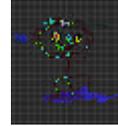


**SureStart**

Seaforth & Bootle



Local  
Programme

**Independent Evaluation of  
SureStart Sefton Local Programme**

**(Wave 3) End of Year One**

**Seaforth & Bootle**

**For the attention of:  
The SureStart Wave 3 Partnership Group**

**Created by**

**Alexandra Upton , Teresa Wilde,  
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Katherine Taylor**

**September 2003**

**SureStart**  
Local Programme  
Wave 3 – Seaforth & Bootle  
**End of Year One Evaluation**

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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

This section presents an overview of the background to this research project. It begins by providing an outline of the government policies that have shaped the SureStart Programmes, since their introduction in early 1999. This is followed by a description of the SureStart Local Programme (Wave 3) for Bootle and Seaforth in Sefton, Merseyside. Finally, the introduction outlines the research objectives and the structure of the report.

#### **1.1.1 Policy Background**

The 'Sure Start' initiative was first developed in 1997, during New Labour's first term of Government. The aim of the initiative was to improve the delivery of public services, which, at the time were viewed by the new Government as ineffective, underfunded and fragmented following three terms of Conservative Government.

The Prime Minister opened his term of office with a speech that pledged to 'make Britain a better place to live' and in the 1997 comprehensive spending review it was first outlined how this was going to be achieved.

Improvements in the delivery of public services for those living in disadvantaged areas, was thought to be the key priority and in particular young children under the age of 4 were highlighted. The rationale behind reform and investment was that the reason many UK children were falling behind even before they had reached school, was due to the inadequate provision of early services to support young children and their families.

By investing in early childhood development, the government aimed to make a difference in the most disadvantaged areas of the UK and increase the lifetime opportunities that were available to the children who came from such areas. Through SureStart they outlined how they wanted to work with parents and parents-to-be by providing better access to:

- Family support
- Advice on nurturing
- Health services
- Early learning

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Specifically, the over-riding aim of SureStart was to:-

**“work with parents-to-be, parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children – particularly those who are disadvantaged – so that they can flourish at home and when they get to school, and thereby break the cycle of disadvantage for the current generation of young people”**

Clear objectives and targets were set so that when it came to evaluating SureStart, successes would be measurable. The objectives and targets set were outlined as below:

**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”**

Target

To reduce by 20% the proportion of children aged 0-3 in the SureStart areas who are re-registered within the space of 12 months on the child protection register by 2004.

**Objective 2: improving health**

**“By supporting parents in caring for their children to promote healthy development before and after birth”**

Target

To reduce the number of women smoking during pregnancy by 10% in the SureStart areas.

**Objective 3: improving children's ability to learn**

**“By encouraging high quality 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”**

Target

To reduce the number of children with speech and language problems requiring specialist intervention by the age of 4 by 5%.

**Objective 4: strengthening families and communities**

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**“By involving families in building the community's capacity to sustain the programme and thereby create pathways out of poverty”**

Target

To reduce by 2004 the number of 0-3 year olds in the SureStart areas who are living in households where no one is working by 12%.

The government thought that the long-term impacts of SureStart would be far reaching and potentially it would:

- Improve physical and emotional development
- Improve performance at school
- Reduce truancy
- Reduce ill-health
- Reduce teenage pregnancy
- Reduce the risk of unemployment
- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Reduce drug abuse
- Reduce crime.

The introduction of SureStart meant that government departments were no longer couched within their own boundaries and for the first time 13 departments began to work together. The running costs of the SureStart Unit were set against the DfES and joint responsibility was given to the Minister of State for Public Health and the Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

Trailblazers, as the first 'Wave' of Local Programmes were known, began in 1999 and initial investments were to fund 250 local programmes over a three-year period. Each Local Programme was set to serve an average of 400-800 children, future Programmes would be rolled out in Waves and each Wave was estimated as having around 60-70 Programmes.

Actual changes in the provision of services, within SureStart catchment areas, meant that:

- Every family with a new born baby would receive a home visit within two months of birth, during which details of the services and support available would be outlined
- Local services would work together in the interests of families and children
- Better access to a range of early support systems would be available through toddler groups, toy libraries, family nurturing, volunteer support schemes and so on.

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Over time subsequent changes were made including:

The Comprehensive Spending Review, 2000, saw the Government outline further investments:

- The number of Programmes that would be up and running by 2004 was increased from 250 to 500 and a revised investment was set at over £500 million. They believed that this would provide 33% of the UK's poorest children, as opposed to the 18% that the previous investments would have supported.
- In addition, identified pockets of deprivation in some rural areas were to be given funding and the unique problems of providing services to those who were isolated would hopefully be addressed.

Progress to date was reported on in the pre-budget report of November 2002 and was highlighted as below:

- 430 Local Programmes had been announced at the time of publishing and of these, over 200 were operational.
- They were on target to reach the set 500 Programmes and it was estimated that over 400,000 children, which was approximately one third of all children living in poverty in the UK would be reached.
- An additional 20 Programmes would be introduced to provide personal, co-ordinated support for pregnant teenagers and teenage parents to help in reducing the conception rates among under 18's by 50% by 2010

The Comprehensive Spending Review of 2002 brought about the following:

- Changes were made to existing floor targets which meant that all fully operational Programmes were to achieve by 2005-2006:
  - Increases in the proportion of young children aged 0-5 with normal levels of personal, social and emotional development for their age
  - A 6 percentage point reduction in the proportion of mothers who continue to smoke during pregnancy
  - An increase in the proportion of children having normal levels of communication, language and literacy at the end of the Foundation Stage
  - An increase in the proportion of young children with satisfactory speech and language development at age 2 years
  - A 12% reduction in the proportion of young children living in households where no one is working

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To support Local Programmes in the delivery of services, a number of service agreement documents were produced. Furthermore, a number of guidelines and additional supporting materials were made available. These are listed below together with web-page links to these documents:

- Sure Start: Guidance on Local Evaluation, August 2000  
[www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp](http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp)
- Sure Start: a guide to planning and delivering your programme, Summer 2002  
[www.surestart.gov.uk/publications/guidance/](http://www.surestart.gov.uk/publications/guidance/)
- The Involvement of Parents and Carers in Sure Start Local Evaluations, February 2003  
[www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp](http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp)
- Conducting Ethical Research, April 2002  
[www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp](http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp)
- Getting Started with a local Sure Start evaluation, April 2002  
[www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp](http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp)
- Support to Local Evaluations Methodological and Progress Report, September 2001  
[www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp](http://www.ness.bbk.ac.uk/guidance.asp)
- Sure Start for all: Guidance on involving minority ethnic children and families  
[www.surestart.gov.uk/publications/guidance/](http://www.surestart.gov.uk/publications/guidance/)
- Sure Start: Promoting Speech and Language Development – Guidance for Sure Start programmes  
[www.surestart.gov.uk/publications/guidance/](http://www.surestart.gov.uk/publications/guidance/)

### **Key Principles of SureStart**

Further to the aims and objectives of SureStart, as set out above all SureStart programmes were expected to adhere to a set of principles, these included:

- Co-ordinate, streamline and add value to existing services in the SureStart area
- Involve parents, grandparents and other carers in ways that build on their existing strengths
- Avoid stigma by ensuring that all local families are able to use SureStart services
- Ensure lasting support by linking SureStart to services for older children
- Be culturally appropriate and sensitive to particular needs

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Local Programmes were also responsible for the recording of monitoring data, as set by the National SureStart Unit and for ensuring the production of a number of evaluations at pre determined key moments (see research objectives, page 12)

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## **1.1.2 Local context background**

### **Geographical information**

The borough of Sefton, Merseyside includes 22 miles of coast between the rivers of Mersey and Ribble and is bounded to the west by the Irish Sea. From north to south, the borough extends some 20 miles; whilst west to east it is 7 miles. Neighbouring authorities to Sefton are Liverpool, Knowsley and West Lancashire.

There are areas of extreme socio-economic disadvantage in Sefton, which are often hidden within borough-wide average figures because some areas of Sefton are also very popular. These include:

- commuter settlement areas
- seaside resorts
- nature reserves
- extensive agricultural areas.

### **The SureStart 'catchment' area**

The Local Programme Wave 3 catchment area includes **Seaforth** and parts of **Bootle**, including the Knowsley Road, Marsh Lane and Peel Road areas. The ward areas covered include parts of Linacre and Church wards. The total population of the area, at the onset of the Wave 3 Programme stood at 9044 and this included 746 children under the age of 4 years<sup>1</sup>

Located in South Sefton, the catchment area was classed as an area of multiple deprivations. There were high levels of social isolation, poor speech and language development amongst pre-school children, a large number of young parents and a higher than average proportion of families in contact with Social Services.

Unemployment in Linacre was set at 5 times the national average<sup>2</sup> and within the postcode L20, which covers approximately 50% of the catchment area, there was the lowest household income of any postcode district in the UK<sup>3</sup>

Other regeneration programmes established in the area included:

- Single Regeneration Budget
- Pathways (European Objective One)
- Health Action Zone (HAZ)
- City Challenge

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<sup>1</sup> Data source, Sefton Health Authority 1991

<sup>2</sup> Data source, OND April 2000

<sup>3</sup> Data source, CACI Paycheck Data 1999

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- Bootle Maritime City Challenge
- Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
- Education Action Zones

**The Partnership Group**

A number of different agencies are represented on the Local Programme Partnership Group, including:

- South Sefton Primary Care Trust (PCT)
- Sefton EYDCP
- Local Parents/Carers
- Sefton LEA
- Home Start South Sefton
- Venus (on behalf of the borough-wide Family Support Forum)
- The Bridge (on behalf of the borough-wide Family Support Forum)
- Sefton Council for Voluntary Services
- Sefton Social Services
- Jobcentre Plus

The accountable body for the SureStart Wave 3 Programme for Seaforth and Bootle was appointed to **Sefton MBC**, whilst, the lead agency was appointed to **Sefton Council for Voluntary Services**.

**Deciding local priorities, targets and Programme activities**

During November 2000 consultations took place to identify the following areas as priorities for the SureStart Wave 3 Programme:

- Ante-natal and post-birth support
- Co-ordinated home visiting services
- Information and support services for families (including support around emotional and behavioural problems, practical support and improved information about local services)
- Access to affordable and quality childcare facilities
- Access to good quality indoor and outdoor play opportunities
- Support for families with children with special needs

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## **1.2 Research objectives**

The aim of the research is to assess:

- Progress towards SureStart PSA and SDA targets
- Cross-cutting issues e.g. how well the Programme is working in practice

In terms of assessing how well the Programme is working in practice the evaluation assesses how well each of the five priority areas for action, as outlined below, are being addressed:

- Support for Parents in the Home
- One-Stop Parents Centre
- Early Education, Childcare and Play Development
- Outdoor Play and Recreation
- Support for Families with Special/Additional Needs

In order to:

- Understand how the Programme and services are performing
- Keep track of progress against targets and objectives
- Make changes to the Programme and ensure continual improvement
- Influence the delivery of mainstream services
- Identify good practice

## **1.3 Structure of the Report**

The findings of the study are contained in this report. The report has four further chapters:

- Chapter 2 contains a summary of the findings
- Chapter 3 presents a description of the research methodology
- Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, including recommendations

Finally, in Chapter 5, we present a short conclusion.

## **2. Executive Summary**

### **Ante-Natal Care and Support**

As a priority area, SureStart funds an additional Community Midwife who is developing a range of ante-natal services across the SureStart area. **The services include:**

- Providing a drop-in service for expectant parents
- Developing community based ante-natal groups
- Developing awareness raising and information programmes on issues such as breast feeding, post-natal depression and healthy eating
- A source of information for practitioners working with children and families

### **Key findings:**

- Just under three-quarters (74%) of respondents felt that they received enough support prior to and after giving birth to their youngest child.
- The main area where respondents would have liked more help and advice is in more general advice/ frequent visits from Midwives and Health Visitors
- Several participants suggested that parents that are having their second/third child should be offered the same levels of support as parent that are having their first.

### **Areas where support could be enhanced:**

- Frequency of ante-natal visits to parents and the amount of information they are provided with
- Support to parents expecting their second or third child

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## **Outreach and Home Visiting**

The aim of this priority element of the programme is to create a multi-disciplinary team by enhancing the existing home visiting and outreach services developed through the earlier Wave 2 Programme. **The team will provide:**

- A consistent and regular home visiting service
- Better access to Health Visitors and other practitioners including drop-in sessions at local community venues
- FAST home visits and access to local 'Start Right' groups to improve early literacy and numeracy skills
- Additional support for parents and families experiencing particular difficulties
- The further development of a Peer Support volunteer programme

### **Key findings:**

- Just under three-quarters (73%) of respondents rated the visit they had received from their Health Visitor as 'very good' or 'good'.
- Just under 40% of respondents (38%) felt that the Health Visitor service had improved since last year, and 19% believed that it had stayed the same.
- 21%, of respondents had been visited by someone other than their Health Visitor. The majority of these parents rated the other SureStart supported agencies as either 'good' or 'very good'
- The home visiting team felt that the main benefit of SureStart was that they were able to visit a larger number of families and provide a more intensive and consistent service

### **Areas where support could be enhanced:**

- Provision of support and advice on post-natal depression
- Earlier and more frequent visits by Health Visitors

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## **Improving Play, Learning and Childcare**

This priority element states that SureStart will **increase and improve opportunities for play, early learning and childcare, in the following ways:**

- Providing funding for an additional Speech Therapist
- Employing Community Early Years Workers to work with parent and toddler and playgroups and develop specialisms in areas of need
- Increase the amount of childcare provision
- Establishing a mobile toy library;
- Provide funding to improve outdoor play spaces and to develop pre-school activity schemes

### **Key findings:**

- Just under a third of respondents (31%) had attended a parent or toddler group in the area. The majority of parents that had attended a parent or toddler group rated them as 'good' or 'very good' (68%)
- Only 12% of respondents thought that there was enough affordable childcare in the area
- Community Early years Workers were highly rated by local parents as a valuable resource for supporting early learning
- Over three-fifths of respondents (64%) believed that there were not enough play and recreational spaces in the area
- A large proportion (59%) of respondents were not aware of the toy library service. Of those respondents that had used the toy library service 64% rated the service as either 'very good' or 'good'

### **Areas where provision could be enhanced:**

- Increased availability of affordable childcare for all ages, especially during school holidays
- Marketing of available childcare facilities
- Additional clean and safe play and recreational spaces for children
- Marketing of toy library

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## **Information and Support for Parents**

The aim of this priority area is to **provide a number of projects that will offer information and support to families, including:**

- The development of a multi-purpose Centre
- Additional support services for families with children who have emotional or behavioural problems
- A Handy Person & Safety Equipment Scheme to offer families with pre-school children practical support in the home

### **Key findings:**

- Just over one in ten respondents (14%) had heard about the multi-purpose SureStart Centre that is going to open at the end of 2003/early 2004 with over four-fifths (82%) of all respondents stating they thought they would use the family & health support part of the Centre when it opens
- The majority of all respondents (87%) suggested that they would use the Nursery part of the Centre.
- One fifth of respondents were aware that SureStart provides a Handy Person Scheme and just over one-fifth (21%) that had heard of the Scheme, have used it
- Over half of parents (54%) reported that 'transport is not a problem for them'. 17% of respondents suggested that they sometimes find it difficult to access facilities because of poor transport links.

