying on family as much where we were relying on family all the time."

"X is like a release valve, you know, you can talk to her and she's not going to blow back at you and that's a good thing. When she leaves, she may go out all frustrated, but I'm calm!"

"So I'm not completely on my own, but I could be on my own."

"I haven't got family, so I need somebody."

"They're brilliant. Thank God that I got involved with them. With not having many friends and I've got no family, its just fills the gap that's empty, you know, that tiny little piece that's empty."

"I've got that used to having her around now, she's just the best friend I've got."

Conclusions and recommendations

From the number of clients contacted since the recruitment of the project worker it can be seen that the number of referrals and the number of clients seen by Home-Start has increased.

From the responses from the Home-Start clients the service appears to having an impact in a number of different areas. The support given to clients ranged from having someone to listen, to shopping and for some fulfilling a part of their life that they perceived as unfilled. This enthusiasm of the clients indicates that they appear very pleased with the support they receive from Home-Start and it seems to have a dramatic impact on their everyday lives.

All of the Home-Start clients were aware of Sure Start, with some accessing activities and a few that were directly involved with the project. The project worker attends Sure Start meetings and the information regarding activities appears to be being communicated effectively.

From this evaluation it was clear that each individual client has different needs, many of which are very complex. However, the service provided appears to be impacting to help the clients both directly and indirectly.

It can be recommended that careful monitoring and evaluation continue to ensure the progress of this method of working. It is possible that volunteers may be considered for future families within the Sure Start area that arise if the project worker has many clients at that point although the complexity of the needs of the families would be a determining factor. Future evaluation could involve both Home-Start clients that are accessing the project worker and those that are accessing a local volunteer. This evaluation could include a cost benefit analysis to aid the comparison of the two methods of working. This would allow comparisons and contrasts to be evaluated.

Sure Start Newcastle

Wheely Good Fun Day Evaluation Report

1.Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The 'Wheely Good Fun' Day was a one off event designed and implemented by Sure Start Newcastle. The purpose of this evaluation is to document the proceedings of the day and to investigate the extent to which it aids Sure Start Newcastle to meet its objectives as specified by the national Sure Start Unit.

1.2 Methods

An observational study of the 'Wheely Good Fun' day was undertaken during the summer of 2003. The data was collected using a variety of methods including digital photography to capture what was taking place, and a disposable camera that was given to a family to attempt to obtain their views of the day. Observation notes were taken and semi-structured questions were posed to the adults that attended on the day.

1.3 Findings

The event lasted approximately four hours during one Saturday in August 2003.

A proportionate number of both registered and non-registered families attended the day.

Overall people appeared to have positive thoughts about the event day and indicated that there were benefits for the children of attending such a day.

1.4 Recommendations and Conclusions

The 'Wheely Good Fun' day helps Sure Start Newcastle to meet the following objectives:

Objective 1: Improving Social and Emotional Development

Objective 2: Improving Health

Objective 3: Improving Children's Ability to Learn

Objective 4: Strengthening Families and Communities

The evaluation indicates that the 'Wheely Good Fun' day helps the achievement of all four Sure Start objectives.

This event had a broad spectrum of benefits, encompassing the four Sure Start objectives. For future planning of events the aims and objectives of an event need to be kept at the forefront of all planning and implementing

activities. Care should be taken that a unique event does not detract from the planning of regular activities.

Greater participation in competitions or activities could be achieved by facilitating links with playgroup and toddler groups to design and make the competition entries or costumes for the day.

Information concerning the success of the day should be disseminated to all those involved with Sure Start. Information could be sent out to families that both did and did not attend on the day. This could be used as a basis to advertise the success of the day and to thank those that did attend. It would also publicise the activities of Sure Start to those families not present on the day. Information should also be sent out to the business organisations that helped with the planning of the day. This ensures that they feel the impact of their input and helps to maintain links with the business community.

2. Background

2.1 Sure Start Newcastle covers the five areas of Knutton, Silverdale, Cross Heath, Milehouse and Parksite.

2.2 The 'Wheely Good Fun' day was designed on the basis that the summer break for schools can be very long and it was recognised that many families do not have the opportunity to take a vacation away. In addition, many of the usual term time activities such as play/toddler groups are not active and therefore the event was designed to provide a recreational day for Sure Start families, but including activities that older siblings could enjoy also.

2.3 Planning of the day was undertaken by the Sure Start staff and a core group of parents. The planning meetings created the focus of the day and created ideas for activities and contacts. A detailed risk assessment for the day was undertaken to ensure any hazards had been thought of and the risk minimised.

