

# An evaluation of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start

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# CONTENTS PAGE

	<b>PAGE</b>
List of illustrations	5
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1. About the report	6
1.2. About Sure Start	7
1.3. About the local evaluation	10
<b>CHAPTER 2: BRITWELL - NORTHBOROUGH SURE START</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1. Introduction	14
2.2. The area	14
2.3. Perceptions of Britwell and Northborough	20
2.4. The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start service delivery plan	28
2.5. Organisational arrangements	36
2.6. The history of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start	42
2.7. Perceptions of the aims of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start	43
<b>CHAPTER 3: ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>46</b>
3.1. Introduction	46
3.2. Services	46
3.3. Buildings and premises	60
3.4. Number of parents & children using Britwell-Northborough Sure Start	63
3.5. Parents' views of services	68
<b>CHAPTER 4: CHALLENGES</b>	<b>72</b>
4.1. Introduction	72
4.2. Buildings & premises	72
4.3. Monitoring & evaluation	79
4.4. Participation and partnerships	83
4.5. Staff satisfaction and dissatisfaction	89
4.6. The Partnership Board	92
4.7. Parent participation at Partnership Board level	95
4.8. Partnerships between agencies and professionals	98
4.9. Sustainability and mainstreaming	103

4.10. Reaching the hard to reach	104
4.11. Impact of the four year old cut off	110
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>111</b>
5.1. Introduction	111
5.2. Strengths	111
5.3. Weaknesses	113
5.4. The Future	115
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>117</b>
1. The evaluation method	117
2. Delivery Plan - Sure Start Reference Group	132
3. Britwell-Northborough Service Delivery Plan - risk management	134
4. Money Plan 2002-2004	135
5. Timetable of development of the Sure Start Programme	141
6. Protocol for referral and information sharing	143
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>144</b>

## ILLUSTRATIONS

<b>FIGURES</b>		<b>PAGE</b>
1.	Map of Slough	14
2.	Wentworth Avenue	19
3.	Perceptions of Britwell-Northborough	23
4.	Moving away or staying put	24
5.	Reasons given for staying or leaving	25
6.	Where local interview participants would like to live	25
7.	Management structure	37
8.	Main aims: staff beliefs	44
9.	Summary of services	59
10.	Parents' experience of the Partnership Board	96

<b>TABLES</b>		
1.	Jarman UPA scores by ward	16
2.	Index of Multiple Deprivation Score 2000	17
3.	Delivery Plan 2000 - total planned expenditure for 3 year period	34
4.	Number of individuals seen 2002-3	66
5.	Number of contacts with parent and/or child 2002-3	67
6.	Parents' opportunity to influence Sure Start	86
7.	Parents views on how they can influence Sure Start	87
8.	Staff satisfaction & dissatisfaction	90
9.	Staff who believe they can influence Sure Start	90

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 About the report

This is a report of the evaluation of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start's key achievements and some of the service planning and delivery processes which took place during April-December 2002. The continuing evolving nature of the programme and the complex environment in which it operates has created challenges for the evaluation and this report reflects what *was* rather than what *is*. The aim of the report is to document what the Britwell-Northborough area was like before Sure Start began; to document the development of this Sure Start programme; to celebrate its early achievements and to reflect on some of the challenges that the programme has faced during this period.

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Partnership Board commissioned the University of Oxford's Health Services Research Unit (HSRU) to undertake this evaluation with funding provided by the DfEE. A full time researcher was appointed by a panel which included two grant holders from the HSRU, the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme manager, a local parent and a member of the Britwell-Northborough Evaluation Sub-Committee, which had been convened to consider ways of conducting a process evaluation of the programme. The evaluation was regulated and defined by formal contract between Slough Primary Care Trust and the Health Services Research Unit, University of Oxford. The evaluation began in April 2002 and the fieldwork was undertaken between April and December 2002.

#### Layout of the report

This section describes how the report of the local evaluation of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has been organised.

Chapter 1, the introductory chapter, draws out key points relating to the National Sure Start programme and its evaluation, before moving on to describe the focus, aims and approach taken in the local evaluation of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start. It goes on to introduce the research methods employed in the collection of data, although these are more fully described in the appendix to the report.

Chapter 2 presents a description of the Britwell-Northborough area and the origins, aims and organisational arrangements of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start.

Chapter 3 focuses on the achievements of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start. It describes the Sure Start programme, premises and numbers of parents and children using the services and

activities. It also includes a section on how parent participants to the evaluation perceive the Sure Start services.

Chapter 4 focuses on the challenges which Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has faced in the planning and delivery of its programmes. The chapter describes how these challenges have been tackled and the part that the action research approach has played in this process.

Finally, Chapter 5, the conclusion to the report, sums up the strengths and weaknesses of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme.

## 1.2 About Sure Start

### Background - The national Sure Start programme

The Sure Start programme originated from a 1997 Government review of services for young children which examined issues and risks relating to social exclusion in early childhood and their consequences for later life. It also reviewed evidence on the effectiveness of existing policies, resources and interventions relating to young children. The review found that multiple disadvantage for young children was a growing problem and that the quality of services for children and their families varied according to locality. Services for the under fours were particularly dislocated. The report concluded that a holistic, community based and evidence based approach was a necessary requirement for policy to impact upon social exclusion.

The review led to the central financing of the Sure Start programme in the financial year 1999-2000, the establishment of an inter-departmental steering group and the formation of the Sure Start Unit. It also led to the formation of the 'Friends of Sure Start' group, which continues to provide a forum for consultation about the development and delivery of the programme.

### Development

There have been three strands of influence on the strategic development of the Sure Start programme. The first strand has been the Educational Priority Areas Programme (EPA), developed in Britain in the late 1960s. These were local projects, set up in areas of disadvantage, whose aim was to raise educational standards and involve young children and families more fully in education. The EPA included a pre-school focus and an evaluation requirement.

The second, more recent, strand of influence has been drawn from American programmes of investment in pre-school intervention. In America it was found that the effects of intensive pre-school programmes of support, particularly those organised around structured play, were

long term and consistent with existing research on the effects of interventions directed at disadvantaged families with pre-school children.

The third strand of influence has centred on the disabling effects of poverty on children growing up in areas of disadvantage and the dynamic processes of social exclusion. It has been asserted that any reversal of the multiple and mutually reinforcing nature of exclusion processes is dependent on resource provision, new ways of thinking and working and new relationships between government, organisations and communities (Sure Start Evaluation Development Project, 1999).

### The Sure Start initiative

The aims of the Government's approach to social exclusion are threefold: prevention, reintegration and the delivery of basic minimum standards to all. These broad commitments link Sure Start with a range of other government initiatives, such as Health and Education Action Zones and the New Deal for Young People. However, Sure Start is particularly associated with programmes of prevention and is already being cited as evidence of success in this field (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001).

The initiative focuses on neighbourhoods where a high proportion of children live in households with incomes less than half the national average. It requires those communities, together with all groups, organisations and sectors involved in services for families and pre-school children, to work in partnership to meet a series of long term objectives and specific targets.

The national Sure Start spending allocation is £1.1 billion, currently reaching around 200,000 children at 2003. Local Sure Start programmes started in January 1999 when David Blunkett, Secretary of State and Tessa Jowell, then Secretary of State for Health, launched the first 60 'trailblazer' projects for the Department of Education and Employment. These initial programmes cost £450 million. By May 2003 490 local programmes had been established. The forecast is that by 2004 there will be 524 local Sure Starts, reaching 400,000 children.

### Long term objectives

The Sure Start programme focuses on families with children under four years old, with the primary aim of promoting 'school readiness' amongst disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It has four long term objectives:

- To improve children's social and emotional development
- To improve children's health
- To improve children's ability to learn
- To strengthen families and communities



Each objective is accompanied by a number of specific national targets. One set of targets, contained within the Public Service Agreement (PSA), is designed to improve children's well-being and development. Another set, contained within the Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) targets, is associated with programme implementation. In total there are 4 PSA targets and 12 SDA targets that local programmes are expected to work towards. The formulation of additional local goals to meet locally identified needs is also encouraged.

### Core services

Local Sure Start programmes must include the core services listed below:

- Outreach and home visiting
- Support for families and parents
- Support for good quality play, learning and child care experiences for children
- Primary and community health care, including advice about family health and child health and development
- Support for children and parents with special needs, including help in gaining access to specialised services.

They are also expected to needs and develop forms of involvement specific to their localities. (Sure Start Evaluation Development Project, 1999). Much more will be said about this later in the report.

### Key principles

Every Sure Start programme works from a shared set of key principles. They must:

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

These key principles are intended to ensure a shared value base and a consistency of approach in the delivery of Sure Start services. In particular, they are designed to ensure that local programmes add value to existing services, provide new services and facilities, communicate clearly to parents about service availability, and train workers and volunteers to deliver Sure Start in ways sensitive to local need. It is also anticipated that these key principles will enable local programmes to meet the challenge of improving joint working between service providers, thereby making them more effective and accessible.

## The national evaluation of Sure Start (NESS)

The national evaluation of Sure Start pools data from many Sure Start programmes. The value of this is that there is numerical evidence of the extent to which the Sure Start programme in general has impacted on key outcomes: educational readiness, health, emotional and social development and community development.

## Britwell-Northborough Sure Start

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start is a 'second wave' Sure Start programme located in Slough, Berkshire. Community consultation began in 1999 and the programme came into being in 2000.

The aim of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start mirrors the broad aims of the national programme and has four more specific objectives, which are:

- To improve social and emotional development - in particular, by supporting early bonding between parents and their children, helping families to function and enabling the early identification and support of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- To improve health - in particular, by supporting parents in caring for their children; to promote healthy development before and after birth.
- To improve the ability to learn - in particular, by encouraging stimulating and enjoyable play, improving language skills and through early identification and support of children with learning difficulties.
- To strengthen families and communities - in particular, by enhancing families' opportunities for involvement in the community and improving the sensitivity of existing services.

## 1.3 About the local evaluation

Programme evaluation at local level is a fundamental principle of the Sure Start evaluation strategy. Local programmes must carry out annual evaluations to find out whether they are reaching all local children and families and whether the design and implementation of services can be improved. They must look carefully at their progress towards the objectives and targets set out in the current Public Service Agreement (PSA) and towards other milestones and targets identified in their plans. Local programmes must also review the working practices and processes through which Sure Start is being delivered and assess whether the services being provided achieve good value for the public money invested in them. They are required to monitor progress towards prescribed objectives, targets and benchmarks. They are also expected to routinely monitor and review working practices with a view to improving such key concerns as cultural sensitivity, partnership working and local participation.

Local Sure Starts collect monthly and quarterly numerical information and supplementary qualitative information about service use. Each local Sure Start is required to submit monthly returns to the Sure Start Unit, showing:

- Number of families and children receiving Sure Start services.
- Number of children under four reached by Sure Start, by population sub-group.
- Range of services accessed by individual children and families.

Each Sure Start is also required to undertake a quarterly review, measuring progress towards quarterly milestones and performance measures, as set out in the local project plan and service agreement. The quarterly review includes a progress report of Individual projects within each Sure Start, indicating if milestones embedded in the service plan have been 'achieved', 'partly achieved' or 'not achieved'.

### The aim of this local evaluation

The aim of this local evaluation is to describe the achievements of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start in its first three years. Local Sure Start's achievements are, of course, also recorded in the monitoring returns made to the national Sure Start Unit. What is not conveyed in these returns is how it feels to play a part in local Sure Starts from the point of view of parents, staff and stakeholders. What is also not readily conveyed, in this format, are the challenges individual Sure Starts have had to overcome to ensure their achievements. Sure Start is a complex programme and all local Sure Starts face challenges in implementing Government plans, some common to many, some specific to individual programmes. Enabling true partnership with parents is one of these common challenges and dealing with conflict between agencies is another. Conflict and challenges are not in themselves a bad thing. What matters and will determine the long-term effectiveness of Sure Start is how the conflict and challenges are handled. Therefore this report also covers the challenges and difficulties faced by Britwell-Northborough Sure Start. It describes the way in which the programme is addressing these challenges. Identifying and helping to tackle challenges and difficulties is a key role for action research projects and, if handled sensitively, this is the main way in which such local evaluations contribute to the effective development of programmes.

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Service Delivery Plan provides detailed descriptions of the aims of the project but it does not explain why some problems are more easily solved than others, or what influences the management and delivery of services. This evaluation shows how some of these issues are linked to family, social and environmental contexts, while others are related to relationships within and between service agencies and professionals.

Sure Starts provide resources and opportunities for children 0-3 years and their parents. The programmes have a responsibility not only to achieve beneficial change but also to communicate results to the national Sure Start Unit in a way that helps promote understanding about how and why outcomes emerge in the form that they do. Both local and national evaluation efforts have an important role to play in communicating these results and also, we believe, in directly supporting Sure Start programmes in general in their efforts to improve service planning and delivery. The action research approach used in this local evaluation is more than the assessment of processes and outcomes and the communication of findings; it is also an exercise in helping local programmes to structure their services and activities in a way which promotes longer-term capacity building.

### A descriptive record focusing on participation and partnership

While the national Sure Start evaluation focuses on implementation, impact, context and cost-effectiveness, guidelines for the local evaluation of Sure Start emphasise the importance of understanding the views and experiences of parents, staff and stakeholders on major issues and processes (Sure Start Unit, 2000). This requires the use of qualitative methods to explore the research participant's individual understanding and experiences of the programme. This local evaluation of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start is a descriptive record focusing on participation and partnership processes.

### Action research - the evaluation approach informing this report

Sure Start activities are constantly evolving, and our evaluation has required close engagement with parent, staff and other key stakeholders. A key principle of the evaluation of this complex, community based initiative has been to develop a model of action research that has allowed the programme to grow and develop in accordance with the on-going findings. Thus the research team has sought to engage parents, staff members and stakeholders in the critical reflection of issues and processes which may affect the delivery of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start services and use these insights to bring about change. Such an approach is most appropriate for evaluating community development projects.

### Method

The value of research is dependent on the methods used and it is important that these are recorded. This evaluation has been based on semi structured interviews with a total of 28 parents, staff and stakeholders as well as observations contemporaneously recorded in a research diary. We were not able to interview everyone involved in the development of this Sure Start, but the list of people who were interviewed was agreed with the programme manager. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed in full. The researcher then analysed the content, coding sections of text which covered key themes or topics. We have described what participants said about the key themes and topics that emerged from these data and illustrated the insights we gleaned by selecting the direct quotations which were

most typical of what they told us. Each quotation is identified by date and interview numbers, but otherwise anonymous. The quotations have been used with the explicit consent of the interview participants.

#### *The feedback loop*

An important principle of qualitative research is that interviews are conducted in absolute confidence. This requirement is potentially in conflict with the action research requirement that problems and issues raised during the interviews are reported back to those running the programmes so that improvements can be made to service delivery. A procedure for feedback that met both requirements and was potentially empowering for the interviewee was developed by the research team and *agreed by all interview participants*. The procedure was as follows: once several people had raised an issue, it would then become a potential feedback item. The interviewer would tell the interviewee that the issue had been raised by a number of other people and encourage him or her to try to resolve the issue, perhaps making suggestions as to how they might do so. If the person felt unable or was unwilling to do this, the researcher would seek permission to do so on the interviewee's behalf, with the understanding that the informant would remain anonymous.

For those who are interested, a detailed description of the research methods and action research approach can be found in Appendix 1 to this report.

## CHAPTER 2

### BRITWELL- NORTHBOROUGH SURE START

#### 2.1 Introduction

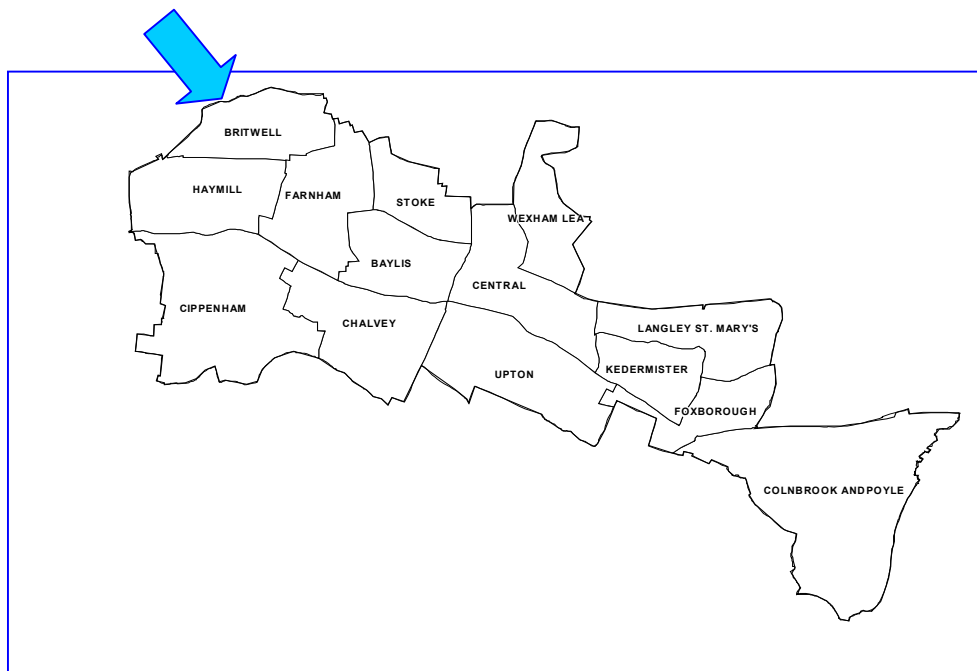
This chapter introduces the contextual background to Britwell-Northborough Sure Start. It begins by describing the local area and how it is perceived by the interview participants, many of whom have lived there for many years. These people give a remarkable insight into how historically embedded behaviours and relationships still influence community development. The researcher has already fed back some of these perceptions and explanations to various stakeholders, some of whom are not very familiar with the area or the background to the local Sure Start programme. One of the stakeholder responded by saying:

*'We almost need to have a session [...] of the history of the programme for those of us who are new, you know, to sort of understand how we get to be here'*  
(Interview 24 30/10/02)

As well as describing the area and the history of the Sure Start programme, the chapter outlines the Sure Start Delivery Plan, the organisational arrangements and the programme aims as perceived by the interview participants.

#### 2.2 The area

Figure 1: Map of Slough



Britwell-Northborough lies on the north-west fringe of Slough, just north of Slough Trading Estate and Haymill ward. It is bordered by the wealthy Farnham ward to the east and the leafy villages of South Buckinghamshire to the north-west. The 1991 census recorded Britwell as having a population of approximately 10,347 people, including 515 children aged 0-3 years from 500 families. Almost 120,000 culturally diverse people live in Slough and while nearly a third are from black and ethnic minority communities, only 9% live in Britwell and 15% in Haymill where Northborough is situated (1991 Census). The results of the 2001 census are not available at the time of writing this report but Britwell-Northborough Sure Start believes that there are about 700 children under four years currently living in the Sure Start area (source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start database, 2003)

The residents of Britwell and Northborough comprise a mix of families. Some have lived there since the estates were built, while others are newcomers to the neighbourhood. The whole area has a reputation for violent crime and vandalism which has contributed to a sense of mistrust, suspicion and anxiety experienced by those living in the community. Indeed, one of the Sure Start staff members commented that Britwell has such an undesirable reputation that local estate agents will always describe houses as bordering Farnham Common, rather than stating that they are in Britwell.