### **Areas for enhancement**

- Marketing of the multi-purpose SureStart Centre nearer its opening
- Increased marketing of the Handy Person and Safety Equipment Scheme

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## **Support for Families with Special/Additional Needs**

The aim of this priority area is **provide support for families with pre-school children with special/ additional needs. To include:**

- A Liaison Directory
- Special Needs Fund
- Special Needs support worker

### **Key findings:**

- Only five survey respondents (3%) had children with special needs
- Three respondents felt that they were offered enough support and two did not (both indicated that lack of respite provision was a problem for them)
- Parents welcomed the recent creation of a SureStart Community Early Years post with a remit for special/additional needs
- Parents valued SureStart 'positive parenting' courses for supporting them with managing their child's behaviour
- Four parents of children with special needs (including one from a focus group) stated that information on services for families had improved over the last 12 months

### **3 Study Methods**

The evaluation of SureStart Local Programme (Wave 3) was undertaken between September 2002 and July 2003 to coincide with the end of the first year of operation for the programme and to provide a comprehensive baseline for future analysis of impact and Programme performance.

The evaluation used a variety of methods including:

- Literature review
- Analysis of secondary data
- In-depth interviews with key partners
- Focus groups and in-depth interviews with home and health visitors
- Survey of parents
- Focus groups with parents

#### **Literature review**

The literature review set the context for the report at both a national and local level. Literature was obtained through Internet searches and included information published by the SureStart Unit, information from several Government white papers and management information provided by the Programme team.

#### **Analysis of secondary data**

Secondary data was used to evaluate whether SureStart had successfully reached its milestones. The data was in the form of monitoring data that all SureStart service providers collate on uses and outcomes of their service.

#### **In-depth interviews with key partners**

In-depth face-to-face interviews were undertaken with approximately 20 key partners to find out what has worked well, what has worked not so well and suggestions for improvements.

#### **Focus groups and in-depth interviews with home and health visitors**

In order to assess how well the enhanced home visiting team is working a focus group with the health visiting team was undertaken along with in-depth telephone interviews with a number of home visitors.

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### **Survey of parents**

In total, 163 surveys from parents with children aged 0-4 were analysed.

A self-completion survey was designed in collaboration with SureStart and piloted with parents at one of the Centres. The survey was posted out to just under 600 households that had 840 children aged between 0-4 using the contacts provided by the SureStart Programme Management team database. In order to ensure a high response rate all participants that returned the survey were given a £5 voucher. 147 completed surveys were returned from parents with children aged 0-4.

Three parents from the Sure Start Parent's Forum were then briefed by the Programme Manager and trained by QA to undertake door to door interviews to boost the number of parental surveys. The same three parents worked on Wave 2 and Wave 3 door to door interviews. At the training and questionnaire workshop the parents contributed to the design of the questionnaire and learnt about research ethics (The Market Research Society Code of Conduct) and interviewing techniques.

After the initial training session the parent interviewers met to plan the fieldwork, using their local knowledge. The Programme Manager provided ongoing support throughout the project.

Once the fieldwork was completed, a debrief session was held where the parent interviewers and the Programme Manager gave feedback on their experiences to QA. The benefits of involving the parents in the evaluation process are evident in two of the parent's stories of their experiences, included below. The Programme Manager said

"It has been very powerful to see the parents gain confidence, work together so well and seeing through our values to involve parents in our planning, delivery and review of Sure Start services". (Ceri Daniels)

### **Focus groups with parents**

Two focus groups were undertaken with parents. Both of these were recruited through the questionnaire. The groups were held at the temporary Seaforth Parents Centre, based within Venus House. All parents were given a cash gift for attending and crèche facilities were kindly provided by SureStart.

## **4 Study Findings**

This section presents the main body of the report, the research findings. Within this section, there are 10 sub-sections. Each sub-section has its own executive summary, the key findings and conclusions/recommendations. The section begins by providing a list of all sub-sections included.

The principal findings of the evaluation are contained in this chapter. The chapter contains ten sections:

- Section 4.1 - Desk research
- Section 4.2 - Monitoring data
- Section 4.3 - Partner interviews
- Section 4.4 - Parent's consultation
- Section 4.5 - Ante-natal care and support
- Section 4.6 - Outreach and home visiting
- Section 4.7 - Improving play, learning and childcare
- Section 4.8 - Information and support for parents
- Section 4.9 - Support for families and children with special/additional needs
- Section 4.10 - Employment and training

## **4.1 Desk Research**

This section presents an outline of the available literature used to inform upon our understanding of the project.

The evaluation began by identifying when and why the SureStart initiative was introduced. The first White Paper, in which SureStart featured was identified and this then became the starting point, from which we reviewed all other government policy, pertaining to the initiative. Government documents that contributed to the development of SureStart that were considered in this review, included:

- Modern Public Services for Britain: Investing in Reform. Comprehensive Spending Review: New public spending plans 1999-2002, July 1998
- Public Services for the Future: Modernisation, Reform and Accountability. Comprehensive Spending Review: Public Service Agreements 1999-2002, December 1998
- Prudent for a Purpose: Building opportunity and security for all. Comprehensive Spending Review: New public spending plans 2001-2004
- Building a stronger, fairer Britain in an uncertain world. Pre-budget report, November 2001
- 2002 Comprehensive Spending Review: Public service agreements July 2002

Further to the above, the SureStart National Evaluation website was used to increase our understanding of the initiative and provided an array of guidelines on how Local Programmes should undertake their evaluations. The guidelines we reviewed were:

- Sure Start: Guidance on Local Evaluation, August 2000
- Sure Start: a guide to planning and delivering your programme, Summer 2002
- The Involvement of Parents and Carers in Sure Start Local Evaluations, February 2003
- Conducting Ethical Research, April 2002
- Getting Started with a local Sure Start evaluation, April 2002
- Support to Local Evaluations Methodological and Progress Report, September 2001
- Sure Start for all: Guidance on involving minority ethnic children and families
- Sure Start: Promoting Speech and Language Development – Guidance for Sure Start programmes

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These guidelines were used to inform upon many areas of the evaluation, and in particular were of influence when designing the methodological approaches we employed. Further guidance was found in the advice and support we received from the National SureStart Unit, in particular that from Dr. Jane Stuart of the National Evaluation team.

Finally, the Programme Delivery Plan produced by the Sefton SureStart Wave 3 Partnership provided a wealth of information that allowed us to understand the local context, within which SureStart and this evaluation are set.

## **4.2 Secondary Analysis of Monitoring Data**

This section of the report is focused on an analysis of the monitoring data gathered by SureStart Seaforth and Bootle, as stipulated by the National SureStart Unit. Two types of monitoring data forms were examined; these were the 'M3 form' and the monthly Progress Reports against quarterly milestones.

**Form M3** – The aim of the analysis was:

- To identify any trends over time, with regards to the number of individuals accessing the SureStart services

**Monthly Progress Reports** – The aim of the analysis was:

- To identify the level of progress made towards reaching the SureStart objectives
- To identify any recurring areas where barriers hindered progress towards the achievement of quarterly milestones

## **Monitoring Data - Executive Summary**

### **Form M3**

- The M3 form was used to record classification details on individuals who had accessed services whilst, the monthly progress reports recorded the actions taken by the Local Programme, in order to achieve their quarterly milestones
- The analysis of monitoring data was conducted to identify any trends, to highlight areas where progress towards achieving objectives had been made, as well as towards quarterly milestones
- Since the introduction of Wave 3, there has been a considerable increase in the number of children seen per month, from 22 in July 2001 when the Programme began operating to an average of 210 per month by November /December 2002
- There has also been a steady increase in other groups that access the service including children with a disability, pregnant women, fathers and young parents

### **Monthly monitoring data**

- The average percentage of positive actions was 80% in year 1
- The average percentage of positive actions for year one of the Programme is slightly lower than that for year one in the Wave 2 Programme
- The key negative occurrence that led to unachieved milestones was the lack of suitably qualified staff and suitable accommodation along with a few government and other organisational constraints.

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#### **4.2.1 Form M3**

##### **Type of information collected**

The M3 form was recorded on a monthly basis and was used to present information from the previous month, in terms of the number of individuals that had been seen by the SureStart team. Numbers were recorded using the national SureStart format of categorising: children; pregnant women; families and parents that had been 'seen' by the Programme eg. Health Visitor contact, use of Toy Library, visit to Centre.

Further breakdown of classification details were also given under each of these four areas, such as age, ethnicity and disability. All of this information was further recorded in terms of 'existing' and 'new' service users, except the final information, which was concerned with the number of new births occurring in the area, at the time.

##### **Method of analysis**

In order to provide a 'snapshot' of any trends that had occurred, over the course of the programme so far, forms were examined at six month intervals starting from the date of the first full quarterly progress report, which in this instance is December 2001. Thus, the forms examined were taken from the months:

- December 2001
- June 2002
- December 2002

##### **Summary of findings**

Findings from the analysis were presented in two sub-sections as either general findings or trends over time

Examination of the monitoring data revealed the following:

General comments:

- There were no errors made when calculating totals on any of the forms we examined
- As SureStart Monitoring systems had changed during the course of our analysis, the way in which the forms were formatted was different on each occasion, making it harder to record the same information on each

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Children

There were clearly large increases in the number of children seen between each of the forms we examined. In July 2001 there were an overall total of 22 children seen, in June 2002 this had risen to 122 children and by December 2002 this has risen to 210 children. This was also the case for the total number of new children seen. In December 2001 there were a total of 21 new children seen, whilst in June 2002 this was higher at 33 new children and in November/December 2002 this had risen to a total of 72 new children seen.

- Ethnicity

The ethnicity of children seen was recorded on the monitoring data and 94% were 'White British' with the remaining being categorised by their parents as Chinese, Black Caribbean, Black British, Albanian, Tanzanian and Kosovan. This is congruent with the local population profile.

- Disability

Two children with disabilities were recorded as seen in December 2001, however, in June 2002 there was only one child with a disability seen but by December 2002 this had risen to 11 children seen.

The figures on the number of children seen show, that over time, the numbers continued to increase, and these increases were evident across all of the age ranges.

Furthermore, there were increases in the number of children with disabilities seen. Helping to demonstrate how the SureStart team were reaching more children with a disability in line with their objectives.

Pregnant women

Four pregnant women were seen in December 2001, rising to 17 in June 2002 and then to 19 in December 2002. Of these 4 had been lone parents and one had been under the age of 18.

## **4.2.2 Progress Reports Against Quarterly Milestones**

The analysis of Progress Reports against quarterly milestones was conducted using a two-tiered process, whereby, all recorded information was examined and two lists were compiled, one containing any statistical information recorded and one containing all of the reasons given for not achieving a quarterly milestone. The aim of this process was to:

- 1 Identify what progress SureStart (Wave 3) had made towards reaching their overall objectives
- 2 Identify any recurring patterns when quarterly milestones had not been achieved

### **Statistical Information**

All statistical information drawn from the progress reports was tabulated and there were found to be 5 different areas of information, which included figures relating to:

- Percentage of children with identified speech and language development delays
- Percentage of mothers who were breastfeeding
- Number of parents to have completed courses/development opportunities
- Number of families registered
- Specific local progress towards annual SureStart targets

Measurement against local and national targets indicates that the Programme is making good progress towards achieving local and national milestones in these areas.

### **Achieved Milestones**

Progress towards achieving quarterly milestones was examined in terms of the number of **positive** and **negative** actions recorded, against each individual milestone, per month.

- A positive action was defined as any outcome that would help SureStart in their progress towards achieving their quarterly milestones
- A negative action was defined as any outcome that hindered or prevented SureStart in their progress towards achieving their quarterly milestones

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Looking at the average percentages over the first full year of operation, it was noted that the average percentage of positive actions made was 80%.

Having conducted a similar process of analysis for the Wave 2 Local Programme, it must be questioned as to why the percentage of positive actions made in Wave 3 was found to be 8% less than those achieved in Wave 2. The Wave 2 average percentage (of milestones reached) per quarter, over each year were found to be 88% in year 1, rising to 92% in year 2 and an average of 94% in year 3.

We would have expected the rate of achieved milestones to be equal to those of Wave 2 or even higher considering the experience learnt from an earlier programme. However, further examination of the reasons why some milestones were not achieved illustrated problems outside the Programmes control. Unachieved milestones were largely met in the following quarter and an 80% successful target rate must still be acknowledged as very satisfactory.

#### **Unachieved Milestones**

Having established the level of success towards achieving milestones, we considered what might have brought about any negative outcome, thus hindering progress towards achievement of milestones.

The aim of this process was to identify areas where problems had occurred, highlighting any examples where the Wave 3 Programme had learnt from the implementation of the Wave 2 Programme. It would also identify any new areas where problems have arisen, as these could be usefully disseminated to other Local Programmes/later initiatives.

The negative actions recorded were found to fall into one of five categories.

These included:

- Difficulties recruiting qualified/suitable staff
- Lack of suitable accommodation
- Government and other organisational constraints
- Parent/carer issues

#### Recruitment difficulties & lack of suitable accommodation

The biggest hindrance, by far, was problems in attracting staff that had relevant qualifications (eg. Health Visitors, Social Workers), or the necessary level of experience and competence. This was compounded by the lack of suitable accommodation from which services could be delivered. This was a major problem in the initial delivery of the Wave 3 Programme and it was for this reason that the

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percentages found in achieving milestones have fallen a little short when compared to the first year of the Wave 2 Programme.

Of the remaining reasons, many were found to be of a similar nature to those experienced in Wave 2.

Delays in recruiting the following staff were cited:

- Speech Therapist
- Health Visitors
- Centre Manager
- Additional Management team staff
- Information Support Worker
- Handy Person
- Community Early Years Workers
- Crèche workers
- Community Midwife

Some examples of why there were initial delays in some service provision:

- Training on PND (NRF Government Guidelines delayed)
- A number of quarter one milestones not achieved (Delay approving Delivery Plan due to General Election)
- Local Ante-Natal group (unable to recruit Midwife at first attempt)
- Keeping Children Safe seminar (Unable to appoint Deputy Co-ordinator (Training & QA) to the Management team at first attempt)
- Family Learning Activities programme (Capital Works delay – in discussion regarding a temporary centre in Seaforth)
- Promotional event for SureStart Centre (Capital Works delayed due to discussions with Social Services)

#### Lack of information

There were three instances when unobtainable information had hindered progress towards achievement of a given milestone, these included;

- Baseline figures on parents currently accessing ante-natal support
- Baseline figures on the number of women breastfeeding
- Number of people accessing the local libraries

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Government and other organisational constraints

There were 4 instances when government or other organisational constraints had delayed the Wave 3 Programme in their achievement of milestones.

These included:

- Delays in the opening of multi purpose Centre due to Social Services Best Value Review & Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative
- Delays in Wave 5 Local Programme approval causing delays in the appointment of a jointly funded Children's Librarian
- Delays in capital development preventing the delivery of the Toy Library

Parent/carer issues

There were 3 examples of delays in milestones achievement that were attributed to the shortage of early parental involvement; these included the Parents Forum and Partnership Board representatives.

Clearly the school holidays represented as much a problem for parents in Wave 3 as was found to be the case in Wave 2. Future consideration of a more realistic timescale for parental involvement could be given in planning other similar Programmes/initiatives. Further analysis of the reports illustrated that a large number of parents did get involved in the Programme but time commitment was diverted back to the family during holiday periods as can be expected, with December/January being a particularly hectic time for parents.

## **Conclusions & Recommendations – Analysis of Monitoring Data**

### **Form M3**

Due to the infancy of the Wave 3 Programme it is very difficult to draw any significant conclusions. It would therefore be more meaningful to analyse the monitoring data after three years of the Programme. As intended by the original commission for this report, the information gathered as part of this research should be used as a baseline for comparison during future evaluations.

What is clear from the data is that since its inception there has been a comprehensive and steady increase in the number of parents and children accessing Wave 3 services.

