

Sure Start North Woolwich/Silvertown & Gallions

Enhanced Evaluation Report

Concept Consulting RMT

December 2003

Executive Summary

The Sure Start North Woolwich/Silvertown & Gallions (NWSG) is a fifth wave Sure Start programme which received approval to provide services for children under 4 and families in the London Borough of Newham in 2002.

Sure Start NWSG undertook an initial evaluation of its progress in the establishment year 2002/3. The study, focused on progress up to March 2003, and highlighted the lessons learned in establishing the programme and baselines of satisfaction with local services amongst local families. However, the Sure Start NWSG recognises that, in addition to developing an effective partnership platform to deliver milestones and targets, they need to look at other cross cutting processes such as access to services and service quality.

The partnership board, therefore, commissioned an evaluation which focused on the use/non use of Sure Start NWSG services for three target groups (Service users, Lapse users and Non-users) and progress of work from March 2003 to date on linkage with National PSA and SDA targets. At the time of the study, most of the key personnel had just been appointed.

The evaluation methodology had a number of components; training parents as evaluators, quantitative data analysis- questionnaire survey, qualitative analysis- semi-structured interviews/ focus group discussions and document analysis. Ninety people filled out the questionnaires. This represented 24% return rate among an eligible population.

Characteristics of Parents

Forty one percent (41%) of respondents described themselves as users, 9% were lapse-users and 50% were non-users. There were 6% males and 94% females. More than half of the parents in the survey were in the 26-35 age group. There were 33% single parents / or those who do not live with their partners, 67% were married or were living with their

partners and 16% single parents who do not use Sure Start's services. The work status of parents showed there were 48.8% full time housewife/ husband and 17.1% who were not seeking work. Six percent (6%) of parents were seeking employment.

Key Findings

The key findings were as follows:

- Over 80% of users and all the lapse-users have a fair amount/ great deal of knowledge about Sure Start NWSG. Among non-users 59% know very little or nothing about Sure Start while 41% have have fair amount of knowledge/ know a great deal about Sure Start
- A great number of non-users (59.5%) know or have heard about Sure Start. There were 45% of parent users who are also involved with the programme as members of the parents group (11%) or on the partnership board.
- Overall, 57% of users said they were very satisfied, 50% of lapse-users were fairly satisfied while 50.4% of non-users were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the services Sure Start provide. Ninety percent (90%) of users were fairly/very satisfied with the services they receive from Sure Start.
- Among users, 58% think that services have gotten better within the last twelve months , 10% think services have stayed the same while 29% don't know. Fourty-three percent (43%) of lapse users think that services are better, 43% don't know and 14% think services have gotten worse. Among non-users , 32% think services are better, 48% don't know while 20% think services have gotten worse/ stayed the same.
- Parents think that services are getting better because there are more things for children to do, information about services are available and there is support for parents.

- Users and lapse-users use more services for children under 4s and their families in the Sure Start area than non-users
- Among users, the Drop-in Crèche is the service which has benefited most parents (22%). It is followed by the Messy Play and Toddler group activities.
- None of the parents users indicated that he or she has benefited from the father's project.
- **Users:** Sure Start parents find the location of the services they use very convenient (65%) or fairly convenient (23%). Ninety one percent (91%) of parents find it very reasonable to travel to the services. Users currently find the opening times very suitable (45%) or fairly suitable (44.5%). Parents find the play opportunities available to their children through Sure Start very satisfactory (72.4%) or fairly satisfactory (21.7%). While 55.2% of parents are satisfied with the employment and training opportunities provided by Sure Start, 24.% of parents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Some parents (3.9%) expressed their dissatisfaction with the service.
- None of the respondents had become employable directly through Sure Start.
- **Lapse-users:** The Baby & Toddler group, the Messy Play and Drop-in Crèche were the services used by most lapse-users. Reasons for non-use among lapse-users included the fact that they don't feel confident (20%), have other older children (20%) or want more information (20%). Other reasons given were that the services they used were no longer relevant to their needs (10%) or they can't be bothered (10%).
- **Non-users:** Among non-users, 57% percent have heard about Sure Start's activities, 75% indicated that they were interested in them. Reasons for non-use included the fact parents don't want to get too much involved (26.5%), they don't feel confident (19%) and they have problems with child care for older children (12.6%), above 4 years, when they use Sure Start's services.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the survey and focus group discussions and interviews with service users and providers/ staff the following recommendations are made:

1. Use the Parents Group to empower parents to be involved more in planning and decision-making. Use local-to-local volunteer/ workers to promote the service on 1:1 basis among parents. The sure start parent evaluators in this study have shown that it takes a parent to reach a parent.
2. Use the Parents Group as a platform to build parents' confidence. Include 'Confidence Building' in your training programme for parents. Create an environment for support networks to flourish within the parents group. Consider holding special Parents group meetings in other parts of the Sure Start area, such as Beckton and Windsor Park Estate to attract more parents.
3. Increase the outreach to single parents through the Sure Start Plus initiative . Inform teenage parents, through promotional materials, about the range of services available in the Borough.
4. Parents are generally satisfied with the services they use and rate, specific services such as Drop-in crèche, Messy Play and Baby and toddler group very beneficial. Continue to use these services/ activities to promote Sure Start among lapse users and non-users.
5. Highlight, in promotional brochures such as the Maternity Pack, the alternative provisions Sure Start is making and choices they offer parents, especially non-users.
6. Have a clear-cut objective of supporting parents to employment. For example, look for ways in which some of the parents being trained by the programme could be employed in the programme at various levels.

7. Parents should know in clear terms how far Sure Start NWSG can help with the problem of older children. Explore seamless service provision with older children through the Children Centre initiative.
8. Through the father's project, change the image of the programme from being primarily aimed at women by increasing targeted publicity and ensuring that general publicity is as appealing to dads/male carers as it is to mums/female carers.
9. Promote the strategy for reaching out to families with special needs. There could be a focus on fathers with special needs children as part of strengthening the fathers project.
10. The process of tracking what has been achieved within the milestone is recommendable. To manage parental expectation, develop the milestones into parent-friendly formats and use them to update the community about what is happening, what they can expect and what Sure Start can manage.
11. Adopt a flexible, responsive and inclusive approach to the opening times of your services. Explore having week-end activities - offering activities for dads/ male carers and their children and families and others who work during the week.

Contents

Executive Summary.....ii

Introduction.....1

Evaluation Methods.....2

Characteristics of Respondents.....6

Satisfaction with Services.....9

Users: Why they Use Sure Start's Services.....15

Lapse-Users: Why they don't Use Sure Start's Services.....17

Non-Users: Why they don't Use Sure Start's Services.....19

Milestones and Managing Expectations.....21

Recommendations.....23

Appendix 1.....25

Questionnaires.....29

Introduction

The Sure Start North Woolwich/Silvertown & Gallions (NWSG) is a fifth wave programme in the London Borough of Newham that is developing services to improve the quality of access to health, family support and early education. As is the case for all Sure Start programmes, the (NWSG) uses a 'joined-up' approach to involve parents, statutory and voluntary agencies, community groups and businesses and parent in streamlining service delivery and ensuring continuity of provision.

