

# SureStart Ashton

## Evaluation Report

### Introduction

This report provides feedback on the second year of evaluation activities that have taken place within SureStart Ashton during 2003/4. The data, which forms the basis of this report, is mainly qualitative in nature as it focuses on the views and opinions of local parents who live in the area and involved in the programme. The report also includes a small amount of statistical analysis which will support the more qualitative findings.

This particular evaluation report concentrates on the following areas/projects:

- Bookstart Plus Project
- Nutrition project
- Play, Learning and Childcare Project (parent and toddler group)
- Feedback from the User Satisfaction Survey

### Background Information

SureStart Ashton is a fourth wave programme coming up to two and a half years of developing services within the community.

Although some activities have been operating for around 2 years some services are still in the early stages of delivery. During the past two and a half years evaluation of individual projects has been undertaken using a variety of methods including questionnaires, focus groups and comments books. We are now in the process of standardising the methods used across the programme to ensure consistency, accuracy and effectiveness.

We currently employ a number of mechanisms for evaluating individual projects. In addition to the numerical data collection systems, e.g. monitoring forms, we:

- Evaluate individual workshops or programmes (e.g. Cook and Eat, Parenting)
- Review each project on a six monthly basis
- Conduct annual customer satisfaction surveys (a summary of our second survey is included within this report)

Progress over last year:

- All staff have received training in simple evaluation methods so that each individual project can build in mechanisms for evaluating its effectiveness.

- A small number of parents/carers/community members have received training in interviewing parents for evaluation purposes.
- The programme has undertaken a selection of individual project evaluations across all service areas using a variety of methods.
- We have produced a more detailed plan and timescale relating to the evaluation of the whole programme, including the Management Structure and Management Board.
- The programme has selected an external consultant to undertake the programme's 3 year evaluation. This will take place between April and July 2004

### Aims and Objectives

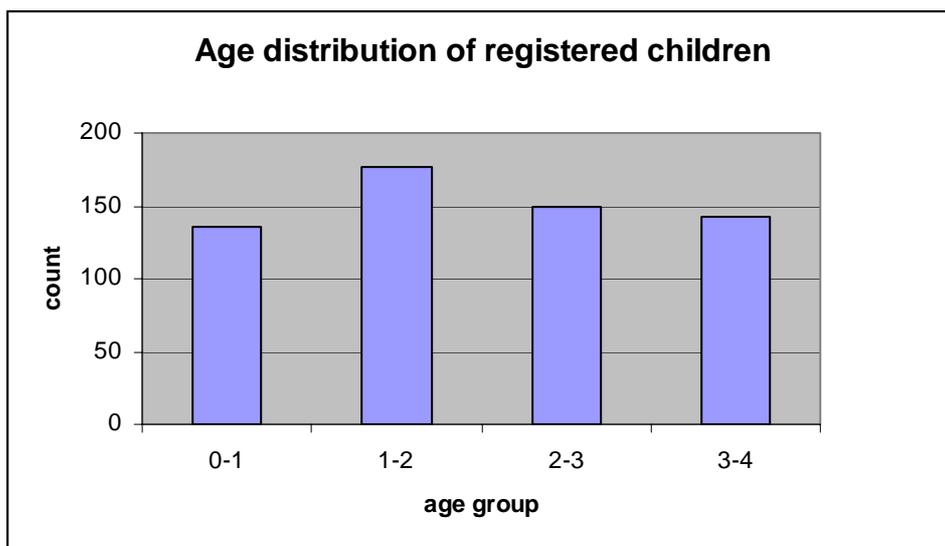
The main aim of this evaluation was to provide us with a synopsis of the following:

Views of local parents who live in the area and their satisfaction levels with the facilities and services used/available in the area, including ways in which services and facilities can be improved.

- To gain an understanding of how well our services are performing
- To progress towards the objectives and targets for SureStart
- To progress towards future development of services and facilities.

### Facts and Figures

Total number of children in SureStart area	=	824
Total of registered children	=	605 (73% of all children in area)
Total children seen (in 12 month measurement period)	=	520 (63% of all children in area)
Total number of registered families	=	603
Total of registered lone parent families	=	95 (16% of all families)

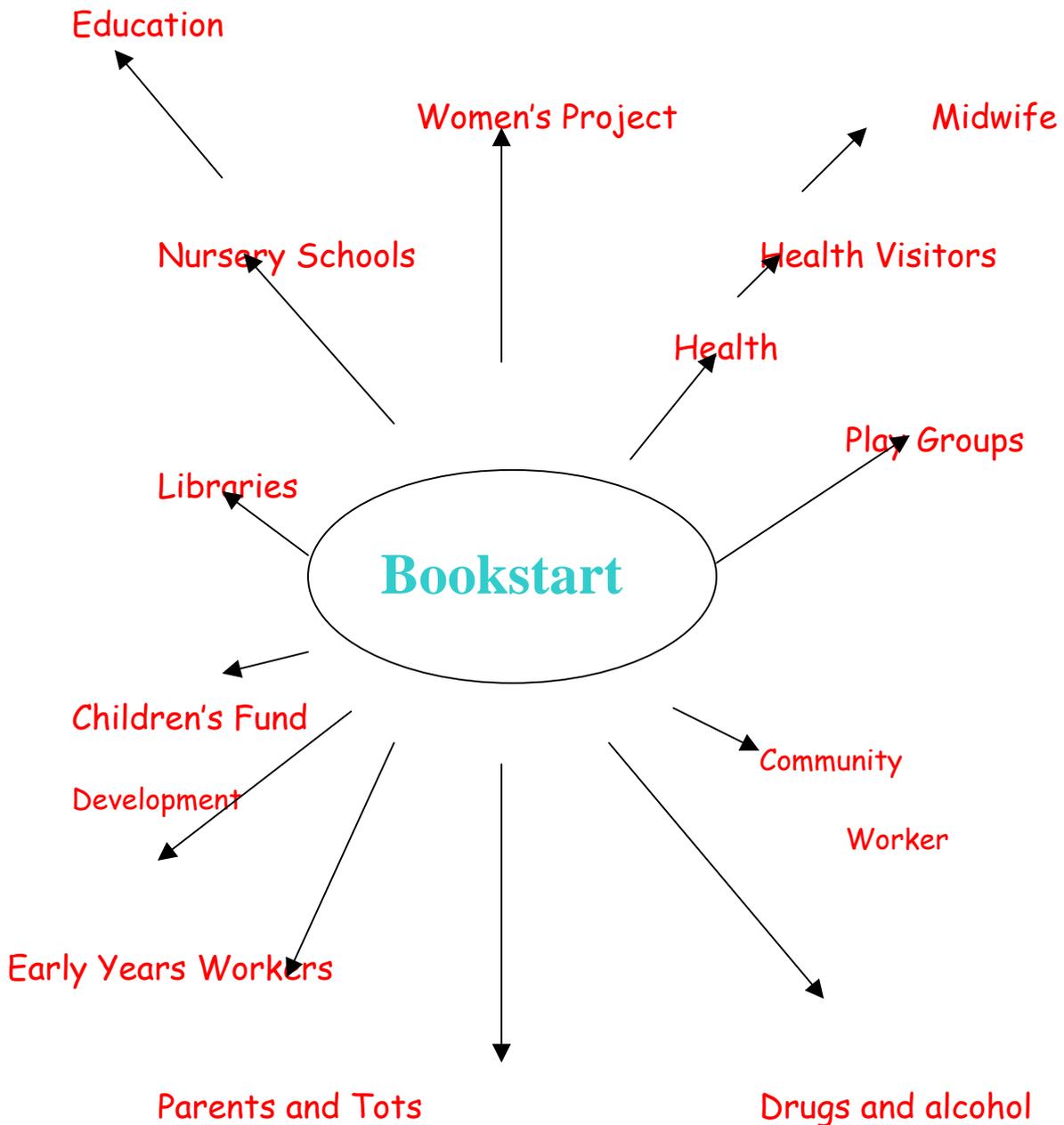


Ethnic Origin of registered people	Percent
White British	80.0%
Pakistani	8.4%
Indian	4.6%
African	1.5%
Bangladeshi	1.1%
Any Other Asian Background	0.8%
White and Black Caribbean	0.7%
White Irish	0.7%
Any Other Ethnic Group	0.6%
White Other	0.5%
White and Asian	0.4%
Any Other Black Background	0.3%
White and Black African	0.2%
Caribbean	0.2%

2% of people are registered with a special need. Of these, 38% are children.