#### **Recommendations**

- In order to produce meaningful data that is comparable year on year, figures must continue to be recorded using the consistent method the Programme Management team have now established
- Undertake further analysis of monitoring data at the end of year 3

### **Monthly progress reports**

Again due to the infancy of the Programme, it is difficult to draw too many conclusions from the monthly progress reports. What is clear is that, compared to Wave 2 data, milestones were slightly less likely to be achieved on time in year one. One of the main reasons for this was the delay in transferring Health Visitor caseloads (to a SureStart designated team) due to a lack of suitably qualified Health Visitors and support staff. This was compounded by a lack of suitable accommodation from which services could be delivered.

Delays in beginning the capital development for a new Centre also caused a negative impact on the percentage of milestones achieved in that first year.

Recruitment of other specialist roles such as the Social Worker and Educational staff proved difficult in a climate of scarcity in those particular skills markets.

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It also took a significant amount of time to successfully appoint additional Programme Management staff to extend the existing Wave 2 Management team to co-ordinate the implementation of this new Programme.

What we can learn from this is that the set-up of a Programme can often take longer than initially expected and it would therefore be beneficial to allow a longer period of time for future programmes in securing accommodation and appointing staff.

**Recommendations**

- Consider extending timescales for setting up Programmes and therefore achieving milestones in a more realistic lead in time

### **4.3 Partner Interviews**

In this section of the research 18 in-depth interviews were conducted with Key partners of the SureStart Programme. The partners came from a number of agencies involved in the delivery and future development of services for children and families. All those interviewed were asked their opinions on how they felt Wave 2 and 3 had gone so far. The names of the partners and the contacts interviewed are presented on page 38 in the Wave 2 Evaluation report.

#### **Executive Summary - Partner Interviews**

The in-depth interviews were specifically designed to determine what partners felt had gone well, what hadn't, and what lessons could be learnt for the future.

The full details of these interviews and the key findings and recommendations can be found in the Wave 2 Evaluation Report. This section draws out any findings that were specific to Wave 3.

- One of the main benefits of Wave 3 is that it has allowed SureStart to target a greater number of families and introduce a more joined up approach over a wider area
- Partnership working was felt to be vastly easier as many successful links had already been established as part of Wave 2
- Many of the services provided in the two Waves were considered to be very similar as, although they covered different communities, parents and agencies involved in pre-programme consultations tended to identify similar issues and areas of improvement in health care and family support
- Lessons learned in establishing Wave 2 helped with the implementation of Wave 3
- Due to the success and positive profile of Wave 2 it was easier to get agencies and parents involved in the Wave 3 projects

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### **Success of Wave 3**

Several partners interviewed believed that it was too early to comment on the specific successes of the Wave 3 Programme; however there were a number of general views expressed and other partners felt able to comment more specifically.

One of the main benefits to emerge in relation to the implementation of Wave 3 was that it 'allowed SureStart to target a greater number of families and introduce more joined up services', as was stated by one partner:

"It has allowed for the provision of joined up services, where voluntary and statutory services are working together to achieve a common goal. This provides support and intervention where the needs really are".

### **Partnership working**

Many of the partners mentioned that they had found working with different agencies and organisations across Sefton a lot easier within Wave 3 as they had broken down the initial communication barriers and had built up trusting relationships with them.

### **Differences between Waves 2 and 3**

When asked what the main differences were between Wave 2 and Wave 3, apart from the geographical areas covered, many of the participants believed that there was a great deal of overlap. Many of the statutory and voluntary agencies covered both SureStart Programme areas and actually found it easier to roll out new services developed under the Wave 2 Programme to the new Wave 3 area. As the ethos of SureStart in Sefton has been community driven, partners felt that they still accounted for the needs of the different communities in each 'patch'.

As one partner highlighted:

"There are some differences and they do have distinctive projects in each Wave but the service re-shaping and delivery of new ways of working is fundamentally based on the same ethos".

Some partners felt that Wave 2 was almost like a pilot to experiment with 'what works' after the initial consultations, which they could then build on and improve in Wave 3. Several commented that Wave 2 was a strong Programme and the Partnership had not been afraid to make 'in-flight' changes if something wasn't working. This had not only kept Wave 2 responsive and relevant to local needs but also brought valuable lessons to service planners for Wave 3.

Another partner explained that one of the differences between servicing the Programmes within their agency was that they were going to change the

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organisation of the teams, and segment and tailor services to different family and individual needs in Wave 3. As was stated below:

“The Neighbourhood Nursery will be a huge element of Wave 3. The organisation of the Programme will be slightly different in respects to the Health Workers as there is a large Health Worker team in Wave 2 but in Wave 3 these will be complemented by a lot more community workers. The community workers will be working more with groups than with individuals. For Wave 3 there will be different workers for different groups of people as during the consultations we carried out, we found that the families in different areas want different things.”

### **Getting the Programme up and running**

Wave 3 was considered a great deal easier and quicker to implement than Wave 2 by many of the partners because of their experiences and lessons learnt throughout the implementation of Wave 2.

It was discussed that the time scale for implementing many of the specific services and activities had shortened. This was partly attributed to the strong links that had already been made with parents and other partner organisations.

Another partner believed that the consultation and development process had improved in Wave 3 and that they had learnt to identify the need for particular services a lot more efficiently. As was stated:

“We did things differently all the way through, like taking different approaches that recognised the different communities. We never took a ‘one size fits all’ approach because that’s not what SureStart is about. Also, there were certain issues that came up more in the focus groups for Wave 3 than in Wave 2 like the ante-natal services. Conversely, for other services people definitely did want more of the same [as in Wave 2] because they could see how successful it was.”

However, one of the partners believed that although certain aspects of the implementation of Wave 3 had been easier, many of the processes had been slower because of the number of other government initiatives and changes in policy agenda that were emerging at the same time.

With regards to getting the projects up and running, one of the partners discussed how it had been difficult to get parents from the Wave 2 Programme area on the initial Partnership Steering Group as people knew very little about SureStart. However they had found it much easier to get parents involved with Wave 3 as by that time many more people were aware of SureStart and what it did and by this time there were lots of parents involved.

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Reflecting this, many of the partners had noticed an increase in early enthusiasm from the parents when comparing Wave 2 to Wave 3 which they believed was down to the success of the projects in Wave 2 and the increase in awareness of SureStart.

### **Key lessons learnt**

When asked what they felt were the key lessons learnt in Wave 2 that they could transfer to Wave 3 and other future Programmes/similar initiatives, one of the partners believed that the managers should be employed during the early stages of implementation so that they have a comprehensive knowledge of what is feasible within the projects and service development.

It was also felt by a couple of the partners that people should not expect to recruit the specified number of staff in the time provided as there was a lot of problems with recruitment in the Sefton area.

Another key lesson that had been learnt in Wave 2 was to be as flexible as possible with what they could do with the 'mix' of staff and skills. Experience of realistic budget planning and the opportunity to re-profile if needs significantly changed, had also helped in the later Wave 3 Programme. Partners described constant change as a recurring theme and many felt that they had learnt to be as adaptable as possible.

Previous experience of SureStart had also given what one partner described as:

"More scope and bravery for exploration into any new ideas that may have developed during the process, instead of just sticking to what you do because that's how it's done!"

It was discussed that although there were plenty of parents involved in Wave 3 Programme activities, there had been difficulties in involving parents directly in the Parents Forum. However, to overcome this problem, the Programme Management team were working with parents involved with Wave 2, to recruit and support new Parents Forum members.

Positively, a project that had developed as a result of the success of community trips in Wave 2 was the Community Activities Fund. As one of the partners discussed:

"We used to organise trips for the families but after a while the amount of time needed to organise these trips got too much and also we didn't want SureStart to end and for people to feel they had been left with nothing. When we began managing Wave 3 as well, we decided to set up the Community Activities Fund in which people in the community (eg. playgroups, parent & toddler groups, residents associations) could apply for up to £300 once a year to organise the trips for families, like the trip organised at the moment to Blackpool just for the dads and their children.

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The idea is it helps people come together as a group to give their kids a day out or to hold a family event in their own community. They are also learning about fundraising and managing a budget because we support them to open a bank account and SureStart will only normally give part of the funding to them, the rest many have raised through fetes and car boot sales or raffles which is great because you can definitely see it bringing back some of that community spirit.”

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### **Conclusions & Recommendations – Partner Interviews**

The lessons learned and multi-agency partnerships established as part of the earlier Wave 2 Programme have really helped when establishing the Wave 3 Programme. The extension of the existing Programme Management team to cover a new Programme in close geographical proximity, was an effective and well-thought out strategic solution to ensure the Wave 3 Programme could begin to make an impact as soon as possible.

We therefore conclude that having previous experience of establishing and running a SureStart Programme is hugely beneficial for delivering more consistent children and families services to the local communities.

Despite the initial slow beginning due to specialist staff shortages and lack of suitable accommodation for the new multi-agency teams, the Programme still began implementing new ways of working in many areas of service delivery in an impressively short time. Comparison with timeframes for implementation in other SureStart Programmes is outside the scope of this study but would be an interesting avenue to explore.

#### Recommendations

- The National SureStart Unit could further consider how to harness the skills and expertise of experienced Programme Managers to benefit new SureStart Local Programmes or similar/linked emerging initiatives such as Children's Centres
- The SureStart Wave 3 Partnership should ensure that good practice continues to be shared across Sefton and that mechanisms remain in place for promoting successful projects or service delivery to other SureStarts as well as lessons that have been learnt

## **4.4 Parent's Consultation**

The SureStart Wave 3 Programme identified five local priority areas, that encompassed the needs identified through consultation and which met the nationally defined SureStart objectives, targets and core service areas. The Programme areas identified for action were:

- Ante-natal Care & Support;
- Outreach & Home Visiting;
- Improving Play, Learning and Childcare;
- Information & Support for Parents;
- Support for families / Children with Special Needs;

In order to evaluate whether these objectives were being met local parents/ carers of children under 4 were consulted through a self-completion survey and focus groups. The profile of respondents that were consulted in the evaluation phase, and their perceptions of the local area are detailed in this section.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Parent's Consultation**

#### **Parents Survey**

- 163 surveys were completed with parents / carers. There are approximately 500 households with over 800 children under 4 in the Wave 3 area
- Only 2 surveys were completed by men
- Most respondents fell into the younger age categories, 36% aged between 16-25 and 44% aged between 26-35
- Just under two thirds (64%) of respondents were at home looking after their family, whilst just under a quarter (24%) were working on a part-time basis. 8% worked full-time
- 4% of respondents were currently studying
- 57% of respondents were in two parent families, whilst 42% were lone parents
- Ninety-eight per cent of respondents described themselves as white
- The 163 respondents cared for 314 children aged 0-16
- 41% of respondents said they felt fully aware of what services and facilities are available for families and children in their area, 59% felt they only knew a little
- Respondents would most like more information on courses that are available locally (66%), and information on childcare (47%)
- Older respondents (35+) were the group that most frequently stated they would like more information on healthcare (47%)
- 91% of respondents were aware that a SureStart Programme is running in the area
- The most common way of hearing about SureStart is through a home visit by a SureStart worker (57%)
- 20% of respondents stated that SureStart got directly in touch with them to ask what they felt needed improving in the area
- 60% were aware of the existence of the Parents Forum and other opportunities to get more involved with the shaping of services for their area
- 29% of respondents that have lived in the area for more than a year feel that information and support for parents has improved during the last twelve months
- 25% of respondents felt that childcare facilities have improved

#### **Parents Focus Groups**

- All participants were aware of SureStart and felt that most families in the area were also aware. Participants felt that parents who work full-time may not be as aware of the range of services available

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- The majority had been told about SureStart by their Health Visitors, several parents had picked up leaflets, and some had been sent information through the post or attended fun days
- A majority of parents had attended courses or development activities through SureStart or their partners and used the FAST service
- It was felt that more advertising of SureStart needed to be done and that there should be more activities for dads and their children made available
- When asked what they disliked about the area participants discussed the problems with the parks and outdoor facilities
- It was felt that there needed to be more facilities and activities available for the older children in the area to try to cut down on vandalism and anti-social behaviour
- A number of participants expressed that the childcare facilities had improved in the last couple of years in the area

## Parent's Consultations

### 4.4.1 Profile of respondents

#### Survey findings

In total, we received 163 completed surveys that could be included in the research. Of the 163 surveys, 154 were completed by parents themselves and sent back in the FREEPOST envelope, whilst nine were completed on a face-to-face basis by the parent interviewers.

The table below details the age and gender of respondents. There was a very low response from men, with only one per cent (2 surveys) of responses being returned by male carers.

Examining responses by age reveals, as expected, the majority of respondents tend to come from the younger age groups, with 36% aged between 16-25 and 44% aged between 26-35. Eighteen per cent of respondents were aged between 36-45, whilst only two surveys were returned by respondents aged 46 and over.

**Figure 4.4.1.1 – Gender and age of respondents**

| <b>Gender / Age</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>%</b>     |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|
| <b>Male</b>         | 2             | 1.2          |
| <b>Female</b>       | 161           | 98.8         |
|                     |               |              |
| <b>16-25</b>        | 59            | 36.2         |
| <b>26-35</b>        | 72            | 44.2         |
| <b>36-45</b>        | 30            | 18.4         |
| <b>46-55</b>        | 1             | 0.6          |
| <b>55+</b>          | 1             | 0.6          |
|                     |               |              |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>163</b>    | <b>100.0</b> |

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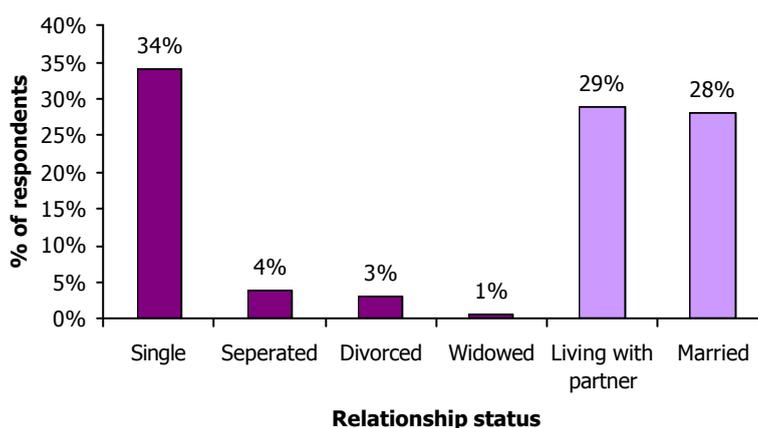
Respondents were asked what their working status was (see Table 4.4.1.2). Respondents were able to indicate more than one option, therefore responses may add up to more than 100%. Just under two thirds (64%) of respondents were at home looking after their family, whilst just under a quarter (24%) were working on a part-time basis. Only eight per cent were working on a full-time basis. In terms of studying, only four per cent mentioned they were currently doing this (3% part-time and 1% full-time).

**Figure 4.4.1.2 – Economic activity of respondents**

| Status                           | Number | %    |
|----------------------------------|--------|------|
| Working part-time                | 39     | 23.9 |
| Working full-time                | 13     | 8.0  |
| Job seeking                      | 7      | 4.3  |
| At home / looking after family   | 105    | 64.4 |
| Studying full-time               | 2      | 1.2  |
| Studying part-time               | 5      | 3.1  |
| Retired                          | 2      | 1.2  |
| Unable to work due to ill health | 9      | 5.5  |
| Working on a voluntary basis     | 1      | 0.6  |
| Other                            | 4      | 2.5  |

The Figure below shows the relationship status of respondents. Responses in the dark purple indicate respondents that are lone parents, whilst those in the light purple indicate responses that are two parent families. In total, 57% of respondents are in two parent families, whilst 42% are lone parents.