The Sure Start NWSG service delivery plan was developed in line with the government's aim of reducing child poverty and was approved in 2002. The government has set a series of national objectives, outcome targets (Public Service Agreement-PSA) and service delivery targets (SDA) for Sure Start that all local programmes work towards. Sure Start NWSG has set clear milestones against which they monitor their progress towards these targets. The partnership also understands the purpose of evaluation and its importance in delivering better services.

Sure Start NWSG undertook an initial evaluation of its progress in the establishment year 2002/3. The study, focused on progress up to March 2003, and highlighted the lessons learned in establishing the programme and baselines of satisfaction with local services amongst local families. However, the Sure Start NWSG recognises that, in addition to developing an effective partnership platform to deliver milestones and targets, they need to look at other cross cutting processes such as access to services and service quality.

Concept Consulting RMT was, therefore, commissioned by the Sure Start NWSG to undertake an enhanced evaluation of its progress to complement the previous evaluation report of 2002/3. The current evaluation focuses on the use and non-use of the Sure Start NWSG services and progress of work from March to September 2003.

The Evaluation Methods

The Sure Start NWSG partnership-commissioning panel agreed that the enhanced evaluation should focus on the following:

- The use/non use of Sure Start NWSG services for three target groups:
 - Group 1- Service users
 - Group 2- Lapse users (to investigate reasons for non-use)
 - Group 3-Non-users (via local nursery schools, venues, baby clinics etc)
- Progress of work from March 2003 to date on linkage with National PSA and SDA targets

The Context for the Research

The study was undertaken within the context of 2003/03 being primarily a year of establishing the programme and the partnership infrastructure. Sure Start NWSG is building links with local families and agencies and initiating service delivery. Staffing level influences programme delivery outcomes. At the time of the study, most of the key personnel had just been appointed.

Methods

Given the remit, the evaluation was guided by the principle that the involvement of local parents in deciding what to evaluate and their continual participation throughout the evaluation process was key to the success of the study. The research was designed to answer the question, *why do parents use or do not use Sure Start NWSG services?* It is anticipated that the results would guide decision-making and mid-course changes.

The evaluation process had a number of components:

- Training parents as evaluators
- Quantitative data analysis- questionnaire survey
- Qualitative analysis- semi-structured interviews
- Document analysis

Parent Evaluators

A one day training programme was organised for 4 parents who chose to be practically involved with the evaluation. The training focused on the evaluation process (with specific emphasis on Sure Start) and administering questionnaires. The draft questionnaire was pre-tested and the necessary changes made.

Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire was further reviewed with the Sure Start NWSG Community Development Officer. The National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) recommends that each programme consult with 15 to 20% of the total eligible population. A Sure Start Street List of NWSG sorted by address indicated 166 eligible parent users in the catchment area.

An initial consultation letter was first sent out to all the families on the Sure Start database and service providers informing them about the evaluation. They were also informed about the questionnaires, and the parent evaluators who would undertake random interviews on the streets, in places where parents meet. Self-administered questionnaires were sent out by post. Six evaluators, in pairs, administered the questionnaire on a 1:1 basis at Gallions Nursery School, Baby and Toddler Gym, Messy Play, and The Royal Docks Health Centre. The parent evaluators also administered questionnaires in the catchment area where they live: Beckton, Windsor Park Estate, North Woolwich & Silvertown.

Administering the questionnaire on a 1:1 basis at Sure Start NWSG groups/services, local activities and by the local parents was deemed to be the most workable option and that most likely to provide a random

sample using the 'convenience sampling' method. A review of the post codes of respondents showed this to be the case. In all a total of 370 questionnaires were sent out. There were 90 respondents; 37 users, 8 lapse- users and 45 non-users.

Semi-structured interviews

The qualitative element of the data was provided by semi-structured interviews. Discussions were held with:

- Eight mothers from the 'Parents Group' at the Sure Start NWSG Centre
- Eleven mothers from the 'Parents Group'
- One father at the Baby & Toddler Gym
- Service providers - the Headmistress of Drew Primary School, a Health Visitor of the Royal Dock Clinic, Co-ordinator of the Windsor Park Community Centre, representatives of the Beckton Islamic and the Windsor Park Bangladeshi Parents Associations.

This provided further insights into what parents and providers feel about the Sure Start NWSG's services. The content of the interviews was formulated based on the questionnaire survey. Additional questions relating to parents with special needs, cultural diversity and language use were included in the focus group discussion with the eleven mothers from the parents forum.

Document analysis

Final outputs and related impacts of the programme's milestones and targets were not considered at this stage. Rather a document analysis of the programmes milestone, focusing on targets reached at the third and fourth quarters, was undertaken. Given the fact that most of the staff of the programme had recently been appointed, the milestones were considered with a view to helping to manage parent expectations.

Limitations

The use of face-to-face interviews has the potential to bias the responses towards a more positive view of the programme than self-administered questionnaires. The research team was confident that the people interviewed provided honest responses as the interviewees were more comfortable with the 1:1 interview process, and provided more constructive criticism about the services they use.

Interpretation of Findings

The results of the research represent the views of the participants. Caution needs to be exerted in drawing conclusions. The views are those of the respondents from an eligible population and the interpretations are ours. It is reasonable to assume that a focus on different aspects of the information provided or different respondents could have been interpreted differently. However, based on the results, every attempt has been made to present the findings in a balanced and plausible manner.

Characteristics of Respondents

Ninety people filled out the questionnaires (Appendix 1). Given the fact that the questionnaires were sent out and received within two weeks, and that no reminders were sent, this represents a good return rate (24%).

Description

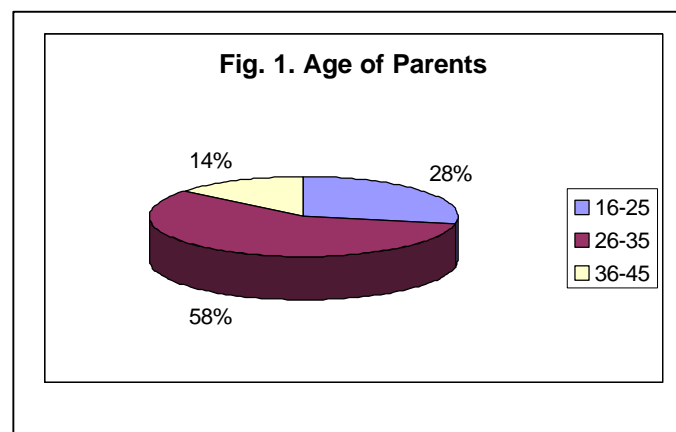
Forty one percent of respondents described themselves as users, 9% were lapse-users and 50% were non-users. The use of 1:1 interview at key service areas contributed to the high level of response from non-users.

Sex

Out of 84 people who indicated their sex, 5 were males (6%) and 79 (94%) were females. Three of the men were non-users. Sure Start NWSG has provided an exclusive service for men, in the hope that it will help raise men's involvement with the programme.

Age

More than half of the parents in the survey were in the 26-35 age group. Although the study did not relate the age of parents to choice of service, parents in different age groups might have different commitments and interests which could help shape service provision and delivery.