# Bookstart Evaluation From April 2003 to April 2004

The Bookstart project supports/ links to other Sure Start Ashton projects and Main Stream Services throughout Tameside.



## Community Connects Project

### Health Services

#### Sure Start Health Visitors

The initial Bookstart contact with a family is when a baby is 6/8 weeks old; the health visitor takes a Bookstart invitation on their primary visit with information regarding the Bookstart plus officer. The Health Visitor will encourage the family to contact the Bookstart officer or they will pass on the parent's information to the Bookstart programme. A home visit is then carried out by the Bookstart officer, this allows an individual/personal contact with the family. The Bookstart officer explains the importance of introducing book sharing at an early age and encourages the parents to join in the Bookstart activities at the library. This personal contact has enabled some parents to engage in the library activities. The parents are given a free pack for their child, which includes a sensory book.

34-week development check - babies, borough wide, in Tameside are given a free book pack at their development check at the clinic. The Bookstart officer attends the SureStart session at Crickets Lane Clinic on a weekly basis to give out packs and reinforce the Bookstart message. This allows consistency and continuity.

18-month developmental checks are held at various times/locations throughout the SureStart area -the Bookstart officer is present at these sessions encouraging book sharing and suggestions for making books fun.

The health visitors also refer families to the Bookstart officer if the family is in need of extra support/stimulation. The Bookstart officer will visit the family at home and provide a range of activities for the parent and child to enjoy together. These sessions are time limited, throughout the sessions the parent will be encouraged to join in the Bookstart and SureStart activities at other venues.

### Education

The Bookstart project links with the seven nursery schools in the SureStart area, St Christopher's, Broadoak, St James, Hurst Knoll, Rosehill, Our Lady and The Heys. The Bookstart officer holds an annual presentation about book sharing in each of the nursery schools sharing examples of good quality books, at each event the nursery children are given a free book and reading bag to encourage book sharing at home. The sessions are well attended with many of the schools taking this

opportunity to introduce their own school library. The parents are asked to fill in a questionnaire asking them to give their honest views on the project.

### Parents Comments

" I think Bookstart is a very good idea and it has made me think more about the books I share with my child"

"Very informative presentation delivered in a "non-jargon" way and really got the message across. Very enjoyable"

"Good information. Very interesting. Good variety of books

"It was interesting and a great way to introduce both parents and children to books also good bonding time instead of watching TV."

"I found the talk interesting, glad I came along."

"Gives an update on things that are going on, also a lot of different types of books and gave me a reminder on getting registered at the library.

" Very good idea and gives your child a head start in life."

"Very good would come to another meeting"

"Excellent idea great for parents and children to interact and learn"

"I was interested to see the books showing children with disabilities"

"I found the talk very interesting and I didn't know until today that they did books for special needs e.t.c which is great with her having special needs."

" I thought the talk was a good idea and it showed the adults the children's view of looking at books."

"I felt very relaxed at your session. It was very informative. I was glad I came even though I read with my children you gave me some good ideas to make reading more fun."

" Good information as I learned a few different ways to approach my son."

"Bookstart is a great idea, I found the session very informative"

"Very informative it makes you think how important books are to young Children.

In addition the Bookstart officer has been involved in other school activities.

St James Nursery Class - Bookstart attended during National book week to read stories to the nursery children.

Hurst Knoll - The Nursery regularly borrow Story Sacks to use with the children.

Broadoak Nursery Class - Bookstart attended the annual parents evening promoting library membership, Bookstart and SureStart activities.

The Broadoak Nursery children and parents have also attended the music fun sessions, which have been set up by the Bookstart project. This has been very successful with one parent bringing her guitar to a session and playing for the children.

### Nursery Teacher's comments

Music and Movement with SureStart at Broadoak Community Centre

The sessions were organised by the Nursery teacher at Broadoak Primary with the Bookstart Plus officer.

They commenced on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2004-05-13

The objective was to: -

- Involve nursery, parents, children under the age of four and SureStart.
- Continue the positive relationship between the nursery, parents, SureStart and the centre.
- Encourage the children and their families to enjoy activities there, so they feel at ease using the community centre.

The sessions were well structured by the sure start staff over a period of six weeks. They supplied Broadoak Nursery with a copy so that we could all be singing from the same hymn sheet.

For example, the first session was "getting to know you" (people and places); familiar songs; new songs; actions and instruments; making musical Hats. In addition to the 26 children 5 parents, two siblings attended. Other sessions included "video for music and movement" and also circle songs and games (e.g. washing); familiar songs; new songs; new instruments; making our own musical shaker instruments. It all finished with a "Grand Finale" with balloons, bubbles and disco ball lights - not to forget the wonderful party food provided at all the sessions! SureStart fed all our senses!

Throughout the sessions, the Nursery staff made observations to comment on how individual children responded to the stimuli provided. These will provide information for the child's profile- (to feed into end-of-year reports)- and will also provide a basis to give feedback to SureStart about explicit and implicit results from this liaison.

The staff at Broadoak Nursery found the collaboration with SureStart staff to be very productive.

- They have continued weekly music sessions within the nursery
- Some parents and younger siblings attended some sessions improving knowledge of SureStart and the centre.
- Some children were much more receptive at these music sessions than had been previously observed in Nursery.
- Nursery staff enjoyed the opportunity to work with other professionals. Strong links have been made with Bookstart and SureStart. Staff will be invited to all parent/pupil activity days at Broadoak Nursery. This will allow continuing knowledge of local families and children to be available to all professionals involved.
- Nursery staff used the music sessions to enhance their knowledge of their pupils and make written observations.
- And most importantly - we had fun

### Hurst Library

The Bookstart officer holds regular events each month at Hurst Library including Time for a Rhyme, Tickle Time and Story Time.

### Time for a Rhyme

Time for a Rhyme was an established event at the library every 6 weeks and was facilitated by an S.R.B funded bookstart post. With SureStart funding these events could be held on a more regular basis, every four weeks. The Bookstart officer continues to hold these sessions in the same format as previously set up. Rhymes, Story, Craft activity, Refreshments.

### Tickle Time

Tickle Time was set up to accommodate the very young 0-18months. The Bookstart officer visited babies in their own home to deliver the 6/8-week pack and parents said there were no activities suitable for their very young babies. All the parents were interested in a finger rhyme session. A pilot session was held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2003 with 18 babies and parents attending and requesting more sessions. Tickle Time was then held on the first Monday morning of each month 10am -11am and soon became popular with mums, dads and grandparents. Many parents have returned to work following maternity leave and have requested sessions on other days and times. Tickle Time is now held the first Monday morning of every month and some Friday afternoons.