**Figure 4.4.1.3 – Relationship status of respondents**



Base=162

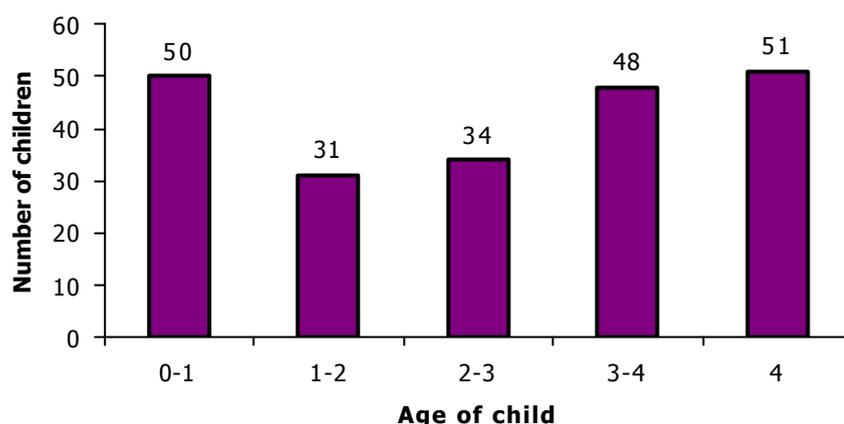
Ninety-eight per cent of respondents described themselves as white.

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Respondents were asked what relationship they had with the children they were caring for. Overall, 158 were the children’s parent or guardian, whilst four respondents were the children’s carer.

The 163 respondents cared for 314 children aged 0-16. Of these, 214 were aged 0-4, therefore coming under the remit of SureStart (see Figure 4.4.1.4).

**Figure 4.4.1.4 – Age of children**



Base=214

## 4.4.2 Awareness of services

### Survey findings

Respondents were asked if they felt fully aware of services and facilities that are available for families and children in their area. In total, 41% stated that they felt fully aware, whilst 59% indicated that they did not feel very aware. Respondents that currently work were least likely to state they feel fully aware, with 35% stating they feel aware and 65% indicating they are not as aware. Respondents aged 35+ were most likely to be aware with 53% indicating this was the case.

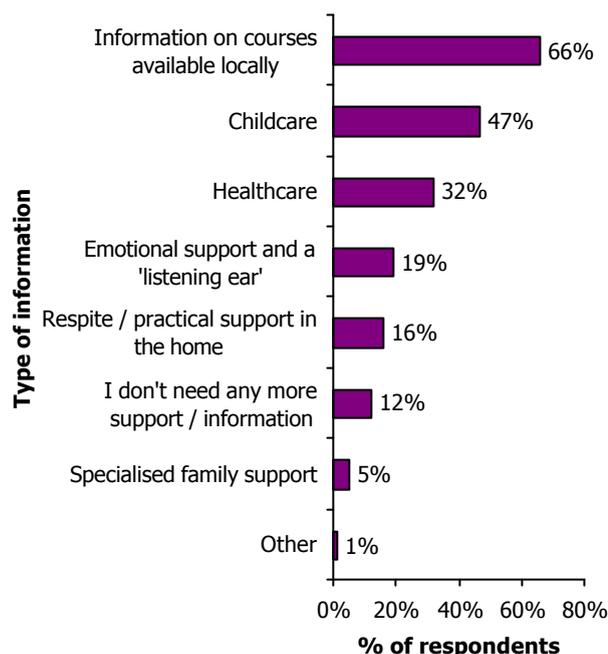
Respondents that indicated they were not fully aware were subsequently asked what areas they feel they require more information on. Responses can be seen in the Figure below. Interestingly, the area in which most respondents would like more information on is courses that are available locally (66%); this is followed by information on childcare (47%). Just under a third (32%) of respondents would like more information on healthcare whilst just under a fifth (19%) would like information on emotional support and a 'listening ear'.

Comparing results by sub-groups reveals that younger respondents (16-25) were most likely to indicate that they would like information on courses available locally

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and childcare (74% and 57% respectively). Whilst older respondents (35+) were the group that most frequently stated they would like more information on healthcare (47%).

**Figure 4.4.2.1 – Areas in which respondents require more information**

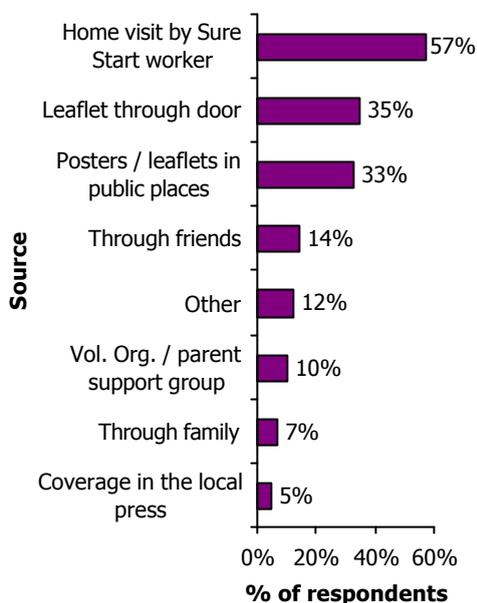


**Base=96**

Positively, 91% of respondents indicated that they were aware that a SureStart Programme was running in the area. The Figure below indicates how respondents heard about SureStart. The most common way of hearing is through a home visit by a SureStart worker (57%); this is followed by getting a leaflet or Newsletter through the door (35%) and seeing a poster / leaflet in a public place (33%).

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**Figure 4.4.2.2 – How respondents heard about SureStart**



**Base=148**

The survey also asked whether respondents had been consulted by SureStart on what they felt needed improving in the area and whether they were aware of the existence of the Parents Forum.

A fifth (20%) of respondents stated that SureStart got directly in touch with them to ask what they felt needed improving in the area. Whilst 60% of participants indicated that they were aware of the existence of the Parents Forum.

**Focus group findings**

The participants were asked where they had heard about SureStart, and whether they felt their family and friends were aware of the service. All of the parents were aware of SureStart and the services it provides.

It was also generally felt that the majority of parents in the area with pre-school aged children knew about services, however it was commented that parents that worked full time may not be as informed.

With regards to how they had heard about SureStart, the majority had been told about it by their Health Visitors/Outreach Workers.

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A couple of parents had picked up leaflets, some had been sent information through the post such as a Newsletter, and one person had heard about it as SureStart supported the parent and toddler group that her daughter went to.

Some of the comments included:

“When you’ve got little ones then you are aware of it [Sure Start].”

“I’d heard about it through my Health Visitor, and she sent someone out from SureStart who came to my home and told me about the ‘Babes R Us’ group and the May Logan Centre. She even offered to take me along there or to the Centre in Seaforth”

When asked about the particular services that they had used, the majority of parents mentioned the adult courses in the Centres, and the FAST service. It was explained by a number of group members that as you make use of the services on offer, you become aware of what else is available.

However, in regards to how people become aware of SureStart, many felt that there needed to be an increase in the amount of advertising done. It was felt that in particular there could be more people knocking on families doors to inform them of the services.

One parents also highlighted the need for more activities for dads and their children as it was felt that they are often left out of childcare responsibilities and often don’t feel confident looking after them on their own. As was stated by one parent:

“The men say they have nothing to do. . . the men feel destitute. There is a Dad’s Group in SureStart so we all need to encourage them to go”

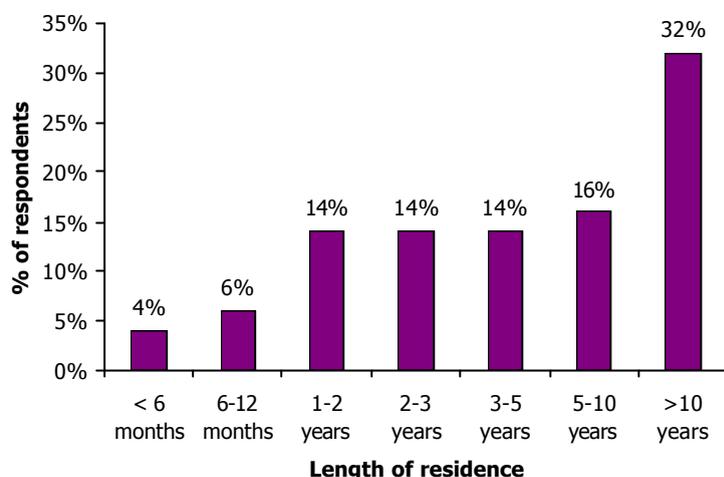
### **4.4.3 The local area**

#### **Survey findings**

As can be seen from Figure 4.4.3.1 the length of time respondents have lived in the area varies quite considerable. 90% have been a resident for over a year and therefore should be able to comment upon any differences that SureStart is beginning to make to the area.

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**Figure 4.4.3.1 – Length of time respondents have lived in the area**

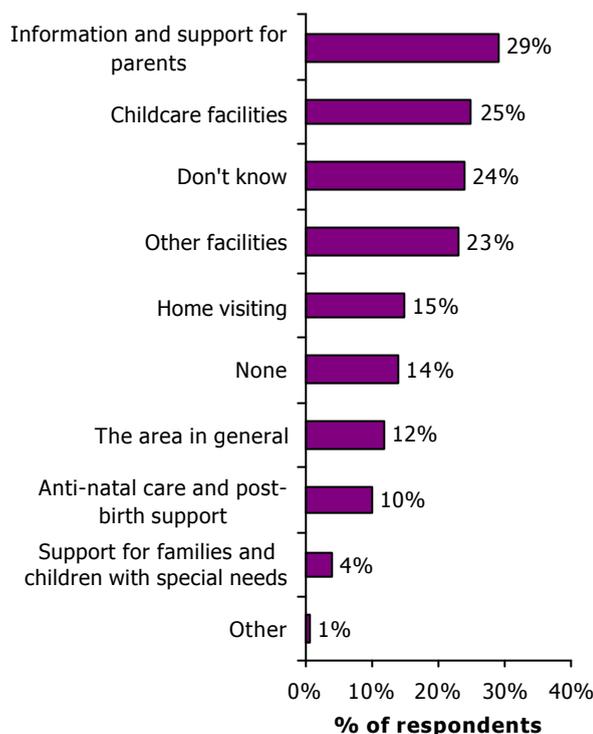


**Base=163**

Respondents that have lived in the area for more than a year were asked whether any services in relation to young children and families had improved. The Figure below details the proportion of residents that indicated services have improved. In total, 29% of respondents that have lived in the area for more than a year feel that information and support for parents has improved. Another frequently mentioned area of improvement was childcare facilities, highlighted by a quarter of respondents. Twenty-four per cent of participants did not know what had improved, whilst 23% stated other facilities (Social, community, health, leisure) had improved.

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**Figure 4.4.3.2 – Proportion of respondents that feel the following have improved**



**Base=146**

**Focus group findings**

The participants were then asked about their feelings for the area, particularly what their likes and dislikes were. Within both groups, the participants particularly discussed the problems with the parks and outdoor facilities in the area.

It was explained that many of the parks were vandalised by the older children and were covered in glass, syringes, and litter. This meant that they were unable to take their young children to the park and were therefore often 'stuck in their houses'.

When asked how the area could be improved, many of the participants again discussed the parks and recommended a number of different ways to keep them clean. These included having dog wardens to control the stray dogs, and the introduction of 'Key Parks' which were parks that were locked up, and only local parents would have the key. One parent suggested:

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“The Council could create special parks where you pay so much and have a key and it’s just dedicated for the younger kids.”

Others felt that such a facility should not have a charge and a better solution would be to provide more entertainment and activities for the older children in the area to try and cut down on boredom and vandalism. One parent also discussed making the local shops more accessible for people with pushchairs, as was discussed:

“When I’m struggling up [the stairs] with twins, things like that put me off even leaving the house”

The parents were also asked whether the area had improved in any way in the last couple of years. It was felt by a number of participants that the childcare facilities had improved. One of the parents commented:

“You’ve got the May Logan by us and that’s brilliant they do all sorts, I think that’s got SureStart in it, that’s brilliant, it’s all dead clean and healthy. There’s lots of parent & toddler groups and crèches near me now which we didn’t have before and a new nursery’s being built just around the corner”

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### **Conclusions & Recommendations - Parent's Consultations**

The findings suggest that generally parents are well informed about the SureStart Programme and what it offers. Although such a high proportion of respondents were aware of the SureStart Programme in their area, many felt that it was important to keep raising the profile as it developed more services.

Many of the participants had taken part in SureStart courses and were extremely positive about the impact this had had for them personally; from gaining new skills and confidence to making new friends.

Participants felt that fathers could be better catered for, as many mothers felt their partners lacked confidence when they spend time with their children alone.

Parents were clearly not happy with the state of the outdoor spaces and parks in the area but had ideas on how to begin making improvements. Several mentioned being involved in the SureStart Outdoor Play Action Group, which will enable them to be part of the planning and development of SureStart funded play spaces.

#### Recommendations

- As services continue to be developed, further promotion will be essential
- Information needs to reach as many parents as possible about the SureStart courses available
- Activities for fathers and children together should remain an important focus for Programme development
- SureStart Action Groups are a critical element of successful parent participation within the Programme and need to be sustained beyond early development stages

## **4.5 Ante-Natal Care and Support**

SureStart funds an 'added value' Community Midwives project that is developing a range of ante-natal services across the SureStart area alongside other SureStart services. The services include:

- Providing a drop-in service for expectant parents.
- Developing community based ante-natal groups and a range of post-natal support and information services
- Developing awareness raising and information programmes on issues such as breast feeding, post-natal depression and healthy eating.
- A source of information for practitioners working with children and families.

Although this is a very new service, it was evaluated through the parent's survey and the parent's focus groups to enable a satisfaction baseline in ante-natal care and support for future research when the SureStart Programme is more developed.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Ante-natal Care and Support**

#### **Parent's Survey**

- Just under three-quarters (74%) of respondents felt that they received enough support prior to and after giving birth to their youngest child.
- The main area where respondents would like more help is increased general advice/ visits from Midwives or Health Visitors (61%) and better support around post-natal depression
- The majority of respondents felt that services had improved over the last twelve months

#### **Parent's focus groups**

- Just over half of the parents taking part in the focus groups felt that they had received good ante-natal support but several parents mentioned that they had received very little support prior to and after giving birth.
- Some participants suggested that parents having their second/third child should be offered the same levels of support as parent that are having their first.
- Several participants had accessed new services provided through the Community Midwives project and rated them highly

#### **4.5.1 Parents survey**

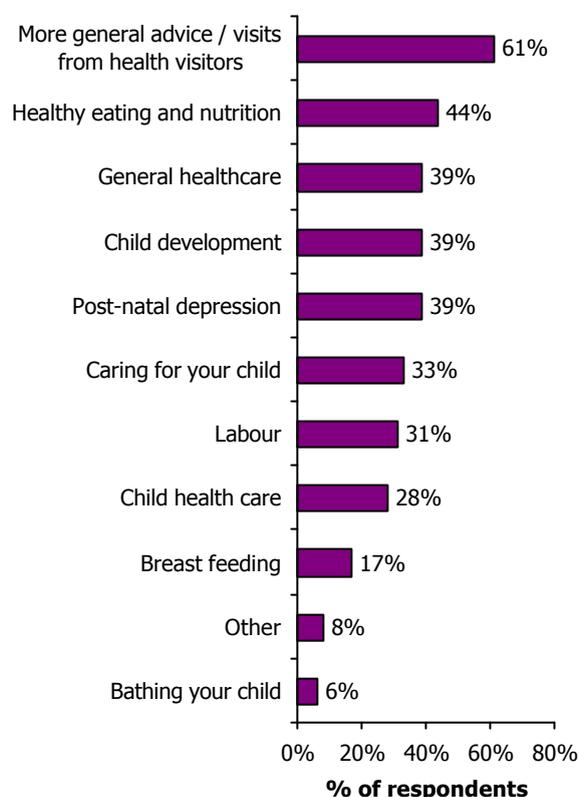
As part of the questionnaire, survey respondents were also asked whether they felt they received enough support and advice both prior to and after giving birth to their youngest child.