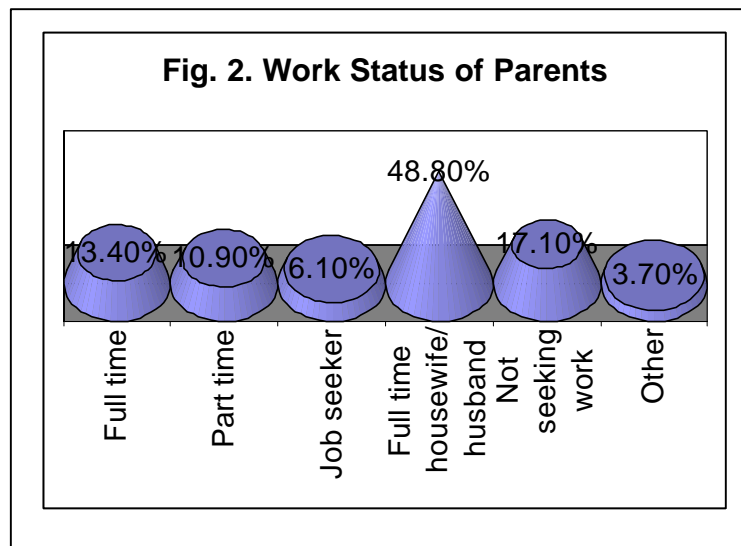


Marital Status

The marital status of respondents show that 33% were single or do not live with their partners and 67% were married or were living with their partners. Sixteen percent were single parents who do not use Sure Start services.

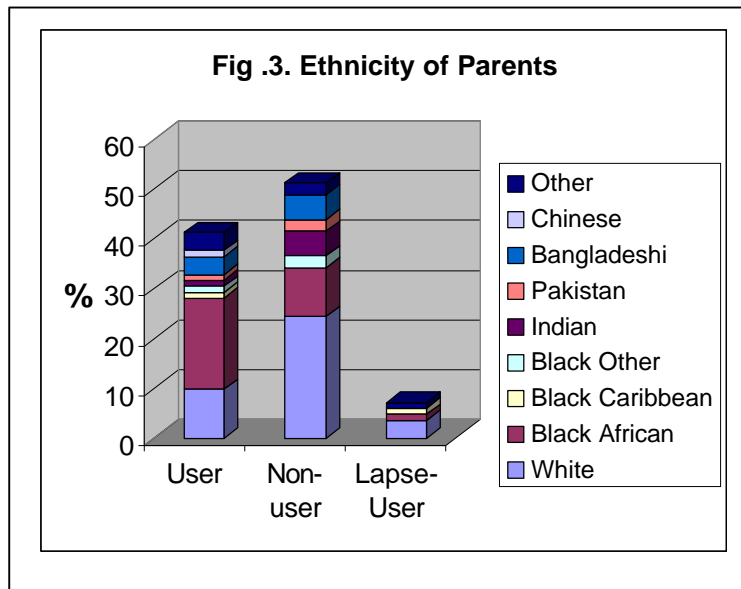
Work Status

Almost two-thirds of the parents who responded to the question about work status were either full time housewife/ husband (48.8%) or were not seeking work (17.1%) . Six percent of parents were seeking employment. The Sure Start NWSG will have to develop creative ways of supporting parents into employment. Services and activities will also have to be developed in such a way that they accommodate the preferences of parents who work and those who are not in any kind of employment.



Ethnicity

The ethnic origins of all parents (n=82) are shown in figure 3. They were predominantly White (37.8%) or Black Africans (29.3%). Among the users, there were more Black Africans than the other ethnic groups. More African users responded to the questionnaires than non-users, while more white non-users responded to the questionnaires than users.

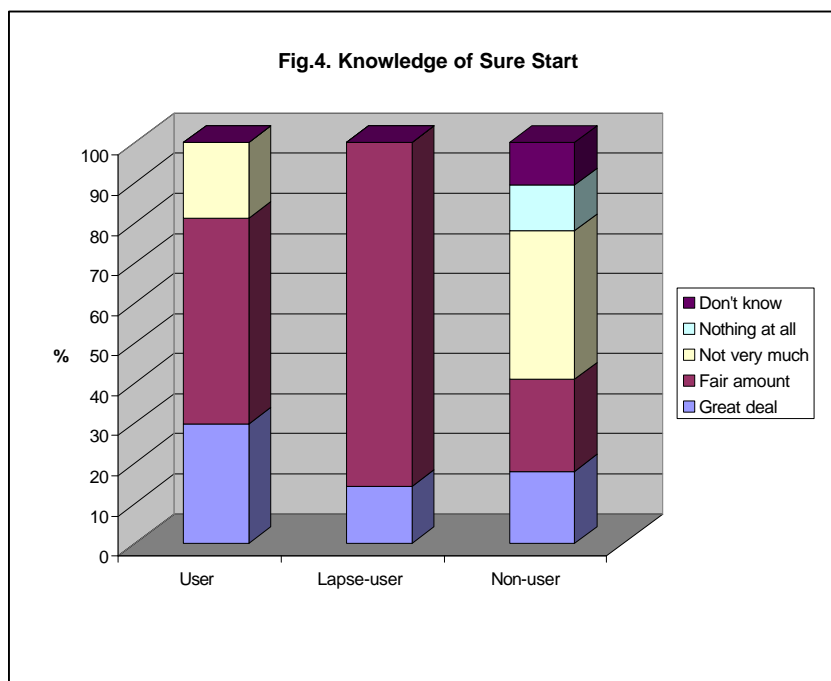


Satisfaction with Services

The survey questionnaires were designed to have an understanding of parent's knowledge of Sure Start, their satisfaction with service provision and the services they use within and outside the Sure Start NWSG area.

Knowledge of Sure Start

Over 80% of users (N=37) and all the lapse-users (N=7) indicated that they have a fair amount/ great deal of knowledge about Sure Start NWSG. Among non-users (N=45), 59% know very little or nothing about Sure Start while 41% have indicated they have fair amount of knowledge/ know a great deal about Sure Start. It appears that quite a significant number of parents surveyed know about Sure Start. However, the response of non-users and lapse users seem to indicate that mere knowledge of the existence of the programme may not be enough to attract potential users. There should be a rigorous and active process of getting informed parents to be involved. The fact that 20% of users honestly indicated that they do not know very much about Sure Start, present the programme with an opportunity to continuously promote their activities.