Figure 1

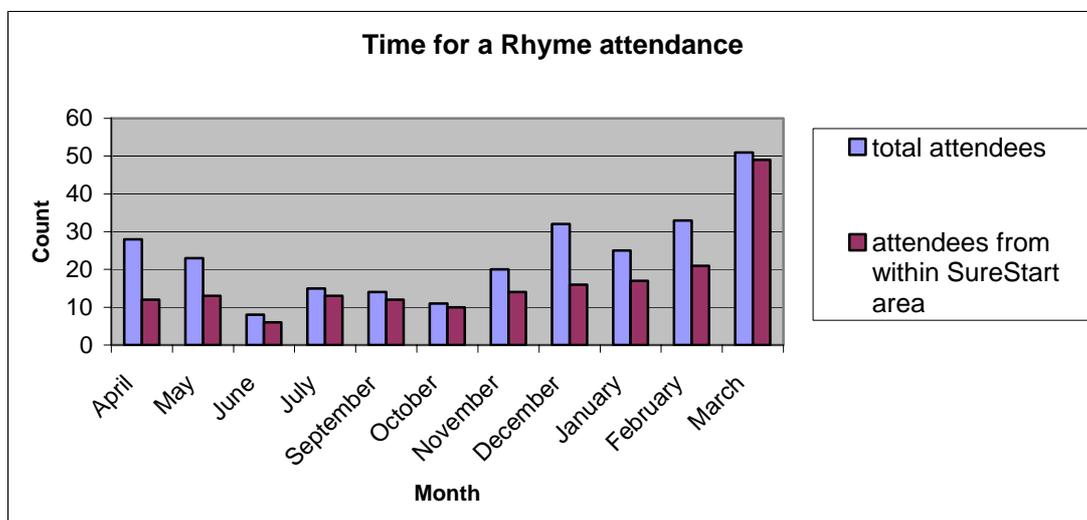


Figure 1 shows the attendances each month at the Time for a Rhyme group. (please note that there was no session in August), The numbers attending has risen by nearly 100% in a year. As the chart shows, the proportion of attendees who are from within the SureStart Ashton area has also increased.



*Babies enjoying  
Tickle Time at  
Hurst Library*

### Parents Comments

"Very enjoyable for babies and mums. Surprised at how the young babies took notice and hope there will be more sessions."

"Excellent, good fun. He loved it too."

"Really enjoyed it. Glad they are morning sessions as I work in the afternoon. Keep it up."

"We had a really good time this morning. Looking forward to the next session."

"Good fun having other grown ups to sing along with."

"The children seemed to enjoy themselves and had fun."

### Story Time

A monthly session for, 18month to 4 years. I tried to split this session into two separate sessions 18months - 2½years (Rhyme Time) and 2½years - 4years (Story Time). However, this was not successful with very small numbers attending each session and the older group started nursery so I lost them completely. The sessions now combined into story time allows flexibility depending on the age range attending. For example board games are played with older children.

### Early Years Area

Following the successful numbers of children and parents attending the Bookstart sessions at the library and comments from parents saying we could use more space. SureStart have funded a "refurbishment" of the

junior section of the library, this will enhance the corner and make it more user friendly. This has been an exciting project for parents, SureStart staff and library staff who have worked together sharing ideas and experiences to get the best for the children. New equipment has been purchased and a design team "Animania" have been working with parents and staff to bring a jungle theme to the library. A special launch will take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> June with many exciting activities on offer e.g. face painting, stories, rhymes and craft activities.

### Music Fun

Music Fun is an extension of the Rhyme sessions and is aimed at children 2½ years and above. This is a 6-week course for children and their parents, extending their musical experience by introducing new songs and musical instruments. The sessions have been held at Broadoak and Rosehill.

### Parents Comments

"Casey couldn't wait to come every week, thoroughly enjoyed, good variety and fun, Party was great."

"Kids enjoyed it very much - very varied"

"The session was very enjoyable and well structured"

"Very enjoyable and well run. Children seem to really enjoy it"

"We enjoy music so much, we keep coming back again and again"

### Women's Project

The Bookstart Plus officer holds regular Rhyme and Story sessions at the women's project, this has encouraged parents to attend other SureStart sessions. Ex-residents from are now engaged in regular Bookstart events. The staff from the women's project often attend Bookstart sessions with the children, this has helped establish positive links with SureStart staff.

### Early Years Workers

The early years workers often work alongside the Bookstart plus officer, providing stimulating creative activities to enhance the story/music session. With many parents attending the sessions this gives the Bookstart plus officer the opportunity to talk to parents on an individual basis, building positive working relationships, identifying their individual needs for themselves and their children allowing future sessions to be

planned around the parents wishes and feelings. One of the early years workers has assisted in the planning and delivery of the music fun and story sessions.

### Community Development Worker

The community development worker has engaged Bookstart in providing activities at other venues in the SureStart area, e.g. SureStart Hazelhurst shops. This has enabled parents to attend sessions within easy access to their homes. Music mania is a music session for parents and children, sessions are held weekly at Hazlehurst shops Mondays 1.30pm - 2.30pm. Story Fun sessions are currently held at The Rosehill Centre.



Enjoying the story of  
The Hungry  
Caterpillar

### Children's Fund

Through the 5's to 13's activities co-ordinator, Bookstart has provided a wider range of activities for older children during school holidays e.g. making books sessions, Bookstart was also involved with the Family Festival held at St James promoting the Bookstart message and singing rhymes with the children.

### Parent's Comments

"She made a book about herself- absolutely brilliant - thanks a lot - you made me cry (with delight)"

"Children enjoyed making the books and painting hands and feet. A lovely keepsake"

"I really enjoyed making the book for my baby. We had a good time".

### Children's Comments

"I thought it was brilliant. I enjoyed making hand and footprints. There was fun for everyone and you can be proud of your work plus you should

show your parents. As well as that you can be proud of your work and you should be proud. That's why it's a great idea."

"I really enjoyed making my book my mum liked it and my dad liked it too."

### Play Group

Bookstart has visited the local Curzon Rd. playgroup holding a couple of rhyme sessions plus providing each child with a book. The Bookstart plus officer also attended sessions with the speech and language therapist working with small groups of children helping them with their language development.

### Parent and Tot Groups

Bookstart regularly visits all the parent and tot groups operating in the SureStart area, Screamers at St Johns church, Broadoak and Smallshaw Community Centre Parent and Tots group and St James Time together group reading stories to the children and parents, and encouraging everyone to participate in the sessions. At all the venues parents are informed about the services in the library, parents are also encouraged to enrol their children at the library.

### Volunteers

The Volunteer coordinator has recently linked a willing volunteer to the Bookstart project. The volunteer is a retired primary school teacher and assists in the delivery of the sessions.

### Volunteers Comments

"I think Bookstart is a really important for introducing parents to the value of sharing books with their children from a very young age. Sharing books helps children to form a close and loving bond between parent and child and helps to develop the children's interest in books and gives them a good start in learning to read. The Tickle Time sessions and Story sessions at the library are very good at helping parent and child to enjoy stories and rhymes together and have fun playing instruments. They are encouraged to join the library and choose a book at each session. The Music Mania sessions are also great fun and create a bond between parent/carer and child. Learning to listen to sound and repeat patterns is a valuable experience in preparation for learning to read."

"I really enjoy all three sessions that I help at and feel really valued by the Bookstart officer and the parents/carers and their children. I like being with the children and helping them and their parents/carers enjoy

and benefit from the experiences. I feel I am valued as a member of the SureStart Team."

### Hard to Reach Families

As we are all aware there are families who for whatever reason find it extremely difficult or impossible or who do not wish to engage in activities. Through the drugs and alcohol misuse worker, The traveller, refugee, asylum seeker support team, and the Community Connects project, Bookstart ensures all the children and families are aware of the Bookstart service and that all the children have access to good quality books.

Through Bookstart all children in the SureStart area are given free packs containing appropriate information for their age and stage of development, invitations to join in regular hands on activities, good quality book, bookmark plus an invitation to join the library.