Just under three-quarters (74%) of respondents indicated that they did receive enough support and advice whilst 22% stated that they did not. Interestingly, comparing results across subgroups reveals that lone parents were most likely to state that they did receive enough support and advice (78%) whilst respondents that live with a spouse were least likely to (71%).

Respondents that stated they did not receive enough support and advice were subsequently asked what areas they would like more help and advice with. The top priorities emerged as more general advice / more frequent visits from Midwives and Health Visitors.

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**Figure 4.5.2.1 - Proportion of respondents that stated they would have liked more help / advice with the following areas**



**Base=36**

### **4.5.2 Parents focus groups**

The parents were asked about the support and advice that they received whilst they were pregnant. Many parents were positive, but some parents commented that they had received very little support during their pregnancies. As one of the parents explained:

“I was scared having twins, no-one gave me advice or anything, and I was absolutely terrified of giving birth.”

It was discussed that a number of the participants had received help from a variety of different Midwives. The participants agreed that they would have benefited from seeing the same Midwife throughout so that they could have built up a better relationship with them and this would hopefully be improved for new mums now with the SureStart Midwives.

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Positively, several of the parents mentioned going to one of the recent SureStart ante-natal pamper days which they really enjoyed. They went on to comment that it had been a good way of getting together with other expectant mums to talk about their experiences and soothe each other's fears.

Another mother had also moved from a different part of Liverpool to Sefton, and had found the service a lot more accommodating. As she explained:

"Where I was at Norris Green nobody came out but when I moved here it's like all the time."

Several participants highlighted that they had definitely noticed an improvement in the standard of care when compared to what they had received before SureStart.

When asked what they felt could be done to improve the support for parents in the area, one of the parents suggested that there should be an equal level of support provided to mothers whether they having their first or third child. One participant expressed:

"There is six years difference between when I had my older one and when I had my youngest. At the hospital they were doing a demonstration in the bath and they said why do you need to go, you've already got a kid? ..... But even after six years you're still a bit funny aren't you."

Another participant mentioned that she would have just liked someone to speak to about having a baby or a course that she could have gone on:

"Just someone to sit and listen to you and explain to you would've been good. My Son's nearly five now but it's brilliant for all the new Mum's because they should get that now."

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### **Conclusions & Recommendations - Ante-natal Care and Support**

Overall the parents gave mixed responses about their satisfaction with the levels of ante-natal care and support that they had received. The majority of respondents (74%) in the parent's survey felt that they had received enough support prior to and after giving birth to their youngest child.

Conversely, many focus group participants felt that the ante-natal support they had received was not so good. This finding needs to be viewed in the context that the majority of focus group participants had children at the older end of the SureStart age-range, offering a useful satisfaction rating for future comparison and analysis.

When asked how ante-natal care and support could be improved 61% of respondents to the survey felt they should be provided with more general information and more frequent visits from Midwives or Health Visitors. The parent's focus groups confirmed this, with many of the parent's suggesting that they would have liked to have received more support and advice. Several participants in the focus groups also raised the point that the same standard of care and support should be provided to second/third time parents as first time parents.

#### Key Recommendations

- Continue to build enhanced ante-natal services through the Community Midwives Project
- Consider the levels of support needed for parents expecting their second or third child and those that are expecting their first
- Promote the strengthening relationship between Midwives and Health Visitors and undertake joint ante-natal visits where resources allow

## **4.6 Outreach and Home Visiting**

The aim of this priority element of the Programme is to create a multi-disciplinary team by enhancing the existing family home visiting and outreach services. This multi-disciplinary team will include; Health Visitors, Families and Schools Together (FAST) Outreach Workers, Portage, Maternity and Early Years Social Workers and Peer Support volunteers. The team will provide:

- A consistent and regular home visiting service, covering all aspects of child health and development, maternal and family health
- Access to Health Visitors and other practitioners through drop-in sessions at local community venues
- FAST home visits and access to local 'Start Right' groups to improve early literacy and numeracy skills
- Support for parents and families experiencing particular difficulties

The success of this multi-disciplinary team was evaluated through the parent's survey the parent's focus groups and interviews with representatives from the home visiting team.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Outreach and Home Visiting**

#### **Home / Health Visitors**

- The main benefits of the enhanced home visiting team was that they could visit a larger number families and offer a more intense and consistent service
- Recruiting suitably qualified staff and finding accommodation for the expanding team was one of the main challenges they faced

#### **Parents Survey**

- Just less than three-quarters (73%) of respondents rated the visit they had received from their Health Visitor as 'very good' or 'good'.
- In the verbatim responses a significant number of people praised the help that they received from the Health Visitors and Midwives.
- A concern brought up a number of times was the lack of support and advice for mothers suffering from post-natal depression.
- Just under 40% of respondents (38%) felt that the Health Visitor service had improved since last year, and 19% believed that it had stayed the same.
- A larger proportion of people that were not working at the time (42%) believed that the service had improved as opposed to those who were working (29%).
- 21%, of the people surveyed had also been visited by someone other than their Health Visitor as part of the SureStart service.
- The majority of parents rated these agencies as either 'good' or 'very good'.

#### **Parents' focus groups**

- Some parents felt that although they had received very good advice from their Health Visitor, SureStart and the more intensive home visiting service had come too late as their children were nearer the older age range.
- Peer Support is a model supported by the vast majority of parents taking part in the focus groups
- Outreach and home Visiting staff in SureStart are key to building successful relationships with parents

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#### **4.6.1 Home / Health Visitors**

The key findings and recommendations from the Health and Home Visitors interviews can be found in the Wave 2 report. This section draws out any findings that were specific to Wave 3.

##### **Benefits**

When asked what the Health Visitors felt were the main benefits of the implementation of Wave 3, many cited that it was the capacity to visit a greater number of families across a wider area.

It also allowed them to recruit a greater number of Outreach workers so that they could offer a more intense and consistent home visiting service to families in the area. It was also felt that Wave 3 helped to raise the profile of SureStart in Sefton even further thus making it easier to get parents involved. Suspicion about 'what' SureStart was and fears that it was another 'here today - gone tomorrow' Government initiative had also largely been broken down and people associated SureStart with positive things.

When asked what the additional benefits were of the implementation of Wave 3, one Health Visitor explained:

"Within Wave 3 we have been able to get extra staffing in the Peer support team and it has allowed us to develop further collaborative work with other agencies."

##### **Problems**

The majority of Health Visitors cited that the services as part of Wave 3 had been very successful and there had only been a few initial problems encountered, mainly in the handover of families to a designated SureStart team.

One of the Health Visitors outlined the challenges involved in having to expand and develop on a continual basis:

"In terms of project development, it's been quite intense I would say. There has been a tremendous amount of effort and energy to make it work."

Finally, there had been problems with finding accommodation which was described by one Health Visitor as "a very stressful time."

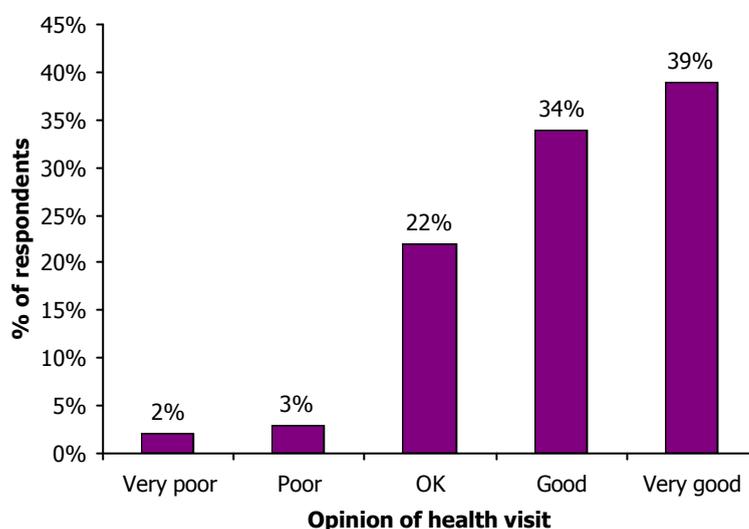
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#### 4.6.2 Parents survey

Respondents were asked to rate how useful they found the visit they received from the Health Visitor following the birth of their youngest child (see Figure 4.6.1.1).

As can be seen, just less than three-quarters of respondents rated the visit as 'good' or 'very good'. Only five per cent stated it was 'very poor' or 'poor'. Twenty-two per cent stated it was OK.

**Figure 4.6.1.1 Opinion on visit by health visitor following birth of youngest child**

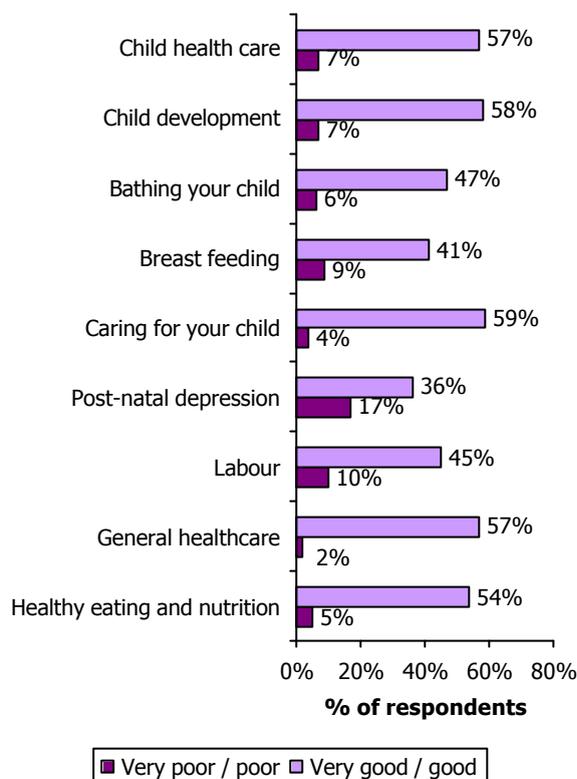


**Base=157**

Respondents were asked to rate the various help and advice provided by the Health Visitors in relation to pregnancy and bringing up a child.

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**Figure 4.6.1.2 Opinion on the help and advice provided by the Health Visitors in relation to pregnancy and bringing up a child**



**Base=157**

The respondents were asked whether they had any specific comments about the issues raised above. A significant number of people praised the help that they received from the Health Visitors and Midwives and cited them as helpful and supportive. As is evident from the comment below:

“I found my Health Visitor very helpful and I was able to talk to her if I had any worries about my son by just phoning up. She was great and very understanding.”

However, there were parents that stated that they had little to no contact with their Midwives and Health Visitors during and after their pregnancies. As a result it was felt that they were not aware of all the services available to them in the area.

“I would have liked more home care early on after the birth. My little boy will be four in July and has still not had his three-year assessment. After some phone calls, I found out I can take him to the local Parents Centre for one.”

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An issue that emerged a number of times was that some of the mothers that had more than one child were not visited as frequently and provided with as much support as first time mothers. Although, for some respondents this was acceptable, for others they had found it quite difficult. As the following comments illustrate:

“Even though it was my third child I was very anxious about the forthcoming labour but nobody helped allay my fears and throughout pregnancy I’d continuously asked for more pain relief and support in labour, which I didn’t receive.”

“I feel some things were not explained to me after having my younger babies because I already have a boy of four years old.”

Another concern that was brought up a number of times was the lack of support and advice for mothers suffering from postnatal depression. As a couple of the respondents explained:

“I had postnatal depression a couple of years ago and no-one would help me, they told me that I was ok and it would get better.”

“I suffered postnatal depression and felt there was no help available.”

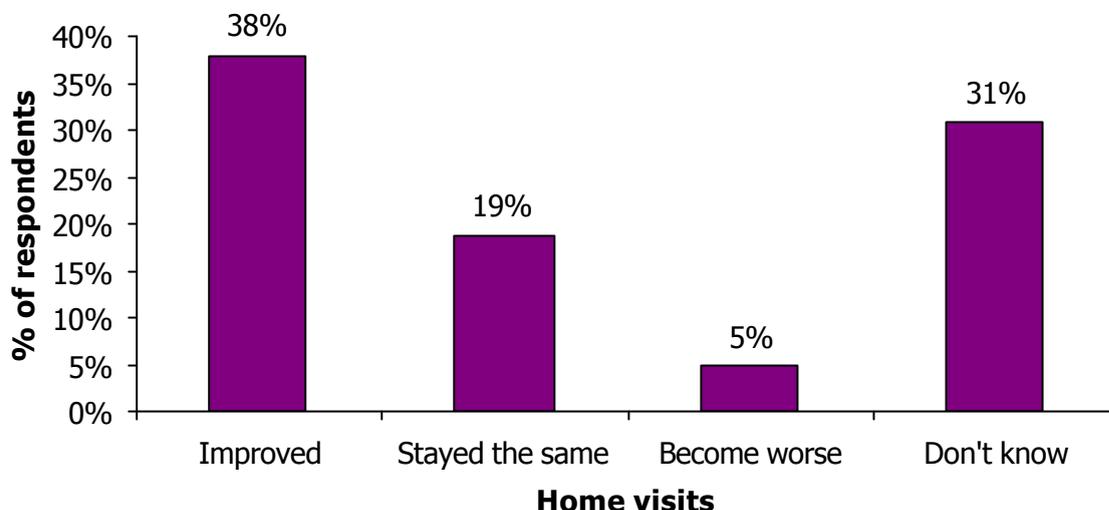
The respondents were asked how they felt the service the Health Visitors provided had changed in the last year. As is evident from the table below (fig 4.6.1.3), just under 40% of respondents felt that the Health Visitor service had improved since last year, and 19% believed that it had stayed the same. Only 5% felt that it had become worse.

“ I think the service is much better than it was a year or so ago, I see the same Health Visitor each time and she has really got to know me and my two boys. The good thing is we work out together what will help, she put me in touch with an early Years Worker and I went to a parent and toddler group for the first time with her a couple of weeks ago. I would never have done that before.”

The results also revealed that a larger proportion of people that were not working at the time (42%), believed that the service had improved as opposed to those who were working (29%).

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**Figure 4.6.1.3 Opinion as to how the service Health Visitors provide has changed in the last year**



**Base=157**

The respondents were asked whether they had received a home visit from anyone else from SureStart, other than a Health Visitor, in the last year. The results revealed that 21% (see fig 4.6.1.4) had been visited by someone other than their Health Visitor.

8% of respondents that were working received a home visit, whereas 27% of people that were not working received a visit. In relation to age, the results revealed that people aged 36 and above were less likely to receive a home visit (13%) compared to the younger parents (average 23%).