## Deprivation

Britwell is an area of economic and social deprivation, scoring highly on both the Jarman Underprivileged Area Score and the Index of Multiple Deprivation. The score is calculated from 8 census variables: under 5s', unemployment, ethnic minorities, single parent households, elderly living alone, overcrowding, social class and residential mobility of population. Individual scores or indices for Northborough are not available because it is a much smaller area and forms part of Haymill ward.

*Jarman Underprivileged Area Score (see Table 1 page 16).*

The Jarman UPA score for individual wards in Slough is based on the ward boundaries at the time of the 1991 Census. The scores indicate that Britwell is the third most deprived ward in Slough, while Slough is the most deprived locality in Berkshire and ranks as 31<sup>st</sup> most deprived local authority in England. Based on the 1991 census, all wards in Slough have positive scores showing higher deprivation than the national average.

Table 1 Jarman UPA scores by ward based on 1991 ward boundaries

SLOUGH			
Ward Name (UPA rank order)	UPA Score	Berkshire rank	Slough Rank
Stoke	35.98	1	1
Chalvey	34.52	2	2
Britwell	31.62	3	3
Baylis	25.24	7	4
Kederminster	23.51	8	5
Farnham	21.7	11	6
Wexham Lea	21.66	12	7
Central	20.99	13	8
Haymill	18.91	16	9
Foxborough	18.31	17	10
Upton	8.87	24	11
Langley St Mary's	4.58	34	12
Cippenham	4.13	35	13

*Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Score 2000 (see Table 2, page 17)*

The Indices of Deprivation 2000 (IMD 2000) were commissioned by the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR) to help focus policy and intervention on deprived areas. The main index is based on six separate domains at ward level.

- Health deprivation and disability
- Geographical access to services
- Housing deprivation
- Employment deprivation
- Education, skills and training deprivation
- Income deprivation (plus a supplementary index, the child poverty index)
- Child poverty index (includes under 16 factors from the Income domain)

The individual domains (except the child poverty index) are combined to produce the IMD 2000 in the following proportions:

Income	25%
Employment	25%
Health deprivation & disability	15%
Education, skills & training	15%
Geographical access to services	10%
Housing	10%

Table 2 (page 17 below) shows the IMD scores for each ward, their national rank and Berkshire rank. The national rank includes 8,414 wards in England and the Berkshire rank has 125 wards. In each case, 1 is the most deprived and the highest rank is the least deprived. Britwell is identified as the fourth most deprived ward in Slough although most of Slough's wards appear in the most deprived quartile of wards in Berkshire.



Table 2 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Score 2000 for Slough wards

SLOUGH				
Ward Name	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Score	National Rank of IMD	Berkshire Rank of IMD	Slough Rank of IMD
Chalvey	36.4	1392	2	1
Baylis	34.3	1562	4	2
Stoke	33.0	1673	5	3
Britwell	31.9	1789	6	4
Wexham Lea	30.5	1919	7	5
Central	28.9	2133	8	6
Foxborough	27.2	2315	10	7
Farnham	26.0	2513	12	8
Kedermister	21.9	3202	17	9
Upton	19.7	3622	19	10
Haymill	18.5	3854	21	11
Colnbrook and Poyle	16.8	4247	23	12
Cippenham	14.0	5007	30	13
Langley St. Mary's	9.7	6513	53	14

Source: Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Indices of Deprivation 2000

Britwell, then, is the fourth most deprived in Slough by either index. However while it has been officially designated a marginalised and deprived enclave of Slough, at least one person who grew up there in the 1960s, remembered how it used to be:

*'It was a very nice, pretty little area. We came from London, so it was nice, we had the beeches, greenery, it was countrified, it was quiet. It was new. It was all new, everything was new, the schools were new, the shops were new, there was industry, so work was easy for my parents and it was OK at that time.'*

(Interview 3 29/05/02))

Another parent, a child in the 1980s, had different memories, as she described a Britwell, where

*"If you said you lived on the Britwell, people would look down on you, you know, whereas if you said you lived in Burnham people would go 'ooh', you know, people would speak to you. Whereas if you live on the Britwell estate people thought you were a bit rough.'* (Interview 7 19/07/02)

## Local services and amenities

### Education

#### Secondary schools

The main secondary school in the area is Beechwood. It is a large comprehensive school which borders Britwell and serves the local community. Early in 2003 it had the unhappy, and, according to some of the local parents, uncalled, for distinction of being named 'the worst school in Britain' by the tabloid press. There used to be another secondary school,

Haymill, on the other side of Britwell and parents raised on the Britwell estate still speak of the rivalry between the two schools:

*'The police were always outside the schools and the gangs would come up and trudge up from the Haymill and Beechwood would trudge down halfway through and somewhere in Kennedy Park there would be a fight.'*

(Interview 3 29/05/02)

#### *Primary schools*

Children living in the area usually go to one or other of two primary schools in Britwell (Claycots and Lynch Hill). While they are both popular schools, some people have chosen to educate their children outside the area, because, they say, certain children who attend the schools and their parents display anti-social behaviour.

*'A load of people up there seemed to be very shouty people. And violent. Not violent but.....aggressive. Verbally aggressive. And shouting towards their children and I thought that's not where we want to be.'*

(Interview 9 09/11/02)

#### *Nursery schools*

Slough Borough Council offers nursery school places from the age of three to all children living in Slough. Both Claycots and Lynch Hill have nursery schools attached to the main schools. There is also Buddies, a pre-school group, linked to the Pre-School Learning Alliance, which is a few paces from the Britwell Clinic. Finally, there is a private Montessori school on the outskirts of Britwell, although this was never mentioned as an option by any of the participants to this evaluation.

### Housing in Britwell-Northborough

Britwell is a residential area comprising low density municipal housing built in the 1950s to re-house Londoners who had lost their homes during the Second World War. Many of these displaced Londoners found work on the Slough Trading Estate, which is still the major focus of the town's commercial activity, providing 20,000 of the 66,700 jobs in Slough. The smaller Northborough housing estate was built about thirty years later and is distinguished by its dilapidated appearance and lack of public amenities, although there are pockets of newly built housing which suggests that the area may be ripe for gentrification.

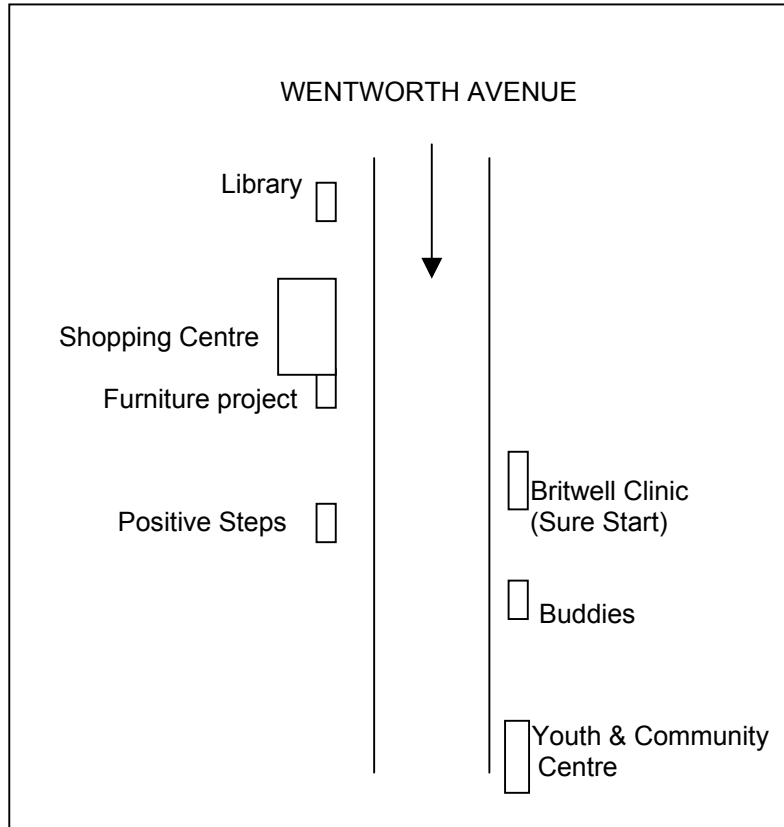
### Britwell and Northborough amenities & community services.

Most of the services and local amenities for people living in Britwell and Northborough are situated on Wentworth Avenue, the main thoroughfare running through Britwell (see figure 2 page 19 below).

The Britwell Clinic is the home of the local dentist, Home Start, some of the district nurses and community health visitors and the Sure Start headquarters (including the community

café, speech and language therapists, Sure Start midwife, Sure Start health visitor and core Sure Start administrative team).

Figure 2 *Wentworth Avenue (The main street in Britwell & site of most local services and amenities for the residents of Britwell and Northborough)*



Positive Steps is on the opposite side of Wentworth Avenue and has been running since July 1999. Unlike Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, it works with the whole community, from the elderly to families with young children. Its umbrella organisation, the Family Welfare Association was commissioned to develop this family support service on the Britwell estate, using Single Regeneration Budget funding (the original capital element was £60k, with revenue funding of £90k per annum). This funding stream has now ended. The service provides counselling and conflict management, as well as offering targeted support to teenage parents, mothers with postnatal depression and families from black and other ethnic minority community groups with special needs. Since summer 2002 it has provided lessons in basic IT skills. Positive Steps is a free service, open to community referrals and reports that it works well with Social Services and also has links with Chalvey Family Centre, the NSPCC and Home Start.

The local library is also on Wentworth Avenue. The children's library has been recently extended and enhanced with funding from Britwell-Northborough Sure Start's capital programme. It includes a new IT suite.

There is a rather dilapidated shopping precinct in Britwell. It includes a sub-post office, two small supermarkets, take-away food shops and a second hand clothing shop. It is also the site of Britwell Talk Shop, which is a free service provided through Slough Borough Council to give advice and information to local people on a range of issues, including employment, access to training courses, assistance in preparing CV's, advice on homelessness, housing benefits and racial harassment. It also signposts people to other agencies. The Slough Furniture Project, which is located on the corner of the shopping centre, sells second hand and refurbished furniture and electrical goods to those in receipt of state benefits. The Youth and Community Centre, also on Wentworth Avenue, offers recreational facilities for older children on two evenings every week.

Slough Borough Council used to fund a playcentre, in a building located a few minutes walk from Wentworth Avenue. This offered drop-in, supervised after-school and holiday activities for children living in the area and was a much-valued service to the local community. It closed shortly after Christmas 2002 as part of the local authority's borough-wide strategy for reducing costs. The closure of the building has had a significant impact on Britwell-Northborough Sure Start as many of its activities took place here.

The only amenities in Northborough, are a housing association tenants' hall, Northborough (this is the only community building of any kind in Northborough), a newsagent and a Chinese take-away restaurant. A mobile library visits the area twice a month. It is linked to Britwell by a poorly kept footpath running across Kennedy Park, which separates the two areas.

Britwell-Northborough has a wealth of open spaces, including several large parks and nearby wooded areas. Parents can also make use of amenities beyond the immediate neighbourhood. These include Slough town centre, a large leisure centre and municipal swimming pool.

## 2.3 Perceptions of Britwell and Northborough

The researcher wanted to find out what it was like to live in Britwell and Northborough so the parent participants were asked what they thought was good and not good about the area (see figure 3 on page 23). Only one parent gave a wholly positive response and all the parents who were owner-occupiers said that the main reason for living in Britwell - Northborough was that housing was cheaper and of better quality than in the surrounding areas.

### Crime

Fear of crime was a primary concern. Local residents said that the highest incidence of local criminal activity took place on Wentworth Avenue and many reported burnt out cars and

street crime. They also reported the constant police presence as an indicator of the criminal activity, although more than a few parents thought that the police were not visible enough.

*'I don't like the environment. I don't wanna bring my children up in this environment. I believe that, personally speaking, that they should have more police patrols on foot or bike.'*  
(Interview 14 04/07/02)

Although the parents were genuinely fearful of local crime, they were actually talking, for the most part, of incidents that had occurred during the summer holidays the previous year, when a considerable number of episodes of juvenile crime had taken place on Wentworth Avenue. Indeed, the Thames Valley police has been prioritising Britwell-Northborough in its crime reduction activities, although one parent was probably speaking for many when saying that even if the crime rate is reduced, *'the potential is always there'*. (Interview 14 04/07/02)

### Substance abuse

While most of the interviewed parents mentioned the prevalence of vandalism and violent crime in the area, some also spoke of the prevalence of illegal drug-taking in the community. Although few would admit to having any confirming evidence, Northborough was commonly cited as a recognised site for the drug dealing community - *'They call (parts of) it crack city'* (Interview 17 9/05/02)

### Parents' values and aspirations for their children

All parents interviewed were preoccupied with what they described as the unruly and criminal behaviour of many children living in Britwell-Northborough and were anxious about how this behaviour might influence that of their own children. Several had already removed their older children from the local schools because of this and several more were planning to do the same. One stated that she was planning to move from the area into one with a *'good school'* (Interview 19 28/10/02) once her child had reached the age of five.

### Neighbours

Although most of the parents interviewed were negative about Britwell-Northborough as a place to raise children, this negativity did not extend to their immediate neighbourhood, that is, the road in which they lived. On the whole they were happy with their neighbours, although very few reported any socialising with them. Several said that they actively avoided them. Most of the parents gave the impression that they lacked any social attachment to their local environment and appeared to have few close friendships within the locality. They tended to seek entertainment and friendship beyond Britwell or Northborough. Only one parent said she positively enjoyed living in Britwell, referring to it as *'close knit'* and her nearby neighbours as *'scallies who would do anything for you'* (Interview 18 19/10/02).

There is a sense of physical and social isolation in the parents' descriptions of their local environment. One parent living in Northborough particularly mentioned the lack of essential services such as a chemist (important in relation to child and family health), and, while there are regular and reliable daytime bus links between Britwell and Northborough to the shops on Farnham Road and to the centre of Slough, there are no public transport links between Northborough and Britwell. Direct access between the two areas is via a rough path, although this was mentioned by only two parents: one commented on the long walk between the two areas and another made a passing reference to the difficulty of getting from Northborough to the Britwell Clinic.

### Mobility

Several of the parents interviewed had their own cars and so mobility was not a problem for them. However, others could be disadvantaged by not having their own means of transport, especially if they had to take their child to hospital. This is illustrated by an event, witnessed by the researcher, which took place during a Sure Start meeting on a late winter afternoon. A very distressed parent brought her sick child to the Britwell Clinic and was immediately told by her health visitor to take the child to hospital. Unfortunately she had no means of getting him there except by public transport, two more young children under five years, no friends she could call upon for help and no money for a taxi. Her health visitor suggested she take the bus. The programme manager appeared appalled at this and gave her money for a taxi from the Sure Start petty cash reserve. This particular event highlights the difficulties of lone parents on a limited income and without family or friendship networks to fall back upon. It draws attention to how the lack of social capital can affect every day functioning.

### Choices

A common theme which emerged from the parents' interviews was their concern for their children's long term futures, mainly in relation to behaviour and education, if they remained living in the area. Most perceived themselves as trapped in Britwell with no hope of living elsewhere and this added to their feelings of hopelessness. There were a few who planned to live in the area for a short period before moving on. These had strong family ties outside the area. One parent sent her young sons to her parents-in-law every weekend to give herself a break from caring for them. This individual planned to educate her sons outside Britwell-Northborough. She and her husband were young professionals, living on the edge of Britwell-Northborough. Well educated, confident and financially secure, she was full of optimism about the future and expected her children to be academically successful.

Another parent, who had lived contentedly in Britwell-Northborough for a few years, also had plans for the future. She wanted to train for an occupation that would earn her enough to raise her children in some style, stating vehemently that she did not want them to feel

disadvantaged because they were from a lone parent family or that they came from the Britwell-Northborough estate. She appeared very resilient, and had a network of friends beyond the Britwell-Northborough borders. She seemed to have had more life experiences than other lone parents interviewed for this evaluation.

Both of these parents were happy living in the area for the time being and displayed a positive goal focused outlook which was linked to their perceptions of life choices and opportunities. This contrasted with most of the other parents interviewed for this evaluation.

Figure 3. Perceptions of Britwell-Northborough

PERCEPTIONS OF BRITWELL-NORTHBOROUGH	
POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
Positive Steps	
Sure Start Sure Start <i>especially:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Speech therapy</i></li> <li>• <i>Playgroups</i></li> <li>• <i>Library</i></li> <li>• <i>Activities</i></li> <li>• <i>Meeting other mums</i></li> </ul>	Crime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>violent crime</i></li> <li>• <i>juvenile crime</i></li> <li>• <i>vandalism</i></li> <li>• <i>burglary/theft</i></li> <li>• <i>drugs</i></li> <li>• <i>domestic violence</i></li> </ul>
Supportive neighbours	Lack of community spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Anti-social behaviour of some children &amp; adults</i></li> <li>• <i>unfriendly neighbours</i></li> </ul>
Pleasant local amenities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>parks &amp; open spaces</i></li> <li>• <i>the play centre</i></li> </ul>	Poor local amenities <i>especially:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Their distance from Slough</i></li> <li>• <i>No shops &amp; youth activities in Northborough</i></li> </ul>
Affordable housing	Poor quality of social housing
Familiarity	Built environment <i>especially:</i> <i>condition of the pavements</i>

## Moving away or staying put

Fifteen of the interview participants lived in Birdwell-Northborough; eleven of them were parents and five were Sure Start staff members. Most of them (11) said they would move away if they had the chance (see Figure 4 below).

Figure 4 Moving away or staying put

	WOULD LIKE TO MOVE AWAY	WOULD <b>NOT</b> LIKE TO MOVE AWAY
Parents	8	3
Staff	3	2
TOTAL	11 parents & staff	5 parents & staff

The parents spoke of push and pull factors in leaving or remaining in the area but on the whole there was a general air of disaffection with the Britwell-Northborough community. Several had already made plans to move. Two parents had made an application to the council for a mutual exchange, although they were not very optimistic about finding anyone who would want to move into the area. Two other parents, who had recently moved into Britwell and Northborough and bought modern homes on the estate, said that their plan was to stay about five years and then move on to a 'better' area. They represented a young upwardly mobile group. As one of these parents said:

*'We said we'd probably stay here about five years but hopefully when she starts school I want to move out again because I want her to go to a nice school'*  
(Interview 23 10/12/02)

However, this parent went on to say that she might change her mind because she had found the local people far friendlier than she first imagined they would be and she had also found Sure Start an extremely valuable source of support.