3. Aims and objectives

3.1 The aim of this evaluation was:

To investigate, using numerical, verbal and visual collection, the impact of the 'Wheely Good Fun' day.

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- To indicate the number of people attending the event.
- To indicate the number of people attending the event that were/were not registered.
- To investigate the extent to which the event aids the achievement of the Sure Start objectives.
- To investigate what the people attending the day thought about the event.
- To show the details of the event using digital photography and a disposable camera.

4. Methods

4.1 Families at the event were approached to answer a few questions concerning their thoughts about the day (Appendix 1). These families were approached on an opportunistic basis and permission was first given before the questions were posed. The responses were noted down for subsequent use. A Dictaphone was not used for two reasons. Firstly, it was felt that it might impinge on the comments that the families would feel able to make and secondly, due to the variety of background noise it was thought that the quality of the recordings may have been affected.

4.2 One family was approached to use a disposable camera during their visit to the event to attempt to obtain an alternate view of the day. Both the adults and the children within the family used the camera to take pictures of what they experienced during the event. Those photographs outlined by a broken blue line in the report are those taken by the family on the day. Permission from the family to use the photographs was obtained before proceeding on the day.

4.3 A digital camera was used to document the different activities taking place.

5. Findings

5.1 In the Newcastle Sure Start area there are approximately 550 families with children under the age of five. Of these around 410 are registered with Sure Start.

On the day (approximate numbers):

Table 1. Attendance numbers

Number of people that attended	150
Number of those attending - registered	100
Number of those attending – not registered	50
Number that registered on the day	2

5.2 These figures indicate that a proportion of people registered with Sure Start attended the fun day event. There were also a number of people that attended on the day that were not registered and a few that registered on the day or took registration forms away to register at a later date. Due to the popularity of the event, for future events precautions may need to be taken to ensure that numbers of Sure Start families attending the event were maintained when compared to members of the public.

~

Objective 1 - Improving Social and Emotional Development

By supporting early bonding between parents, helping families to function and by enabling the early identification and support of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The children were given the opportunity to interact with other children, to share in the activities that were present and to explore new experiences together. One parent said, "*events like this help in preparing children for school*" and "*it lets kids mix with other kids.*"

Children were given choices about where they wanted to go and what activities they wanted to participate in. A parent commented on the benefit of the day being, "*not having to say no when they ask to do something.*" When asked about the day they responded that they "*liked being out and about, with no restrictions on the children*" and that this created, "*freedom for the child*" and made them, "*more independent.*" This indicated an environment that nurtured the development of the family relationship and encouraged bonding between children and carers.

The responses from families and the photographs taken on the day indicate that the event day supports Sure Start Newcastle in its aim to achieve objective one in two ways. Firstly, by facilitating bonding and secondly, by acting as a channel for successful family functioning.

~

Objective 2 – Improving Health

In particular, by supporting parents in caring for their children to promote healthy development before and after birth.

Children were encouraged to bring their bikes along to the event whether to obtain an 'MOT certificate' to enter into the competition or simply to ride and complete the cycling proficiency course. Peddle cars and bikes were available to use and gave the children the chance to obtain a driving license for completing manoeuvres supervised by a staff member. This not only encouraged the children to become involved in a physical activity but also gave them a sense of achievement upon presentation of the driving licence. The 'five-a-day' Community Initiative was present at the event with information and fruit for tasting in order to increase awareness of healthy eating. The provided lunch included a variety of foods and helped to ensure that families had something to eat without feeling pressured to purchase from the vendors present.

At the event was an information post giving advice on using material nappies. This provided parents with an opportunity to obtain information about alternatives to disposable nappies and consequentially, presented an opportunity to support parents to make informed decisions concerning their child's well-being.

The event day was designed with elements that promoted healthy behaviour. The emphasis of the day on wheels and more specifically, bikes, gave the opportunity for outdoor exercise and there was healthy food and healthy eating information available. The responses from families and the photographs taken on the day indicate that the event day supports Sure Start Newcastle in its aim to achieve objective two.

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Objective 3 – Improving Children’s Ability to Learn

In particular, by encouraging high quality learning environments and childcare that promotes early learning, provide stimulating and enjoyable play, improve language skills and ensure early

Remote control cars and the train gave the children a chance to experience activities they may not previously have been presented with. At the event there were opportunities for children to engage in making items of interest. A competition was undertaken to encourage the children to decorate their bicycles and bring them to the event in order to win a prize. Building contractors were on site with colouring packs and a video explaining the dangers to children of playing on building sites. A craft artist facilitated children in making bicycle reflectors, which not only placed an emphasis on learning in the manner of doing but also gave the child something to take home from the event that could encourage greater road safety.