Figure 2

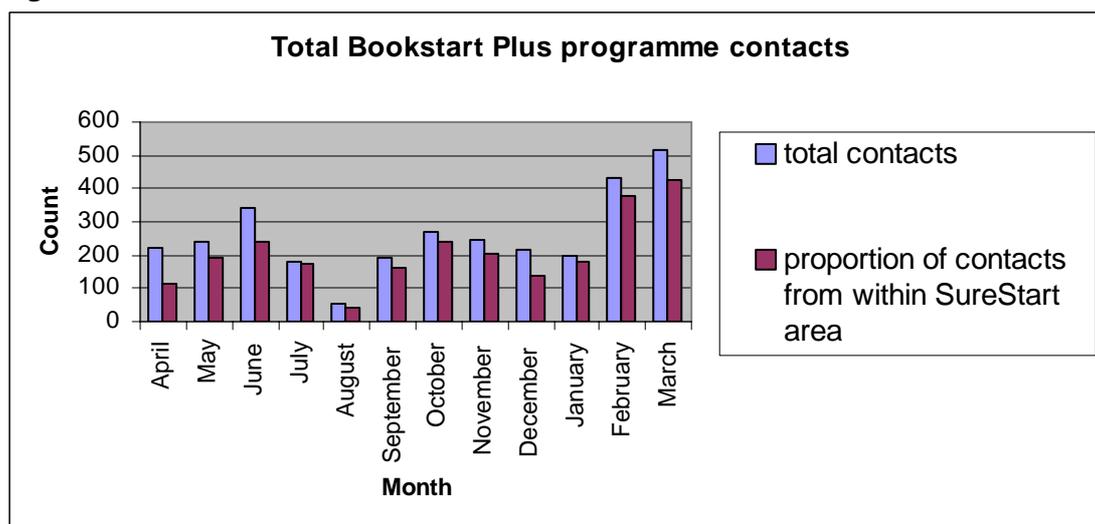


Figure 2 shows the reach of the Bookstart Plus programme (please note that the Bookstart Plus officer was on leave for 3 weeks in August). The graph shows that as well as a general increase in the numbers attending activities, there has also been an increase in the proportion of attendees who are from the SureStart Ashton area.

Bookstart is having an impact on the local community with numbers of parents and children at each activity increasing, plus the numbers of children who are members of the local library at Hurst has increased.

## Nutrition Project

### Cook and Eat Sessions

Most interventions aimed at changing children's diets target the mother. Alderson (1999) found that mothers tended to feed their children in a less healthy way than themselves, they feed their children more sweet products and unhealthy breads and an excess of dairy products. When choosing foods for themselves they are motivated by practicality and calories but when choosing foods for their children they consider 'health' to be more important e.g. nutritional value, long term health. Despite being well intentioned the diets of the children are poorer than their own. With this in mind it is clear that any courses to promote healthier family eating need to include basic information on food and nutrition, address the different needs of children and adults as well as a practical cookery element. The period whilst the dishes are cooking is ideal to discuss the family's diet, any problems and to address misconceptions that often arise due to the sensationalising of food stories in the media.

The Cook and Eat sessions fall within the SureStart objective Improving Health.

SDA targets the sessions aim to meet are parenting support, guidance on hygiene and reduction in the number of children admitted to hospital with gastroenteritis.

#### Aim

To provide parents within the SureStart area with advice on healthier eating and basic nutrition for themselves and their families along with the opportunity to try out a range of recipes within a group and then taste them with their children. To offer further training in Food Safety and the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised qualification where appropriate.

#### Objectives

- To provide a 'bank' of recipes and healthy eating literature to be given to the parents at Cook and Eat sessions.
- To raise awareness of the importance of good food hygiene.
- To develop cookery skills and an ability to adapt family meals to suit infants (weaning) and toddlers.
- To introduce parents to other SureStart activities and services

The Cook and Eat sessions have been run across 3 centres - Broadoak, St Johns and St James, sessions at the women's project and, as a follow on from weaning parties, sessions at Rosehill. The sessions run for 5 weeks during term time with a crèche provided. The courses are promoted at all the venues used, through the nurseries and by the Early Years Workers as they meet with parents; we have also had referrals via the Health Visitors. In addition to the group sessions one to one work has been done with a number of families with particular needs e.g. milk free diets, egg free diets and problems with chewing?

The 'Cook and Eat' sessions give the parents an opportunity to learn about basic nutrition in a relaxed friendly atmosphere, where they can try new recipes without the risk of wasting money if the families do not enjoy the particular foods cooked that week. The sessions also allow an opportunity to discuss healthier cooking methods, cooking on a budget and simple food hygiene. The most common problem raised at the sessions is fussy eating in toddlers; whilst we are able to offer help and advice around this parents often find that the children are willing to try a wider range of foods whilst with the other children from the crèche. Where the venue allows we also do some simple cooking with the children in the crèche.

- ✓ We have built up a bank of recipes for the courses, which have been used by other parents - through Lifestyle courses, weaning sessions, and also parents we talk to at Parents and Tots sessions. In the past parents have discussed and chosen what they want to cook, in the future we will provide a (large) list of tried and tested recipes from the previous courses for the parents to choose from. These recipes are suitable for all members of the family and in some cases include advice on suitability as weaning foods.
- ✓ The emphasis has been on foods with high fruit or vegetable content, iron rich foods and avoiding reliance on expensive convenience foods.
- ✓ We have seen many nervous and shy Mums grow in confidence, blossom within these groups and move on to access other SureStart services and activities.
- ✓ 5 of the parents who have attended Cook and Eat courses have expressed an interest in volunteering for the Community Café at Rosehill and have helped with buffets provided for Christmas parties and Broadoak centre celebrations.

- ✓ We have a waiting list of 6 parents who have attended a Cook and Eat course that are interested in the GMOCN Nutrition and Food Hygiene course (awaiting crèche and venue at Rosehill).
- ✓ We have a waiting list of parents interested in the Cook and Eat sessions, which will run as soon as crèches and venues are available, we also have parents who have attended Cook and Eat courses in the winter months and have enquired about a course with recipes more suited to the summer months.

The cook and eat sessions were attended by 34 registered parents. 38% of them attended more than one session, however only 21% of the 34 completed the full course.

At the first session we make two quick snack type meals, which allows time to discuss 'The balance of good health' and to take a 'Snapshot survey' of their diets through a food diary. We talk about the merits of different foods and discuss the types of foods they eat at the moment, where they shop, their food budget, food issues in the media and any problems around food, particularly in relation to children - faddy eaters etc. This information is used to plan the menus for the other sessions.

### Food diaries

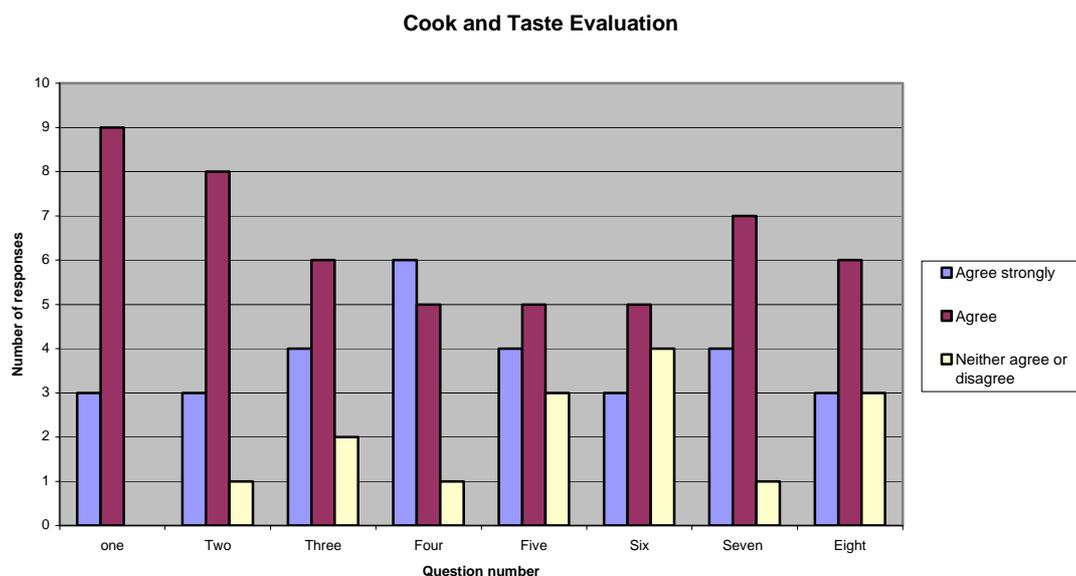
The diaries are completed by the parents in respect to their own diets (the diaries have now been changed to include 3 columns for other members of the family to complete).