Other interview participants living locally were ambivalent about moving or staying put in Britwell. The strength of local ties can make a difference, as the comment below illustrates:

*'Maybe when the children are a bit older we could move away. But then I've got all my friends here so maybe I'd miss my friends. Because I haven't much family left in Slough, apart from my husband's family, so there's nothing really keeping me here apart from the history, because I've grown up here. I've lived in Slough all my life.'*  
(Interview 20 25/11/02)

None of the interview participants who were staff members (6) living outside the area regarded Britwell-Northborough as somewhere that they would want to live, citing high levels of crime and fears for their personal safety. One member of staff said that she did not share the same values as people who live in the area. This was a subject that embarrassed them and indeed, all but one lived in much wealthier parts of Berkshire



Figure 5 Reasons given for staying or leaving

Reasons for wanting to move away	Reasons for NOT wanting to move away
Poor quality of life Poor quality of local education Different values Poor behaviour of local children No activities for children over 3 years Poor quality of local environment No family ties Oppressive nature of local community	Family ties Familiarity with area Contentment with life

Figure 6 Where local interview participants would like to live

Where local interview participants would like to live
Farnham Common - for good schools North of England - to be close to parents Nottingham - to join friends, nice city, slower pace of life Langley or Wexham - no reason given but close family live there Countryside - because no family left here. Windsor- to be close to parents America - no reason given Country or coastal town -slower pace of life, less culturally diverse

### Trust your neighbour?

Although there are many different ways of measuring social capital, the simplest and usually preferred measurement is whether people think other people can, in general, be trusted. The parent and staff participants were asked about their relationships with people living in Britwell-Northborough and whether most people looked out for each other or whether people would take advantage of each other. Most of the interview participants did not know how to answer the question or what it really meant. This suggests that the reliability of the answers to this question is uncertain. The majority of interviewees thought that people probably did look out for each other but they were not very certain of this, mainly because they had no personal experience of it.

There was little difference between the views of the residents and non-residents. Some of the participants who had lived in the area for a long time pointed out that people used to be very neighbourly but that the area was much less so now that newcomers had moved in. The researcher gained the impression that people acted in a friendly manner towards each other but they had few close and enduring friendships. There was a tendency to question the motives of anyone who appeared sociable.

#### *Taking advantage*

The interview participants were asked if they thought that people would take advantage of them. This is a standard question used in social capital surveys, so it was interesting that most found it difficult to answer, mainly because they did not understand what was meant by 'take advantage'. To most, 'taking advantage' had positive connotations (as in, say, 'taking advantage' of activities offered by Sure Start).

The question was rephrased and they were asked if they thought that people would take *unfair* advantage of them. Half of the parent participants thought that people would take unfair advantage of them although most of these said that this was not peculiar to Britwell-Northborough. There was a spectrum of views, from parents and staff who said that people would take advantage of anybody who became too closely involved with them, to parents and staff who said that people would not take advantage of people they knew very well. The non-resident staff participants were asked the same question. Less than half of these thought that people would take advantage of each other.

### Support networks

Parents and all the staff were asked questions about their support networks, irrespective of whether the staff lived there or not. The reason for asking the staff was to see how much they knew about social capital in the community.

#### *Child care support*

The parent interview participants were asked where they would go for support with childcare, particularly in relation to 1) work-related support, 2) emergency help and 3) short-term help. What emerged from these questions was that no matter how long they had lived in the area, parents said they would use the Sure Start crèche when attending training sessions. However if the parent or child was ill, parent participants tended to ask relatives for help, even if they lived in another part of the country. One new mother had lived in the area for six months and had made several friends at the ante-natal classes and baby group but she would not consider asking any of these new friends to help her. Instead she said her husband would take time off work, or if this was not possible, she would arrange for her parents to travel down from the Midlands. Another participant, who had lived in Britwell-Northborough a

couple of years, but with no local family ties, said that she would arrange for a relative from London to come and look after her children. Parents who had lived in the area for many years and had relatives living nearby, would always ask them for help rather than approach their friends.

There seemed to be little tradition of babysitting. One lone parent said that nobody had ever offered to baby-sit her two children so that she could go out in the evening, although from time to time she paid a friend from Britwell £10 to baby-sit. She was not interested in setting up a baby sitting circle with a couple of friends as it would mean that she would have to reciprocate.

Regular childcare was a different matter. Some of the parents said that they would rather not work than place their child with a childminder, while parents who had not lived in the area very long were more likely to engage a childminder if they were returning to work. Positive Steps offers a crèche in which children can be left for short periods during the day, but this was mentioned as an option by only one parent, a member of staff and she did so only after prompting by the researcher.

*Advice about their child's behaviour.*

The parents were asked where they would go for advice if they were concerned about their child's behaviour. Most of the participants distinguished between minor behavioural problems and behaviour which they perceived as needing formal and specialised intervention. Thus they all said that they would go to a health visitor, doctor or teacher for the latter but that very often they would mull it over with a friend in the first instance. At other times they would use their friends and people they met at toddler groups to discuss general development issues. Two of the parents said that they would just plod on without asking anyone or talking to anyone unless they thought it was a serious matter.

*Support for themselves*

A range of parent support needs emerged from the interviews. Some parent participants spoke about the need for support in finding work or training while others spoke about the need for support in medical or mental health matters. A few also mentioned needing support in coping with their children. These different types of support needs, which ranged from practical to emotional to medical were often blended. At least two parents had faced some distressing problems but neither had sought help for them. One said she had 'bottled it up', using cigarettes as a crutch, while the other, who had become isolated at home because of postnatal depression, said that she had not discussed this with anyone for fear of being thought 'mental' although she knew that it was not a shameful condition.

The overall impression is that parents were not particularly happy at living in Britwell-Northborough. They did not value the local community or have close ties with the neighbourhood. They were particularly worried about the education provision and crime in the area. They did not regard the environment as one in which they wanted to raise their children. However it was also clear that most of the parents felt that they had little choice over whether they stayed or went. The only parents who seemed to feel that they had any autonomy over their lives were those who were financially secure or had supportive family networks elsewhere.

<p>SUMMARY</p> <p>CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BRITWELL-NORTHBOROUGH COMMUNITY</p> <p>A predominantly white British population experiencing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low educational attainment</li> <li>• high unemployment</li> <li>• poor health</li> <li>• poor housing</li> <li>• prevalence &amp; fear of crime</li> <li>• few close friendships</li> <li>• no 'community spirit'</li> </ul>
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## 2.4 The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start service delivery plan

### Introduction

*'The continued involvement of local parents, the wider community and agencies is essential in the realisation of the Sure Start programme in Britwell-Northborough'*  
(Source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Delivery Plan 2000, page 29)

This section describes the process by which Sure Start came to Britwell-Northborough, including the criteria used for choosing the area and the consultation procedures which were put into place. It also describes the main content of the Service Delivery Plan, approved in October 2000. This is a requirement of all local Sure Start programme and contains the main aims, principles and practices to be adopted in order to develop its programme in accordance with the Sure Start vision and principles described in the introduction to this report (chapter one). For those who are interested, there is a timetable showing the development of the Sure Start programme 1999-2000 in the Appendix.

So far, this report has used the perceptions and experiences of the interview participants, coupled with some of the health related evidence, to describe what it is like to live in Britwell-

Northborough. These are important contextual details to be borne in mind when considering the Sure Start programme embodied in the Service Delivery Plan.

### Britwell-Northborough Sure Start - the beginning

In 1999, Slough Borough Council formed a multi-agency partnership group in anticipation that it would be asked by the National Sure Start Unit to submit an expression of interest in the development of a Sure Start programme in the area. This partnership group later became a reference group, representing key agencies in the area. (Appendix 2 contains the key organisations and representatives of the multi-agency group).

Much debate took place about which area within Slough would benefit most from the introduction of Sure Start. The main contenders were Britwell and Chalvey as they were both isolated communities of a suitable population size and they both scored highly on the Jarman Underprivileged Area Score and the Index of Multiple Deprivation (see pages 16 & 17). However Britwell was eventually chosen as it already had the potential infrastructure in terms of underused public buildings and the presence of an established local non-governmental organisation (Positive Steps), providing much needed services to local parents. Nearby Northborough was included as part of the programme, because, if anything, it was even more isolated and lacking in amenities than Britwell. The two areas made up the required population of about 700 families with children aged 0-3 years. Interestingly, there is no record of any consultation with local parents about which area should be chosen. However, it appears from the revised Service Plan and conversations between the researcher and one of the original decision makers, that this may have been because there was an extremely tight time frame between the initial creation of a committee of interested parties and the deadline for submitting an expression of interest to the Sure Start Unit.

Once it had been decided locally that Britwell-Northborough should host the Sure Start programme, there ensued a series of public consultations and activities to find out how the programme would be received in the local community and to identify the needs, wants and aspirations of the families living in the area. The consultations took the form of a questionnaire, parents meetings and interviews, community focus groups, informal lunchtime meetings and finally, a 'Planning for Real' community event, aimed at encouraging all local people to voice their opinion on the Sure Start outline plan.

A steering group was formed to lead on five key areas and a senior managers group was convened to address the main issues. Forty-one parents were interested in the development of the project and were encouraged to join the various decision-making groups. Thus some effort was made to include parents in the process.

A Partnership Board was set up to represent a balanced arrangement of statutory, voluntary and community organisations and parents representing the local area. An accountable body was to be appointed once the Sure Start programme application had been formally agreed by the National Sure Start Unit.

### Assessment of need - key findings from the consultation

The consultations highlighted gaps in some local service provision and the need to reshape other services. These are outlined below:

#### *1. Outreach and Home Visiting/Support for Parents*

- Teenage parents and expectant teenage parents needed greater access to information and support in the home.
- There was a need for a drop in facility in the area for health promotion, mutual parent support and education and training.
- There was need for a resource to promote parenting skills and positive health.
- There was a need for extended childcare facilities to assist parents personal development needs.
- Services were needed to satisfy the needs of ethnic minority families.

#### *2. Primary and community health care, advice on family health and child and health development*

- Home assessment and therapy was needed to reduce incidence of speech and language difficulties of pre-school children.
- There was a need for sessions to improve maternal and child health and improve access to help and advice about health through outreach work.

#### *3. Support for good quality play learning and childcare experiences for children*

- There was a need to develop activities for pre-school children including secure play area, soft play facilities and training opportunities for parents.
- Outreach work with families before nursery admission needed improving.
- Parents needed additional parent and toddler groups, especially during the school holidays.
- Physical activities in pre-school settings also needed to be introduced.

#### *4. Support for children and parents with special needs*

- Tailored services were needed across all core service areas.

#### *5. Parent representation*

- It was agreed that a Sure Start staff co-ordinator should be appointed to work with parents to maintain and develop active local parental input to the Sure Start programme.

6. *Environmental (home and community safety)*

- There was a need for access to safety devices to improve safety in the home.
- A need was identified for an improved route linking Northborough and Britwell.

7. *Teenage pregnancy*

- A dedicated support for teen-age parents was needed.

## Decisions about service provision

The core service areas were specified by the Sure Start Unit (see Chapter 1) but the local assessment highlighted a need for additional services within the area.

It was decided that the following services would be offered:

- Outreach and home visiting
- Support for families and parents
- Support for play and learning and childcare experiences for children
- Support for children and parents with special needs
- housing advice and related services
- Support for older children
- Teenage pregnancies
- Meeting needs of the minority ethnic community

There was also to be provision for service monitoring and evaluation.

In addition to the above, the Sure Start programme was to operate in accordance with a risk management strategy (see Appendix 3).

## Management

The final Sure Start Delivery Plan for 2000-2003 was approved by the Sure Start Unit in October 2000, which was when the programme manager was appointed.

The plan (source: Britwell -Northborough Sure Start, published 2001) documented the structural arrangements for the management of the programme. It was to be managed by a Partnership Board, which was to be responsible for all the strategic and local policy decision-making. The Board would include parent representation at Board level in accordance with risk assessment requirements (source: Sure Start Unit, 2002). The Board would also interface between the National Sure Start Unit and the local Sure Start programme.

The line management structures within the programme itself were to be established around core work themes and co-ordinated by the programme manager. A programme manager would produce consultation and evaluation machinery, have a training budget and develop a training strategy for working on Sure Start projects.

The programme manager would also manage a core Sure Start team, which would

include a project development worker and an administrative/financial assistant. Core staff team meetings would be held weekly, while sub-groups and the Partnership Board would meet every six weeks.

### The Sure Start base

The core Sure Start team was to be based at the Britwell Clinic, an underused building owned by Slough Primary Care Trust. At that time it was used by some of the community health visitors, a dentist's surgery and the local Home Start programme, which was struggling to survive. The Primary Care Trust agreed to provide Britwell-Northborough with accommodation rent-free for three years and in return, Sure Start agreed to provide capital funding to refurbish the building and provide equipment.

By using existing and diverse buildings and premises in a number of venues it was believed that the programme would reach far into the community. The Britwell Clinic location was considered ideal as there were other services already on site. There was a meeting room and enough space to develop a small café. There were also opportunities to develop links with other local partnerships and initiatives such as:

- Positive Steps
- Healthy living centre (Update: Slough was not successful in its bid to become a healthy living centre, but negotiations re-opened in 2003).
- Education action zone
- New deal for schools
- Associate health action zone
- Other eg furniture project; Home Start
- Lifelong learning
- South east regional co-operative society
- Health improvement reward fund

### Risk management

The Delivery Plan addressed the area of risk management. It identified perceived risks in six key areas and set out proposals for their strategic management. The risk management and strategy is included in Appendix 3 of this report. At the time the Delivery Plan was written, the main perceived risks were associated with:

- Managing the transition period from the interim partnership group to the Partnership Board.
- Possible delay or rejection of planning permission for capital expenditure.
- Difficulties in staff recruitment to some posts.
- Ensuring inter-agency commitment.



- The commitment and sustainable involvement of the local community.
- The longer term sustainability of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start.

### Monitoring and evaluation

The Delivery Plan stated the need for partnership working, so that the collection of data for the area could be rationalised and universal systems developed. Each project within the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme was to complete a project plan describing activities, costs and evaluation. These were to be monitored by the programme manager against milestones in the Delivery Plan and progress reviewed against local and government objectives.

Quantitative and qualitative evaluations were to be obtained annually, to include parents' views, which were to be regularly fed back to them. The Delivery Plan stated that a communication group would be set up for this purpose.

### Funding

An assessment of the revenue and capital costs of providing the programme was carried out and included in the Service Delivery Plan. The original funding agreement was for three years from 1/4/00-31/3/03; the original capital funding over three years was £656265 and the revenue funding over three years was £1673341. Table 3 below displays the total planned expenditure for the first three years of the programme.

#### *Planned revenue and capital expenditure*

It was decided that expenditure was needed on the following projects:

- Family support - to develop satellite family unit at Northborough.
- Childcare project - to extend facilities at Positive Steps.
- Play and Learn library - to extend plus space for computers.
- Homemaker - to buy safety equipment for homes.
- Britwell Clinic - to refurbish office accommodation and provide secure windows in return for a 3-year rent free period agreed with Slough Primary Care Trust.
- Britwell-Northborough path - capital funding was allocated to contribute to Improvements to the path as part of a multi-agency approach.

Table 3 Delivery Plan 2000 - total planned expenditure for 3 year period

PROJECT	REVENUE	CAPITAL	TOTAL REVENUE + CAPITAL
Family support	188495	74300	262795
Disability/special needs	69333		69333
Childcare project	148731	136450	285181
Teenage pregnancy	83349		83349
Ethnic minority project	25105		25105
Services to pregnant women	47034	4666	51700
Early years outreach	100250		100250
Play & learn library	143485	264999	408484
Parent & toddler groups	45658	12000	57658
TOPS	7266	6550	13816
Wilstar	130504	11000	141504
Homemaker	94656	66300	160956
Community parents	155903		155903
GP services	30756		30756
Community childminders	27815		27816
Britwell Clinic		30000	30000
Britwell-N path		40000	40000
Co-ordinator and training	310000	10000	320000
Monitoring & evaluation	65000		65000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1673341</b>	<b>656265</b>	<b>2329606</b>

Source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start service delivery plan 2000

The costs associated with the delivery of the programme were naturally of prime concern. It was agreed that capital costs for the main projects would be the extension/refurbishment of:

Positive Steps childcare project - extension £125,000.00

The play and learn library extension £180,000.00

Window replacement to the Britwell Clinic £12,500

It has been acknowledged by the Sure Start Unit, that once a programme is approved, getting services fully on stream takes at least six months, and probably longer, because of the time needed to recruit and train staff and equip suitable premises. The original Britwell-

Northborough Sure Start delivery plan had set out a range of activities and services to be delivered over a three year period, in line with the time frame over which government spending was planned.

### The revised Sure Start service delivery plan

Soon after taking up her post, the programme manager and the Partnership Board revised the Delivery Plan to represent their vision for the ongoing development of the Sure Start programme in Britwell-Northborough, in the light of the new Sure Start Public Service Agreement.

The Partnership Board envisage the Sure Start programme actively working in Britwell-Northborough. over a 10 year period. The revised plan set out how they intended to adjust existing services, and introduce new ones, so as to ensure that Sure Start services were well established. These would be integrated into the re-shaped local services and supported by strengthened community capacity to enable the services to be sustainable over time.

#### *Revised money plan 2002-2004*

The revised delivery plan included a money plan which reflected the Sure Start Unit's guidance that the Sure Start grant should peak in Year 3 of the programme's life, remain broadly steady for years 4 and 5, and decline in subsequent years. As the programme began to actively deliver a range of services from April 2001, this was to be considered as Year 1, for money planning purposes. For those who are interested, the money plan is reproduced in Appendix 4. In revising the plan the Partnership Board consulted with colleagues across a range of agencies, and took into account the views of local parents, which were gathered through informal contacts and a questionnaire. Monitoring systems had been put into place for monitoring the progress of projects towards meeting agreed milestones and performance targets, and this information was to be used to inform the ongoing development of the programme. However, this information was somewhat limited, due to the timescales involved. No far reaching changes were therefore made in planned service delivery at that stage of the programmes development.

The majority of the projects identified in the original Delivery Plan (2000) were up and running by the time of the revised delivery plan and they were reviewed in the light of the new Sure Start Public Service Agreement. The capital and revenue grants were revised as listed below to reflect the new service delivery plan:

Capital grant: £640,015

Revenue grant:

2000-1 (6 months) £381,530

2001-2	£648,003 including £50,444 carry forward of unspent revenue
2002-3	£666,475 including £50,000 additional funding to meet the new Public Service Agreement
2003-4	£714,614

In February 2002 the national Sure Start Unit made available an additional capital sum of £250,000 to address the need to create childcare places in the Britwell-Northborough area. There was a further notification in June 2003 that the total capital funding limit would now be £1,000,000.

## 2.5 Organisational arrangements

### Introduction

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start organisation and management arrangements were described very briefly on page 32. This section describes them more fully. The programme is managed by a partnership board which has no legal status but which has collective responsibility for the planning and delivery of the programme and for managing the Sure Start budget. No one agency has lead status but Slough Primary Care Trust has been nominated the accountable body with responsibility for administering the Sure Start grant.