Increasing families’ awareness of road safety was a key aspect of the event with cycle proficiency for the children and car safety for parents/carers. One parent commented on the trading standards display, *“The ‘cut-and-shut’ car was a very fine display – amusing to see. I still can’t really believe it.”*

Representatives from the fire service and the police force attended on the day. Construction site machinery such as diggers were also present at the event, provided by the same organisation giving information on the dangers of building sites to the families.

These photographs taken by a family that attended the event show them enjoying meeting the fire service and the police officers. The photograph on the right, taken by one of the children is particularly interesting as it shows a child’s view of adults, particularly emphasising the height difference between children and adults.

The planning of the event day provided children with the chance to experience a variety of different activities, some of which they may not have experienced before. These aspects indicate that the event day supports Sure Start Newcastle in its aim to achieve objective three.

~

Objective 4 – Strengthening families and communities

The 'Wheely Good Fun' day was designed to encourage fathers to participate in Sure Start activities. A core group of fathers were involved in the planning and preparation of the day by creating ideas, helping the expansion of the event and providing practical expertise. Methods of involving other fathers were considered in order to expand their involvement. The inclusion of the remote control cars appeared to encourage the presence of fathers at the event.

Also of importance was the ability of the event to raise awareness of Sure Start Newcastle. Due to the advertising of the day, families within the Sure Start area attended that were both registered with Sure Start and that were not registered. Therefore, a number of families that attended the event took the opportunity to register with Sure Start on that day increasing their awareness of Sure Start and additional activities. Other families attended from the local community that were not able to register due to the age of their children but these people were welcomed to experience the event. The event provided an opportunity to present the community with an insight into the activities of Sure Start and to emphasise the community based nature of the enterprise. Also of importance, was that it allowed members of all of the areas within the Sure Start Newcastle to mingle and interact with others both from their own area and from other areas. A mother that attended the event because her husband was involved one of the activities said, "*I wish we had something like this in our area, we would love this type of thing.*"

Sure Start Newcastle appears to provide access to activities or events that people perceive to be absent in the area, "*there's nothing else like this.*" Families were aware that areas that were designated as safe for children no longer are, "*parks are unsafe*" and were appreciative of a fun event to attend, that occurred in a controlled environment. A few families indicated their concern about older children creating a disturbance or using unsuitable language.

A crucial aspect of the day for many of the families asked was that the event and all activities were not based on cost, "*being free was a definite thing.*" Within the complex families were provided with access to all of the events occurring on the day with freedom to explore as they wished. Lunch was

provided for all those that attended with no charge incurred. Tickets were given out during the day to families for free ice creams from the vendor on the site.

The 'Wheely Good Fun' day gave Sure Start Newcastle an opportunity to formulate links with and awareness among the business community of Sure Start and its operations. A number of organisations gave advice, information and gifts to be distributed on the day. This type of networking extends community awareness of Sure Start and provides a basis for future support from the business community.

Involving families, particularly fathers, on the day was a specific priority with parents involved in the planning, organisation and running of the day. Parents were free to explore the event as they wished and were encouraged to simply enjoy the day without any pressures. This emphasis on participation at all stages supports Sure Start Newcastle in its aim to achieve objective four.

~

6. Recommendations and Conclusions

- Due to the popularity of the event, for future events precautions may need to be taken to ensure that numbers of Sure Start families attending the event were maintained when compared to members of the public.
- The evaluation indicates that the 'Wheely Good Fun' day supports the achievement of all four Sure Start objectives.

Objective 1: Improving Social and Emotional Development

Objective 2: Improving Health

Objective 3: Improving Children's Ability to Learn

Objective 4: Strengthening Families and Communities

- For future planning of events, the aims and objectives of an event need to be kept at the forefront of all planning and implementing activities. Care should be taken that a unique event does not detract from the planning of regular activities.
- Greater participation in competitions or activities could be achieved by facilitating links with playgroup and toddler groups to design and make the competition entries or costumes for the day.
- Information concerning the success of the day should be disseminated to all those involved with Sure Start. Information could be sent out to families that both did and did not attend on the day. This could be used as a basis to advertise the success of the day and to thank those that did attend. It would also publicise the activities of Sure Start to those families not present on the day. Information should also be sent out to the business organisations that helped with the planning of the day. This ensures that they feel the impact of their input and helps to maintain links with the business community.

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Sure Start Newcastle

'See Us Grow' Garden Project Report

1.Executive Summary

1.1Background

The 'See us grow' project was a series of sessions designed and implemented by Sure Start Newcastle. As this was the first programme of events it was felt that it would be beneficial to reflect on the changes that have occurred during the year. The purpose of this evaluation is to explore the impact of the garden sessions on the families involved.