- Most of the parents skip breakfast but then snack during the morning- usually crisps or confectionary.
- Few parents (4/29 diaries completed) ate fruit as a snack, many counted bought fruit pies or crumbles etc as a portion of fruit, whilst this is the case with a fruit rich home made dessert, bought products have minimal fruit content and are high in fat.
- Most of the diets had a poor vegetable content though parents were reassured when they realised they had not included the vegetable content of dishes e.g. tomatoes, mushrooms, peppers, onions etc in pasta dishes or casseroles.
- Breaded and battered items featured heavily in many of the parent's diets, even when oven baked these are high in fat (18/29). These are often served with chips or processed potato items e.g.

curly fries or waffles, if other items are served these tend to be beans or spaghetti in tomato sauce. Pastry was also a regular item some parents had a pie or pasty most lunch times.

- Take-a ways play a large role in at least half of the diets including pastry items, Indian, Chinese, pizza and traditional fish and chip type meals.
- Many parents felt that cooking pasta and a jar of pasta sauce to be a home cooked meal, this may be one of the reasons they felt 'home cooking' to be expensive.
- Parents had a range of starchy foods - rice, potatoes and pasta but these are white, the parents had no high fibre or wholemeal rice or pasta. Some of the parents had brown bread but were unaware of it was wholemeal or granary and that brown bread could be just as processed as white.
- The parents had little dairy produce though they had not considered that milk in tea or coffee adds up to quite a lot in a day.

Evaluation forms have been sent to 28 parents who have attended Cook and Eat sessions, 13 questionnaires have been returned<sup>1</sup>. All the responses were positive with the most common comment that the courses should be longer.



<sup>1</sup> One respondent ticked all the questions without using the scale, no information from this questionnaire has been used

1. The information given and recipes used are appropriate
2. Using the recipes has helped to increase our fruit and vegetable intake
3. The course helped me to try a wider variety of foods
4. In general the recipes had less fat than those I would usually use
5. I continue to use the recipes from the cook and eat
6. I use less convenience food than before
7. I consider my diet to be healthier than before the Cook and Eat course
8. Healthy eating need not be expensive.

### Comments from evaluation questionnaires

- It was useful to learn how to make the type of foods we usually buy - curries, chicken nuggets etc.
- Useful to have ways of using the blender from the weaning party other than to make baby foods.
- Good ideas to hide vegetables in other dishes when children are fussy eaters
- The course was informative and enjoyable - not patronising as I had imagined it would be.
- I thought healthy eating would be expensive (it is a lot more time consuming though).
- I liked the fact we were given the different spices to take home as I wouldn't try new recipes because of the cost of spices (4 other similar comments).
- I didn't know about all the other SureStart things that went on.

### Suggestions from evaluation questionnaires

- Make the courses longer (6 comments).
- Ideas for healthier children's party foods (3 comments)
- More quick snack type lunch time recipes.
- Do a summer course with salads and lighter meals.
- Have less people on the course so there is more for everyone to do.
- Do more curries and Chinese foods.

### What changes can we make?

- ✓ Include one 'snack type' meal each week along with one main course and one dessert.
- ✓ Prepare a small children's party buffet at the last session with quick, cheap and healthier party foods.
- ✓ Try to include a traditional curry and Chinese dish (unfortunately these often need a large number of ingredients which can be quite off putting).

### Anecdotal evidence

- ✓ Other SureStart staff have seen parents buying vegetables on the market in Ashton.
- ✓ Parents often call in to the Broadoak for new recipes.
- ✓ Recipes have been passed onto friends and family and have been cooked and served for grandparents etc.
- ✓ A parent who never eats fruit or vegetables has been seen eating fruit at a SureStart event and said she now regularly eats fruit as a snack.
- ✓ One parent came along to the first session and did not even take her coat off she soon settled in and had since attended a number of SureStart activities including a Healthier Life Style course.
- ✓ Many of the parents have moved on to join other SureStart activities and groups.
- ✓ Parents are keen to help with SureStart events where food is involved.

I feel the results of the evaluation questionnaire show that positive changes are being made by the parents. The Cook and Eat sessions have a practical, social and educational element that the parents enjoy. The opportunity to sit together to sample the foods at the end of the session not only helps to encourage the children to try new foods but also to test the dishes 'risk free' i.e. if the children do not enjoy the dish they have not wasted time and money, however the children are more likely to try the foods whilst in a group with their peers.

We have been unable to run any Cook and Eat sessions this year due to problems with venue and crèche facilities. We have a waiting list but are no longer taking names as the maximum number for a group is 6 and we now have enough names for 3 courses. The new Parent and Toddler group at Broadoak have asked for support so the first sessions will be for these parents and will include healthy snacks and quick meals for the playgroup volunteers along with Basic Food Hygiene training. We also hope to be able to run a course from mid-June at Rosehill.

### St James' Cook and Eat Sessions

Cook and Taste sessions were arranged using the kitchens at St James Nursery. The parents were recruited via a volunteer at the school. Two parents attended the first session but were told they 'had to come'. These parents said they were very busy in the afternoons and had to prepare meals etc as the children went straight to language and religious lessons after school. They also said that they would be particularly interested in sewing classes but felt their husbands would only eat foods

cooked in the traditional way so 'Cook and Eat sessions were not appropriate, the kitchen was also a problem as it was very small and used as a store room for cleaning equipment. No one came to the next session.

We re-launched the sessions a few weeks later but moved the venue to St Johns where the kitchen was more suitable, a mini bus was arranged and all parents informed it would be a drop in with free crèche and a minibus up to the venue which would fit in with nursery times. Again two parents came who had been "told to come", these parents said they were unaware it had been moved to St Johns but had come as they were interested in "English" dishes for their children e.g. pasta, pies, burgers etc. Unfortunately despite telling the staff who accompanied them back to St James that they had enjoyed the session they did not attend the following week. It has been difficult to find out why the sessions failed at St James but we plan to do more sessions when the new kitchen is built. The Oral Health Promoter will be involved in both recruitment and running the sessions and we hope this will lead to more success.

### Women's Project

I have done short Cook and Taste sessions at the women's project on 3 occasions. We do not provide crèche but parents are sometimes able to leave the children with play workers or other residents so everyone who wants to attend a session can. In these sessions the dishes are prepared but not eaten as each person makes enough for their own children and themselves to eat together as a family meal that day. The mums enjoy the sessions as they rarely cook as they don't know who will be in the kitchen and they feel the equipment is limited. Many parents also said that if they bought food it may not be there when they came to cook the meal so they did little cooking. There is a weekly delivery of short dated 'fresh' foods from Marks and Spencer which many parents rely on. Despite enjoying these sessions the staff feel it is often better for the residents to attend sessions outside the centre in order to meet other parents and socialise.

### Rosehill

The sessions at Rosehill were a request from parents who had attended the weaning parties but felt that as their children moved forward toward family meals they needed further support. There were two sessions covering family meals suitable for toddlers, much time was also spent discussing how healthy eating guidelines for adults were not appropriate for children. These children are now 14 months old and the parents are now interested in quick lunch recipes for these children instead of sandwiches and nugget type meals.

