

Mexborough Sure Start

Annual Evaluation Summary

Introduction

In 2003/2004 we developed our Evaluation Strategy. We commissioned two independent reports and both of these will be outlined in more detail below. Evaluation was embedded into all project activity undertaken by staff through a 'plan, do, review' model. Methodology of evaluation is identified on every project brief, this in turn informs the member of staff on satisfaction levels and provides for the opportunity of reflective practice. In order to support staff with this process, we worked with an external evaluator who devised a full day staff-training event around evaluation. We examined why we evaluate and looked at innovative ways of collecting information.

The Programme Manager wrote a Board report on evaluation and made several proposals for small pieces of commissioned activity. The Board selected two areas of work, these were both concluded March 2004 and independent reports are available. The companies both gave presentations to the Partnership Board on their findings, and both companies were included in the tender presentations for the full 2004/2005 evaluation project.

'Barriers to Engagement' – ARC Research and Consultancy Service

Arc, Sure Start parent development workers and the Programme Manager devised a schedule of focus groups to examine broad barriers with clients, staff and community members and offer potential solutions. Nine focus groups took place, three with staff teams, one aimed at men in a local pub and five with mothers in a variety of community settings. Attendees were offered a gift voucher for participation in the focus groups. Parent Development Workers consulted the Sure Start data-base to find clients who had registered but who had not attended any other services, they made telephone contact to invite attendance to the groups. Approximately 21 parents and 15 professionals participated in the groups.

Practical barriers to engagement were found to be-

- Lack of information
- Dissatisfaction with services offered
- Difficulties with access
- Lack of finances
- Lack of transport

Psychological barriers to engagement were found to be-

- Fear of the unknown
- Stigma associated with Sure Start services
- Lack of motivation

Cultural barriers to male engagement-

- Local culture
- Timings of activities

All of these barriers are fully explored in the report with actual quotes taken from the focus group meetings. Many positive findings are also reported upon, and a selection of solutions were offered.

Action points that Sure Start are to respond to as we move into 2004/2005 are-

(These actions are referenced into the Programmes overall Annual Report, and will form part of the operational plan 2004/2005)

- E1.1 A quarterly newsletter is to be produced and sent to every Sure Start registered household.
- E1.2 Outreach workers are to use baby clinics more as a way of connecting with parents early on in the parenting process.
- E1.3 Some events/trips are to be heavily subsidized and targeted at 'hard to reach' groups through partnership with Social Services and Health Visitors.
- E1.4 More consultation to take place on what parents want, where and when.
- E1.5 Activities should be offered for mixed age groups.
- E1.6 A parenting mentoring system to be set up to support new parents.
- E1.7 A welcome party or similar be explored.
- E1.8 Notice Boards should be used more effectively.
- E1.9 Staff are to take greater responsibility for the promotion of their service/activity with the whole staff team and ensure all timetables are updated accordingly.
- E1.10 More work to be done to involve dads, family events, specific activities i.e. BBQ's.
- E1.11 More work to be done to give the message that Sure Start is for ALL children and families within Mexborough.

Base Line 'User Satisfaction' Survey – ACTON SHAPIRO

A full and detailed user satisfaction survey was commissioned to follow on from work undertaken previously as part of the original Delivery Plan 2002. The intention was to strengthen the data to afford measurable information. The Sure Start Unit requires Local Programmes to undertake a satisfaction measure every three years. After much discussion around methodology we decided to undertake a pure postal survey, offering a free prize draw to attract a good response. Much thought went into how we could potentially increase the response rate; we included a return envelope and a Sure Start pen (with number on) within the pack. We did an awareness raising campaign through word of mouth and through posters displayed at Sure Start settings; a short time scale was given to provoke immediate response and the prize draw gave the opportunity to win £200 pounds worth of prizes. We targeted all households in Mexborough with children aged 0-5years, this included Sure Start registered and non-registered families. All this planning succeeded in achieving an excellent response return of 29.2%.

Many Sure Start services received an overall satisfaction rating of over 80% including:- Baby Fun sessions, Musical Minis Groups, Low Cost Safety Scheme, Baby Massage groups, Training courses and Drop In sessions.

Problems were identified as-

- Information and awareness of services

- Outdoor play space/parks
- Availability, venues and suitability
- Childcare that is affordable to all
- Transport
- Quality and consistency of care/resources
- Flexibility – hours, ages of children
- Access to GP's appointments etc
- Support with Post Natal depression
- Support to stop smoking
- Involvement of fathers
- Attitudes of professionals to parents
- More breastfeeding support
- Benefits /tax credit advice
- Mental Health support
- Speech and language support
- Portage support

The survey highlighted widespread lack of knowledge on what is available locally with only 30% of respondents saying they knew what was available locally. Overall the survey highlighted a higher dissatisfaction rating with support for families with children with special needs.

This survey can form the basis of further qualitative work around specific services and themes. A parental summary was produced and sent out to all respondents and those who requested further information are being followed up through the Parent Development Workers who are contacted them all individually.

Please request a full copy of the report for more information.

Action points that Sure Start are to respond to as we move into 2004/2005 are-

(These actions are referenced into the Programmes overall Annual Report, and will form part of the operational plan 2004/2005)

- E2.1 Improve information systems to ensure Sure Start is promoted effectively.
- E2.2 Work with other community groups to support the development of parks and playgrounds.
- E2.3 Develop services in a variety of settings throughout Mexborough.
- E2.4 Improve the information for parents on the support they can receive with childcare, benefits, tax credits and early education grant.
- E2.5 Establish a taxi service for family support, hard to reach groups to assist with access.
- E2.6 Continue to work with all local providers to improve the quality of provision in all settings.
- E2.7 Develop services/activities that respond to the need for mixed age groups.
- E2.8 Continue to support the Student First Contact Practitioner, who will be able to see and treat patients in support of the GP's.
- E2.9 Develop specific response to post natal depression, working within the ante-natal period to assess pre-disposition and providing appropriate support.
- E2.10 Continue to develop our smoke cessation services and provide support through all Sure Start workers and wider partners.
- E2.11 Develop specific and targeted activities for dads to participate in, such as go-karting camping etc.. through the family support team.

- E2.12 Provide staff training in community development principles and involve wider partners.
- E2.13 Further encourage and support breast-feeding mothers, through La Leche peer mentoring programme, breast pump loan scheme and incentive scheme.
- E2.14 Develop partnership with CAMHS service to respond to local mental health issues, with consideration to purchasing some psychological or counselling services.
- E2.15 Continue to develop and promote access to Language support groups and liaise with Speech and Language therapy mainstream service provision to continually improve service provision.
- E2.16 Work with families with children with special needs and utilize effectively resources such as the Portage Service and Pre-school Inclusion Team.

Conclusion and recommendations

As you may already have noted the problems identified are very similar in both reports and this can only add weight to the comments made in different ways and potentially by different people. It will be anticipated that if we ensure that we action the above suggestions in this next year, then this should impact on satisfaction levels. The 'User Satisfaction Survey' should be repeated in the same way in two years time (January 2006) when qualitative and quantitative data should be analysed to assess any significant movement of data.

Planned Work for 2004/2005

We undertook the commissioning of our 2004/2005 evaluation company; we were supported in the tendering process by the PCT purchasing department and a local parent. Four companies were short-listed and invited to present to our panel. A scoring mechanism was used against a specific criteria, and Acton Shapiro was selected to take our Evaluation Strategy forward into 2004/2005. They will now undertake a full evaluative study of the Programme, looking at cross cutting themes and specific individual projects.