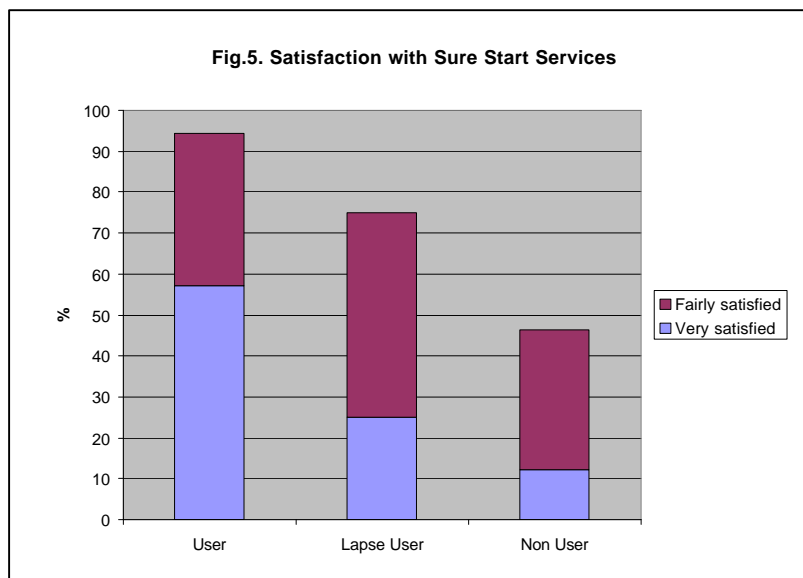


Nature of Involvement

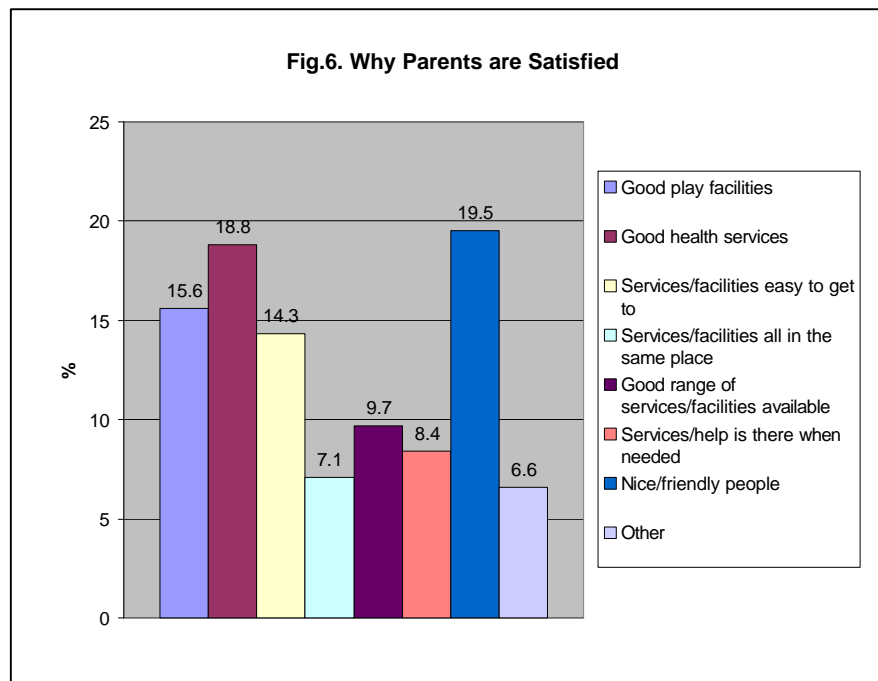
A greater number of non-users (59.5%) attribute their involvement to the fact that they know or have heard about Sure Start. Lapse-users go further but limit their involvement to the use of some services. In addition to using the services (45%), users are also involved with the programme as members of the parents group (11%) or on the partnership board. Parents who know and use Sure Start's service are more likely to increase their level of involvement to areas such as being on the partnership board. Alternatively, if parents are involved in the designing of services they are more likely to use it.

Satisfaction with Sure Start NWSG Services

Parents were asked overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are they with facilities and services that Sure Start NWSG provide for young children under four and their families in the area. Fifty seven percent of users (N=35) said they were very satisfied, 50% of lapse-users (N=7) said they were fairly satisfied while 50.4% of non-users (N=27) said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Non-users who have heard about Sure Start indicated that while they do not use their services they appreciate the fact that there is an attempt to improve service provision.



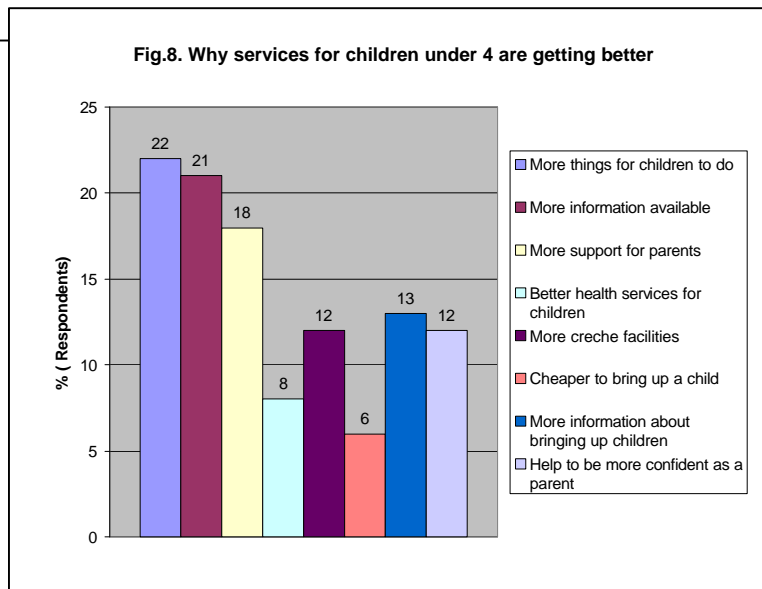
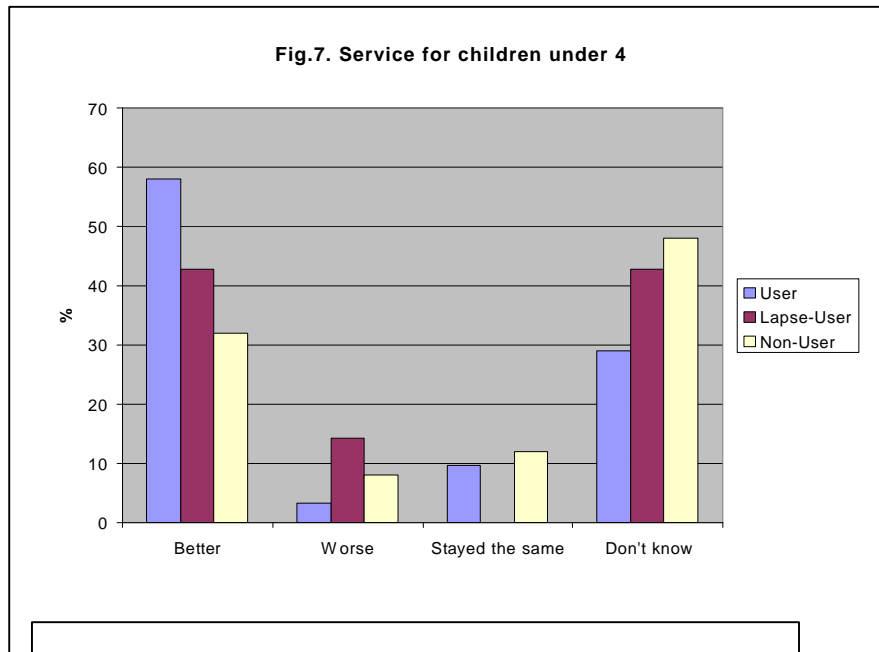
Their satisfaction is in recognition of the availability of the service rather than actual utilisation of the service. Ninety percent of users were fairly/very satisfied with the services they receive from Sure Start. Lapse users also rate the service very high (75% were satisfied). Parents gave several reasons why they are satisfied with the general services provided by Sure Start NWSG (Fig. 6.). These included good play facilities and health facilities, availability of and access to services. How services are provided is more important to parents than the mere availability of the service. Parents think highly of Sure Start staff.