## Parent and Toddler Group

### How It All Began

The parent and toddler group at Broadoak was started in October 2002 run by the Speech & Language Therapist and Bookstart Officer. At the time there were no other parent & toddler groups in the area.

Initially it was advertised in the local primary school, posters were placed in the community centre & leaflets were distributed to local residents. There was no charge for this session as it was funded & equipped by SureStart Ashton.

### Objectives

- Provide a social opportunity for parents/carers with children under 4.
- Encourage good practice in play/creative activities for children/parents and carers.
- Provide a point of contact for parents/carers to access other SureStart activities.
- Provide a point of contact for SureStart staff to contact parents/carers to promote our service.
- Provide structured activities to promote good speech and language development in under 4's.
- Provide fun activities for children /parents and carers.

Right from the outset it was the intention to hand over the responsibility for this group to the parents by September 2004.

### The Early Days

In January 2003 the Early Years Workers were appointed and began to run the session. Bookstart & the Speech Therapist were still involved on a regular basis. The average number of children attending was 12.

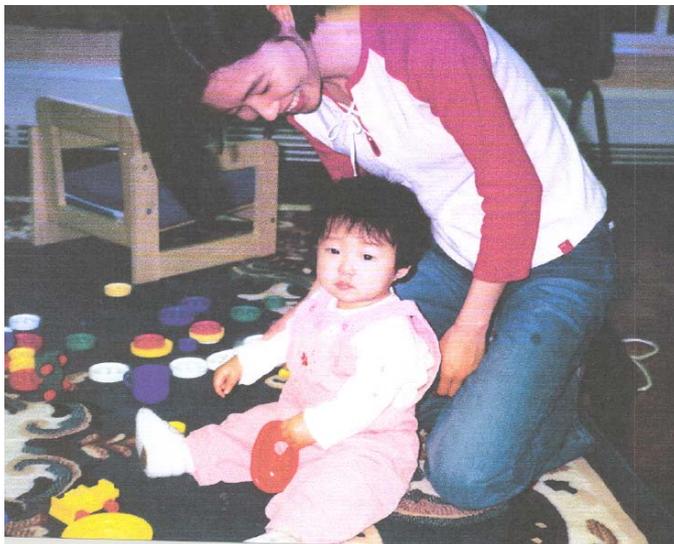
During the sessions the staff encouraged all parents to interact with their children to allow them to develop various skills. e.g. sharing & turn taking. Social skills were gained by sitting together for both snack time and singing/story. Art and craft was also provided during the session. This included painting, collage, junk modelling and card making.



Developing pre-writing skills

Prior to snack time parents/children & staff all tidied up together. Whilst snack, was prepared by staff, occasionally a parent/carer would volunteer to assist.

Over the following months the session proved to be very popular. attendance increased, till approximately 24 children were attending with their parent/carer.



Early play experience

The success however came at a price. The room being used became very crowded and uncomfortable. This caused restrictions on the type of activity that could safely be provided. Some parents with very young babies commented on this. Saying they felt it necessary to keep their child on their knee which limited play experiences. Because of this it means that our original objectives have only been partly met.

## What Happened Next

It was at this point that we decided the group need to move into a bigger room (the hall). It had always been the intention that the group should be run by the parents themselves. Therefore it seemed the right time to begin this process.

A letter was sent out in October 2003 to all those that attend. This invited them to a meeting to discuss the future of the group.

### Parents identified the following issues:

- \* Need to provide more space
- \* Have access to large toys
- \* Hot drinks available
- \* Some way to separate babies and toddlers
- \* Run a toy library from the group
- \* Have own funds to run things like trips and to provide snacks.

### Staff were also clear about some priorities for the group:

- Parent/carers to have support during the hand over period.
- Hot drinks only to be available if health & safety issues can be resolved.
- That healthy snacks continue to be provided.
- The emphasis on parental involvement with their children is maintained.
- That appropriate levels of training be provided to enable parents/carers to run the sessions.
- That the group who volunteer to run the sessions ensure the maximum participation of other parents/carers. To ensure the long-term sustainability.
- Appropriate funding agreements are reached, again to ensure long-term sustainability.

### Also at this meeting the following actions were agreed.

- Parents needed to establish themselves as a committee.
- That key positions be identified and filled e.g. treasurer, chair.
- That a plan be devised detailing actions needed to enable parents/carers to take the group over, with appropriate support.
- Training needs/opportunities for parents & carers be identified.
- Works & equipment required to enable the hall to be used be identified and completed/purchased by SureStart as soon as possible.

- That Broadoak & Smallshaw Community Centre via the management committee is involved in discussions about the long-term sustainability of the group.

Unfortunately only the last 2 actions have been achieved due to the lack of commitment from those attending the group.

In November 2003 the group became an independent section of Broadoak & Smallshaw Community Centre. Each adult paid £1.00 to become a year member and there after they pay £1.00 for each session they attend.

All those who attended were kept informed of what was happening by verbal communication from SureStart staff and by letter.

### What Could We Have Done Differently?

- The Early Years staff feel that the committee of parents should have been established before the parent and toddler group was actually handed over.
- Training should also have been completed prior to this.
- Both staff and the parent that now runs the session would have liked to see ground rules set right from the beginning. Maybe an information leaflet about the group needed to be produced and given to each parent/carer.
- It is also felt that at least 1 early year's staff should be involved in any further meetings that takes place.

### What Happened Next?

To help evaluate the group and plan for the future a questionnaire was conducted during one of the sessions. The results of which can be seen in the evaluation undertaken by the parent who runs the group.

One of the positive outcomes from this was that 5 parents/carers came forward to assist with the smooth running of the group.

### Future Hopes

- The group is able to gain their own identity, by selecting and using a name chosen for the group by the parents and children. One suggestion already received is TIDDLERS.
- Training opportunities will be ongoing for all those interested in running sessions.
- A leaflet will be devised and handed out to all new members.
- Increased advertising to ensure the ongoing success of the group.
- Establish a set program, to be implemented from September 2004;

e.g., Monthly sessions with Bookstart Plus, Early Years Staff and Toy Library on a rota basis.

- Obtain independent funding in order to provide more equipment.

### **On going assessment of the group.**

Continue to provide a safe and happy environment in which children and their families can play and learn together.

Currently the average weekly attendance of the group is 24. With approximately only 2 attendees per week being from outside the SureStart Ashton area.

## **Parents' comments or suggestions about the Parent and Toddler Group**

*"It would be really nice to have 2 sessions a week"*

*"I think the parent and toddler group is very well run and nothing at all should be changed"*

*"First time I have visited, I brought my grandson here after a neighbour mentioned the play group. People are friendly and he seems to be enjoying himself!"*

*"Another session poss Thurs am"*

*"When the playgroup began we used to have a sing song at the end of the session my daughter really misses it"*

*"My daughter and myself have really enjoyed these Tuesday afternoons, with something different every week and the friendly staff we look forward to September. Thanks a lot."*

*"she really enjoys herself at the group. Her development has come o leaps and bounds. Every success in the future."*

The following evaluation of the Parent and Toddler Group was undertaken by Julie who runs the group. Julie is currently undertaking a course at college and used the opportunity of this evaluation exercise to complete a module of the course. This part of the evaluation report is in Julie's own words.

## Parent and Toddler Group at Broadoak Community Centre.

### The Story So Far

The Parent and Toddler group at Broadoak was established in October 2002. I was one of the Parent/grandparents/carers to attend the group. I found out about the group via a leaflet, which was posted, through the door.

By January 2003 the Early Years Workers were in place and in the beginning they ran the group via SureStart. The workers would provide activities for the children to try, they included handprints, leaf painting etc.

After snack time the workers would encourage the children to join in with a sing-a-long. There seemed to be a kind of structure to the sessions, which was good.