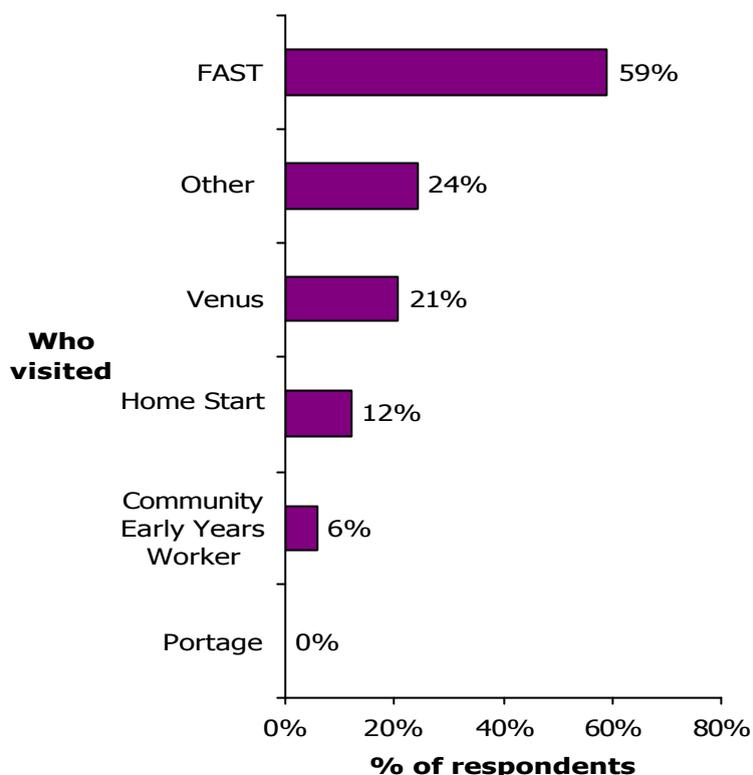
The majority of people (59%) were visited by a FAST worker, 21% were visited by a worker from Venus, 12% were visited by someone from Home-Start, and 6% were visited by a Community Early Years worker. None of the people surveyed had been visited by a Portage worker, although some parents in the focus groups had.

When asked which 'other' people the respondents had received a visit from, the answers included:

- Community Midwife
- Social Worker
- Handy Person
- Domestic Violence Worker

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**Figure 4.6.1.5 Agencies respondents had received a visit from**



**Base=34**

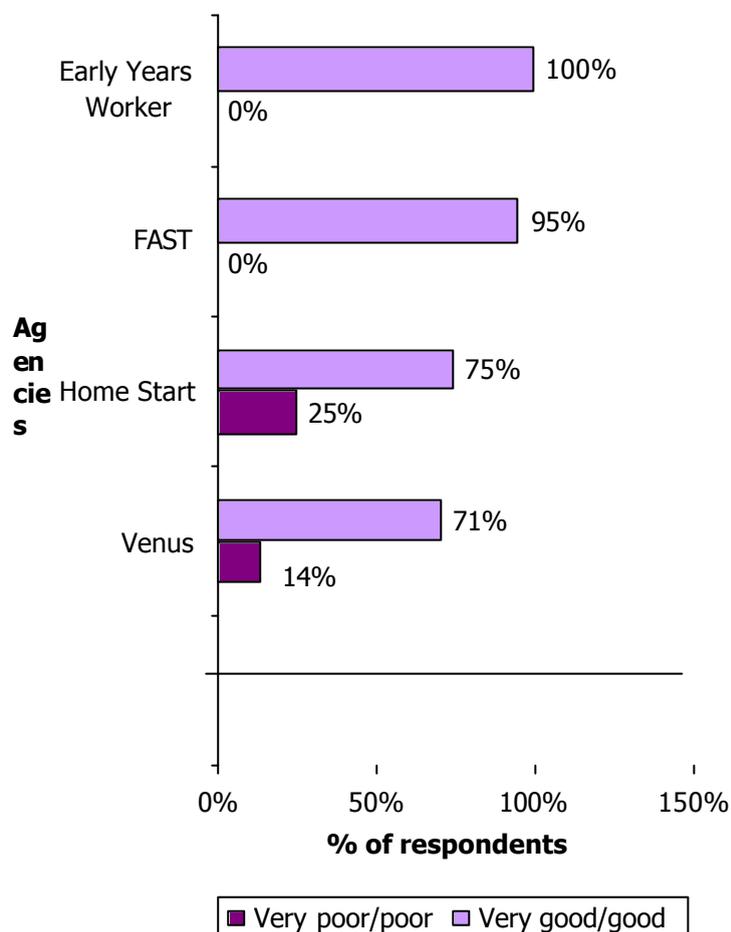
The respondents that had received a visit from a SureStart supported agency or worker were asked to rate the service.

Encouragingly, the vast majority of people rated the agencies as either 'good' or 'very good,' with Community Early Years Workers receiving 100%, the FAST team receiving 95% and Venus Peer Support achieving above 70%.

Less positively however, a quarter of the respondents rated the Home-Start service as either 'poor' or 'very poor'. [SureStart no longer funds the Home-Start South Sefton Scheme.]

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**Figure 4.6.1.6 How respondents rated visits**



**Base=varies**

The respondents were asked whether they had any specific comments to make about the agencies. All of the comments made were extremely positive, particularly with regards to the FAST service. Some of comments included:

“My children and I thoroughly enjoyed FAST. They were very professional, friendly and approachable and I felt my family gained a lot from the visit.”

“I was involved with the Venus Peer Support programme and I felt I had been carefully matched with my volunteer as we had so much in common and I found her support invaluable.”

“The FAST lady was very nice, informative and approachable and I was worried about her being intrusive or judgmental but she was neither.”

### **4.6.3 Parents focus groups**

The parents were asked about the support and advice that they received after giving birth. A number of participants discussed that they had been very happy with the support that they had received from their Health Visitors. For others the care and advice offered through home visiting had come too late, as their children were just about to go to School when SureStart was launched. As one of the parents noted;

“My Health Visitor was spot on I couldn’t fault her but we didn’t have SureStart until I had my third child..... I wish we could’ve had it for all three of them!”

Discussions in the focus groups often highlighted how parents felt services were beginning to change and improve but many felt there was still a long way to go. Parents were particularly positive about the SureStart Home Visiting team as a whole and believed the concept of several different agencies working together to support them was a good one.

Several parents also made reference to the handy person and the fact that through SureStart they had had safety gates and fireguards fitted, something they could not have afforded to do themselves.

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### **Conclusions & Recommendations - Outreach and Home Visiting**

The findings suggest that generally parents are very satisfied with the support and information they receive from the SureStart Home Visiting team. Also, it is encouraging to see that a considerable proportion of respondents felt that the service had improved in the last year and would continue to improve as the model developed.

Some parents stated that they had little or no contact with their Midwives and Health Visitors during and after their pregnancies and hoped this would be better under SureStart.

Some of the mothers that had more than one child, felt that they were not visited as frequently or provided with as much support as first time mothers, which sometimes proved difficult as they felt this was an unfair expectation. Conversely, other parents stated they would feel 'patronised' if their Health Visitor explained things over and over or constantly visited when additional children came along.

The home visiting services delivered by agencies other than health, were generally well rated and well received.

There was felt to be a lack of support and advice for mothers suffering from postnatal depression.

#### Key Recommendations

- As part of the Home Visiting ethos, the level of support offered needs to continue to be tailored to the individual family needs
- It must not be presumed that a parent that already has a child needs less support than a new parent
- SureStart can build on its positive reputation with parents that already have older children as they appear more aware of the new services that have been developed
- Women suffering or at risk from postnatal depression need to be given more support

## **4.7 Improving Play, Learning and Childcare**

This priority area states that SureStart will increase and improve opportunities for play, early learning and childcare, in the following ways:

- By providing funding for an additional Speech Therapist who will run local drop-in sessions, provide training and information for other practitioners working with children and families, and promote speech and language development in the area
- Employing Community Early Years Workers (C.E.Y) Workers to work with groups such as parent and toddler and playgroups to provide practical support around early learning and play (and develop a needs-led additional specialism)
- Increase the amount of childcare provision to meet local need, in partnership with Sefton Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP)
- Establishing a mobile toy library
- Provide funding to improve outdoor play spaces and to develop pre-school activity schemes

The effectiveness of this element of the programme was evaluated through the parent's survey and parent's focus groups.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Improving Play, Learning and Childcare**

#### **Parent's survey**

- Just under a third of respondents (31%) had attended a parent and toddler group or playgroup in the area.
- The majority of parents that had attended a parent or toddler group rated them as 'good' or 'very good' (68%).
- Only 12% of respondents thought that there was enough affordable childcare in the area.
- A large proportion of parents feel that there are not enough pre-school activity schemes.
- Over three-fifths of respondents (64%) believed that there were not enough good quality play and recreational spaces in the area.
- A majority of respondents (34%) thought that play and recreational spaces had stayed the same in the last year, 26% thought they had become worse and 17% thought they had improved.
- A large proportion (59%) of respondents were not aware of the Toy Library service.
- Of those respondents that had used the Toy Library service, 64% rated the service as either 'good' or 'very good'.

#### **Parent's focus groups**

- Most focus group participants were aware of a SureStart Group in their area
- Almost all participants made the point that there was a real gap in the market for affordable, good quality childcare.
- Several participants commented that all the 'better quality' childcare facilities seemed to be at the north end of Sefton.
- Participants that had received speech & language support for their children rated it very highly
- Community Early Years Workers were considered as very important in relation to support given through the SureStart programme
- A number of participants expressed the desire for more joined up provision that would cater for all ages of pre-school children.
- A complaint made by several parents was that the childcare provision in the area often stops during the school holidays, which is often the time when parents need it most.
- Participants that had used the Toy Libraries were very impressed with them.
- Several participants mentioned that they had been put off using the Toy Library because they were worried that toys would be unclean or they would be fined if the toys got broken.

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- Most parents thought the mobile toy library would be more beneficial than a stationary one.
- All participants agreed that the parks needed to be cleaned up and maintained as they were continuously vandalised.
- A number of participants felt that 'key parks' could be introduced to avoid vandalism.
- One participant commented that she been informed that a local park was going to be cleaned up and she had been involved in discussions with SureStart
- Many participants felt that getting their children involved in SureStart activities (while they accessed adult courses/development) was extremely good for their children's learning

#### **4.7.1 Parents survey**

The respondents were asked whether they attended any local parent and toddler groups. Just under a third (31%) of the people asked, attended a group in the area.

The results also revealed that people that were working were less likely to attend one of the groups (21%) compared to those that didn't (35%).

Furthermore, respondents living with a partner were more likely to attend a group (36%), as opposed to those living on their own (23%).

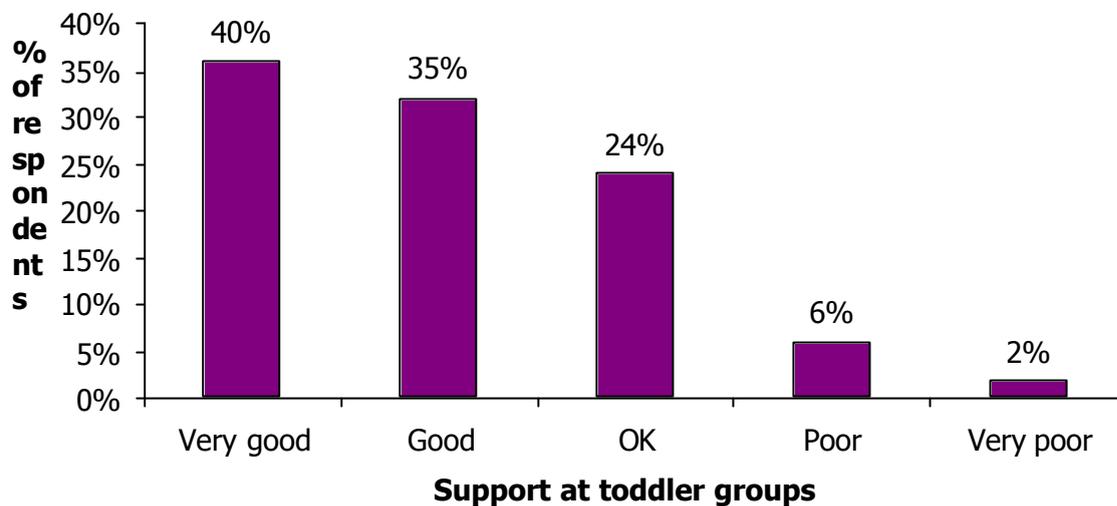
The respondents that attended one of the parents and toddler groups were then asked what they thought of the support and advice that they received from them. Overall, the response was very positive, as the table below illustrates (fig 4.7.1.2), over two-thirds (68%) of the respondents believed the support and advice to be either 'good' or 'very good'. This is an impressive finding as the groups are operated by volunteers that are supported by SureStart.

Many parents cited that the opportunity for them to socialise with other adults was just as important as the opportunity for their children to mix and play together.

Only 8% of people believed the support and advice around play and learning that they received was 'poor' or 'very poor'. What was also made apparent in the results was that the respondents that were living on their own found the support particularly good, with almost three-quarters (74%) rating it as 'good' to 'very good'.

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**Figure 4.7.1.2: Respondents opinions of the support and advice provided at parent and toddler groups**

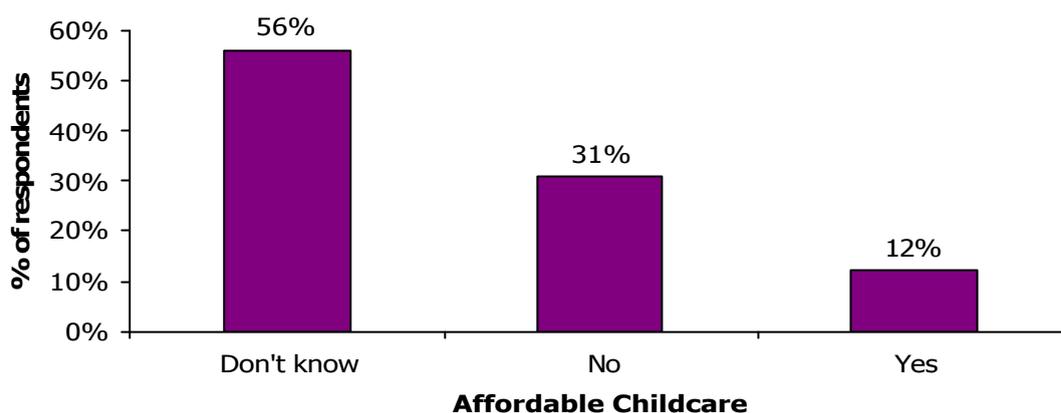


Base=50

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Respondents were asked whether they felt that there was enough affordable childcare in the area. As can be seen from the graph below (fig 4.7.1.3), the majority of people did not know (56%). In total, 31% of the respondents felt that there wasn't enough affordable childcare in the area, with 12% believing that there was. The results also revealed that it was the younger respondents (between the age group 16-25) that felt there was not enough affordable childcare.

**Figure 4.7.1.3: Percentage of respondents feeling there is affordable childcare in the area**



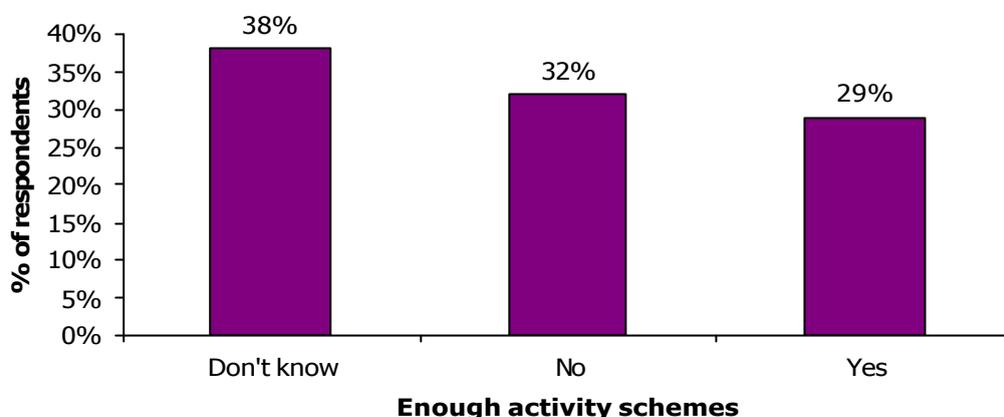
**Base=163**

The graph below (fig 4.7.1.4) reveals how many people thought there were enough pre-school activity schemes in the area. Overall, the largest proportion of people (38%) did not know whether there were enough pre-school activity schemes. Following this, the results were almost equally divided, with almost a third (32%) believing that there wasn't enough, and 29% believing that there was.