Services for children under 4- are they getting better?

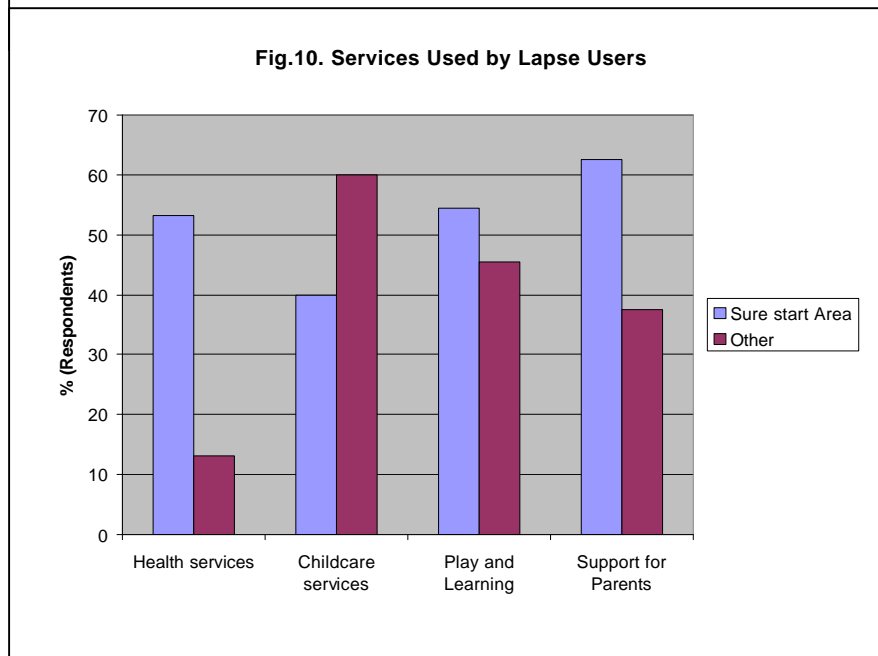
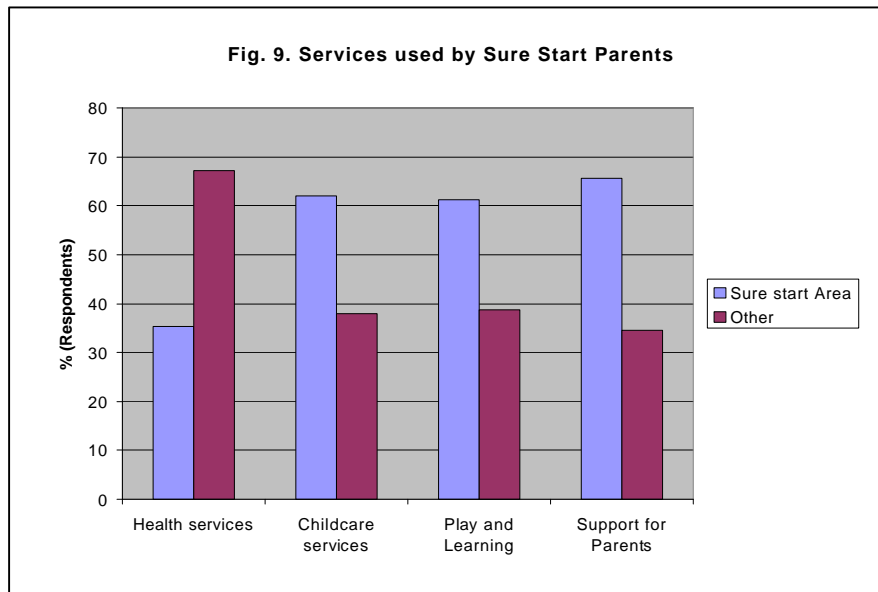
Sure Start NWSG aims to improve service provision for children under 4 in the area. The survey specifically asked whether parents perceive that services have got better or worse over the last twelve months, or they have stayed the same (Fig.7). Among users (N=31), 58% think services have got better, 10% think services have stayed the same while 29% don't know. Forty-three percent of lapse users (N=7) think that services are better, 43% don't know and 14% think services have gotten worse. Among non-users (N=25), 32% think services are better, 48% don't know while 20% think services have gotten worse/ stayed the same. The results suggest that once parents use Sure Start services, their perception of

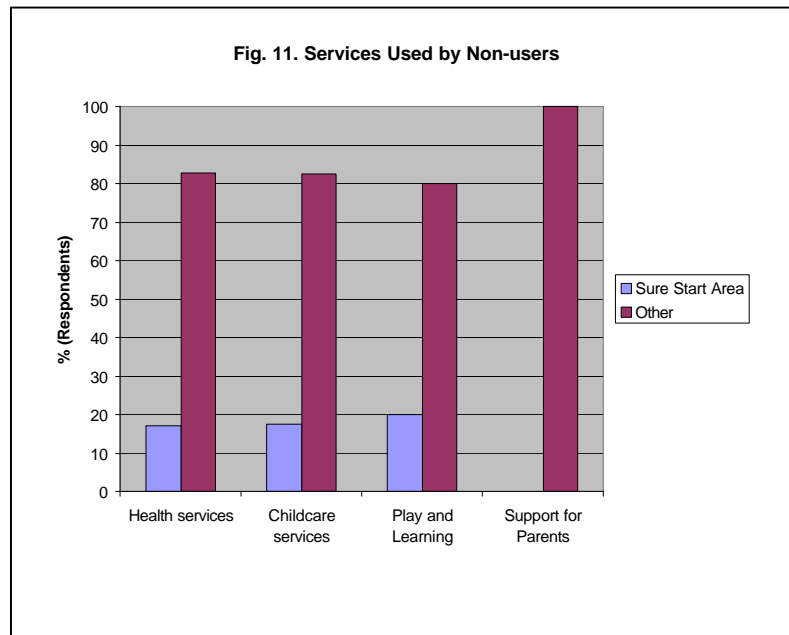
service quality, in general, are more likely to be influenced by their experience. Service users are satisfied with facilities and services provided by Sure Start and, therefore, think that services have improved within the last year. Parents reasoned that things are getting better because there are more things for children to do, information about services are available, there is support for parents (Fig 8). Sure Start NWSG should use these themes in their communication strategy to promote the programme to parents.



Use of Services : within or outside Sure Start Area

Parents were asked, out of a list of 45 activities or provisions in key Sure Start service areas (health, childcare, play and learning and support for parents), which services they have used in the last twelve months and whether they were or were not provided by Sure Start. Sure Start parents meet more of their childcare, play and learning, and parental support needs through services provided in the Sure Start area (Fig. 9).





Their response show that they use more health services in other areas than those provided within the Sure Start area.