By September 2003, the group had outgrown the crèche room and had to relocate to the hall at the centre. During the first year I noticed that the toys, books and the types of activities improved and as a lot of young babies started to attend the under 2's toys were introduced have been built and play toys, prams, animals and other educational toys, the selection now is vast.

It was always intended from the very beginning that the parents would eventually take over the running of the group. This was originally planned for September 2003 but was not feasible at the time and new meeting was set for October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2003 regarding the setting up and running of the group. The parents took over around November from the Early Years Workers.

I feel that since the Early Years Workers have handed over control of the group, there seems to be something missing from the session.

The missing link seems to be the lack of someone to whom you and other could seek advice from during the session. When the Early Years Workers were in or dropped into the session even for half an hour, the parents know that there was someone to talk to regarding problems or even to seek advice from. I know that an early years worker is on the premises and is always available but at present I have to leave the group to seek advice or help from her.

I oversee the running of the group since the parents took over the control. It still takes place on Tuesday afternoon from 1-15 until 2-45 pm. and can be well attended depending on the weather. During the last six weeks or so, The Bookstart officer has attended a few sessions doing story time followed by a sing-a-long session. This was extremely well accepted by both the parents and children alike. When the Bookstart

officer was unavailable to attend due to other prior commitments it has been commented upon that everyone seems to be disappointed that this activity was not available during that session.

The following questionnaire is to be issued for completion and return on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2004. This is being assessed by myself as part of my HNC Business Studies Course and in conjunction with SureStart Ashton with their help and cooperation.

## REPORT

TO: - The Manager, SureStart  
FROM: - Julie  
DATE: - May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004  
SUBJECT: - Evaluation of Parent and Toddler Group, Broadoak.

### Introduction

This report will attempt to show the results and recommendations ascertained from the questionnaire previously completed.

### Result

There was a large portion (81%) that stated that they and their child/ren always looked forward to attending the group session. The remaining 19% stated they often looked forward to attending. 75% of those questioned stated that the venue was very good while 19% said it was a good and the remaining 6% said it was satisfactory. This shows that it was a good move and the remaining 6% said it was satisfactory. This shows that it was a good move switching the group from the Crèche facility to the hall for more room.

The equipment provided by SureStart for the group to use of those parents/carers questioned 69% Stated it was very good, 25% said the equipment was good, whilst the remaining 6% stated the equipment was satisfactory for our use.

Regarding the snacks and the £ 1 charge the parents/carers questioned agreed that they were very good. The proportion was 94% to 6%; the other 6% said it was good.

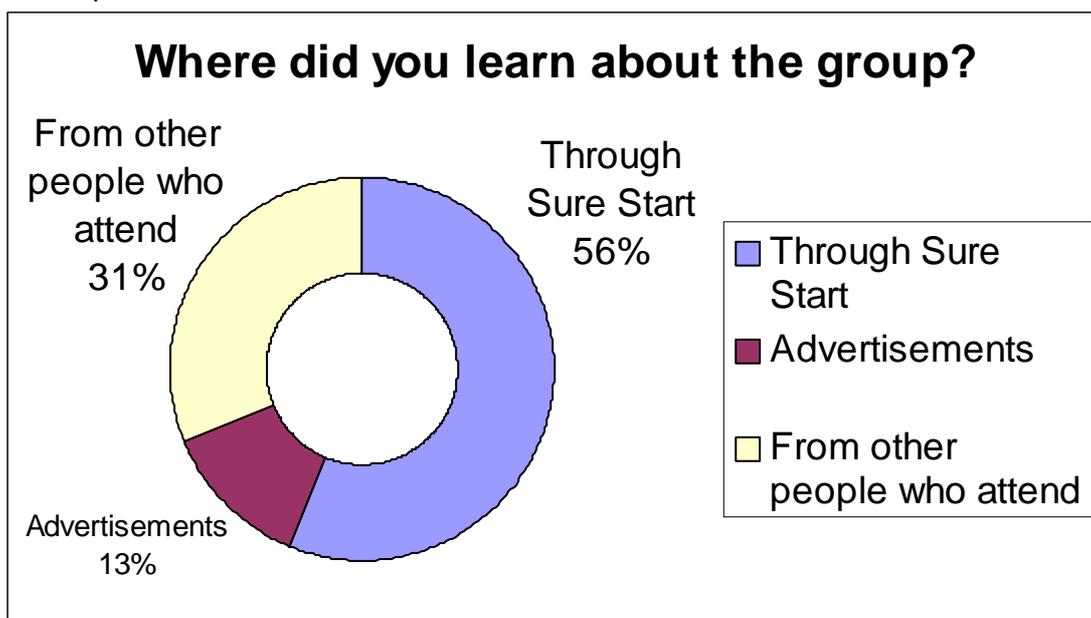
The day and time was very appropriate to all 100% of those questioned and there were 5 parents who gave suggestion for other days. The day chosen was Thursday and the percentage was 31% of those questioned.

The next two questions were related regarding (1) if more of a set structure was needed within the group, and (2) if other activities should be introduced to the sessions. These questions turned up some surprising results. 75% of the parents/carers wanted more of a set structure to the session but 56% of parents did not want to introduce any other activities.

This meant that although the majority want more structure they don't necessarily want other activities included. There were some suggestions put forward in respect of other activities that some of the parents would like to be introduced. These include: - Story time, art and craft, sing-a-long and 1 parent suggested splitting the group into ages e.g. 0-2 years and 0-4 years.

On the day the questionnaire was issued the session had 19 children in attendance and of those 37% were between 36 to 40 months of age. The next highest group were the 18 to 24 month with 21% this was followed closely by the remaining groups of 24 to 30 months and 40 to 48 months who each had 16% each. The last group in the sector was 12 to 18 months and 30 to 36 months there was 5% in each group.

The majority learned of the group via SureStart with 56% of those questioned stating this was the first they know of the group's existence. While 2 of the parents stated they had a leaflet through the door, it can be assumed that these parents were in the original group, as the local area was leafleted. These accounted for 13% of those questioned. The remaining 31% stated that they learnt of the group through people who already attended the sessions.



The next question regarding how they got to the group. The majority stated that they walked to the group. 31% used a car to get to

the group while 6% travelled by public transport. This shows why the group is not very well attended when the weather is wet or very cold.

The last question asked was regarding the parent's willingness to be more involved with the running of the group. This showed a surprising result with 38% of those questioned stating they were willing to become more involved. The names have been passed on to the Early Years Worker. It has to be noted that of those parents/carers who have shown an interest in becoming more involved the vast majority have children between the ages of 36 and 48 months. Also it has to be said that those parents/carers who showed an interest have attended the group from the beginning or early stages. This group of parents represent 83% of those volunteer. It was also noted that those who had children under 3 do not want to be involved.

### Evaluation

The questionnaire provided a few surprises. On the day it was given out the group had NO younger children attending i.e. less than 12 months. whereas when the group was in the crèche area there were quite a few young babies who attended. Parents have attended with younger children but not on this day or very often.

The other major find had to be with the structure of the sessions. Where 75% of those questioned wanted more structure but without any new activities introduced. This has been discussed by the Early Years Staff and myself (see recommended section of this report).

At present the parents who have attended the longest are the ones who are willing the help within the group session. The parents who have shown no interest in becoming involved are still in the "chatting" stage whereas those who volunteered to help have gone through that stage and know what is involved in running the group.

With the ages of the children attending the sessions, the majority will finish coming next September as they will be attending full-time school. Therefore it is imperative that the group introduces new parents and children this coming school year. I have asked for advertising posters to be produced for the local area in the hope that it will introduce new blood to the group, therefore ensuring the continued success of the group into the future.