1.2Methods

An observational study of the gardening sessions was undertaken during the summer of 2003. The data was collected using a variety of methods including digital photography to capture what was taking place, disposable cameras that were given to the families that attended to attempt to obtain their views of the day. In addition, observation notes were taken during the sessions.

1.3 Recommendations and conclusions

The 'See Us Grow' project helps Sure Start Newcastle in its aim to meet the following objectives.

Objective 1: Improving Social and Emotional Development

Objective 2: Improving Health

Objective 3: Improving Children's Ability to Learn

Objective 4: Strengthening Families and Communities

The evaluation indicates that the 'See Us Grow' project helps the aim to achieve all of the Sure Start objectives.

2. Background

1.3 Sure Start Newcastle covers the areas of Knutton, Silverdale, Cross Heath, Milehouse and Parksite.

1.1 The 'See Us Grow' project was designed to introduce families to the benefits of spending time in the garden.

Planning of the events was undertaken by the Sure Start staff. Risk assessments were undertaken and a list of rules created to ensure that everyone that attended the sessions was aware of the dangers, particularly for children, of being in the garden.

3. Aims and objectives

3.1 The aim of this evaluation was:

To investigate using the collection of visual and verbal data, the impact of the 'See Us Grow' project.

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- To document the progress of the 'See Us Grow' project since its introduction.
- To assess the impact of the 'See Us Grow' project is having with regard to the Sure Start objectives listed below:

Objective 1: Improving Social and Emotional Development

Objective 2: Improving Health

Objective 3: Improving Children's Ability to Learn

Objective 4: Strengthening Families and Communities

4. Methods

This evaluation was planned during July 2003 and undertaken during August and September 2003. Discussions were undertaken with Sure Start Newcastle concerning the structure and approach of the garden sessions. A visit was taken to the garden, to understand the environment in which the evaluation would be taking place. The garden is situated at the Newcastle Day Services site located within the Sure Start area. The gardening sessions took place on a Sunday afternoon as this was determined by the programme to have been most suitable for the families. The researcher attended two of these sessions when completing the evaluation. The number of families that attended the sessions ranged from four to twenty.

During the evaluation sessions, a digital camera was used to take images and to document the different activities that were taking place. Permission from the parents was obtained before taking images of the children. Families that attended the garden sessions were also approached and asked if they would help their children to take images of the garden. The emphasis was placed on the adult facilitating the child to use the camera, however parents were not restricted from taking photographs of their own children if they wished to do so.

Observation notes were taken during the sessions to aid the documentation of the events that occurred during the sessions. A non-participatory observation method was chosen to provide information on the sessions whilst restricting the impact of researcher during the sessions. The observation focused on the children and their involvement within the activities and the interaction between

the children and parents. A digital Dictaphone was used to record some of the comments that were made during the sessions.

These different methods of evaluation were brought together to complete the evaluation report.

5. Findings

The Sure Start 'See Us Grow' Project is part of the Community Growing and Gardening Project and is a partnership between; Newcastle Sure Start, Newcastle Day Services, Lower Milehouse C.D. Association and the Directorate of Health Promotion.

The area available for the garden to be situated was untouched and consequentially much work had to be undertaken to prepare the ground to be used as a garden. Young people from the local community were recruited to help to provide a basis for garden so that further preparatory work could be undertaken. Following this families were encouraged to become involved to begin the construction of the poly tunnel and the organisation of the materials required for the garden.

Shortly after the preparatory work had been completed families were asked to complete a response sheet to indicate which day of the week and which time would be most suitable for them to attend. From the response sheets it was shown that one Sunday every month was most suitable for families to attend and as a consequence this time was chosen. Each session lasted approximately two hours and involved a variety of activities. A final session during September was undertaken indoors to culminate the summer activities. A plan was formulated to consider all of the aspects that should provide the basis for the ethos within the garden.

"We believe gardens are simply wonderful, and every 3 year old should have the chance to,

See how tomatoes turn red
Pop a pea pod...and eat the peas
Feel the soft lining of a broad bean pod
Plant a seed and help it grow
Look at a ladybird – watch a worm
Measure a sunflower that grows bigger than you
Carry a marrow!
Snip a bunch of sweet peas
Collect up newly dug potatoes
Count as one shallot turns into ten
And **be happy** outdoors."

At the end of each gardening session the fruit and vegetables that had been harvested during that session were distributed to the families that attended on that day. This was done to encourage the use of the vegetables for cooking at home and to indicate how what was grown in the garden could be transferred once the families had left the garden and returned home.