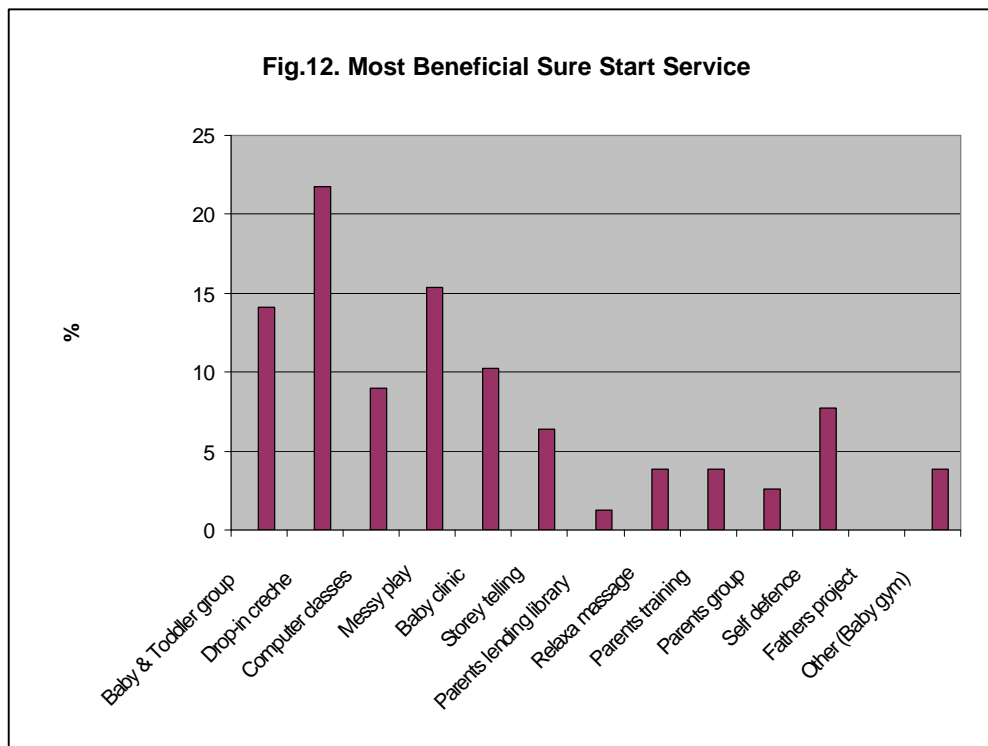
With the exception of childcare services, the lapse users interviewed indicated that they use more health, play and learning and parental support services in the Sure Start area than in other areas (Fig.10). The results show that non-users use predominantly services provided outside the Sure Start area (Fig.11). In fact none of the parents indicated that they meet their support needs in the Sure Start area. It appears that non-users are either quite satisfied with the services they receive in other areas or do not have an idea of the choice of services available to them. This may explain why most non-users do not know whether service provision for under 4s in the area are improving or not.

Users: Why they Use Sure Start's Services

The study found out which service has benefited each parent the most and the reasons why parents use Sure Start NSWG services.

The results showed that the Drop-in Crèche is the service which has benefited most parents (22%). It is followed by the Messy Play and Toddler group activities. These three services account for 50% of the responses. The baby clinic was next and it was followed by the Computer classes. Parents also seemed to have benefited appreciably from the Self-defence activity. Parents are yet to experience the benefits of the father's project.

Although parents in the focus group discussions talked favourably, about the Parents Group activity, it was rated low compared to other services. The programme should consider ways of strengthening the parents group and increasing parental involvement.



Parents use Sure Start's services for a number of reasons (Appendix 1.). Sure Start parents find the location of the services they use very convenient (65%) or fairly convenient (23%). There was an overwhelming favourable response to the cost of travelling to services. Ninety one percent of parents find it very reasonable and the rest also find it fairly reasonable.

The opening times of services have always been the subject of debate among parents using Sure Start's services. While a few of the respondents who are in full time employment expressed the feeling that they prefer services which open in the evenings, the survey results show, nonetheless, that users currently find the opening times very suitable (45%) or fairly suitable (44.5%). Sure Start NWSG should adopt a flexible approach to service opening times, one that is based on real needs of users, to encourage maximum participation.

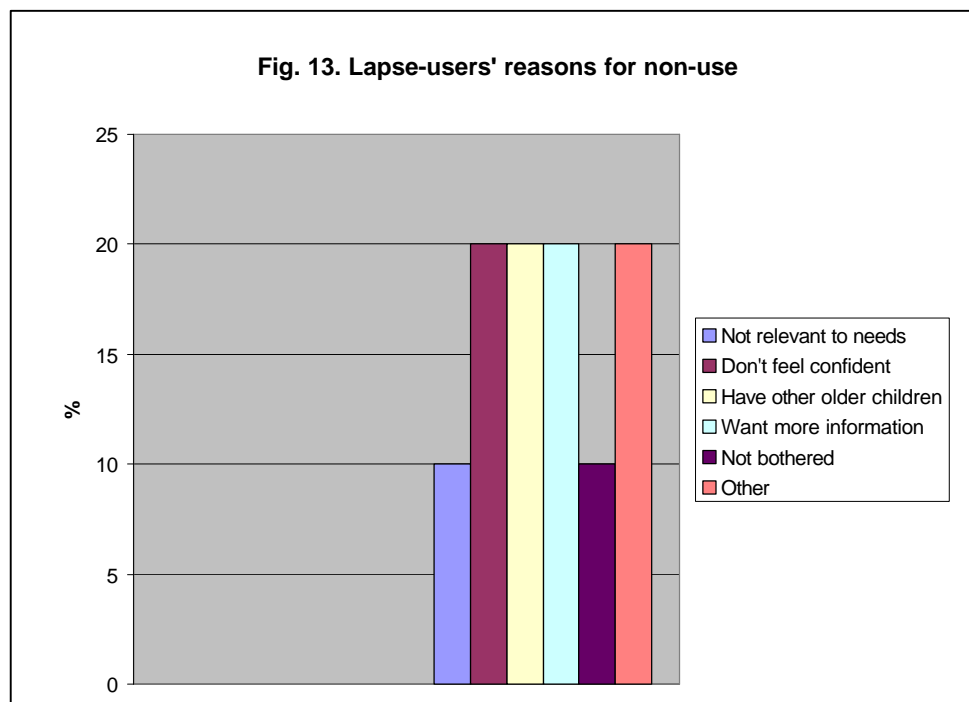
Parents find the play opportunities available to their children through Sure Start very satisfactory (72.4%) or fairly satisfactory (21.7%). While 55.2% of parents are satisfied with the employment and training opportunities provided by Sure Start, 24.% of parents are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Some parents (3.9%) expressed their dissatisfaction with the service.

Analysis of a previous survey by the Sure Start NWSG programme involving 15 service users showed that none of them had become employable directly through Sure Start's employment-related activities.

Lapse-Users: Why They don't Use Sure Start's Services

Lapse- users indicated the services provided by Sure Start that they have used before. Among 13 different services or activities, Baby & Toddler group was the service used by most parents (Appendix 1). This was followed by Messy Play and Drop-in Crèche. These were the same services that most Sure Start parent users said had benefited them most. Some lapse-users have attended the Father's project sessions before.