Finally, the results showed that a larger proportion of working parents (42%) believed that there were not enough pre-school activity schemes, compared to 27% of the parents that did not work.

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**Figure 4.7.1.4: Percentage of respondents that felt there were enough pre-school activity schemes in the area**

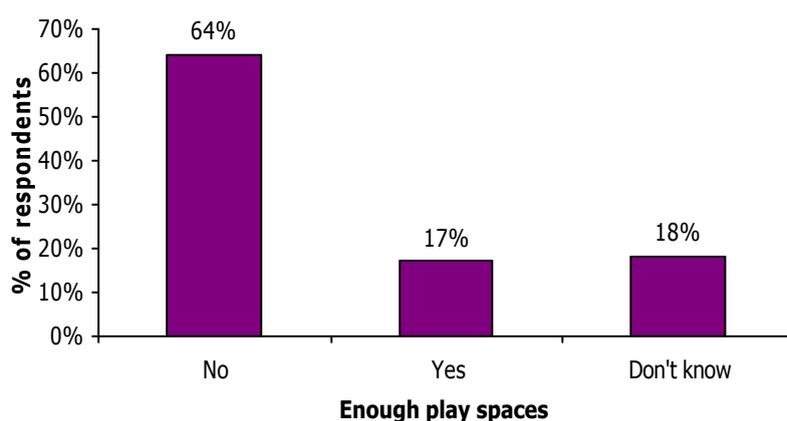


**Base=163**

The respondents were asked whether they felt that there was enough play and recreational spaces in the area. As can be seen from the table below (fig 4.7.1.5), a significant 64% of people believed that there was not.

The findings also revealed that a particularly large proportion of the older respondents, (36+) believed there were not enough play areas (75%). Similarly, a larger proportion (68%) of respondents living with a partner believed this to be the case.

**Figure 4.7.1.5: The percentage of respondents feeling there are enough play and recreational spaces in the area**



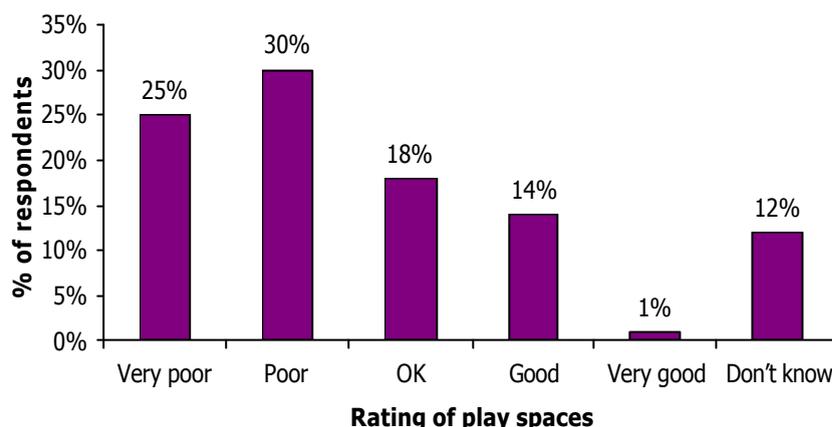
**Base=163**

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The questionnaire then went on to ask people what they thought about the quality of play and recreational spaces in the area. The results are recorded on the graph below (fig 4.7.1.6).

Over half of the respondents (55%) rated the play and recreational spaces as 'poor' to 'very poor'. Only 15% of people believed them to be 'good' to 'very good' and 12% marked 'don't know'.

**Figure 4.7.1.6: Respondents opinions of play and recreational spaces**



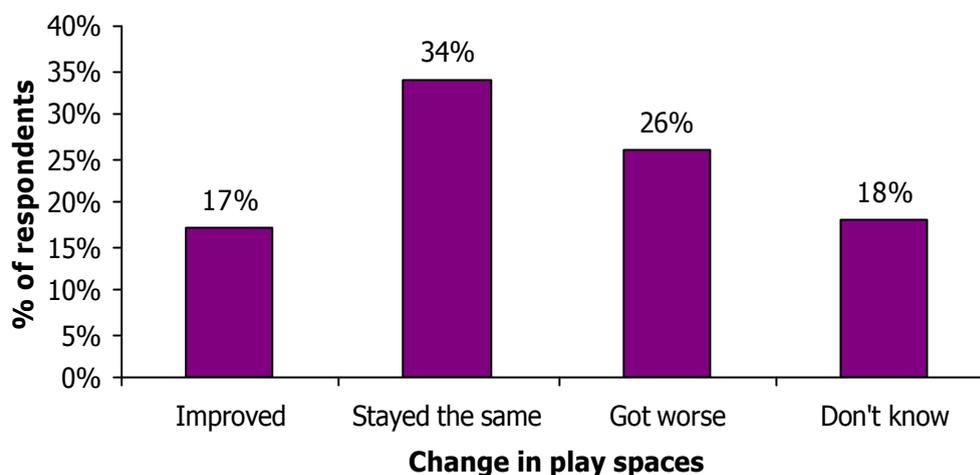
**Base=163**

The respondents were questioned as to how the play and recreational spaces have changed over the last year. As can be seen below (fig 4.7.1.7), the majority of people felt that the play spaces had remained the same in the past year, and over a quarter (26%) of respondents believed they had got worse.

Only 17% of the people asked believed that the play spaces had improved. The results also showed that a significantly larger percentage of the people that believed the play spaces had become worse were aged 36 or above.

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**Figure 4.7.1.7: Respondents opinions of changes to play and recreation spaces over the last year**



**Base=163**

The parents were asked whether they were aware that there was a Toy Library. A large proportion of the people asked (59%) were not aware of this service.

What was also made apparent from the results was that the younger respondents between the ages of 16 and 35 were less likely to know about the Toy Library, in comparison to the older respondents.

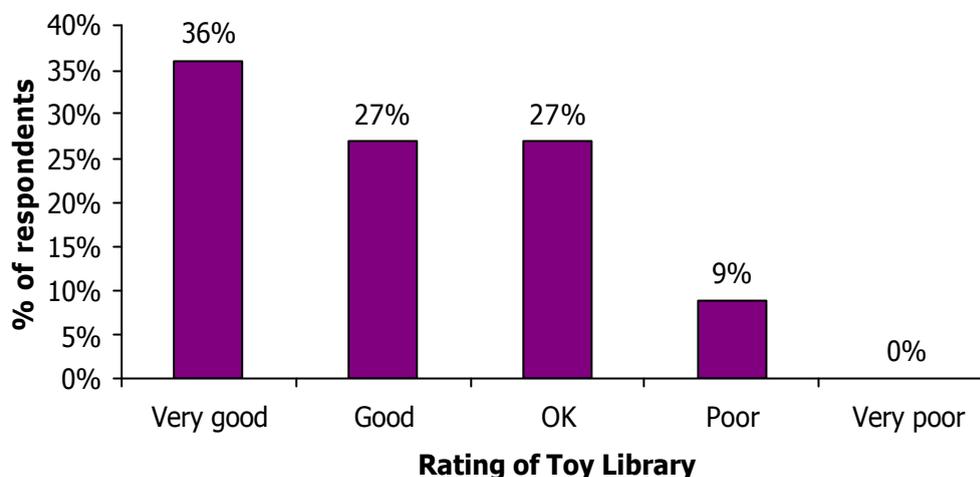
The amount of respondents that used the Toy Library was gauged. The results revealed that the vast majority of people asked (83%) did not use the Toy library.

The results also highlighted that people aged 36 or above were less likely to use the service compared to the younger respondents (6%), and single parents were more likely to use them than the people living with a partner.

The respondents that had used the Toy Library were asked to rate the service. Very encouragingly, 64% of people rated the service as either 'good' or 'very good', and only 9% rated it as poor (fig 4.7.1.10).

Interestingly, a significantly larger proportion of working parents rated the Toy Library as 'good' to 'very good' compared with those that did not work.

**Figure 4.7.1.10: The parents opinions of the Toy Library**



**Base=11**

#### **4.7.2 Parents focus groups**

The participants were asked about what children’s play or toddler groups they were aware of or used in the area, and how satisfied they had been with it. Within one of the focus groups, the parents knew of very few facilities in the area and only mentioned Jingles crèche, Tumble Tots and two parent and toddler groups.

A number of parents felt that it was essential that they had some form of affordable childcare in the area as it not only benefits the children but also the adults. One of the participants went on to explain that because of the amount of time that they spend with their children, both the children and parents need a break from each other.

“The groups are good because they give you some time out, even if you have to stay with your child, they are mixing with others and you get a chance to spend time with other parents and have a chat”

Another issue that arose out of the focus groups was the need for joined up provision for children of a range of different ages. For example a number of parents explained how they had to take their children to two separate playgroups because of their age differences.

They felt that it would be very beneficial to have a group that catered for children from 2 to 6 years old. Another participant also discussed how there was a lot of

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activities for children over 5 in the area, but not enough for the under fives. As one participant stated:

“There’s a church by us where they can go in from 6pm to say 8.30pm and that’s good . . . my daughter’s almost five so she goes to that but it’s for the older ones really.”

Conversely, several parents with older children in another focus group mentioned that there were lots of activities for under fives and not enough after school facilities.

A complaint that was brought up by several parents was that the childcare provision in the area generally stops during the school holidays. They felt that this was particularly difficult as that was at a time when they needed somewhere to entertain their children. As was stated:

“Things finish don’t they and don’t start again ‘til September and it’s the holidays you want to be doing something The new Centre in Seaforth’s supposed to be open all year round so that’ll be good .”

Another parent spoke of when she needed respite care because she was ill and no one could help her. She explained:

“I rang around social services and they said there’s nobody, nothing, no one can come out .....I had to rely on friends and family.”

Positively, many of the parents attended parents and toddler groups in the area, which they described as very enjoyable. They also felt that their children learned a lot of skills in preparation for School.

“You can tell the kids that haven’t been to nursery or playgroup on the first few days of a new term, they often seem to be clinging to their Mum’s but the others (that have attended pre-school) just head on into reception”

Finally, a number of participants felt that there should be childcare available in the area that is either free or heavily subsidised as many of them could not afford what was available. Encouragingly, several participants had heard of childcare tax credits and planned to find out what help they could get once the new Seaforth Nursery opens.

Within the two focus groups, very few people had heard about the Toy Library or used it. However the participants that had used it were very impressed stating:

“I definitely think it’s [the Toy Library] the best thing about SureStart. I was surprised how clean and well cared for the toys were.”

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It was made apparent that quite a few of the people that had not used the Toy Library were wary of using it because they were afraid that the toys would be unclean. As one participant commented:

“You think they might be manky [dirty] so it’s nice to hear they are kept clean.”

There was also some concern expressed about having to pay for the toys if they were made dirty or broken. Finally, one of the group members felt that it is very beneficial for there to be a mobile toy library as it allows people that can’t walk to one of the centres, to benefit from the service.

Several participants discussed their involvement in activities provided by the Community Early Years Workers with many having accessed food taster courses and learnt to cook on a budget. A parent also mentioned how popular weaning weekly sessions had been and explained there was a waiting list because so many people wanted to go on it.

Parents felt good nutrition and eating habits were important to their children’s learning and several participants discussed how it was important that they had a good breakfast before School and ate healthily.

One Mother described how she had been given a lot of support with breastfeeding as she had found it particularly difficult especially for the first few days;

“I don’t think I would have stuck it out without her support, it’s really tough and there aren’t exactly a lot of other Mum’s breastfeeding”

With regards to the outdoor facilities in the area, all of the participants agreed that they needed to be cleaned up and maintained as they were continuously vandalised by the older children. One of the parents described how there was a nice park in Potters Barn (on the outskirts of the Wave 2 SureStart Sefton area):

“Potters Barn is kept nice; they have a Park Friends Association so everyone rallies round. I think it’s a bit like that at the Bark & Daley Park that SureStart did up”

Once again a number of parents felt that they could introduce ‘Key Parks’ so as to avoid vandalism. Other than that, a participant suggested putting up CCTV cameras to deter people.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Improving Play, Learning and Childcare**

31% of respondents to the parent's survey currently attend parent and toddler groups in the area. Positively 68% of those respondents, rated them as 'good' or 'very good'.

Suggestions for improving the parent and toddler groups by focus group participants were that they needed to be; open in the school holidays and joined up, so that they provide care to all ages of pre-school children.

Overall parents made the point that there was still a real need in the area for good quality and affordable full day childcare, pre-school aged activities schemes and play and recreational spaces. What is available could also do with being more widely marketed.

Community Early Years Workers are highly rated by parents and are viewed as a key link to other SureStart services.

Survey findings revealed that a large proportion of parents were not aware of the Toy Library, although they were highly valued by those that used them. In the focus groups, parents that had used the Libraries were also really impressed with the service.

However, some participants suggested they had been put off using them because they were worried that they would be unhygienic or that they would be fined if the toys got broken. Several participants felt that they would make more use of the mobile Library since they wouldn't have to carry the toys home after they had picked them up.

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Key Recommendations

- Continue to implement developments to enhance childcare, pre-school aged learning activities and play and recreational facilities
- Consider running more activities in the school holidays.
- Working in partnership with providers servicing older age ranges, aim to provide (wherever practical) more facilities where parents can take children of all ages together
- Look at implementing 'key parks' so that parents have a space where they feel safe to take their children and capacity build local communities to self-protect play spaces eg. 'Friends of the Park' Assoc.
- Continue to Work with other organisations (eg. Leisure Services) to try and ensure play and recreational areas are kept clean and maintained
- Enhance the marketing of the toy library including informing the parents that the toys in the toy library are clean and that they won't be responsible if the toys are damaged.

## **4.8 Information & Support for Parents**

The aim of this priority area is to provide a number of projects that will offer information and support to families, including:

- The development of a multi-purpose Centre which will provide a central information access point about services and other forms of support, and a venue to develop new parent-led activities and access to drop in and outreach sessions.
- Additional support services for families with children who have emotional or behavioural problems, and the development of interventions that enable parents to develop positive and nurturing relationships with their children.
- A Handy Person Scheme to offer families with pre-school children practical support in the home.

This element of the programme was evaluated through parent focus groups and the parent's survey.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Information & Support for Parents**

#### **Parents survey**

- Just over one in ten respondents (14%) had heard about the multi-purpose SureStart Centre.
- Over four-fifths (82%) of respondents thought that they would use the information and support part of the Centre.
- The majority of respondents (87%) suggested that they would use the Nursery and 'children's play area' at the Centre.
- One fifth of respondents were aware that SureStart provides a Handy Person Scheme.
- Just over one-fifth (21%) of respondents that had heard of the Handy Person Scheme had used it.
- Over half of parents (54%) reported that 'transport is not a problem for them'.

#### **Parents focus groups**

- Almost all of the parents had visited one of the Centres in the Wave 2 SureStart Programme area, with the majority mentioning the May Logan Centre (this centre lies on the boundary of the two Programmes)
- Parents were very satisfied with what the temporary Seaforth Centre offered but some felt it was too small and several were on waiting lists for courses.