### Characteristics of the Partnership Board

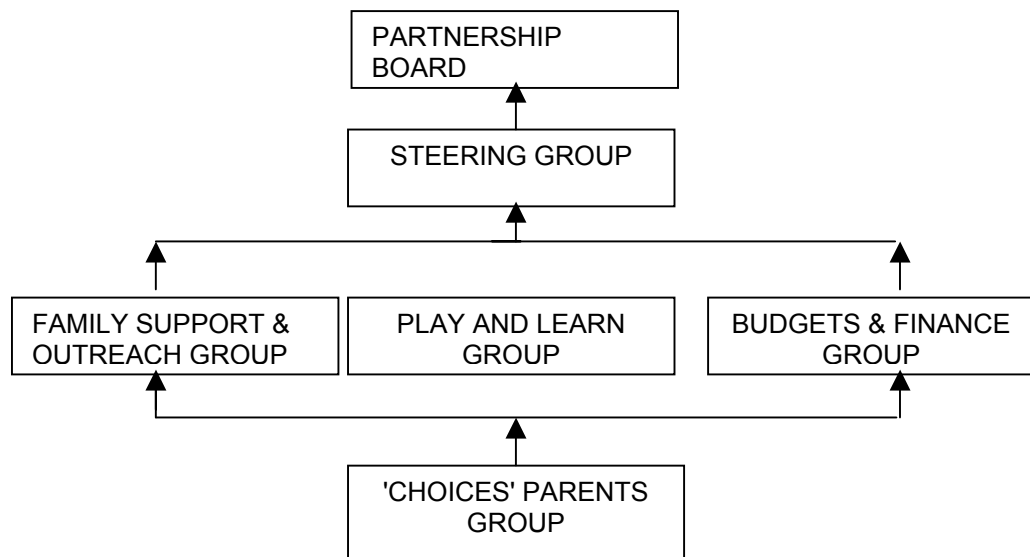
The Partnership Board provides overall strategic direction and programme governance. It comprises twelve predominately female and white British members, including four parents with children under four years and four representatives each from statutory and voluntary/community agencies. Statutory representatives are currently from Slough Primary Care Trust, Slough Social Services, Slough Early Years Service and Heatherwood and Wexham NHS Trust. Voluntary and community agency representative are currently the Family Welfare Association, Homemaker, Buddies and the National Childbirth Trust.

At the beginning, Home Start and the Britwell Initiative (a local residents group), were represented but both withdrew as they were unable to identify anyone who could attend meetings. The local church was also approached, as was Parvaaz, a group focussing on the needs of young people with special needs from the Asian community – neither chose to put forward a representative. There were no local fathers on the Board, which is common to many Sure Starts, but ‘while the involvement of fathers in Sure Start has not been encapsulated into a formal programme target, it remains an important policy issue and is increasingly mentioned in notions of what constitutes “good practice”. (Source: National Evaluation. Early Experiences of Implementing Sure Start. Report 01 June 2002. p. 22) There were also no representatives from local parents with older children, from the parish council or

from the local tenants association. Sure Start states in the same report (p.14) that in future evaluations they will be exploring the contribution or otherwise of such groups to the management of the local programmes.

The terms of reference for the Board state that membership should be reviewed annually, and that there should also be annual elections for the chair. This has taken place in October of each year of the programme's operation to date. At the beginning of the evaluation, the Assistant Director of Children and Families from Slough Borough Council Social Services Department acted as Partnership Board chair while the nominated chair was on maternity leave. Shortly after the chair returned from maternity leave, a parent was nominated as chair of the Partnership Board. There had always been a parent as vice chair.

Figure 7 Management structure



Meetings are held every six weeks during the afternoon at the Britwell Clinic, with a buffet lunch provided by the Food for Thought community café and a crèche provided for Board member children aged under four years. Parent Board members are also provided with personal support in the form of pre-board meeting briefing sessions.

Three project sub groups (the Family Support and Outreach Group, the Play and Learn Group and the Budgets and Finance Group) report to the Steering Group, which comprised members of the sub groups, the lead partner (Slough Borough Council) and Slough Primary Care Trust (the accountable body). The Steering Group reports to the Partnership Board through the programme manager.

### Staff employment contract arrangements

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, like most other Sure Starts, does not have independent status and must operate through an accountable body (Slough Primary Care Trust in this case), which is responsible for administering the Sure Start grant. All employment contracts or commissioned services are awarded by Slough Primary Care Trust.

At March 2002 around forty-one people were employed in delivering Sure Start services, twenty-three were members of the local community and eight of these had children under four. (Source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Annual Report April 2001-March 2002, p.3). These figures may have changed since then. Most of the staff are on fixed term contracts. The core staff are employed on fixed term contracts through Slough Primary Care Trust. Staff employment arrangements are complex and give rise to dual management and accountability structures.

Core staff include:

- Programme manager (full time)
- Project administrator (full time)
- Community development worker (full time)
- PA to the programme manager (part time)
- Database worker (part time)
- Sure Start health visitor (full time)
- Two community café managers (job share)

Some staff members are employed on a sessional basis through Slough Primary Care Trust. These include three crèche workers and two community café assistants based at the Britwell Clinic. Other staff members are employed by Slough Primary Care Trust on permanent contracts and split their work time between Sure Start and other health services. At the time of the evaluation, the senior speech and language therapist and the Sure Start midwife fell in this category and they considered this important as it gave them some long term employment security:

*'I have to think of things like my NHS pension [...] when the Sure Start project ends, I will be reabsorbed [...].'*  
(Interview 10 28/06/02)

Some Sure Start staff are appointed by agencies commissioned by Slough Primary Care Trust to provide a specific Sure Start service. These staff members tend to be on fixed term contracts and have no more employment security than core Sure Start staff.

*'My pay slip comes from Slough Borough Council, but the Slough Borough get it from Sure Start, so it's from Sure Start.'*  
(Interview 11 26/06/02)

The insecurity of working for Sure Start is a real issue for many of the staff:

*'A lot of people are contracted till March 2003, so there's still the question mark, you know, maybe 2004, but we don't actually know. So my personal view is do I start looking for a job now so that you keep your options open and things like that, cos that is really when your contract runs out. [...] Do I need to start looking elsewhere?'*  
(Interview 11 26/06/02)

Some services are commissioned by the Primary Care Trust from an agency such as Positive Steps. The Sure Start programme manager has limited formal authority over the individual staff members, although she is involved in the creation of the job and person specification and is usually invited to take part in the appointment selection process. In practice, the programme manager and the Partnership Board hold a position of power and responsibility to ensure that high quality services are delivered because they can decide whether or not to continue funding specific commissioned services.

### The Sure Start team

While a substantial number of people are involved in delivering Britwell-Northborough Sure Start services, the core team is based at the Britwell Clinic. It is led by a full time programme manager whose job it is to lead the work towards realising the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start vision contained in the Delivery Plan 2000

The team based at Britwell Clinic comprises:

- The programme manager
- The personal assistant to the programme manager
- The project administrator
- The community development worker
- The Sure Start midwife
- The Sure Start health visitor (joined September 2002)
- The family outreach co-ordinator
- The Speech and language therapist team (two part time therapists and one full time support worker)
- The Community Café managers (2 job-share partners)

### Staff meetings

The programme manager holds regular meetings with core staff members and one-to-one meetings with the administrative and co-ordinating staff based at the Britwell Clinic, The midwife and health visitor attend the core staff meetings but not the speech and language therapists or the café staff. During the evaluation period there were no meetings which could

be attended by everyone delivering Sure Start services and the researcher was told that this would be impractical because of the large numbers of staff, lack of accommodation, and clashing work timetables. Some of the staff have the opportunity to meet with colleagues through sub-group membership. Here they share information about the programme, and contribute towards its development.

### Links with other local initiatives

Local Sure Starts are expected to develop links with other government initiatives and Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has established collaborative relationships with the following agencies:

- Positive Steps
- The Play Centre
- The Slough Furniture Project
- Claycots and Lynch Hill infant schools
- The Childminding Association
- Buddies pre-school nursery
- The Britwell library

#### *Positive Steps*

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has commissioned services through Positive Steps, a local family support programme managed through the Family Welfare Agency. The Positive Steps staff with specific responsibility for delivering Sure Start services include:

- The Positive Steps manager
- Teenage parents worker
- Ethnic minority worker
- Child care organiser
- Family support co-ordinator

The manager and family support co-ordinator are only part funded by Sure Start.

### Sub-group meetings

Many agencies have a professional interest in Sure Start and are members of Sure Start sub-groups, making operational decisions about activities and services, which feed into the Partnership Board meetings.

The main sub groups are:

- The steering group
- Family support and outreach sub-group
- Play and learn sub-group



## Staff training

### *Specific training*

During the evaluation period, there was one training session available to all members of staff. This was an overview of the child protection legislation. It took place at the Britwell Clinic, lasted about two hours and was attended by approximately ten people, including representatives from Positive Steps, a community health visitor based at the Britwell Clinic (but not part of the Sure Start team), the Sure Start community development worker, the Sure Start pre-nursery worker and the Sure Start programme manager.

## Staff Meetings

Apart from an event specifically for the Partnership Board members and project leads, (the Partnership Board Away Day on 8/11/02), there was one large staff meeting during the evaluation period. This was 'Identifying priorities for the coming year' (on 17/12/02). Staff were invited to attend through their project leads, but not all did so. Some told the researcher that they did not know that they were entitled to attend. Others said that they were unable to do so because they were committed to offering services or activities at the same time.

There has recently been a staff information-sharing session on promoting community participation, and use of monitoring information (on 20/03/03).

Events which took place before the evaluation period include:

- 11/06/01 Promoting mentally healthy families
- 30/07/01 Project planning and evaluation
- 18/12/01 Framework for the Assessment of children in need, followed by a Christmas buffet lunch
- 7/02/02 Story Sacks and Speech and Language Therapy
- 15/03/02 Child Protection

All these events included an element of team-building, information-sharing and planning.

### *Career development training*

Individual staff members can participate in a wide range of training opportunities, depending on their individual development needs, and they can also take part in training offered by and required by their employing organisation. Two examples of training offered through Sure Start are listed below:

- i). Nursery nurse training: Some of the crèche workers from the Britwell Clinic and Positive Steps attended training which was held at the Britwell Clinic or on the youth club premises.

ii). Catering and basic hygiene: The sessional and voluntary staff members working in the community café were given training in basic hygiene standards before they were allowed to work in the kitchen.

Although this is not intended to imply that these were the only training opportunities, there was a staff perception that not much training took place.

## 2.6 The history of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start

Parents were asked when and how they first heard about Britwell-Northborough Sure Start. Most people are not very good at remembering community events in any detail so it was not surprising that parents who were living in the area during the Sure Start consultation and start up period (up to two years ago) had rather hazy memories of it. Four parents who had lived in Britwell-Northborough at the time, could not recall when and how they had heard about Sure Start, although after prompting, one said:

*'I think it was when they done their very first Open Day' over at the playcentre. [It was] advertised in the paper and I said 'OK, free grub, we'll go'.*  
(Interview 15 19/07/02)

Another had a blurred memory of the consultation exercise:

*'Didn't they have a survey out, to say it might be happening and what did we think about it?'*  
(Interview 22 9/07/02)

Newcomers to the area had more detailed recall because they had only recently heard about the programme.

Parents who remembered, said it was through one of the following: personal letter; public meetings, local newspaper; baby clinic; leaflet; Positive Steps; word of mouth; Britwell library, local playgroups.

### How has Britwell-Northborough Sure Start changed?

Most of the parents who had lived in the area for some time thought that there were many more services and activities than before, although some felt that it was not easy to say, because similar activities had taken place at the same premises [e.g. baby clinic, toddler groups) before Sure Start was established:

*'I know that over in the clinic they used to have a playgroup but I don't think that was Sure Start'.*  
(Interview 15 19/07/02)

Nevertheless there were no negative comments about Sure Start and one member of staff who had lived in Britwell for many years said:

*I'd say there's a lot more going on. There's quite a lot more activities. And obviously new parents. From the time the children are born. I think parents are hearing about Sure Start so obviously they're getting involved in Sure Start right from the early days. When their children are a lot younger.'*

(Interview 1 27/05/02)

This remark supports the observations made by the researcher's observation that new parents displayed a greater willingness in becoming actively involved in organising their own Sure Start activity groups. It suggests that it is an opportunity for Sure Start to make a concerted effort to involve new parents before they have created other routines and habits, certainly before they return to work, when their contact with the Britwell Clinic and Sure Start lessens.

## 2.7 Perceptions of the aims of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start

The interviews included a series of questions which sought to capture the participants' perceptions and understanding of the aims of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start. The idea was to encourage them to make explicit their understanding of what the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme was trying to achieve, rather than to recite what was contained in the Sure Start Delivery Plan. Many of the interview participants found this difficult and it is true that it is not always easy, given the breadth of the service agenda.

### *Parents perceptions of Sure Start aims*

If the parent participants knew the aims of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start they were only able to articulate them in the vaguest of terms, as:

*'Give the parents a better way of life, for the children as well.'*

(Interview 15 19/07/02)

### *Staff perceptions of Sure Start aims*

Most of the staff interview participants were able to identify *some* long-term aims although the replies were not consistent. Some described the national Sure Start aims, whereas others did indeed recite the aims described in the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start implementation plans. Most articulated the aims which were relevant to their particular work activity. One (relatively new) member of staff's response to the question was, rather worryingly:

*'To be honest I haven't seen any main aims so I don't know at the moment and that's the truth'.*

(Interview 6 6/06/02)

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has a very broad remit and the different replies highlighted the different priorities and specific job specifications of the staff members.

### *Stakeholder perceptions of Sure Start aims*

The interview participants who were the stakeholders to Britwell-Northborough Sure Start were probably the least able to say what they thought were the main aims of the local programme and tended to align the aims with their own broad service remits, for example, education related aims or health related ideals concerned with reducing health inequalities and improving the health of the Slough population as a whole.

While acknowledging the central position occupied by education, this stakeholder replied:

*'Education, I'm afraid I see as actually one of the determinants of health, so I.. if we're looking at the broader health determinants, I don't really see a distinction. There's plenty of international evidence to suggest that the better you educate, particularly your, your women folk, the, the better the overall health of the population is, so for Sure Start to provide an educational support for parents. with very young children I would expect that, there is reason to believe that will have a positive impact on health.'*  
(Interview 25 12/11/02)

The stakeholders were conscious of the need to use lessons learnt from the Sure Start experience when reshaping other services.

Figure 8 Main aims: staff beliefs. This table shows how often the staff participants mention each category

	TO IMPROVE SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	TO IMPROVE HEALTH	TO IMPROVE ABILITY TO LEARN	TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
Staff	☆☆☆☆	☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆

Care should be taken in interpreting the table, as it takes no account of the different and very small numbers of interview participants in each category. Its purpose is to show that there was a general awareness of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start aims.

Most of the replies from all the interview participants were broadly in line with one of the formal Sure Start aims and objectives, as follows:

- Improving social and emotional development*

However, while improving parenting skills and raising self-esteem was mentioned, there were no references to support for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Improving health*

Staff who were health professionals or employed to deliver the healthy eating programme perceived the long-term aim of improving health in Britwell-Northborough as an end in itself and *"trying to encourage families to eat healthily"* (Interview 10 28/06/02) was a typical comment.

Another linked health, rather hesitantly, it must be said, to a broader ideal:

*'To work with children from nought to four to prevent poverty and, well, not to prevent poverty but to improve their health and well-being.'*  
(Interview 2 27/05/02)

- *Improving the ability to learn*

The role of education in the Sure Start programme was acknowledged by some staff participants and was interpreted very broadly. While one participant said the aim was:

*'To improve children's ability 'to learn, their play, their language, all those types of things, their quality of life so they're ready to fly when they go to school. Doing that through parents, targeting children as well as parents.'*  
(Interview 8 17/06/02)

Another, reflecting on low literacy levels, rather more prosaically stated that *her* aim was to

*'let people know where the library actually is, cos I think that's quite a big problem, that parents or even the whole community don't know that the library's there.'*  
(Interview 9 26/06/02).

### Achieving long term and short term aims

Although central government has stated that it does not expect to see tangible results from the Sure Start programme for at least twenty years, the local programmes are expected to meet local milestones and targets and undergo regular and detailed performance monitoring to show that progress is being made. There was scepticism amongst those delivering the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start services about their ability to achieve measurable improvements in education and health and reductions in health inequalities within its funding lifetime. Although there was general recognition that there was an opportunity to begin to make real changes, interviewees were quick to point to the range of economic and social factors which could influence the achievement of the Sure Start aims, not least the withdrawal of national funding.

While seldom described as a long-term aim in its own right, partnership working was mentioned by the programme manager and several of the staff members and stakeholders as an important *means* to achieving the aims of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start. However explanations and expectations of partnership working betrayed diverse perceptions of the concept and about just who these partners were. Some interview participants emphasised the importance of strengthening relationships between Britwell-Northborough Sure Start and agencies such as Positive Steps, while others viewed partnership as collaborative working amongst professional individuals. There was little mention of parents as partners, apart from acknowledging that they were members of the Partnership Board (this forms one of the main themes of the evaluation and is addressed in Chapter 4).

## CHAPTER 3

### ACHIEVEMENTS

#### 3.1 Introduction

All Sure Start programmes are faced with the enormous task of identifying and responding to needs within the community, introducing and maintaining key initiatives, working within revenue and capital budgets, forming local partnerships and planning for future development. Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has made significant achievements in all these areas. The achievements listed in this chapter serve to demonstrate the commitment, hard work and enthusiasm of the Sure Start service providers under the effective leadership and management of the programme manager.

#### 3.2 Services

This section describes the main services and activities offered by Britwell-Northborough Sure Start during the evaluation period. The services are delivered across six core activity areas in partnership with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies (see page 59 for a summary of the services). Some of these services were added during the evaluation period April - December 2002 (such as the English as a Second Language classes, the Sure Start health visitor aerobics classes and the toy library),

Positive Steps plays an important part in the Sure Start programme as it is commissioned by Sure Start to provide many of the local services and activities. The two agencies need to work closely together and the Positive Steps manager (appointed September 2002) and the Sure Start programme manager have been forging a strong working relationship. They have a similar work ethic and determination to achieve sound and transparent organisational structures and processes and one of the staff members expressed the general view that:

*'The new manager is very supportive of the programme manager and the programme manager is very supportive of her'.*  
(Interview 12 25/10/02)

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start runs accessible services during weekdays. Parents can visit 9.00am-5.00pm Monday to Friday or telephone anytime during working hours. Some of the staff members (eg the Sure Start midwife) have a mobile number which they give to the parents in case they need to be contacted when they are away from the Sure Start premises. The staff are very willing to respond to parents requiring information and support and there did not seem to be any difficulty in contacting members of staff. Of course some of the staff are not always available because they work part-time but none of the parents raised this as an issue. A

breakdown in communication was mentioned only once. This was in relation to the Speech and Language programme, when a parent was waiting for a routine visit from one of the Speech and Language therapists and was unaware that she was no longer working at Britwell-Northborough Sure Start.