One of the objectives of the study was to find out the reasons why some parents no longer use the services provided by Sure Start NWSG. The responses of parents are shown in Figure 13. Lapse-users indicated that they don't feel confident (20%), have other older children (20%) or want more information (20%). Other reasons given were that the services they used were no longer relevant to their needs (10%) or they can't be bothered (10%).



The fact that some parents don't feel confident enough to use the service means that attempts should be made to encourage and build

parents confidence. During the focus group discussions with some users, some parents whose first language is not English raised similar concerns. While attempts are made to respond to needs through interpretation services, parents were of the opinion that an inclusive service provision is a better approach. However, efforts should be made to encourage those who feel marginalised. The parents themselves should also take the challenge that an inclusive service presents as a learning ladder.

Some parents also indicated that they find it difficult to use some of the services when they have older children. While there are no easy answers to this problem, more so when Sure Start focuses on under 4s, there is need to explore ways of getting around this problem. An eligible child should not miss out on Sure Start's service simply because the parent does not know what to do with an older child. It appears some parents lack information about general service provision for older children.

It seems that lapse-users do not use Sure Starts services, not because they can get better services elsewhere but for the simple reason that they just can't be bothered to find out. Lapse-users indicated that they want more information. Although the study did not explore the kind of information they want, the results suggest that, Sure Start NWSG should continue to use their various information channels to reinforce their messages. Some of the things that Lapse users would like to see changed included information (Box 1).

Box 1.

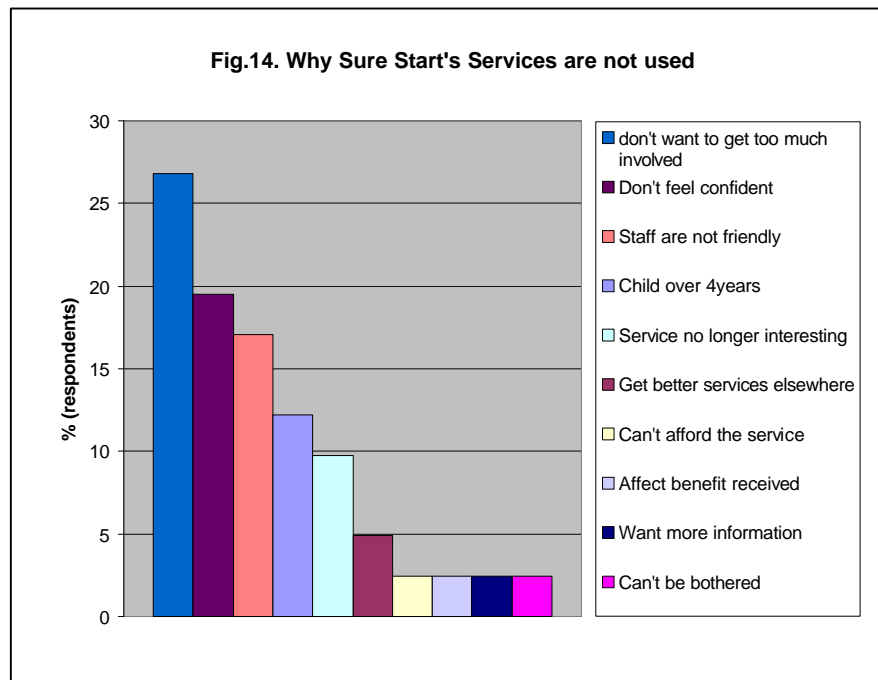
There should be more general awareness and regular updates. It will be good to see a bit more support for single parents; and also to ask parents what they would like to get involved in. I don't think Sure Start is reaching some of the needy groups in the area.

Non-Users: Why They don't Use Sure Start's Services

The survey asked parents who described themselves as non-users whether they are aware of specific services/ activities provided by Sure Start NWSG, whether they are interested in any of them and if so why they have not pursued it.

The results showed that 57% percent of non-users who filled out the questionnaires indicated that they have heard about Sure Start's activities and 75% indicated that they were interested in them. Parents have heard about Baby and toddler group (14.5%), Drop-in crèche (13%), Computer classes (11%) and Baby Clinic (11.6%).

In terms of response, they were interested in Baby and toddler group (10.8%), Drop-in crèche (10.%), Baby Clinic (9.3%) and computer classes (8.8%).



Some of the reasons why parents don't use Sure Start's services are shown in Fig. 14. One of the main reasons is that non-users don't want to get too much involved (26.5%). The results show the need to handle

parental involvement with care. It is like a knife- use the handle and you can cut things through, touch the blade and you can hurt yourself. The programme's involvement strategy should look at the extent and nature of parental involvement so that what is good about Sure Start (parents shaping service) does not become the means of exclusion.

Like lapse-users, non-users don't feel confident about using Sure Start's services. Parents perception of service provision and delivery might not be accurate. However, the response also means that the programme should find ways of projecting an image that is attractive to parents. Parents should feel that the programme is there to support them, irrespective of who they are.

Parents are also not using the service because either they have found or heard about staff not being friendly. It appears such perception may be unfounded as one of the main reasons why parents surveyed are satisfied with Sure Start's service is the fact that staff are friendly. Nevertheless, this presents the programme with a challenge to continue to deliver quality service to counteract erroneous impressions.

The results also suggest that parents who do not use Sure Start services not necessarily getting better services elsewhere. Although parents want more information, the results suggest that it is not the overriding factor why people do not use Sure Start's services. Some non-users suggested ways in which services could be delivered to meet their needs

Box 2. Help Us Use Your Services

- More information on all activities provided in a booklet with times and dates
- Activities/ crèche could be between 10-12am or after 2:30pm on Mondays & Tuesdays.
- Daughter with special needs
- Nice to see newsletter about events that have happened that may interest people with the progress of Sure Start
- More services for older children (5 and above)

Milestones and Managing Expectations

Managing the expectations of Sure Start parents continues to be a major challenge for all Sure Start programmes. All programmes have developed strategies of meeting these expectations alongside the prescriptive targets and the milestones within the SDA's and PSAs.

The Sure Start NWSG has developed a good approach for monitoring progress made in its milestones. What to be achieved, when and who to do them are clearly spelt out. This is useful in tackling slippage. A look at the activities for the third and last quarters of the year showed that the programme has made steady progress.

However, focus group discussions revealed that parents expect more than what is currently on the ground. The push and pull tensions which arise in meeting Sure Start targets, as well as providing activities which are accessible, relevant and meet the diverse needs of a culturally mix community require a lot of negotiation on the part of Staff and management.

Discussion with some staff of the programme showed that Sure Start NWSG meet parental expectations and that of Service providers, in the first instance, through the provision of information packs.

The information provided by the packs, informs, engages and provides a basis for dialogue. They also help in promoting the programme.

Networking by staff and partnership board members, at community forums, and other local events, helps in bridging the gap between community expectations and what the service can actually provide.

All new parents receive these information packs when they join Sure Start. For North Woolwich Sure Start, it is one of their main tools for helping to give a reality check on what is possible within the framework of their objectives. Networking and attending community events, local forums also gives Sure Start staff, the opportunity to share information, and promote their services locally. The impact of this has been a general widespread knowledge about Sure Start amongst parents, local schools and local businesses.