The children were encouraged to wash their hands after having been in the garden before sitting to have a drink. Some of the children decided to wash the courgettes in the bucket.

The environment

Children and families were encouraged to attend the garden on a regular basis in order to be able to appreciate the changes that had occurred and to experience the different activities as the garden developed. Children were encouraged to become involved at all stages within the garden and when they indicated particular enthusiasm for a task, they were encouraged to continue. This flexible environment gave the opportunity for children to feel supported to continue rather than being pressured to change to a different activity. One particular child during the sessions particularly enjoyed using the watering can and was facilitated to continue that activity.

The sessions in the garden reflected the developments that were occurring in the garden at that time. The activities originated from the changes occurring, such as digging or picking when crops had matured and sowing when there was free ground.

All members of the family were encouraged to become involved and to help the children with the activities within the garden. This inclusive approach not only allowed all family members to enjoy the garden but also gave more direct and individual support for children. In addition, of importance was the opportunity for familial interaction, facilitating adult family members to spend quality time with the children in an environment that encouraged learning and development.

Often activities were completed by the whole group and led by the garden leader. On some occasions, children were given tasks that they could complete independently in order to give the child a sense of accomplishment. This was aided by the families giving support and encouragement for completing tasks. The photo below shows one child proudly having counted twenty potatoes into the wheelbarrow.

The use of child friendly tools within the garden gave the children the chance to be directly involved in the gardening tasks whilst not having to struggle with adult sized tools. This gave them the autonomy to do things themselves whilst also ensuring that safety remained a priority.

Towards the end of the summer activities, an indoor session was undertaken including many aspects from the garden. This event provided an original conclusion to the series of gardening days. During this session information was given about the developments occurring in the garden keeping families aware of changes for the future.

During this session a number of different activities were available for the children to participate in. A particular emphasis was placed on bee keeping and the products from bee keeping. An unused beehive was on show for children to look at, as was the protective clothing used to ensure safety when handling the bees. Honey taken from the bees was available for the children to siphon into small jars to take home. Children were encouraged to make candles with the help of a childcare worker using the beeswax. Vegetables from the garden were on display and

Homemade jams were available for tasting and the Five-a-Day initiative was present with various fruit to taste and inform people of the benefits of eating five pieces of fruit a day. An apple press was used to make fresh apple juice which people were invited to taste. The press was used to show the families the process of making the juice and one child found the process particularly interesting and was involved in the pressing and later the distributing of the juice.

Throughout the garden sessions the children were given the opportunity to learn new skills and to develop existing skills. Learning, using the garden, was an important part of the sessions, with emphasis placed on direct involvement by the children. Emphasis was placed on making the children aware of all of the things around them, encouraging the use of all sensory aspects of the garden. Children were encouraged to handle the fruit and vegetables. Colours and changes in colours were highlighted, textures of the skins of fruit were emphasised and the smell of herbs and flowers were brought to the attention of the children. The size and shape of the fruit and vegetables were of particular interest to the children, and they appeared to find the oversized courgettes fun and amusing.

The involvement of the whole family meant that children always had support to carry out tasks and to try new things. This allowed the children to retain their independence and to complete the activities whilst feeling secure that they were supported during any tasks they may have felt they needed help.

Continuity from one session to another was an important aspect of the garden sessions. This helped to show the children the changes that were occurring in the garden as the fruit and vegetables developed. During one session children planted their own sunflowers and were able to clearly see the change that had occurred since they had last visited.

The project not only introduced tasks that challenged the children physically but also tasks that required control and accuracy. These capabilities can be seen to have transference to all other aspects of life. For some children the garden provided access not simply to a garden but to a wide-open space in

which they could run and play safely. The activities also gave the children the responsibility for looking after the plants, tending to them, and harvesting.

Objective 1 – Improving Social and Emotional Development

By supporting early bonding between parents and their children, helping families to function and by enabling the early identification and support of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The garden project provided the opportunity for children to interact and to share new experiences together. The garden can be seen to provide an interesting and stimulating environment in which families can come together and spend quality time away from the home. Children or families with particular difficulties or requirements were facilitated to use the garden. Being open plan garden the plot is easily accessible for children and adults. Fully qualified members of staff attended the groups to support the families and to help the children during different activities. The staff also gave support to help parents interact with their children when particular barriers, such as physical or attention difficulties were present.

Children were encouraged to work together and to complete tasks within groups. At other times the children were eager to complete tasks independently and this enthusiasm was encouraged to proper a sense of personal achievement and enjoyment.