## 1. Outreach and Home Visiting Services

- *Services to Pregnant Women*

The Sure Start midwife works closely with the existing community midwives to reshape ante and post-natal care for women in the Sure Start area. Over the last year, her work has concentrated on the following areas:

- *'Before and After' Group.*

A successful weekly drop-in ante and post-natal care session has been established. Around 10-12 women attend the ante-natal sessions and about 15 attend the post-natal sessions. The sessions have developed into a friendly and supportive group, with women returning with their new-born babies and gaining on-going support from the group. There have been informal discussions on topics such as breast-feeding and sudden infant death syndrome. A Smoking Cessation Adviser attends these sessions and offers individual and group support to the parents.

- *Parentcraft sessions*

Traditional ante-natal parent craft sessions are offered to individuals and groups of parents. Access is improved by the provision of crèche facilities so that mothers with other young children can attend. Specific sessions have been arranged for teenage parents, supported by a grant from the Teenage Parents Strategy Group. Before the arrival of Sure Start, parentcraft sessions had only been available at Wexham Park Hospital, making it very difficult for local parents without transport to attend.

- *Individual Care*

The Sure Start midwife offers an enhanced level of care to expectant mothers within the sure Start area and also works on the labour ward at the local hospital. She has delivered several Sure Start babies.

## 2. Family Outreach Project

- *Home visiting*

Until the post of Family Outreach Project co-ordinator became vacant in January 2003, the post holder had worked in the community with the local health visitors, the community midwives and the Sure Start midwife. Although this post remains unfilled, Sure Start staff continue to offer a home visit to all new births in the Sure Start area, giving information about

activities and services and ongoing home visiting support, if needed. Members of the Sure Start team try to sustain that contact by sending birthday cards on the babies' first birthdays, carrying out birthday visits and sending regular mail shots of Sure Start activities.

The demand for the home visiting service was rather low, so parents were consulted by questionnaire to find out what support arrangements they would prefer. It was found that most parents wanted group support in venues outside of the home. The Sure Start team responded by offering a New Mums' Group for post-natal support and education and an 'Up to 1's' Group, focusing on child development.

- *Health visiting*

Unlike many other Sure Starts, Britwell-Northborough did not have a dedicated health visitor for the first eighteen months of the programme. The Partnership Board recognised that the achievement of key Sure Start targets relating to breastfeeding, smoking cessation, and post-natal depression would require the contribution of increased health visiting input. Sure Start funding was obtained for the employment of a full time Sure Start health visitor, who was appointed in September 2002. She has been working in partnership with the Sure Start midwife to successfully increase the number of parents using the Sure Start services. They work as a team to encourage parents living in Northborough to bring their children to the weekly 'drop-in' session at the Northborough tenants' hall where the Sure Start health visitor offers informal advice session on good parenting. This 'drop-in' used to be run as a Sure Start parent and toddler group, frequented by an average of only three parents per session but numbers have steadily increased since the involvement of the Sure Start health visitor and midwife. During one 'drop-in' session, attendance reached a record 18 parents and toddlers.

### 3. Support to Families and Parents

- *Family Support Service*

Sure Start has commissioned Positive Steps to address the needs of high risk groups in addition to providing general support to parents and members of the community. Positive Steps offers in-home support and group work to families where there are issues relating to, for example, substance abuse, mental health, post-natal depression, and domestic violence. The project also runs a healthy living group, to promote exercise, cooking skills and healthy lifestyles and is developing activities to attract fathers to the centre.

- *Parenting programmes*

During the evaluation fieldwork Positive Steps was providing:

*'In-home support where we have session workers and an ex-headmistress who is doing some work at the moment with a family with behaviour and play so we're able to provide that*



*sort of help and we are hoping soon to run a parenting course. We've had training for that [through Relate}, to run this parenting course'.  
(Interview 7 12/06/02)*

According to the Sure Start programme manager, the staff at Positive Steps receive the bulk of their family support training through the Family Caring Trust, which delivers the parenting course 'From Pram to Primary School'. This is a widely recognised course which local health visitors have also been trained to deliver. Staff shortages prevented Positive Steps from offering the parenting course during the evaluation period although it has recently introduced the 'From Pram to Primary School' structured six week parenting skills programme.

'From Pram to Primary School' - material is supplied by the Family Caring Trust and aimed at parents with children aged 0-5 years. A maximum of six parents attend the weekly two hour sessions, which are delivered by two trained workers and a volunteer, all from Positive Steps. Parents can self-refer or be referred by the Sure Start health visitor or midwife. The course is very popular amongst the parents and there is a waiting list of five/six parents. The programme covers the following topics:

Session 1: Behaviour (of the child and the parent)

Session 2: Encouraging your child

Session 3: Listening

Session 4: Talking with your child

Session 5: Discipline

Session 6: Quality time

Parent evaluation takes place at the end of each session and Sure Start staff have noticed improvements in the parenting practices of those who have attended the programme.

There are plans to extend and increase the number of courses: a seventh session will be added, which will focus on a more formal evaluation and an evening programme will be introduced in the autumn to improve opportunities for fathers to take part. The Sure Start health visitor will be joining the evening course providers from Positive Steps.

- *Teenage Parents Project*

The Teenage parents Project used to be a stand-alone project but was absorbed into the family support programme in early 2003 for reasons of cost effectiveness and because its development was not as successful as anticipated. The service aims to provide information, support, and opportunities for teenage parents to develop their skills as parents, although it does not offer a structured parenting programme. It has a focus on personal development training to enhance self-esteem and confidence and on 'work-readiness' training and activities. It plans to form links with other agencies to offer relevant and accessible training opportunities to enhance employability.

- *Ethnic Minorities Project*

The Ethnic Minorities Project is intended to promote a greater ethnic mix within Britwell and Northborough. An ethnic minorities worker based at Positive Steps provides outreach work for parents of an ethnic minority. The aim of the project is to ascertain the numbers, distribution and needs of ethnic minority families in the Sure Start area and to provide appropriate support. In addition, English classes (ESL- already mentioned at the beginning of the 'Services' section), provided through the Sure Start core team, are proving successful in encouraging people from black and ethnic minority communities to integrate more fully within the local community.

- *Baby Gym*

Weekly Baby Gym sessions provide children with the opportunity to participate in a structured activity session supported by their parents/carers. Approximately 30 children per week attend these sessions.

- *Childcare Service*

The childcare service is commissioned from the Family Welfare Association, and based at Positive Steps. It provides:

- i) A 'Baby Club', linked to the baby clinic sessions held at the Britwell Health Clinic.
- 2) An extended childcare through the pre-nursery groups at Lynch Hill School. Claycots School and Buddies for parents who wish to work or develop their skills (see page 54 – the section on improvements to parents' employability).

It also offers Parent/Carer and Toddler sessions, at Positive Steps and in the Northborough area (see also *Health visiting* section above).

- *Early Years Outreach*

Two part-time posts have been established, one at each of the two primary schools in the Sure Start area, to

- Make positive early links between home and school.
- Provide structured play opportunities for young children prior to their admission to nursery.
- Support parents in preparing children for nursery.
- Offer parenting skills programmes in response to need (but none have been established so far).

The Lynch Hill pre-nursery group was set up in Sept 2001, while the Claycots School pre-nursery group was set up at the end of May 2002.

There were reasons why the Claycots pre-nursery group took longer to become established. At the time of the evaluation, Claycots School was being redeveloped. The Claycots School development plan included a community room to be used for pre-

nursery groups and other initiatives such as breakfast clubs and family literacy sessions. While the building works were in progress, the pre-nursery group sessions were held in a portacabin adjacent to Claycots nursery (also in a portacabin). A variable number of pre-nursery children attended – as many as eighteen children on one occasion. The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Family and Outreach worker offered one two-hour pre-nursery session a week, as an interim measure, until the appointment of a pre-nursery worker who was wholly funded by Sure Start. Completion of the building works took place in the autumn of 2002 and wraparound care (extended care hours for children of working parents) will start once the Neighbourhood Nursery is built in March 2004.

Both Lynch Hill and Claycots pre-nursery groups offer 3 sessions per week, plus home visits as required. The sessions are for children under three years old. Children tend to be offered nursery places around their third birthday.

- *Childminding Project*

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start works with the National Childminding Association (NCMA) and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) to increase the number of childminders in the area, particularly those offering care during unsocial hours and care for children with special needs. Britwell-Northborough Sure Start funds a part-time co-ordinator to recruit, assess, train and support local childminders.

- *Britwell Play and Learn Library*

As part of the Sure Start capital programme, the local library has been extended to provide enhanced play and learning opportunities for both children and their parents, five days a week. The aim is to increase the active membership of the library. The new room and refurbished areas cost in the region of £200,000 and were completed in January 2003. A Play and Learn Library Friends Group was set up by the library co-ordinator to inform the development of services. Bookstart is well established in the area, and a Bookstart Plus project has been developed, providing an activity bag and books for two-year-olds, linking to the development checks carried out by health visitors.

The premises now boast

- A toy library.
- An information technology area to support lifelong learning.
- A safe, and secure outside play area.
- A full programme of play and learning activities throughout the year.
- An outreach programme to promote reading and library use.
- Bookstart and Bookstart Plus.

- *Parent/Carer and Toddler Groups*  
The initial consultation and on-going feedback from parents identified a need for additional Parent/Carer and Toddler group sessions, especially during the summer holidays. Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has worked with voluntary and community groups and the pre-school Learning Alliance, to develop additional sessions in venues and at times to suit parents. In particular, there were weekly sessions in the Northborough area, run by Positive Steps. A summer holiday group was also offered In July-August 2002. It was based at Buddies pre-school playgroup, which had closed for the holiday period and so had room to hold this activity.
  
  - *Neighbourhood Nursery*  
The Sure Start Partnership is working with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) to establish a day nursery in the area, through the Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative. The Sure Start Partnership Board agreed to restructure its capital programme to part-fund the building. Sure Start funding will be subject to agreement by the Sure Start Unit, once the consultation and design planning process is complete.
  
  - *Buddies play group/nursery care*  
Buddies is linked to the Pre-School Learning Alliance and offers a playgroup/nursery and wrap around care to local children between the ages of two years nine months and when the child starts school (after his/her fourth birthday). Once a child reaches three years the cost of the playgroup place is paid through a nursery education grant, but Buddies make a charge to the parents for children aged between two years nine months and three years and for any children they care for outside the core nursery hours. Since February/March 2003, Sure Start has agreed to pay 50% of these costs per child from its under-spend budget. However, few parents have taken advantage of this subsidy and this low demand means that at present Sure Start can afford to fund any parent who wishes to apply. Between six and eight children are currently subsidised through Sure Start.
4. Primary and Community Health and Social Care
- *Speech and Language Therapy Early Intervention Project*  
Two part-time speech and language therapists work from the Britwell Clinic and have been employed to promote the early identification of speech and language difficulties, and to offer a range of group and individual interventions. The therapists form an integral part of the Sure Start team and are pro-active in working across statutory, voluntary and community groups. They work with the midwife in helping her to talk to parents about how to develop early communication skills. They work with library staff, the early years outreach teacher, and all those involved in providing play and learning experiences,

advising on appropriate reading materials, games and activities. They train health visitors in the Wilstar screening techniques. They work with referred children and parents individually, and in small group settings. They also work in the two local nursery classes, assessing and providing interventions, and they train nursery staff in implementing strategies to improve the speech and language of the under fours in their care. The open referral policy may enable early identification and treatment of young children with delayed speech or language development, which might otherwise be missed if it is only identified after children start school. They run early language groups for parents with their children and also home visit all babies at 8 months old to screen them and talk to parents about language stimulation techniques. This is a very early intervention.

- *GP Service*

During 2002, a local GP provided a series of parent group sessions at Positive Steps to address issues relating to child health in the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start area. The researcher attended one of the talks, entitled 'Why Britwell is an unhealthy place to live'. It provoked a lively response from the six parents present, most of whom challenged the premise that Britwell was an unhealthy place to live and dismissed the presented evidence.

- *Exercise classes*

A weekly exercise class for parents is offered at the Britwell Clinic in response to requests from local parents, alongside evidence of the beneficial effects of exercise in terms of raising self-esteem, combating stress and depression, helping to alleviate post-natal depression and aiding weight control. The Sure Start health visitor, who is also a fully trained aerobics instructor, has been delivering the class since her appointment in September 2002. Positive Steps also offers a weekly exercise class as part of its Healthy Living programme. Both classes are supported by crèche facilities.

- *Smoking cessation*

Smoking cessation advice and support is offered in a variety of ways across Sure Start projects: the Sure Start midwife provides advice and support and a smoking cessation adviser attends the 'Before and After' drop-in sessions.

- *Healthy eating and the Food for Thought Community Café*

A community café has been established in the Britwell Clinic, in conjunction with the Community Nutritionist and as part of the Health Improvement Rewards Scheme. The aim is to:

- Provide access to cheap, healthy food.
- Promote healthy eating and lifestyle.
- Provide a focal point for the community.

- Provide training in food hygiene, and work opportunities.

The café is proving to be very popular with the whole Britwell-Northborough community and can become very crowded at lunchtimes.

## 5. Support for children with special needs

- *Special Needs Project*

The original Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Service Delivery Plan included services for children with a disability; however there were few children under four years in the Sure Start area who were identified as disabled. The Special Needs Project was reviewed by a multi-agency reference group, in the light of the increased emphasis in the new Sure Start PSA on the early identification and support for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and special needs. A multi-agency group, led by the Educational Psychology Service, has now developed a structured home visiting program to address the needs of children with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, to be known as the 'Holding Hands' project.

## 6. Additional Services

- *Safety in the Home*

The Homemaker Project has been contracted to improve safety in the home by supplying and installing free (but funded through Sure Start) smoke detectors, stair gates, cupboard and window locks. It is envisaged that this service will be scaled down very soon, as all families with children under four years will have had equipment fitted, should they want it. A reduced service will be maintained to meet the needs of new families moving into the area, and first-time parents. The range of home safety equipment offered is under review.

- *Improvements to parents' employability*

The Slough area is one of relatively high employment. There are job opportunities, but many of these are unskilled, low paid, and require people to work shifts and unsocial hours. There is also a shortage of affordable and accessible childcare places which may deter parents from taking up employment. Britwell-Northborough Sure Start is working to improve employability through the following strategies:

- Offering personal development and 'work-readiness' training, linked to the Family Support Project, the Teenage Parents Project, and Parent/Carer and Toddler groups.
- Offering a wide range of learning and training opportunities, through the East Berkshire College. Courses have been offered in response to parents' stated need and provided in local venues, supported by crèche facilities.

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has run the following courses for interested parents, including those working in the crèche and the Food for Thought café.

- Introduction to Pre-school Practice (IPP) - a 12 week accredited childcare course.

- First Aid.
- Food Hygiene.
- Story Sacks – A story sack is a large cloth bag containing a good quality storybook with supporting materials, such as puppets, soft toys and a game to stimulate reading/language activities. There is usually an accompanying audio cassette tape with the story recorded onto it so the children can follow along and act out. Parents make up the sacks and take them home to share with their pre-school children. The aim is to encourage parents to become actively involved in the child's discovery of books and the activities which can flow from them. The story sack project is a nationwide community initiative.
- Taster sessions - These are short sessions requested by parents on topics which interest them. They are run by the WEA. Some topics are presented as single sessions, while others are presented over several weeks. Each session lasts about two hours and a free crèche is provided in an adjoining room. Taster sessions have included the following topics: personal safety, creative writing, interior design and cooking on a budget.

Sure Start has been working with the National Childminding Association and the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) to

- Increase the number of childcare places available in the area.
- Increase the number of crèche places available, to enable parents to take part in training.
- Work with the Employment Service and the Lone Parents Advisor to offer local advice and information sessions, based in the Food for Thought Community Café.
- Offer work and training opportunities in the Food for Thought Community Café.

There has been a very positive response to the establishment of English as a Second Language classes (ESL), with crèche facilities, which will serve as an entry point from which families can be supported to access appropriate services.

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start is part of the successful UK Online bid - IT Britwell. This has brought IT access to four venues in the Britwell area. A Sure Start IT trainer has been employed to offer training to interested parents and an IT training suite is planned as part of the extension to the Britwell Library.

#### *The 'Committees' training course*

As part of the Partnership Board's strategy to encourage greater parent involvement in the planning of services, training in committee work was delivered in six weekly sessions. This is potentially an important course, given the Sure Start requirement that parents participate

in all aspects of service planning and delivery. However, it was attended by only two parents, Neither of these were parent-members of the Partnership Board, although it may have been particularly beneficial for this group. The lack of interest and attendance suggests that it was not well marketed. The researcher attended one of the sessions and found the mode of delivery rather dull and pedestrian. This observation was fed back to the programme manager and the Sure Start Community Development worker who had drawn up the training brief and arranged for the delivery of the course. There is a need for better monitoring and evaluation of both the quality and content of such courses to ensure that they are pitched at an appropriate level and that they give parents every opportunity to develop knowledge and skills which help them contribute meaningfully to the Sure Start programme. However, this is easier said than done as monitoring and assessing commissioned sessions takes time which is in short supply for the core Sure Start staff.

### Holiday Activities

Some of the Sure Start services for parents and under fours (eg Baby Gym and toddler groups) stopped during the summer months. It was explained to the researcher that this was because of a tail off in demand for activities - parents and staff were away on holidays and/or many of the Sure Start staff were also parents who had school aged children to care for during the holidays. Parents were not allowed to bring their older children to the Sure Start activities. In the summer of 2002 several staff members had left Sure Start and their replacements (including the health visitor, and two speech and language therapists) had not yet taken up their posts. Activities in the library for the under fours activities had been discontinued because of building works. However Positive Steps' child care and family support services continued and a variety of other activities were offered, including:

- *Barbecues*

There were Sure Start summer barbecues in the Britwell Clinic garden, organised by the Food for Thought café managers during the summer. They were very popular. For an entry fee of £2.50 per adult and £1.00 per child, each was entitled to typical barbecue fare - hamburgers, hot dogs, salad and soft drinks and activities for the children: inflatables, outdoor toys, a sandpit and face painting. At the Play and Learn Sub- Committee meeting in June 2002, the manager for Positive Steps and the children's library project worker raised the matter of the entry fee as they had heard some parents complain that they could not afford it. The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme manager agreed to relay this back to the Food for Thought café managers, although it was felt that it was a reasonable charge for the food.

- *Breakfast club*

One of the strengths of the Sure Start programme is the willingness of most of the staff to be innovative in the development of their services. One such innovation was the Food for Thought Community café breakfast club, introduced during the summer holidays. The



number of families wanting this service tailed off as the summer holidays progressed, but it was considered a success by those parents who brought their children to the club for a healthy breakfast.

- *Day trips*

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start arranged day trips throughout the summer. Heavily subsidised by Sure Start, up to two coaches were hired to transport parents and children to local wild life parks and zoos. The seats on the coach were invariably booked many weeks in advance and all the interviewed parents were very enthusiastic about the trips, which they viewed as the highlight of the summer. The only complaint was that they and their children were not entitled to go on the trips once the children reached the age of four.