However, many parents did not know what services or activities Sure Start provided beyond the fact that it was for children and mothers with children. The parents who frequently used the activities, were satisfied with the types of activities offered, and the locations in which they were provided. The Winifred Street with its child-centred bright environment and resources, was by the far the parents favourite centre. Transportation to the centre was perceived by the parents, as accessible for those living in North Woolwich, and Canning Town. The parents from the Windsor Park estate who use the Windsor Park community centre and the local nursery school, generally, were unhappy about the centre's location and the bleak environment. The respite crèche and the baby toddler service, was very well used, but when staff instituted a number of safeguards in the interest of health and safety, it caused some difficulties for parents.

While parents know what Sure Start is about in general, very few knew what specific activities were happening and at what time on regular basis. Some parents requested information in this regard. It might be useful to develop the milestones into parent-friendly format which regularly updates parents on what would be happening.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the survey and focus group discussions and interviews with service users and providers/ staff the following recommendations are made:

1. The Parents Group is rated highly by users. Use the opportunity to empower parents to be involved more in planning and decision-making. The programme may consider employing local-to-local workers who could promote the service on 1:1 basis among parents. The sure start parent evaluators in this study have shown that it takes a parent to reach a parent.
2. Lack of confidence is an issue for some parents. Use the parents group as a platform to build parents' confidence. Include in your training programmes, topics such as 'Confidence Building' for parents. Also create an environment for support networks to flourish within the group. Consider holding special Parents Group meetings in other parts of the Sure Start area, such as Beckton and Windsor Park Estate to attract more parents.
3. The programme currently contacts a significant number of single parents. Increase the outreach to single parents through the Sure Start Plus initiative. Inform eligible single parents, especially teenage mothers, through promotional materials about the range of services available in the Borough.
4. Parents are generally satisfied with the services they use and rate specific services such as Drop-in crèche, Messy Play and Baby and toddler group very beneficial. Continue to promote these services among lapse users and non-users.
5. Non-users are not quite sure what Sure Start is about and the difference it aspires to make. Highlight, in promotional brochures such as the Maternity Pack, the alternative provisions Sure Start is making and choices they offer parents, especially non-users.

6. Supporting parents into work remains a daunting task. Have a clear-cut objective of supporting parents into employment. For example, look for ways in which some of the parents being trained by the programme could be employed in the programme at various levels.
7. Parents expressed their feelings about the problems they face when they have other older children who cannot use Sure Start's services. Parents should know in clear terms how far Sure Start NWSG can help older children. Explore seamless service provision with older children through the Children Centre initiative
8. Through the fathers project, change the image of the programme from being primarily aimed at women by increasing targeted publicity and ensuring that general publicity is as appealing to dads/male carers as it is to mums/female carers.
9. Families with special needs deserve special attention. Promote the strategy for reaching out to families with special needs. There could be a focus on fathers with special needs children as part of strengthening the 'Fathers Project'.
10. The process of tracking what has been achieved within the milestone is recommendable. To manage parental expectation, develop the milestones into parent-friendly formats and use them to update the community about what is happening, what they can expect and what Sure Start can manage.
11. Adopt a flexible, responsive and inclusive approach to the opening times of your services. Explore having week-end activities - offering activities for dads/ male carers and their children and families and others who work during the week.

Appendix 1

Characteristics of Respondents

Characterisitcs		Number of Respondents			Total
		User	Lapse-user	Non-user	
Description		37	8	45	90
Sex	Females	33	5	41	79
	Males	1	1	3	5
Age Group	16-25	5	2	16	23
	26-35	26	2	20	48
	36-45	3	2	7	12
Marital status	Single	8	2	13	23
	Married	16	2	25	43
	Living with partner	7	1	2	10
	Not living with partner	2		1	3
Work status	Full time	3	3	5	11
	Part time	4	1	4	9
	Job-seeker	3		2	5
	Not seeking work	4	1	9	14
	Full time housewife/ husband	18		22	40
	Voluntary			1	1
	Student			2	2
Ethnic Origin	White	8	3	20	31
	Black African	15	1	8	24
	Black Caribbean	1	1	0	2
	Black Other	1		2	3
	Indian	1		4	5
	Pakistan	1		2	3
	Bangladeshi	3		4	7
	Chinese	1			1
	Other	3	1	2	6

Service	Percentage of Respondents		
	User	Lapse-User	Non-User
Heard about it	18.1	33.3	59.5
Inv. In providing service	3.6	8.3	
Inv. In parents group	11.0		4.76
On partnership	1.8		
Used some services	45.5	33.3	
Visit from SS	5.5	8.3	16.68
Knows about SS	14.5	16.7	16.68
Consulted in planning stage			2.38

Why Users are Satisfied

Service location	% (N=35)
Very convenient	65.7
Fairly convenient	23.0
Neither	8.4
Fairly inconvenient	0
Very inconvenient	2.9
Cost of Service	% (N=35)
Very reasonable (or no charge)	91.1
Fairly reasonable	8.9
Neither	0
Fairly unreasonable	0
Very unreasonable	0
Opening Times	% (N=35)
Very suitable	45.4
Fairly suitable	48.5
Neither	6.1
Fairly unsuitable	0
Very unsuitable	0
Learning Opportunities	% (N=28)
Very satisfied	53.5
Fairly satisfied	35.7
Neither	7.2
Fairly satisfied	0
Fairly dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	3.6
Play Opportunities	% (N=32)
Very satisfied	72.4
Fairly satisfied	21.7
Neither	6.9
Fairly satisfied	0
Fairly dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	0
Employment & Training Opportunities	% (N=30)
Very satisfied	55.2
Fairly satisfied	17.2
Neither	24.2
Fairly dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	3.4

Services used by Lapse-Users

	% of Respondents
Baby & Toddler group	18.2
Drop-in crèche	13.6
Computer classes	4.5
Messy play	13.6
Baby clinic	0
Storey telling	9.1
Parents lending library	4.5
Relaxa massage	4.5
Parents training	9.1
Parents group	4.5
Self defence	4.5
Fathers project	9.1
Other (Baby gym)	4.5

	Percentage of Respondents	
	N=26	N=34
	Heard about	Interested in
Services/ activities		
Baby & Toddler group	14.49	10.89
Drop-in crèche	13.04	10.36
Computer classes	10.87	8.8
Messy play	5.07	8.29
Baby clinic	11.59	9.33
Storey telling	5.08	7.25
Parents lending library	4.34	7.25
Relaxa massage	7.25	7.25
Parents training	7.97	6.74
Parents group	7.97	7.77
Self defence	7.25	9.33
Fathers project	5.08	6.74

Questionnaires

Request for information about the questionnaires should be sent to the report authors:

Kwaku Ahenkora & Salome Ahenkora
Concept Consulting RMT
42 Woolhampton Way
Chigwell
IG7 4QJ
02085016888
Conceptrmt@aol.com

Alternatively you may contact:

The Programme Manager/ Community Development Officer
Sure Start North Woolwich/ Silvertown & Gallions
Sure Start Centre
Winifred Street
North Woolwich
E16 2HX