One older child was asked to count twenty potatoes into his wheelbarrow and as the photo below shows he proudly completed the task on his own. Many of the activities within the garden allowed flexibility to meet the needs of individual children. Children of different ages attended the garden and the activities were used to address the different ages and abilities.

Objective 2 – improving health

In particular, by supporting parents in caring for their children to promote healthy development before and after birth.

The 'see us grow' project provides an opportunity for parents to care for their children in a variety of ways such as furthering knowledge or building relationships. The support and guidance is available to both the children and the family, including parents and siblings.

The families through the project have a safe environment in which to play and learn. This can directly impact on the health of the children as they are physically active and also has the ability to impact on the mental health of those involved as it provides access to facilities not previously available and an opportunity to interact away from the home.

The project introduced fruit and vegetables that may have been new to the children and may have increased awareness and encouraged the children to try what they had seen grow.

Objective 3 – Improving Children's Ability to learn

In particular, by encouraging high quality learning environments and childcare that promote early learning, provide stimulating and enjoyable play, improve language skills and ensure early identification and support of children with special needs.

The project can facilitate literacy, numeracy and sensory-based learning, whilst being an exciting activity for children to participate in. Of importance to the project is encouraging families to attend the garden on a regular basis so that the children can observe the changes that have taken place in the garden since their last visit. The children can also observe how plants grow and what they look like when they are harvested and compare this to what they observe when they go to the supermarket or at home.

The project has included a variety of different activities, both indoors and outdoors and using a number of different activities from planting seeds to tasting honey. Children were supported to try different activities and tasks. Learning could be seen to be both direct and indirectly from the undertaking and participating of different activities.

Objective 4 – Strengthening Families and Communities

In particular, by involving families in building the community's capacity to sustain the programme and thereby create pathways out of poverty.

Many different people and agencies are involved with the garden project. As the 'See Us Grow' project is a part of the Community Growing and Gardening Project a number of different agencies have contributed to different aspects of the garden. This collaboration with the community is important for formulating links and sustaining projects such as this. Sure Start Newcastle involved a number of different people from the community to be involved with the project. As was shown previously in this report, a number of young people were recruited to help to prepare the garden to be used. Local families were involved in much of the preparation of the garden and later in encouraging their children and families to enjoy the garden. Parents were also involved in carrying out a detailed risk assessment to ensure the safety of those involved. Ancillary learning about areas such as sunburn and insect bites was also included in the preparation. All members of the family were encouraged to attend with the children during activities and as the photographs show older siblings and grandparents took the opportunity to become involved. Childcare staff were also involved in the project to facilitate families.

6. Discussion and recommendations

The first objective of this evaluation was to document the progress of the project since its introduction. The 'See Us Grow' garden project was began this year and many developments have taken place since the idea for the project was formulated. Newcastle Sure Start has worked effectively with the other agencies involved to share the garden and to contribute fairly to its development. Through documenting what has taken place during the garden sessions the opportunities for supporting and encouraging families in a variety of ways can be seen.

This evaluation indicates that the 'See Us Grow' garden project supports Sure Start Newcastle in its aim to meet the following objectives:

- Objective One: Improving Social and Emotional Development
- Objective Two: Improving Health
- Objective Three: Improving Children's Ability to Learn
- Objective Four: Strengthening Families and Communities

During its first year of implementation many changes and impacts can be seen to have occurred. The 'See Us Grow' project appears to be helping Sure Start Newcastle to achieve the objectives stated above. Many changes are also planned with the collaboration of the other partners involved in the project. These would hopefully help to extend the project in future years.

During the period when little activity can take place in the garden it may be possible to inform Sure Start families of the progress of the garden. Evaluation and monitoring information could be used to increase awareness of the project. This may also be important whilst the developments take place in the garden, which may prevent the garden from being used.

From this evaluation it appears that an important consideration is emphasising to families the benefits of attending the garden on a regular basis. It may be possible that more could be done in the following year to encourage families to attend the sessions on a regular basis.

Specialist workers, such as the Speech and Language worker have been consulted to enhance the project but it may be possible to increase the involvement of these specialist workers for future garden activities. This could expand and develop the project further. Using this specialist knowledge may help to continue parents thinking about issues raised during the garden sessions when they return back home. For example, information could be given with the vegetables that are taken home regarding activities related to gardening that could be carried out by the families when they return home. Families may be encouraged to create or try new recipes using the garden vegetables. The use of the garden could also be extended during summer

evenings to incorporate a form of entertainment or activities to publicise the use of the garden and its facilities.