### Satisfying a need for more parenting programmes

Several staff members highlighted the need to raise awareness of children's emotional and social development. An example of this was contained in the annual service review (2002-3) of one of the pre-nursery teachers, where she described how supporting parents in dealing with 'unwanted behaviour' was a key challenge:

*'Observed parents either sitting back too much or over reacting and being too demanding or chastising too heavily. Advice given to parents about rewarding and praising any good behaviour and kindness rather than only going attention for negative behaviour.'*  
(Source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start annual service review 2002-3)

The teacher's key achievements included the provision of advice on behaviour management by supplying handouts and providing good role models.

Introduction to Pre-School Practice (IPP) courses were delivered through Sure Start on three separate occasions (see also the section on improving parents' employability on page 54 above). These focused on child development and play and lead to a diploma in pre-school practice. However, according to one member of staff and several parents, some of the parents lost interest in the course and so it was abandoned:

*'We had 20 go through IPP, which dropped down to 14, but we started off with 20.'*  
(Interview 3 29/05/02)

Nevertheless fourteen is a significant number of parents who have now gained a qualification, some of whom went on to study for the Diploma in Pre-School Practice.

While there has been no subsequent demand for the IPP course, the popularity of the Sure Start Health Visitor's informal sessions on good parenting (mentioned above - in the section on the Family Outreach Project- health visiting) suggests that there is an unmet demand for parenting programmes. Bearing in mind the popularity of the structured parenting skills programmes offered through Positive Steps, the Sure Start team could expand the provision of

such programmes and make them available to all parents as a matter of routine. The pre-nursery teachers have also identified a need and have been attempting to introduce 'good parenting' practice, so there appears to be the potential to adopt a more co-ordinated, Sure Start approach. The Sure Start health visitor is interested in the concept of parenting programmes and might consider offering them to interested parents. These programmes are potentially a solution to the problem of antisocial behaviour among older children, an issue raised by many parents (see Chapter 2).

### The Introduction of innovative ideas and practices

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start's great asset is the core and commissioned staff members and their ability and willingness to try innovative ideas and practices. These are just a few examples of such ideas:

- Teenagers are notoriously unreliable at attending any course; however the Sure Start midwife introduced phone vouchers as a reward for any teenage parent attending every session of a teenage parenting programme. This encouraged 100% attendance throughout the course. She also left a box of condoms freely available in the female WC as a way of promoting practices of safe sex and birth control. Although there is no knowing the effectiveness of this strategy, the box needed frequent replenishing.
- Sure Starts are required to reach out to all parents with children living in their area but making contact with all parents is not easy. The programme manager commissioned a video of local parents' views and experiences of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start to be used to advertise and market the Sure Start programme to local parents.
- The programme manager is keen to nurture the talents of the staff for the good of the programme. She allowed the office administrator to take time off work to train as a teacher in English as a second language (ESL), which led to the setting up of local English language classes for non-English speaking parents. This has been an effective way of reaching some ethnic minority parents who had not previously registered with Sure Start.
- Several members of staff are working together to provide added value to services, for example:
  - The health visitor and midwife are working together to develop a post-natal depression group, a quit smoking group and jointly run an ante-natal drop-in. The health visitor works very closely with the Positive Steps ethnic minority project worker to encourage hard to reach parents to take part in activities.
  - The dentist at the Britwell Clinic and staff at Britwell-Northborough Sure Start are working as partners in the promotion of dental health. Sure Start provides feeding cups, tooth brushes and toothpaste through its home visiting programme.

- The National Cycle Helmet Initiative has provided free cycle helmets for the recent 'bikeathon' organised by staff and parents at Britwell-Northborough Sure Start.
- Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, Slough Sure Start and the Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative has joined forces to build a day nursery at Claycots School (opening October 2003).

Figure 9. Summary of services (evaluation period - April - December 2002)

BRITWELL-NORTHBOROUGH SURE START 6 ACTIVITY AREAS	
1. Outreach and Home Visiting Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Services to pregnant women</i></li> <li>• <i>Local Parentcraft sessions with crèche</i></li> <li>• <i>Individual care</i></li> <li>• <i>'Before and After' group</i></li> </ul>
2. Family and Outreach Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Health visiting</i></li> </ul>
3. Support to Families and Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Positive Steps</i></li> <li>• <i>Family Caring Trust parenting programme</i></li> <li>• <i>Café</i></li> <li>• <i>Smoking cessation</i></li> <li>• <i>Family support service</i></li> <li>• <i>Ethnic minorities project</i></li> <li>• <i>Baby gym</i></li> <li>• <i>Childcare service</i></li> <li>• <i>Early years outreach</i></li> <li>• <i>Childminding project</i></li> <li>• <i>Britwell Play and Learn Library</i></li> <li>• <i>Parent/carer and toddler groups</i></li> <li>• <i>Neighbourhood nursery</i></li> </ul>
4. Primary and Community Health and Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Speech and language therapy early intervention project</i></li> <li>• <i>GP service</i></li> <li>• <i>Exercise classes</i></li> <li>• <i>Food for Thought' community cafe</i></li> </ul>
5. Support for children with special needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Special needs project</i></li> </ul>
6. Additional Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Parenting skills training</i></li> <li>• <i>Safety in the home</i></li> <li>• <i>Teenage parents project</i></li> <li>• <i>Improvements to parents' employability</i></li> </ul>

### 3.3 Buildings and premises

The decision to introduce a Sure Start programme in Britwell and Northborough was based, to some degree, on the large number of underused buildings spread about the area. It was believed that they would form the backbone of the programme, because they offered great potential for refurbishment and development with the aid of Sure Start capital funding (source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start in Slough Service Plan 2000 p.1.). It was felt that the required consultation and negotiations with local parents and agencies would strengthen community capacity and develop the partnership and networking approach so integral to the Sure Start vision.

However, over-optimism about the kind of premises that might be used is a feature of many Sure Start delivery plans (source: Getting Sure Start Started, August 2002). Very early on in the development of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start it emerged that many of the premises were inappropriate. They were either too small or the location did not reach the most isolated pockets of the neighbourhood. Plans for expanding the Sure Start programme have been hampered because the physical capacity is just not available. Nevertheless the programme manager and her staff have been very imaginative in their use of existing buildings and continue to provide a range of services and activities which take place in different locations at the same time. One advantage of this is that it gives parents and children a choice over which venue to attend. Meanwhile, huge strides have been made in the development and refurbishment of the buildings identified in the Service Delivery Plan (2000).

#### Refurbishment

It has been explained that services and activities are delivered from premises which pre-date Sure Start. Many of them have been refurbished with capital funding from Sure Start.

- *The Britwell Clinic*

Since becoming the main offices of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme, the Britwell Clinic premises have been transformed. Sure Start shares the premises with a local dentist, community health visitors and Home Start. The building is owned and managed by Slough Primary Care Trust who granted Britwell-Northborough Sure Start rent free accommodation and overheads (gas, electricity and telephone costs) for three years, and contribute £12,500 pa towards the development and running of the Food for Thought community café, as part of its Health Rewards Improvement programme. In return for this, Sure Start contributed £30,000 of capital funding in 200-2001 to refurbish the premises. This has benefited all users and occupants of the clinic as they included the installation of new window frames and security shutters for the whole building, new internal fixtures and

fitting to the communal parts and to the rooms allocated for the use of Sure Start and to the district health visitors' rooms (which were not part of Sure Start).

The rear garden has also been landscaped to provide a safe play area for the children and more recently, computer equipment for the use of the local community has been installed in a corner of the Food for Thought café.

The agreement reached between the Primary Care Trust and Sure Start about the shared use and cost of the building is an example of partnership working for the benefit of children and families in the area.

- *Positive Steps*

Positive Steps' premises were extremely cramped and prevented any expansion of services. Sure Start provided capital funding for an outside play area and during the evaluation period the Partnership Board discussed ways and means of provide or contributing towards the installation of a temporary building on the site. This never came to fruition, much to the chagrin of some of the Positive Steps staff, however, during 2003, the agency moved to the disused play centre premises.

## Building Developments

The Sure Start Service Plan included provision to extend and develop buildings within the area to create facilities which would be of use to the whole community as well as to the parents and children under four years. The Sure Start programme manager has been a driving force in the creation of links between Sure Start and other local agencies.

- *Library extension*

The library building has been extended with Sure Start capital funding of £200,000. The new building opened in October 2002 and after some building and staff recruitment delays, the toy library was launched in January 2003. It was recorded in the minutes of the Britwell-Northborough Steering group meeting (18/02/03) that 120 parents and children attended the launch and the uptake of library based activities has increased. Plans are also in place for the installation of an IT suite. The extension, which includes a safe and secure outside play area, is a community asset available to all the local parents and their young children.

- *Pre-nursery*

- Lynch Hill pre-nursery school

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start provides revenue funding for the delivery of this service. The Partnership Board have agreed a development plan for 2002-3. It also provided £15k match funding to provide a room which is used as the base for the pre-

nursery group and also by the speech and language therapists and other groups by arrangement.

- Claycots pre-nursery school

The whole school has recently been re-built (not through Sure Start funding). It was eventually completed, after much delay, in October 2002. The Partnership Board has agreed a development plan for 2002-3. Sure Start will be part-funding the building of the neighbourhood Nursery.

### Making use of other buildings

Apart from the new and refurbished buildings, Sure Start has rented space in other public and community buildings. The Britwell Play centre, which was owned and managed by Slough Borough Council, was an important amenity for children of all ages. Its very big rooms were ideal for holding some of the larger Sure Start mother and toddler groups. Sometimes there were ball ponds and bouncy castles, to the delight of the children. Some of the training sessions (e.g. the English as a second language classes) were held in one of the rooms with a Sure Start crèche for the children in an adjacent room. It has been mentioned several times elsewhere in this report that the play centre was closed by Slough Borough Council as part of a cost cutting exercise. The local parents have lost a valuable resource. After all, the availability and spread of under-used community premises across Britwell-Northborough was used as a rationale for choosing Britwell-Northborough as the local Sure Start site. Instead, the closure of the play centre. has added to an acute shortage of space for its activities.

- *The Baptist Church Hall*

The Sure Start team negotiated with the Baptist clergy for sessional rental of the local Baptist Church Hall. This was another small room used by the up-to-one's group on a Friday morning.

- *Northborough Tenants Hall*

Northborough lacked space for the delivery of any activities or services, apart from a tenants' hall situated on a small housing estate. Although Positive Steps offered a weekly mother and toddler group here, it was not well attended. Once the new health visitor was the appointed, she and the midwife organised a Sure Start Road Show at the premises to promote the programme and the venue as a convenient place for local parents and young children to meet regularly. The Sure Start midwife and health visitor organised the Road Show and many other staff took part (from the library, Food for Thought café, Claycots and Lynch Hill schools; the speech and language therapists, and the childminding development worker).

### 3. 4 Number of parents and children using Sure Start

The continuing success and future of local Sure Start programmes depends on as many qualifying parents and children under four as possible accessing the services. This section reports on the number of children and parents who use Britwell-Northborough Sure Start. The decision to place Sure Start in Britwell-Northborough was based, amongst other criteria, on the fact that there were 500 families and 615 children under the age of four, living in the area (source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start in Slough. 2000: p.4).

#### The local monitoring and review strategy

Each project within the Sure Start programme must produce a plan which forms the basis for the monitoring and review process. These plans are considered by the Steering Group and referred to the Partnership Board for agreement if there are any concerns or where there are proposals to make substantive changes to services.

The local monitoring and review strategy is designed to

- Help the Partnership Board understand how well the services are performing.
- Keep track of progress in meeting the Sure Start objectives and targets.
- Develop the programme effectively in response to the needs of the community.

The current monitoring and review strategy comprises the following elements:

- Monthly monitoring  
Regular monthly contact with children under four living in the area has risen from 23% in April 2002 to 31% in February 2003 (source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start annual report 2002-2003)
- Quarterly and annual review reports.
- Consultation with service users
- Measurement of progress towards the Public Service Agreement (PSA) and the Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) targets.
- A process evaluation by the University of Oxford (which is the subject of this report).

To this end, all Sure Start programmes are required to set up database systems which monitor progress towards locally and nationally set attendance milestones and targets.

#### Service use

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start is constantly developing and learning how to respond effectively to the needs of local parents and children. During the course of a year, some activities and services will expand and others will contract, according to demand and need.

Although Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has a powerful database, its analytic functions are underused, partly because there is no universal agreement about essential terminology or criteria. Many of the staff members do not understand numerical and tabular data and this affects their ability to keep accurate records of their activities. Table 4 (page 66) below sets out the numbers of parents and children who have used Sure Start services from April 2002-March 2003 but caution must be exercised in drawing any inferences from the table as it lacks clarity and there are a number of inconsistencies. However it gives some indication of the most used and least used services.

Briefly, the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start database records:

- The number of parents and children who have signed up to Sure Start, by address.
  - The total numbers of contacts (parents and children using services) per month for each key service.
  - How often parents and children access key services per month (frequency).
- (There is a fuller discussion of the database in Chapter 4)

### What the database shows

The database records information on services and usage (total numbers of parents and children using all services; total numbers of parents and children using individual services; frequency of service use). The database allows this information to be cross-tabulated with information on parents and children using the services (by address, gender and ethnicity).

The data demonstrate a steady, month by month, rise in the number of contacts with many Sure Start services. These services include: enhanced health visiting, family support, childcare, early years outreach, Britwell Play and Learn Library, speech and language early intervention and the Buddies pre-school group. However, these data represent the number of contacts, not the number of children. Many children have accessed a range of services on a number of occasions within the month.

### **Total number of children who made contact with Sure Start**

In July 2003 the database was updated to provide the following information:

- April 2001-March 2002 - 254 out of approximately 700 eligible children were contacted by Sure Start at least once.
- April 2002-March 2003 - 469 out of approximately 700 eligible children were contacted by Sure Start at least once.

These data suggest that during the year April 2001-March 2002 an estimated 36% of children living in the area had at least one contact with Sure Start and this increased to an estimated 67% in the year April 2002-March 2003.



The increase can be explained by the much better levels of contact with new births since the employment of the Sure Start health visitor. Nearly all are now registered with Sure Start. Also, when the sure Start programme first started, it was playing 'catch up' in terms of reaching the two and three year olds, particularly as many were not in contact with any services. However, the data need to be interpreted in the light of some know inaccuracies and other which may yet come to light. For example:

- The Lynch Hill pre-nursery was closed during the summer months yet figures for July-September are high and there are no recorded figures for April-June, when the nursery would have been open.
- The database does not separately record home visits and visits to the Sure Start premises.

At the time of writing this report the categories on the database are being restructured on the database so that it produces more useful information about individual activities, for example, so that group activities can be distinguished from individual sessions or home visits or individual.

Table 4: Number of individuals seen 2002-3

Service uptake 2002-3	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>Enhanced Health Visiting</b> - clinics, home visits, Up to 1's group	0	23	25	12	24	28	65	20	64	89	94	112
<b>Childbirth Education</b> - ante & post natal contacts, parentcraft, Teenage group	37	52	58	37	33	60	66	34	43	50	41	53
<b>Homemaker</b> - fitting of home safety equipment	30	31	12	0	20	4	37	21	8	6	11	0
<b>Sure Start Team</b> - Fun Days, Training - Childcare, First Aid; Trips	11	20	19	122	93	0	0	15	96	0	0	0
<b>Family and Outreach</b> - initial home visits, birthday visits, home visiting support	55	48	16	37	13	28	37	18	7	20	11	37
<b>Family Support</b> - in home & centre based support- Positive Steps	33	36	42	39	26	42	41	43	76	19	42	73
<b>Childcare Service</b> - crèche; Up to 5's - Positive Steps	70	74	57	95	33	46	74	65	59	77	91	82
<b>Teenage Parents Service</b> - ( Positive Steps)	13	21	19	18	14	10	13	11	17	14	17	11
<b>Early Years Outreach- Lynch Hill</b>	49	66	58	44	0	58	70	13	28	51	52	60
<b>Early Years Outreach - Claycots</b>	0	0	0	0	0	11	63	72	80	102	111	120
<b>Childminding Support Service</b>	0	1	5	6	0	39	10	6	12	0	13	14
<b>Britwell Play and Learn Library</b> - music & story time community outreach; toy library etc	45	29	32	34	19	0	0	31	28	102	46	80
<b>Speech and Language Early Intervention</b> - indiv assessment and treatment	20	20	17	24	39	30	58	37	14	25	50	49
<b>English as a Second Language Lessons</b>	0	9	9	6	0	7	5	7	6	12	13	15
<b>UK Online</b> - IT training & access	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	12	0	3	9
<b>Buddies Pre-School Group</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	10	19
<b>Community Development</b> Crèche facilities; Activity time for parents; Tiny Gym; Jo Jingles	125	123	47	46	20	100	63	84	76	20	89	137

Table 5 Number of contacts with parent and/or child 2002-3

<b>Service uptake 2002-3</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sept</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>	<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>
<b>Enhanced Health Visiting</b> clinics, home visits, Up to 1's group)	0	35	35	12	26	36	115	54	109	216	263	287
<b>Childbirth Education</b> - ante & post natal contacts, Parentcraft, Teenage group)	106	109	79	91	49	115	120	68	78	89	65	98
<b>Homemaker</b> - fitting of home safety equipment	30	31	12	0	20	4	37	21	8	6	11	0
<b>Sure Start Team</b> - Fun Days, Training - Childcare, First Aid; Trips	11	20	19	191	162	0	0	15	96	0	0	0
<b>Family and Outreach</b> - initial home visits, birthday visits, home visiting support	68	50	16	57	17	40	49	51	11	35	11	74
<b>Family Support</b> - in home & centre based support- Positive Steps	79	130	81	86	55	109	146	86	115	62	109	326
<b>Childcare Service</b> - crèche; Up to 5's - Positive Steps	196	198	124	228	86	169	223	105	150	326	433	498
<b>Teenage Parents Service</b> Positive Steps	4	49	26	31	38	15	66	22	29	37	62	88
<b>Early Years Outreach- Lynch Hill</b>	98	170	92	46	0	100	156	79	67	205	169	248
<b>Early Years Outreach – Claycots</b>	0	0	0	0	0	11	112	342	342	478	419	676
<b>Childminding Support Service</b>	0	1	10	13	0	54	18	18	18	0	30	39
<b>Britwell Play and Learn Library</b> - music & story time community outreach; toy library.	122	76	69	48	33	0	0	117	95	185	230	255
<b>Speech and Language Early Intervention</b> - indiv assessment and treatment	24	25	32	28	48	41	71	71	20	25	92	127
<b>English Lessons</b>	0	12	18	18	0	10	7	32	11	18	37	29
<b>UK Online</b> -IT training & access)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	12	0	6	21
<b>Buddies Pre-School Group</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	120	103	205
<b>Community Development</b> - Crèche facilities; Activity time for parents; Tiny Gym; Jo Jingles	240	286	112	82	33	98	93	165	112	22	172	137

### 3.5 Parents' views of services

An important indicator of a programme's success is how well it satisfies the desires and needs of the service user (although the nature of the user group, in terms of social class, age, ethnicity and previous experience, will tend to influence expectations). This section focuses on some of the parents' thoughts and experiences of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme.