### Recommendations for the future

- All necessary training to be completed as soon as possible.
- From September 2004, the establishment of a monthly programme  
In the form of: -  
Week 1 Early Years Workers  
Week 2 Book Start Plus

Week 3 On Our Own

Week 4 Toy Library

- To continue with the ongoing success via local publicity campaign which needs to be activated by June ready for September.
- To produce a leaflet which would contain what the group is about, the ground rules, etc. This can be handed to all parents whether they are existing ones or newcomers.
- Establish when the group is open i.e. term dates instead of a notice stating no group next week so that parents can plan ahead.
- To find a system to ensure an ongoing way of assessment of the group.
- The group needs its own identity namely its own name; - this has been ongoing and the group is now called " TIDDLERS".

This questionnaire was kept anonymous to all who attended, except for those who indicated they wished to become involved in the running of the group. This is the reason this question was placed last in the questionnaire and also for confidentiality, and this was achieved with great success.

## Feedback from the User Satisfaction Survey

### Conclusions and recommendations

The self completion survey (with incentive) was an effective method, and achieved a good response rate. When compared to the survey conducted in 2002 the findings show that there is continued interest in SureStart in the programme area. This good response rate was supported by the high proportion of families that expressed an interest in receiving information about becoming more involved with SureStart.

### The Ashton Area

Respondents appear to have similar opinions on their local area as those recorded in 2002; most describing the area as 'ok' with elements they wished to change. A low proportion of respondents expressed high dissatisfaction with the area.

### Child and family services

When compared to 2002 there appears to have been an increase in the use of childcare by families in the programme area.

This increase in childcare take-up is particularly notable for the number of parents accessing parent and toddler groups. Despite this there is still demand for crèches and after school clubs. There has also been an increase in the proportion of parents of children with a disability or special need that feel they have access to appropriate childcare for their child (albeit a finding derived from a small number of interviewees).

A significant proportion of parents expressed interest in using nursery provision for their child/ children and quality of care and cost were felt to be the most important factors when deciding whether or not to use this. A section of respondents also hoped that this could act as a meeting point for families.

Fewer respondents than in 2002 said that they faced barriers when accessing childcare. Although cost continues to be the most significant barrier for those that feel barriers are faced.

Lack of suitable play areas continues to be a concern for families in the Ashton area. It was suggested that safer and well maintained play areas would improve the situation.

### SureStart Services/ Support

Awareness of SureStart services and support is high particularly for key services such as Midwives, Health Visitors, Bookstart Plus and Parent and Toddler groups. Parents were (unsurprisingly) less aware of more specialised support such as substance misuse and back to work advice.

A large proportion of respondents now feel that they know where they can go for help, support and advice and a high proportion of respondents that have used SureStart support and service feel it has improved their confidence and their child's confidence.

Parents still feel however that they would like practical support attending groups.

Respondents were able suggest several ways in which SureStart could improve the facilities to encourage the involvement of fathers. Suggestions included additional groups at the weekend and / or in the evening.

### Employment and Training

In terms of their employment situation, despite the increased take up of childcare, most parents that worked part-time said a lack of suitable childcare was the reason for this. Cost of childcare was also the greatest perceived barrier preventing respondents them from improving their employment situation.

The main barriers to taking up training and study were cost of training and lack of time.

Despite this, a notable proportion of respondents had training courses that they wanted to undertake in the future.

### Overall Conclusions

Despite the differences in the survey it has been possible to make meaningful comparison with the results of the 2002 survey. There does not appear to have been a substantial change in the overall perception of the Ashton area and some of the areas that respondents would like to see improved remain similar such as improvements in parks and play areas. Responses from those parents that have accessed SureStart services suggest that SureStart has made a positive impact on their lives. They have greater awareness of where to access help/ advice and support and

they feel more confident in themselves and have noticed this change in their children.

### Recommendations

SureStart could:

- Try to ensure that all families are aware of support that is available to them to help with the cost of childcare, as cost of childcare remains a barrier.
- Examine what appears to be a cultural shift in the area away from seeking full time work in favour of part time hours, in regard to the suitability of current provision (for example timing / careers advice)
- Raise awareness of specialist support that SureStart offers such as back to work training advice and try to ensure that all families are aware of the range of training and childcare support provided by SureStart.
- When developing further family services, consider increasing the availability of practical support that is available to parents to encourage their attendance at local groups.
- Attempt to encourage the involvement of fathers in SureStart by targeting them with specific information about activities which are available, these activities should be designed to attract men such as outdoor activities. Any activities for fathers should take place at weekends or in the evenings to encourage attendance.
- This study has found that 24% of parents were interested in contributing to SureStart in some form. This is an encouraging finding. Furthermore, 54% of parents might consider getting involved if they knew more about SureStart. Therefore we recommend that SureStart Ashton takes the opportunity to improve awareness of the services on offer, which will also serve, if suitable follow up is planned, to increase volunteering levels among parents in the area.
- Work with other local stakeholders to ensure that existing parks and play areas are safe and well maintained for families to use.
- Access to information is still a barrier to childcare more likely to be faced by lone parents. SureStart should consider undertaking

further research with a larger sample of lone parents to determine how significant an issue this is, and what other factors are at work.

## Future Evaluation

### Aims and purpose

The following information refers to the external evaluation of the programme to commence April 2004.

The SureStart Ashton programme wants to evaluate what we are doing, how well we are doing it and are we making a difference to the families who are using our services. To provide some structure we have broken down the evaluation of the programme into the following three areas:

### Programme management and Structure

- How effective is our SureStart team?
- How effective is the Management Board?
- How involved are local families in the management of SureStart Ashton?
- How effective are our inter-agency arrangements?

### Programme Operation

- How are our services delivered?
- Are we delivering a good range of provision?
- Are our services of high quality?
- Are our services cost effective?

### Programme Impact

- Are we making a difference?

Although as a programme we have to demonstrate that we are working towards and achieving our objectives and targets, the monitoring and data collection systems already in place will provide us with the relevant information to assess our progress against these targets. Therefore meeting targets and objectives is not the main aim of this piece of work. However our systems collect significant amounts of information and statistics which will be made available to the evaluator as a resource to support any evaluation findings.

SureStart Ashton has identified **7 key areas** within the programme which will form the basis of the evaluation at this stage. These are:

Specific area of evaluation	The issue we need to explore	Our research questions
1. Community Development	Evaluation of this early project could help inform a community development strategy	Are we reaching the right people? Are we regularly involving new/different families? How can we ensure the parent forums are representative of the community? How far have we engaged minority ethnic families/groups?
2. Board and inter-agency support	Levels of involvement from agencies Parental influence within the Partnership	How well are working with our partners-providers of mainstream services? Do parents feel able to influence decisions at Board meetings?
3. Staff teams	How effective are current management structures? - Management team, project teams, whole team How effective is the current communication structure?	Are the current management arrangements appropriate? Are our systems working adequately? Is there good communication within and throughout the team(s)? Are we adequately implementing SureStart values?
4. Publicity and external communication	Programme is concerned about adequate levels of publicity. New post planned with responsibility for marketing and publicity.	Are SureStart services adequately publicised? What do we need to do to ensure that all families and professionals are aware of the range of SureStart services?
5. Co-ordination, streamlining and adding value to existing Services	Want to begin to explore if the projects in general are adding value to mainstream services.	Do professionals in these areas feel that SureStart has impacted on their work and in what way? How well are we working with our partners (providers of mainstream services)?
6. Hard to reach groups	Some evaluation of this at an early stage could help develop the programme's 'hard to reach strategy'	Are we reaching: fathers, teenage parents, substance misusing parents, minority ethnic families etc.?
7. Programme Management	Is the Programme Management effective in delivering the SureStart programme?	How effective is the role of the programme manager in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Management Board</li> <li>• management team</li> <li>• whole team</li> <li>• service users</li> </ul>

As a programme we value our service users and aim to place families at the centre of everything we do and want to achieve. This approach is one we would like to be reflected throughout the evaluation process.