Child consultation Record Sheet

- **Stage 1: Choosing the Sample**

Choose approximately 7 children by asking them who would like to be involved in the project, with the help of the staff (who are familiar with the children).

Need to think about splitting the group by gender or by friend groups e.g. best friends. Will need to go with what works with the children chosen.

- **Stage 2: Discussion with the Children**

Explain to the children that we would like to know what they like and don't like to do when at nursery, and so ask them if they could they help us by telling us what is important to them at nursery and what are the things they don't like about nursery.

We want to understand their daily routine.

Could ask them to describe what things they would tell a new child at the nursery – best / worst things about the nursery.

Explain to the children that we would like them to show us what they like and don't like to do by a variety of methods; they can tell us; show us by taking us to the places they like/dislike; take pictures with cameras; make pictures / symbolic maps.

The **aim of the first stage** is to start to build a rapport with the children and get them thinking and telling us about their routines and likes / dislikes. By asking them about their daily routine, this will highlight to us the things they remember and therefore what stands out in their mind as a major part of childcare, indicating to us what may be important and can also lead to further discussion.

Questions asked of parents as used by Clark & Moss (2001), these can be adapted to be used with children:

What would be a good day for you in the nursery?

What do you think would be a bad day in the nursery?

What do you like playing with in the nursery? (Lancaster 2003).

Basic questions for children e.g. what do you like about this? Which do you prefer? Not why questions (Sweeney 2003).

Other questions for children:

Favourite activities? Indoors? Outdoors?

Activities don't like to do? Indoors? Outdoors?

What is most important for the children at nursery?

What do grown ups do at the nursery? What should grown ups do?

- **Stage 3: Creating Pictures**

The initial discussion will have refreshed the children's memories about their likes / dislikes of the nursery and therefore will prepare them for creating pictures. The children will be provided with a variety of arts and crafts materials and will be asked to create pictures / models to illustrate what they like / don't like at nursery – activities / areas / people etc.

- **Stage 4: Child Led Tour**

The children will be asked to take the researchers on a tour of the nursery showing us various areas/activities they feel are important and therefore wish to highlight to us. Each child on the tour will be given a disposable camera and will be asked to take pictures as they lead the tour. Need to work with each child to show them how to use the camera.

Ask the children about the photo's they had taken – what did they see? What did they like or dislike about something? What happened? Children's comments will be recorded. Can ask them what would they like to show Mummy & Daddy about their nursery? (Lancaster 2003).

- **Stage 5: Creation of Symbolic Maps and Child Consultation**

The researchers will return to the childcare setting and will ask the children to choose the pictures / photographs that they want to include on their symbolic maps. At this stage it is important to listen to the children as they describe and explain their choices of pictures in order for the researchers to understand what is important to the children within childcare settings

(Clark & Moss 2001). The session will be tape-recorded and statements / quotations from the children will be noted alongside their pictures.

- **Stage 6: Staff Consultation**

Need to ask key workers whether they consult with the children for their ideas on activities/setting (Lancaster 2003).

Ask staff what the children prefer to play with / what are their favourite areas within the childcare settings / favourite activities / least liked activities – areas etc. and why? Male / female dominated activities / areas?

Could use the table to calculate the number of times the categories are mentioned e.g. use of bar gates.

The first three columns (initial discussion, picture drawing, tour & cameras,), the number of children talking about these categories is recorded – for picture drawing this is recording the object of each picture, this may include two different things e.g. playing outside and friends. The third category is observational and asking the children what they are taking photos of, but this is difficult to follow when there are 7 children running in different directions. For the fourth column (symbolic maps & child consultation), the children are asked to pick their 10 favourite pictures, their 10 reasons for choosing the pictures will be recorded in this column on the table. For the last column (staff consultation) the key worker(s) will be asked the children's favourite activities and will be recorded on the sheet.

During the consultation process where the children are actually making symbolic maps more detailed information can be collected, via field notes and quotations from the children.

P/O 1794438 Consultancy & training: Consumers as researchers

Sure Start Detectives: Parents as researchers training programme

By Dr Elizabeth Boath & Ali Spender

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SureStart Detectives: Parents as researchers training programme

The sessions have been used to train SureStart parents and staff in basic research methods and each group has been encouraged to devise a research project or evaluation, in conjunction with SureStart staff that is appropriate to their local needs. For example, the Burton group revised an existing summer activities questionnaire, and all groups are currently considering options, such as why more families do not attend SureStart events.

The training consists of face-to-face interactive workshops, lectures and small group work and is tailored to the individual needs of each cohort. Each group has sessions of consultancy time that they can draw on when required to support the research / evaluation that they choose. This is currently outstanding for all cohorts. An outline of the training sessions is shown below.