The parents who took part in the research interviews were enthusiastic supporters of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme and when they were invited to express their views, they made very positive and overlapping comments about the qualities of the Sure Start staff and services.

#### The personal qualities of the staff

The interviewed parents particularly valued the Sure Start staff for their personal qualities, invariably describing them as 'kind', 'polite', 'supportive' and 'friendly'. Some of the parents distinguished between the services offered by Positive Steps and those offered by Sure Start, without, it seems, realising that these were all funded through Sure Start. However, all the staff were held in equally high regard and the parents placed great emphasis on their approachability and helpfulness. One parent described the programme manager's response to a request for information;

*'She's really nice. I wanted to find out about the computer [...] and because she couldn't find out all the information there, she actually sent it to me. She was very helpful.'*  
(Interview 21 27/11/02)

#### A shared identity

Chapter One describes Britwell-Northborough as an area of acknowledged deprivation. Many of the Sure Start staff members have lived in the community for years and parents regarded them as particularly well equipped to understand the difficulties they faced in their every day lives:

*'Having people in the community that know you and know the environment is a great plus [...] they know you and what you're about.'*  
(Interview 14 4/07/02)

#### Professional knowledge

It is very difficult to single out some services rather than others because parents made positive remarks about them all. Many of the new parents had used the enhanced ante-natal and post-natal services offered by the Sure Start midwife and health visitor and so these were uppermost in their thoughts during the interviews. Some of the new mothers had forged a special relationship with the Sure Start midwife, who was described by one as '*my rock*' (Interview 21 27/11/02).

Immediate access to professional workers in a relatively informal setting was considered important and most valued the local childminders' expertise and knowledge as highly as that of the health workers:

*'They're all trained, they've all got the right qualifications. I've always gone for childminders because I think it's important. If you're going to do it, you've got to do it right. It's no good asking friends. I mean, obviously they know, I mean I know a little bit. But at the end of the day, you've got to go to the right people. It's no good relying on guesswork.'*  
(Interview 14 4/07/02)

### Variety and cost of activities

The parents commented on the huge number of activities available for children and the thought that had gone into their planning. This had also made an impact on one of the childminders, who said:

*'At the Easter party the children were all given hats, which was brilliant because all the childminding children now have got special yellow hats and they allowed us to have them for the older children as well so when we go out together, with all our children in the same hats, we know where they are.'*  
(Interview 22 9/12/02)

Apart from the wide range of activities offered through Sure Start, parents frequently made explicit reference to the low cost of services and trips, some of which were provided free of charge. They felt privileged to have the Sure Start programme in their area, explaining that

*'The prices you have to pay is quite appropriate, it's not the extortionate amounts which some groups [in other areas] can be.'*  
(Interview 11 26/06/02)

### Making a difference to the children

One person referred specifically to the staff's treatment of the children:

*'I get some satisfaction from seeing the children dealt with nice. So there's a lot of positive things involved with all the services. Basically it's just something that has made my life a little bit easier.'*  
(Interview 14 4/07/02)

Sure Start parents are as aware as any other parents of their children's need to engage in social activities outside the home:

*'It's very important to take your child out and yourself out. You just can't sit in one place all day'*  
(Interview 19 28/10/02),

Overall, the parents were very satisfied with the Sure Start programme, saying that there were few local activities for young families before its arrival:

*'Nowhere else has a patch on here. We're lucky, very, very lucky. I have a friend who is out of area and she can't believe the services and what stuff I had going for me. And I would say she was envious that I had these facilities.'*  
(Interview 21 27/11/02)

While some parents felt that there had always been a stigma attached to living in Britwell - Northborough, they now foresaw that their children would derive increased opportunities and benefits from Sure Start:

*'I think it's good for the children, because they can make something of their lives. Just because they're on this estate. They could be a doctor or the next Prime Minister if they wanted to be. You know, there is hope [...] I think it is making a difference. You know, before it came along, there was that stigma that "oh, you know, people on Britwell, they won't be brain surgeons.'*  
(Interview 20 25/11/02)

### Building friendship networks

Finally, parents perceived Sure Start as facilitating the building of friendship networks and the Food for Thought community café was considered an ideal starting point for making friends

*'It's nice to come over here and see someone, a face that you know, who you know by name and can chat to. It's quite nice that you don't feel so isolated.'*  
(Interview 21 27/11/02)

The socialising effect of the Food for Thought café launched them into other activities:

*'I realised there are so many playgroups going on and I thought, 'Why waste my time just sitting in the café? Why don't I go there and do different things?'*  
(Interview 19 28/10/02),

### Research observations

During the evaluation period, the researcher observed that parents were becoming friendlier towards each other. Young parents who were new to the area had made friends in the ante-natal and post-natal sessions and were bonding as a group. They were lunching together in the Food for Thought community café and meeting socially in the evenings. The members of the English as a Second Language classes, a set of disparate ethnicities who tended not to speak to parents outside their circle of fellow classmates, were, nevertheless, making friends within their group.

### Conclusion

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has achieved considerable success since the programme was approved in October 2000. It has established a wide range of new services which are attracting a high proportion of local families. Parents rate the new services highly and feel lucky to be living in the area. Much of this can be attributed to the leadership of the programme manager whose talents are recognised by her peers:

*'She's done brilliantly, getting a project off the ground, the sort of political shenanigans of how you get things through the council and this part of the council and that part and this part of the PCT and learning to deal with all of our sort of policies and procedures in terms of the people she employs and suchlike, you know, a whole host of project management type issues'*  
(Interview 26 3/12/02)

What has been reported in this chapter is a snapshot of its achievements between April-December 2002. Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has made considerable progress towards meeting the needs of the local community.

## CHAPTER 4

### CHALLENGES

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes some of the challenges faced by Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, how those challenges have been approached and the contribution of the action research approach towards their resolution.

Nobody said that the organisation and delivery of Sure Start programmes was going to be easy... These programmes are innovative and much is demanded of local managers and their teams. They are expected to explore new ways and means of delivering services which satisfy local needs and expectations, encourage community development and ensure the sustainability of services through links with other agencies. They are also expected to take a proactive role in mainstreaming Sure Start services and activities. While these are challenges facing all Sure Starts, other challenges have emerged during the course of the development of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start. Challenges are inevitable but what is important is not that they occur, but how they are handled.

#### 4.2 Buildings and Premises

The availability of underused premises was one of the deciding factors in the local decision to site the Sure Start programme in the Britwell-Northborough area (source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Delivery Plan 2000). However, these premises have hampered the development of the programme because many turned out to be unsuitable. When Sure Start was introduced into the area it took over some existing activities and services and continued to provide them from the same premises. This confused many parents. What was Sure Start? Where was it? Parents found it hard to understand that Sure Start was funding activities only for under fours (eg at the Britwell Clinic, Positive Steps, the Baptist Church and the play centre). Particularly confusing was that both Positive Steps and the play centre offered Sure Start activities which were, naturally, for children under four but they also offered activities for children over four.

Although there is a perception that all Sure Start programmes are awash with money, administrative systems for financing new build or major refurbishment are cumbersome and hampered by complex risk assessments. Compared with first wave Sure Starts, capital funding has been reduced for 2<sup>nd</sup> wave programmes like Britwell-Northborough Sure Start and they are financially constrained in terms of capital investment in building.



Added to this, Britwell-Northborough Sure Start does not have the freedom to use the buildings and facilities as it would like. It has been hindered by the need to negotiate with the owners and managers of the buildings, especially the Britwell Clinic. This is managed by the Slough Primary Care Trust which has to balance competing needs and demands for limited available space.

## Space

This report has already explained that Sure Start shares the limited space available in Britwell Clinic with other agencies: Home Start, a dental surgery and some community health visitors. The Sure Start core staff members occupy one main office, whilst the speech and language therapists share another very small one. There is also a small room, which is now used by the programme manager as her office. The other two rooms used by Sure Start are dual purpose and must be booked: the garden room (which leads onto the garden), is variously used i) as a crèche; ii) by the midwife to see her clients and iii) as a small meeting room. There is also a very large room, which is used for playgroups, board meetings or large staff meetings. Britwell-Northborough Sure Start does not have exclusive use of any of these rooms. There is limited space for storage and in the late summer of 2002, two computers with Internet access were installed in the café area as there was no space elsewhere.

The café is popular but far too small and although it is extremely popular with customers from all parts of the local community, a lack of available space prevents any expansion of its services. Cooking and serving food in cramped conditions to hungry parents and children is a challenge. The kitchen area can only accommodate three catering workers comfortably and the customer seating area cannot cope with the demand during meal times. Many of the customers queue up for a takeaway meal.

Programme development in Britwell-Northborough has undoubtedly been constrained by the premises available, and facilities for staff continue to be inadequate for optimum functioning.

## The programme manager's office

As the Sure Start programme has developed, it has put pressure on the limited space available at the Britwell Clinic. No provision had been made for a private office for the programme manager, who shared an office with members of the core Sure Start team. While the matter was never raised as an issue by the programme manager, it caused real problems for the staff and many raised it during the research interviews and on other

informal occasions. If they wanted to discuss private issues with the programme manager, they had to make an appointment or try to catch her when nobody else was around

A typical comment was:

*'If you go in and say 'oh [programme manager], can I see you?' normally you're stood in the toilet talking to her.'*  
(Interview 6 6/06/02)

Staff members working in the office often felt uncomfortable because they were unwilling eavesdroppers to private conversations between the programme manager and other staff members. In addition to this, the programme manager expected staff to work to high standards and closely monitored what they were doing. At times this caused tension.

The action research process allowed the researcher to broach this with the programme manager and her line manager at Slough Primary Care Trust. The line manager's response to the suggestion that the programme manager could be allocated a small, infrequently used interview room was that there was competition for this limited space. The working conditions of the district nurses in the same building were just as cramped and these people took priority, although, as the accountable body to Sure Start, the line manager realised it was important to show support:

*The politics of that have been an issue, particularly as we're the host organisation and so tried to keep everyone within the same building all happy and, you know, when actually what you've got is a very well resourced, a new and innovative project that seems to be getting all the headlines, and then you've got district nurses beavering away in a tiny corner, you know, a corner with no office space, and, you know, feeling demoralised, and you've always got to manage that tension, really.*  
(Interview 24 3/12/02)

The following day the line manager contacted the programme manager to discuss the possibilities of being allocated her own room and eventually space was found. The programme manager moved into her office early in 2003. Shortly after taking up occupation she commented:

*'I quite like it so far. The fact that they can come and talk to me individually and confidentially seems .... attractive at the moment.'*  
(Interview 29 16/01/03)

There was also positive feedback from the staff members who said their working environment was much improved. All had found it very difficult to confront this issue and some of the discussions with the researcher were extremely painful for them. Nevertheless it was essential that they faced the problem honestly as it was having a detrimental effect on working relationships. It is important to acknowledge the willingness of the programme

manager, her core staff and her line manager to engage in the action research process and arrive at a successful solution.

### Parents preferences/avoidance

The diagram in chapter one shows that Positive Steps and the Britwell Clinic are on Wentworth Avenue, almost immediately opposite each other. However, certain parents who used the Britwell Clinic said that they had never visited Positive Steps and vice versa. Some parents who had lived in the area for many years were able to shed light on the reasons for this. They were quite complex and give some insight into the Britwell community. It seems that some parents avoided Positive Steps because the building held bad memories...

*Positive Steps used to be the old rent office years ago. It used to be a café years ago. It used to be a playgroup years ago. So there is a lot of history in that building and people may not use it because of what's happened [...] I mean if you've had your house repossessed because they didn't sort out the rent properly. You know, when the estate first came we used to have rent men and then you had to go and pay your rent in the office.*

(Interview 3 29/05/02)

Sometimes we can forget that people might be damaged by events which have taken place many years before.

Some parents would not use certain premises because they did not like to associate with the parents who frequented the premises. Others, like this parent (below) were less condemning:

*'I never did like Positive Steps before Sure Start started. It might be just because of the people who were going there. I didn't like some of the people at the time. The other mums. But I don't know if they've increased what they do but I go over there and the kids absolutely love it. and it's really friendly over there as well. I get on with the workers there.'*

(Interview 15 19/07/02)

Many people living in Britwell-Northborough were suspicious of the motives of social workers and did their best to avoid anybody from the Social Services Department in Slough. The remarks made by one parent (below) suggest that it would be well for Britwell-Northborough Sure Start to tread gently when creating collaborative partnerships with Social Services.

*'There was a new lady, she was lovely, nothing personal against her but she was a social worker and she was talking about what we'd do if social services came and tried to take our kids away. Now I found that a bit bizarre because we're not all <<pause>> and what our rights are and <<interruption from child>>. And you know like we all batter our kids and they're all on the At Risk register and things like that, and I thought it was a bit of a bizarre thing'*

(Interview 18 19/10/02)

The Social Service Department needs to be sensitive to local feelings and make positive links with the local community.

*'People say to me, because they know I come here, and they'll say, "Why d'you go to Positive Steps?" I said, "Because I like it. It's been good for my children." "Oh, I wouldn't go there. Connected with Social Services." [I say] they are wonderful people there and they've stood by me and they've stood by my family and they have helped me a lot, and that's what I tell people.'*

(Interview 14 4/07/02)

Still more parents are loyal to certain premises and the staff who deliver local services and so will not, on principle cross the road to visit Sure Start/Positive Steps. Some staff members are aware of this loyalty and have encouraged parents to use other services:

*The only other one is as I said, why are they all on the same day. Because I actually had apologies from a couple of the mums who came here very regularly and now they go to (inaudible) because it was so busy and they came and apologised to me. and I said 'it's up to you. You do what you want to. Wherever you're happy going.' And then they do pop in every so often and say hello. 'I say I really don't mind. Wherever you're happiest, you go. But you know I'm always around and if you want to chat to me, come and chat to me.' And quite often I see them at baby clinic*

(Interview 1 27/05/02)

The advantage of a qualitative evaluation of process is that it can answer the 'why' questions. Who would have thought that some parents' participation in Sure Start services would be so influenced by memories of the past.

### Other challenges in relation to buildings and premises

The building occupied by Positive Steps is too small and has an uncertain future because Slough Borough Council is proposing to redevelop the site and surrounding area within the next few years. In September/October 2002 when the Council took the decision to close the play centre, it left a large empty building in Britwell. Sure Start had used the play centre for some of its activities and the Britwell-Northborough Partnership Board was anxious to bring it back into use. There was some discussion about whether it could be leased through Sure Start or Positive Steps to provide more space for local activities and services for the under fours. During 2003, Positive Steps was granted aid from the Children's fund, Sure Start and Slough Borough Council which enabled them to lease the property. They plan to move there in July 2003 and Sure Start will expand into their vacated Wentworth Avenue premises

Another building which has been of limited use is the tenants' hall in Northborough. This is because Sure Start has no control over when and how it can use the premises and it has no authority when it comes to arrange repairs. The Sure Start playgroup (run by

Positive Steps) was cancelled for several weeks during the summer as windows were broken and were a risk to children and it was some time before the windows were reglazed.

There were also protracted negotiations over Sure Start's intended use of the Methodist Church Hall. The churchwardens forbid certain activities, for example, gambling, and needed reassurance from the Sure Start team about the proposed use made of the hall by the mothers and babies group.

### Frustration of plans to expand Sure Start premises

As time goes by Britwell-Northborough Sure Start is becoming more popular with the parents and so space and facilities need to expand to meet demand. This is an ongoing challenge to the development of programme and the programme manager and her team constantly seek out imaginative solutions and compromises.

They work collaboratively with Positive Steps and the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Partnership Board to find solutions to these challenging problems. At the beginning of the evaluation they were working developing several ideas, although events moved so quickly that as soon as they agreed on one course of action, circumstances seem to change:

Tentative plans were made to extend the Britwell Clinic and an architect was engaged to produce some rough plans. Full architects plans were expected to cost in the region of £10, 000, and the programme manager spent a considerable amount of time working up a proposal for the architect's payment by transferring some of the revenue budget to the capital budget. However, this was vetoed by the Sure Start Unit and the Primary Care Trust as the accountable body that manages the site. Each was wary of making the financial commitment without the consent of the other party. This was truly exasperating for the programme manager who was sympathetic to the Primary Care Trust but perceived the Sure Start Unit to be taking an accountant's decision which lacked the Sure Start vision and spirit.

Positive Steps needed more space and so the Sure Start Partnership Board discussed the erection of a portacabin on the site as a way of increasing space. However, these plans were put on hold once there was a possibility of Positive Steps relocating to the empty play centre (see below).

Sure Start continues its search for suitable premises in Northborough. This has proved very difficult. The only vacant building in the area is a small, disused laundrette which could serve as an information kiosk but nothing more. An added drawback, bearing in mind the prevalence of crime in the area, is the element of risk to any member of staff working alone.

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Partnership Board applied to the Northborough Cooperative Housing Association for the use of a vacant flat, but this was refused. It also approached Slough Borough Council for the use of a vacant property, but was told that none was available, and that the demand for housing was so high that there was no likelihood of one ever becoming available for Sure Start use.

Managing this Sure Start programme has required flexibility in difficult circumstances because of the lack of control and constant 'fire fighting' over space. Expansion of premises was undoubtedly needed and the programme manager submitted reasonable proposals but these reached stalemate because of risks anticipated by Primary Care Trust and the Sure Start Unit. Neither would agree unless the other did. Added to this, the uncertainty over Slough Borough Council's development plans for the Positive Steps premises and the closure of the play centre has meant that the situation has been in constant flux. The programme manager has used all her powers of influence, persuasion, and imagination in trying to resolve this.

### The Britwell-Northborough path

The final challenge addressed in this section is not about premises or buildings, but about the access route from Northborough to Britwell. Sure Start community consultations highlighted a need for a properly laid path connecting the two areas. The revised service plan contained a commitment to work in partnership with other local services to bring this about.

The programme manager spent a great deal of time investigating the feasibility of building a pathway. The building estimate was in the region of £75,000 and there would be other annual costs for general maintenance and lighting. This was to be hugely expensive, but possible, however, a major hitch was that the land was owned by a private property company. The company showed a distinct lack of interest in the proposed construction of the path and nervous about any potential liability for repairs and maintenance. It went so far as to suggest that the steep slope of the path might attract skate boarding youths and so present a risk to parents and children.

The path was raised as an agenda item at several Partnership Board meetings and the programme manager wrote to local organisations in an attempt to obtain commitments to collaborate in working towards a solution. None of the Board members showed any real commitment to the path development or took any action in support of the campaign. Eventually the programme manager decided that there was nothing more she could do without their active support. This lack of interest, together with the projected exorbitant cost and difficulties associated with ownership of the land, led to a Partnership Board decision to stop pursuing the building of the path.