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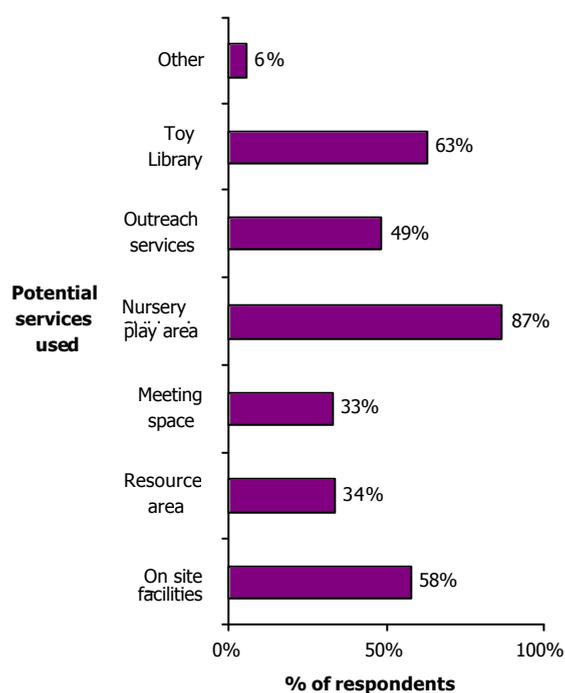
## Information & Support for Parents

### 4.8.1 Parents survey

The survey sought to establish the level and effectiveness of information and support that is available to parents. Overall, the respondent's awareness of the multi-purpose SureStart Centre (that is due to open in Mar 2004) was fairly limited, as only 14% of respondents had heard about it. Encouragingly, however, when asked if they were likely to visit the Centre over four-fifths (82%) of respondents thought that they would.

As Figure 4.8.1.2 indicates, parents suggested that they would use a range of facilities that will be available at this Centre, with the greatest proportion of respondents (87%) mentioning they will use the Nursery and 'children's play area' and 58% hoping to use the on-site crèche facilities. Just under half of respondents (49%) mentioned that they would use the 'outreach services' and just over a third (34%) mentioned they wanted to use the 'resource area'.

**Figure 4.8.1.2: Respondent's perceived uses of the multi-purpose centre**



Base=134

Only one-fifth (20%) of respondents were aware that SureStart provides a Handy Person Scheme. Of the respondents that had heard of the scheme, 21% had used it and of those respondents that had used the service, 3 rated it 'very good', 1 rated it

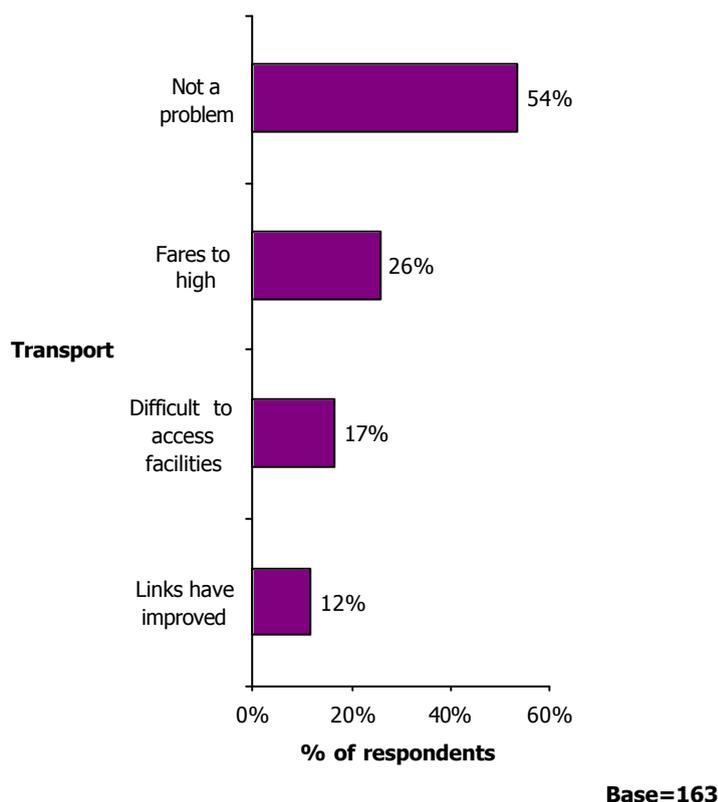
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'good' and 3 rated it 'ok'. Positively no respondents rated the Handy Person Scheme 'poor' or 'very poor'.

This profile is reflective of the level of service the scheme can deliver. The Handy Person service can only reach a limited number of the most vulnerable and at risk families and takes referrals from SureStart Health Visitors and the Social Worker for fitting equipment. The Safety Equipment project has a wider scope and will be promoted through the new Seaforth Centre offering cost price safety equipment for families to purchase.

Respondents were asked their opinions of transport that is provided in the area. Positively, over half (54%) of parents agreed with the statement that transport is not a problem for them and 12% felt that the transport links have improved in the last 12 months. 17% suggested that they sometimes find it difficult to access facilities because of poor transport links but many highlighted the train network as very reliable and easy to access. The responses are detailed in figure 4.8.1.3.

**Figure 4.8.1.3: Respondents opinions of local transport**



#### **4.8.2 Parents focus groups**

The parents were asked about their awareness of services in the area and if they felt enough information and support for families with pre-school children was available.

The majority of parents felt there was a better range of information available compared to twelve months ago and many made reference to information on SureStart services received through a Home Visitor or through the post in the form of regular newsletters.

Positive Parenting courses were cited by several participants as a welcome support mechanism that was offered at local venues and often had childcare attached to enable parents to go to sessions without children. Some healthcare services such as children's development checks were now offered at community venues as well as through home visits and participants generally agreed that this was much improved.

Getting accurate information and extra support had also been easier for some participants than in the past, and they cited this as a result of having regular contact with SureStart staff such as the Community Early Years Workers or from having a more constant relationship with their Health Visitor.

Overall, information was seen to be clearer and more family friendly but participants felt there needed to be more promotion of family services.

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### **Conclusions & Recommendations - Information & Support for Parents**

In terms of information and support for parents SureStart has begun to make good progress but more needs to be done to promote current services and those being developed such as the new Centre and Neighbourhood Nursery. Although knowledge of the new Centre was not high amongst respondents, the number of parents expressing a desire to use it once open is very encouraging. A majority of focus group participants were already using the temporary Wave 3 Centre and rated the level of information and support available to them highly.

SureStart 'Welcome Packs' given out to all new families/new births are enthusiastically received by parents. Many mentioned that they did look at the leaflets and information contained in the bags and the safety packs containing door protectors, plug socket covers and so on were particularly useful.

It is clear from the parents survey and focus groups that the Centre will be an extremely well used local resource for information and support for parents.

#### **Key Recommendations**

- Ensure the new SureStart Centre & Nursery is fully promoted nearer to its opening.
- Consider the future expansion of the Handy Person scheme if additional funding can be secured
- Continue to produce a relevant, enjoyable and informative newsletter for all families in the SureStart area

## **4.9 Support for Families and Children with Special / Additional Needs**

The aim of this priority area is provide support for families with pre-school children with special/ additional needs. To include:

- Producing a 'Liaison Directory' that effectively signposts families to the range of specialist support available
- Provide a Special Needs Fund to enable SureStart to respond to emerging needs
- Employ a Special Needs Support Worker

The effectiveness of this element of the programme was evaluated through the parental survey and the parents focus groups.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Support for families and children with special / additional needs**

#### **Parents survey**

- Only 3% (n5) of respondents indicated that they had children with special needs.
- 2 of the 5 parents of children with special needs did not think that they were offered enough support.
- Of the 3 parents that felt they did get enough support, all three felt support had improved in the last 12-18 months

#### **Parents focus groups**

- Only one parent from the focus groups had a child with special needs, she felt she was currently given enough support but was concerned that she wouldn't be offered as much support when her child started school.
- Several participants expressed the view that their children had ADHD and there was little support for families with children with severe behavioural problems
- A number of parents mentioned that taking part in positive parenting courses had helped them to significantly manage their children's behaviour
- The majority of participants had heard about the new Community Early Years (Special/Additional Needs) post and felt this would act as a good support and source of information for those parents with children with special needs

#### **4.9.1 Parents survey**

Only five respondents (3%) indicated that they had children with special needs and the survey sought to establish the support that is available to them.

Three respondents thought that they were offered enough support and two did not. Both respondents that did not feel they were offered enough support highlighted the lack of respite available through Social Services. One had recently used the new SureStart Family Breaks (an emergency respite service) and felt this was beneficial but she would have preferred a service that could offer the family an overnight break, which SureStart does not provide for.

#### **4.9.2 Parents focus groups**

Only one of the parents in the focus groups had a child with special needs. She explained the support she received was adequate however she would need more when she started school. She commented:

“I get a speech-therapist and a physiotherapist I get that every week. I’m worried that when she starts school she won’t get the same level of individual attention and that’s what she really benefits from at the moment”

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**Conclusions & Recommendations - Support for families and children  
with special / additional needs**

Only a very small proportion of respondents to the survey and focus groups had children with special/ additional needs, thus it is difficult to draw any definite conclusions in this area. However, an earlier survey conducted by SureStart revealed approximately 12% of families in the area had a child with special/additional needs and the main request for support was for respite provision.

In response, the Programme has established a 'Family Breaks' project that offers a child some time in a quality childcare setting during the day whilst working alongside Social Services to support the longer term needs of children and families experiencing particular pressures. The project can only be accessed by SureStart staff working with families under pressure that may have a child with a disability or have illnesses or emergencies within the family home.

As a result of this close working relationship, another scheme is being piloted between SureStart and Social Services to offer 'Natural Breaks' for children with disabilities either in the family home or an inclusive setting. This scheme does provide some out of hours support.

Overall, based on responses to the survey, the parents that responded are fairly aware of the range of support that is available to them.

**Key Recommendations**

- Evaluate the effectiveness of both the Family Breaks project and the Natural Breaks project
- Revisit this SureStart priority area in particular detail in any follow up research to aim for a more representative sample of families in the area with children with special/additional needs
- Monitor the impact of a dedicated Community Early Years Worker post on service provision and referral to support for families

## **4.10 Employment and Training**

As part of the self-completion survey, parents were asked about their employment status as supporting parents into training and employment is a new priority area for SureStart Local Programmes. Through the focus groups we aimed to gather more in-depth data, we asked parents whether they would like to be able to change their employment status, and whether they had participated in any training.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Employment and Training**

#### **Parents survey**

- 32% of respondents were working and 68% were not working.
- The majority of respondents (64%) were at home looking after their family.
- Less than one in ten respondents (8%) worked full-time and 24% worked part-time.
- Only 1% of respondents were studying full-time and 3% were studying part-time.

#### **Parents focus groups**

- A concern of working parents was that they felt they needed to spend more time with their children.
- Some participants that worked suggested that working meant they rarely got to spend time as a family.
- Many parents mentioned that accessing SureStart courses or training had given them a new-found confidence
- Most parents that didn't work commented that they would love to work or train but they were prevented from doing so by the lack of affordable childcare.
- Working parents mentioned that they found it difficult that a lot of activities closed in the school holidays.

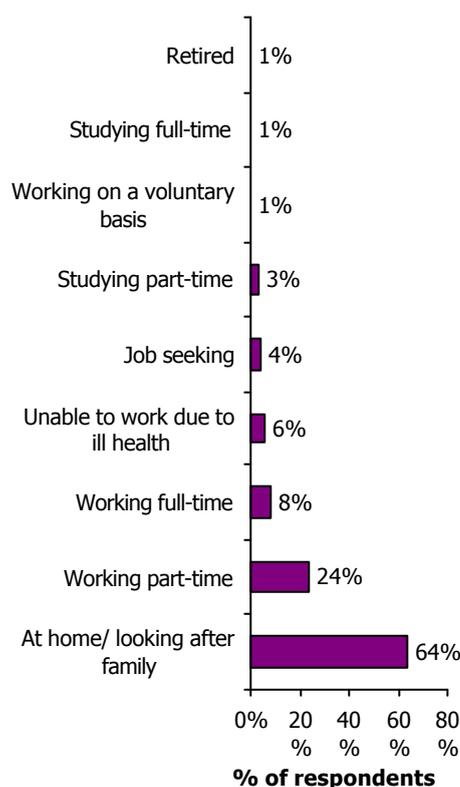
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### 4.10.1 Parents survey

The survey sought to establish the employment status of parents. Overall 32% of respondents were working and 68% of respondents were not working.

Figure 4.10.1.1 details the actual employment status of parents, as can be seen the majority of parents (64%) were at home looking after the family. In terms of those that worked just under a quarter (24%) were working part-time, 8% were working full-time and 1% were working on a voluntary basis. Overall 4% were studying and of these, 1% were studying full-time and 3% studying part-time.

**Figure : 4.10.1.1: Respondent's employment status**



Base=163

#### **4.10.2 Parents focus groups**

The participants were asked whether they were in employment or training, and if not, whether they would like to change their situation. Four of the parents were employed but they felt that sometimes they needed to spend more time with their children.

They all agreed that it was also a problem not being able to spend quality time together as a whole family. When they were at work, their partner looked after their children, and vice versa. As one of the parents stated:

“I have to work weekends when he is not working and that just means that none of us get time together. In fact we rarely spend time together as a family, which is really sad”

The rest of the parents that didn't work all agreed that they would like to get back into work or go into training. However, they felt that childcare was too expensive. It was explained by one parent that if they worked, they would have less money than if they didn't:

“When I was getting income support, and all that, I found I was better off then, than when I was working.”

Another participant said that she wanted to return to college to do a course however the crèche would not be able to look after her child until she was one.

Another parent explained;

“ I've done the foundation course but I can't get a childcare place yet and I can't afford a private nursery. I know you can get vouchers but they won't cover all the time I need to be in college and I just can't afford the extra”

The participants were asked whether they had any final comments. The group reiterated that many of them wanted to take part in training and get jobs and SureStart would be a good point to start. Several parents had actually used the Jobs Education & Training (JET) Officer and found out more accurate information about what they were entitled to in terms of childcare support and benefits.

A consensus emerged that, as their children became a little older, and they had had the opportunity to access taster courses, basic skills and development activities, they would increase in confidence and skills and be better equipped to enter the workforce.

A small number of parents had used the Children's Information Service but most were not aware of it. Parents also felt that more activities and childcare needed to be made available during the holidays.

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### **Conclusions & Recommendations - Employment and Training**

Overall the majority of respondents (68%) to the survey were not working and only a minority (4%) were undertaking training.

From the focus groups the comments by those that worked were mostly negative, such as the fact that they felt they didn't spend enough time with their children and partners, as they would like. Conversely, most parents that didn't work expressed the desire to but felt that they were constrained by the lack of affordable childcare. Working parents made the point that it is very inconvenient that a lot of the facilities for pre-school children close during the school holidays.

#### **Key Recommendations**

- Work alongside the local EYDCP to make employers more aware of the needs of working parents in the area & further support CIS with promotion of childcare and children's play facilities
- Monitor the impact of the SureStart JET Officer on numbers of parents accessing training, education and job opportunities and consider 'rolling out' the model if successful
- Continue to support equally, those parents that wish to remain at home for the early years while offering opportunities for building steps towards future training, education or employment
- Extend the range of activities open in the school holidays and support local childcare providers to offer more settings during the holiday periods

## **5 Conclusion**

The 'End of Year One' Evaluation has provided the SureStart Wave 3 Partnership with an opportunity to gain an insight into how the Programme is beginning to develop during its first twelve months of operation. The process has also enabled a satisfaction baseline against each priority area that should enable later comparisons and impact analysis during future research.

Overall, the Programme has begun implementing many new models of working in an expedient timeframe and has made some 'in-flight' changes to several proposals outlined in the original Programme Delivery Plan as local needs have changed.

The conclusions and key recommendations for each section should serve as a basis for further development and review of service delivery across the Programme.

At this stage, the Wave 3 Programme can already demonstrate many areas of 'added value' and 're-shaping' of service provision in Seaforth and Bootle but it will be important to monitor this over time to inform the mainstreaming agenda.

**SureStart**  
**Local Programme**  
**Wave 3 – Seaforth & Bootle**  
**End of Year One Evaluation**

Further copies of this Executive Summary and the full Evaluation Report relating to the Wave 3 Local programme in Sefton are available from the Management Office;

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