Introduction to research and critical appraisal

What it is? Who does it? How do they do it? Where is it done? The research process. Investigating the research of others and assessing the quality of research that informs the way services are delivered.

Literature searching, research questions, and developing a research protocol *Reviewing and defining the topic area, establishing a manageable research/evaluation question.*

Sampling

Selecting who is to be researched, issues in selection and generalisability.

Data collection, interviews

What are they? Why use them? Best practice for interviews.

Data collection, focus groups

What are they? Why use them? Best practice for focus groups.

Research / evaluation project support

Time set aside to support individual trainees in their own projects.

Data collection, questionnaires

What are they? Why use them? Best practice for questionnaires.

Data analysis

An introduction to the more common analysis techniques for the types of data collected via questionnaires, interviews and focus groups.

Dissemination

Report write-up and publicising findings.

Ethics

Ethical considerations in research, applying for ethical approval.

Research / evaluation project support

Time set aside to support individual trainees in their own projects.

Programme summary

A round up of skills covered during the programme

Recruitment of participants

In order to facilitate recruitment, a flyer was developed by AS and EB in conjunction with SureStart staff and parents. The flyer is shown in Appendix 1. This was placed in SureStart venues and included in SureStart Newsletters, mail shots and handed out to parents. SureStart staff also telephoned and approached individuals who they felt would be interested in attending the group.

Where & when the course is running

The 'SureStart Detectives: Consumers as Researchers' course is currently ongoing in Burton, Cannock and Newcastle. The training sessions will run during the following periods.

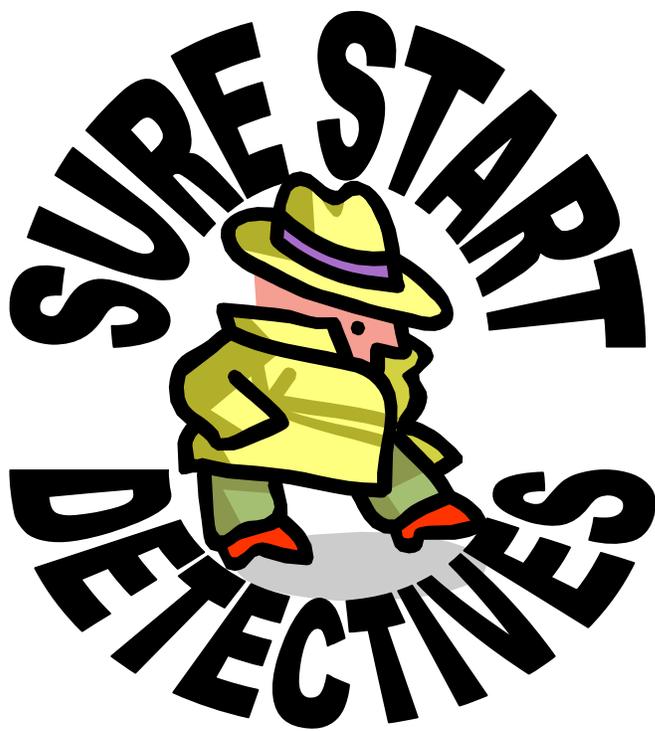
- Burton runs from 29th Sept 2003 through to 29th January 2004.
- Cannock runs from 6th Feb 2004 to 6th April.
- Newcastle runs from 23rd Feb 2004 to 10th May 2004.

Evaluation of the training

Participants will be asked to complete an evaluation form at the final training session. The evaluation form is shown in Appendix 2. This evaluation is currently in progress.

In addition participants have been asked to complete a Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire the first and final teaching sessions. Data collection is currently ongoing.

PARENTS WE NEED YOU!



A group of parents and Sure Start staff and volunteers are meeting on a 10 week course to learn how to get their views and the views of others heard.

The course will help them become 'detectives' who will seek out and research important

The course is run by two researchers from Staffordshire University, Liz Boath and Ali Spender.

Liz and Ali will talk about different ways that research can be carried out, demonstrate the ideal ways to do a research project and help the Sure Start 'detectives' start up a project.

Course Feedback Form

We'd really like to hear your views about how you found the course. This information will help us plan courses that will be most helpful and useful to others in the future.

What have you found most useful about the course?

What have you found least useful about the course?

Can you name three things you've found out whilst on the course that you didn't know before?

1.

.....

2.

.....

3.

.....

Can you think of anything that wasn't covered on the course that you think would have been useful?

Do you think the venue of the course was appropriate and convenient?
(If no - please can you say why)

Were the refreshments OK? (If no - please can you say why)