This was a very disappointing outcome. The need for a path was one of very few items that had emerged from the Sure Start public consultations and so its development was included in the Service Delivery Plan. It may not have been a viable proposition, but this was not sufficiently explored and is an example of the Partnership Board's failure to work with the Sure Start programme manager in a supportive and collaborative manner.

### 4.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Allocation of the Sure Start grant is dependent on local Sure Start programmes demonstrating how they intend to reach the national targets and fulfil the national objectives. Local programmes produce their own milestones for each of the national targets, with output-related milestones for the end of each financial year of the programme, and with process-related milestones for each quarter of the financial year. The Sure Start Unit assesses progress against these milestones at regular intervals, and payment of grant, which has already been allocated to each programme, is linked to its milestones.

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start is required to collect data to monitor progress towards its own stated targets and milestones as well as those set nationally. This is intended to raise staff awareness of the performance of individual services and the overall local Sure Start programme. The collected data are used to inform the effective development of services which meet the needs of the local Britwell-Northborough Sure Start community.

National Sure Start requires each local Sure Start programme to develop and maintain its own database. The rationale behind this is that each programme is unique and a standardised database would not reflect the individual programmes.

#### Database Problems

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has had some problems in developing the database. The first computerised database was adapted from an ACCESS programme and developed by a

small company which provided the same database programme to seventeen other local Sure Start programmes in the South of England. The company was contracted by Britwell-Northborough Sure Start to provide ongoing technical support in its development and maintenance.

In May 2002, the researcher attended a meeting between the company and the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start evaluation and administrative worker to learn more about the database and how it was being developed. Sure Start is an innovative and evolving programme at national and local level and this is reflected in the changing demands for data analyses and presentation. Any database must have the capacity to respond to these changing demands or be easily and quickly adapted but the Access database was inflexible and the number of data fields was limited. It became apparent during the meeting of May 2002 that there were two issues at stake. The first was that the technician was unable or unwilling to expand the database fields to accommodate the collection of new data, such as ethnic group of parent, unless it was demanded by a number of other Sure Starts. The second was that the evaluation and administrative worker was reluctant to include on the database any data not requested by the Sure Start Unit, because inputting the data was time consuming.

The Access database, then, was not really fit for the purpose and modifications took too long. Added to this, there was insufficient database expertise in Britwell-Northborough Sure Start to maximise its capabilities. The database was underused, for example, as a tool for identifying the areas within the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start that required targeted initiatives. After some discussion between the evaluation and administrative worker, the researcher and later the programme manager, it was agreed that the Access database lacked the flexibility and power to produce information for the management and delivery of services, although it had been useful in the early days of the Sure Start programme when simpler demands were being made of it. What was required now was flexible, easy to use database, with ongoing, responsive and expert technical support.

### *Soft Smart*

The programme manager decided to replace the database and in November 2002 Smart Start (the trade name for the Soft Smart Access database) was installed. This has been developed for the use of over one hundred local Sure Start programmes and it is also used by the Children's Fund programmes. It cost £1800 and offers training and support. The evaluation and administration worker was not enthusiastic about database work and did not attend the training sessions. As a result the new database was not used to its full capacity until May 2003 when she left Sure Start and a new member of staff took over her role. Now



all members of the Sure Start core team have been trained in the use of the new database, which is able to provide a much more detailed picture of service use. There are plans to make greater use of its monitoring and evaluation possibilities in the future.

### Organisational cultures and accountability

The need to produce quarterly reviews of both the programme and the individual projects was the driver in establishing the database and also in the collection of data on attendance and outreach work from each Sure Start funded project. The quarterly reviews and the progress reports played a very important role in the management of Sure Start and dominated both the service delivery process and the Partnership Board meetings.

The call for this information created difficulties in relationships amongst the staff and managers. Lack of evidence of good service usage in monthly and quarterly reports and service reviews from Positive Steps led the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Board to review whether their level of funding was justified. Positive Steps staff were perceived to be unwilling or unable to account for their time and there was concern that the agency was not offering value for money. This apparent lack of accountability caused considerable friction between the Sure Start programme management and Positive Steps.

*'Finding information about what they were doing, how they were doing it and how money was spent. That caused a lot of tension.'*  
(Interview 2 27/05/02)

The programme was under considerable pressure from the National Sure Start Unit to meet quarterly milestones and this heightened anxiety about Positive Steps. Sure Start and Positive Steps operated in very different ways. Sure Start was driven by the central Sure Start Unit to set up systems for monitoring and evaluation and was tightly controlled from above. Positive Steps, on the other hand, was rather loosely managed, having had a series of permanent and temporary local managers in its short life time, all with their different management philosophies and working practices. It was not surprising that there was a clash of cultures and personalities when the leadership and working practices of the two organisations were so different.

Positive Steps offer a broader range of services to a wider client group than Sure Start. The staff considered themselves to be very much part of the community. Some Positive Steps staff lived in Britwell or Northborough and had raised their families in the community. This is reflected in the educational and employment achievements and aspirations of many of the staff at Positive Steps. What they had to offer in the way of local experiential knowledge and skill in dealing with local people did not equip them to respond well to demands from the Sure Start programme for quarterly progress reports

from individual staff members. This was expressed very well by one of the Sure Start staff members:

*'They weren't used to paperwork. They're very much a sort of drop-in-and-have-a-cup-of-tea-and-a-biscuit, whereas Sure Start has to evaluate, review, evaluate, review all the time, quarterly [...] so I think that's been difficult because lots of people at Positive Steps don't have a professional qualification so they aren't used to paperwork.'*  
(Interview 2 27/05/02)

Monitoring and evaluation was required from all commissioned services, not just Positive Steps and the programme manager developed a template for quarterly reporting with simple headings such as 'particular successes/difficulties in this quarter' and 'feedback from parents'. She also offered a workshop to project leads to help them to review their services and set milestones for the revised delivery plan, but this offer was not taken up. The extent of monitoring differed across commissioned services and projects. Some projects attempted quite limited monitoring whereas others carried out much more rigorous evaluation. It appears that the Positive Steps manager did not distribute the reporting template to her staff, many of whom had no experience of evaluation or report writing.

Months later, after the appointment of the permanent local manager to Positive Step, the staff started using a slightly amended version of the quarterly monitoring report template.

The monitoring and evaluation processes had a negative affect on staff, especially at Positive Steps and the quality and content of their quarterly monitoring reports was a cause of disagreement between the two agencies. Some of the Positive Steps staff had little idea about report writing and had never been given any training in what was required. The researcher discussed this with the Sure Start programme manager who felt that such training was an internal matter for Positive Steps or their umbrella organisation, the Family Welfare Association. The staff at Positive Steps were very conscious of the Sure Start programme manager's concern about the quality of their reports and were clearly anxious to deliver reports of a standard acceptable to the programme manager. After being approached by the Positive Steps temporary manager, the researcher gave some group and individual guidance in report writing to the Positive Steps staff members which was much appreciated.

While the process of establishing monitoring system which would satisfy the national Sure Start Unit was the source of considerable friction in Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, the researcher was impressed by the overall level of motivation and enthusiasm displayed by all the staff members to solve this and other problems. They seemed determined to make Sure Start work

### An example of confusing and misleading data collection

The researcher noticed that for 18 months a commissioned service had been completing a table which showed monthly attendance figures based on the number of different ethnic groups attending rather than total numbers of participants attending activities. Thus the recorded attendance figures for this activity were very low. It was a design fault in the first ACCESS database already discussed in the beginning of this section and had only recently been discovered by the programme manager, who was arranging for the table to be redesigned.

## 4.4 Participation and partnerships

There are fierce academic debates about the similarities and differences in the meaning of the terms 'participation' and 'partnership', however a common feature of both is a commitment to involvement and for the purposes of this report the two words are conflated.

Participation is rather a slippery concept and this report draws on consumerist and democratic models (Robson, Locke and Dawson, 1997) as a way of explaining significant differences in the distribution of power and control in service planning and delivery and how user participation can occur on several levels ranging from passive consultation to active partnership.

### *Consumerist model*

The consumerist model of participation is closely identified with an economic or market-led model of service delivery. It relies on user consultation and the passive involvement of the user, or in the case of this research, the parent. The concept is associated with Thatcher's market based, managerial approach to service improvement in response to a complaint or comment. Although the consumerist approach goes some way towards addressing the power difference between service providers and parents, it stops at user representation instead of moving on to embrace the user as an equal partner. The power to make change remains with the service provider. The consumerist model is characterised by limited discussions or consultations with parents about services which are defined, planned and delivered by the organisation.

### *Democratic model*

In contrast, the democratic approach is based on a different political and philosophical approach, which is concerned with citizen inclusion and empowerment. Users and local communities are given the opportunity not just to put forward their points of view, but to assume responsibility, and so become accountable for the decisions themselves. Here the parents are part of the decision making process and so have the power to bring about change. The democratic model describes parents' active participation in the structures of governance and strategic decision making.

### Opportunities for parent participation

Some opportunities for parent participation in the Sure Start programme were better developed than others. However, during the time of the evaluation, the consumerist model was the dominant approach. When the Sure Start staff members were asked about opportunities for parent participation, most described provider led formal and informal consultative activities. They said the usual practice was to ask individuals or small groups of parents about services they would like. They would then make arrangements for their delivery:

*'We try to get feedback from parents and things at the end of groups and make modifications based on that.'*

(Interview 3 25/05/02)

The staff were constantly thinking of ways of consulting parents and from time to time set up road shows and activity days. However they were not comfortable with the idea of devolving the planning or delivery of services to the parents. One of the staff members spoke for many when she said that parents came to the activities for a break rather than to busy themselves making the tea. Other participatory methods were ineffective, for example, there was a parents' Comment Board in the community café, but parents seldom wrote anything on it.

Some staff members related parent involvement to the completion of satisfaction questionnaires whereas others had a more sophisticated understanding of what it meant. In fact, parent participation ranged from parent representation on the Partnership Board to consultation through questionnaires and informal discussions...

### How parents can influence Britwell-Northborough Sure Start services

Parents were able to influence Sure Start in the following ways:

#### *Service planning*

- Partnership Board membership - which involves strategic decisions about priorities, services, goal setting, and financial matters
- Membership of the Food for Thought café committee

- Membership of the Toy Library advisory group
- Impromptu and informal discussions and consultations with Sure Start staff

#### *Service delivery*

- Monitoring and evaluation of services - providing formal and informal feedback on experience of service use
- Individual parents can discuss their needs, such as pre and post-natal services and options.
- Permanent, temporary or voluntary employment with Sure Start
- Establishing and running their own mother and baby group
- Suggesting and organising events such as the bike-athon

#### Satisfaction questionnaires

Satisfaction surveys were frequently used by Britwell-Northborough Sure Start to obtain information about parents' views and about 100 parents completed a questionnaire in the summer of 2002. A drawback to such surveys is that they do not actively involve parents in making decisions about services. They are also problematic because there is no universal understanding of what the concept of 'satisfaction' means and it is also often difficult to get responses from 'hard to reach' groups such as non-English language speakers.

Questionnaires are not easy to compile. Some of the staff had found that past questionnaires had not been completed successfully or had not provided the information they wanted. The researcher helped Sure Start staff by giving advice about question sequencing, layout and on tightly focusing the questions and avoiding leading questions. She also worked with the ethnic minority worker at Positive Steps to produce a questionnaire about ethnic minority interests and take-up of services.

Creating a culture of parent participation means forming strategies which:

- Embed parent involvement within Sure Start as a continuous activity rather than a one-off project.
- Involve a wide range of different parents including those whose views are not often heard.
- Respond to points raised by parents and keep them informed of actions taken as a result of their input.

#### Do parents really influence Sure Start services?

The staff and parent interview participants were asked if parents had an opportunity to influence the planning and delivery of Sure Start services. Most of the staff participants

were confident that parents did, but rather worryingly, given the efforts made by the Sure Start staff to consult widely, parents were less certain. The majority of parents who thought that they had some influence were either Partnership Board members or full time members of Sure Start staff.

One parent (whose 12 year old daughter acted as interpreter), found the question laughable as she said that her poor mastery of the English language prevented her from having any real say. She did not even know that she was entitled to use the Food for Thought café and, if so, whether the menu catered for her religious dietary requirements.

Nevertheless, efforts are being made to engage with parents whose English is not their first language. For the first year of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme, services targeted towards the minority ethnic population were rather under developed because there was a general perception, based on the 1991 census, that it was very small group. However, when it became apparent during May 2002 that there was a demand for lessons in English as a foreign language, it took the core Sure Start team by surprise. However, they reacted quickly in arranging a programme of lessons delivered by the evaluation and administrative worker who was a trained ESL teacher.

*Table 6 Parents' opportunity to influence Sure Start*

Do parents have an opportunity to influence the planning and delivery of Sure Start services?			
Number who said:	YES	NO	NOT SURE
Number of parents (11)	6	2	3
Number of staff (12)	10		2
TOTAL	16	2	5

There is ample evidence that parents *are consulted* about Sure Start services, through surveys and questionnaires. It has already been stated that many parents completed a service satisfaction survey in the summer of 2002. The preamble to the questionnaire stated that parents' views were important and would be taken into account, however when the researcher asked some parents about the questionnaire, none of them could really remember what it was about.

Table 7 Parents' views on how they can influence Sure Start

Parents' views on how they can influence Sure Start services		
Through responding to consultation exercises	Through joining committees	Through working at Sure Start
Questionnaires (1) Information meetings (2) Surveys( 1) Comments board (1) Suggestion box (2)	Partnership Board (4) Café committee (3) Choices(2) Library committee (2) Finance committee (1) Away Day (1)	Voluntary work- café (1) Paid work -café (1) Sure Start Office work (1)

*The bracketed numbers represent times each item was mentioned by the parents.*

### Disseminating questionnaire results

Are the results of parent consultation fed back to parents in a timely fashion, if at all? There was no sign of this during the evaluation period. One parent did not see any connection between completing the questionnaire and having any influence, which begs a question about the meaning and value that service users place on such consultations. Nevertheless this failure to see a connect between consultation and service outcome is particularly curious, given that some of the parents were able to state clearly how they were consulted and involved. (See Table 7 above).

### Active Participation

Most of the parents did not know about the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start system of governance. They were not really interested in joining any of the sub-committees serving the Partnership Board, and while some did not realise that they could, other parents interviewed displayed some resistance and were uneasy about it, stating they could not possibly take part because of:

- lack of time
- logistics - lack of child care provision for older children at school
- lack of inclination
- a perception that it was not necessary.

During the first six months of the evaluation, staff members were not interested in encouraging parents to become more involved in planning or running the activities, saying that they were so busy arranging activities that encouraging parent participation had taken a back seat.

*'We got together a parents forum and they came along and we got quite a lot from them. What's happened now of course is that we've run out of time to fit the parents forum in.'*  
(Interview 3 29/05/02)

Persuading parents to come to any meetings and take part in activities could be an uphill struggle and it affected staff morale and motivation from time to time. They had become disillusioned by what they perceived as parent apathy towards joining in the activities.

Not all parents were apathetic. One parent was eager to become involved in every aspect of the programme, if only she could find out how. She had little knowledge of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, having only recently moved into the area and given birth to her first baby.

Other parents were involved at a democratic level because they were Partnership Board members. There was a quota of four parents on the Partnership Board, although these positions were not advertised. (See later for further discussion about parent involvement on the Partnership Board) The programme manager chose parents who regularly attended other activities and meetings. Most of the opportunities for involvement seemed to be by word of mouth.

### A changing approach to parent participation

On the whole, the staff had not encouraged parent participation at a democratic level and so they were the main barriers to it... They felt that they, rather than the parents, were responsible and accountable for service provision. Such responsibility often brings with it the need to control and it can be very difficult to 'let go' of this. Community development, though, is about helping parents to do things for themselves, rather than doing things for them. And while there is a place for both consumerist and democratic approaches to participation, too much provider control discourages the parents from becoming involved, especially in an already disempowered community.

Over the evaluation period there was a gradual shift in the staff members' approach towards actively including parents in the planning of services. The programme manager and staff constantly discussed how to involve parents in ways which did not place an unwanted burden on them. The trick was to determine which parents wanted an active role and which preferred a more passive role in the Sure Start programme. Not everybody is interested in participating in decision-making and some parents would rather just use the services. This was recognised by one of the stakeholders who felt that:

*It's terribly important but I guess the reason that would be given is that we can't get parents interested.*  
(Interview 24 30/10/02)



In February 2003 the Partnership Board agreed a revised parent participation strategy, highlighting the importance of including parents in the strategic decision making process. A training day was planned to discuss the implement of this strategy. This reflected the community development approach advocated by the Sure Start Unit and by the researcher and signifies a sea-change in the way parents are viewed. It also demonstrates the Partnership Board's public acknowledgement of the parents' capabilities and experiential knowledge.

Parents in this disadvantaged Sure Start community do not participate unless invited. A year ago this participation was poorly developed and informally implemented but there is evidence that staff is gradually changing their approach towards partnership working. There is a greater preparedness to address parent participation in a planned and strategic way and some of the newer members of staff have actively sought out the researcher to discuss collaborative ways of working with parents and how evaluation can be built into their everyday working practices. The parents have a heightened awareness of their right and need to become actively involved. They are more willing to engage with Sure Start and a clear sense of ownership of the programme is evolving. An example of this is that one of the parents from the Up-to-Ones Group has volunteered to take over running the club. By maintaining an awareness of the issues involved in establishing participation, and by watching for opportunities and encouraging both parents and staff to make use of these the researcher has played a part in bringing about these changes

## Conclusion

Parent participation encompasses a broad spectrum of involvement, from playing an active part in strategic service planning; to responding to consultation exercises about Sure Start services or working for the programme as an employee or volunteer. However findings from this evaluation of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start confirm that partnership working takes time and that its development can be affected by parents living in an environment where there has never been a tradition of involvement in the planning of community activities. Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from the findings is that the service providers recognise that enabling parents to participate at all levels requires the letting go of traditional provider led services.

## 4.5 Staff satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Working for Sure Start means introducing change in the community. This is bound to suit some people more than others. Many of the jobs are not clearly defined and the staff are able to develop them in response to the perceived needs of the community. However, many people like structure to their working day - this is not the Britwell-Northborough

Sure Start way, where every day is different. The staff were not always happy about their work and identified several sources of stress and dissatisfaction. (See table 8).

*Table 8 Staff satisfaction and dissatisfaction*

Sources of staff satisfaction and dissatisfaction	
Sources of Stress & Dissatisfaction	Sources of Satisfaction
Change and uncertainty The Managers Lack of training opportunities Lack of role clarity	Peer support Contact with parents [parents] Team culture Opportunity to develop own work Flexible ways of working

Despite the controls imposed by the National Sure Start unit, local programme managers and their staff are in a powerful position to create partnerships with the local community towards developing services in response to local need. But do core and commissioned staff members feel that they can influence Sure Start? If so, in what way? These were questions put to the interview participants, with somewhat unexpected results (see Table 9 below)

Only four of the interviewed members of staff gave thought they influenced the sure Start programme. This is surprising, given that the programme manager positively encourages staff members to take responsibility for developing their projects. Most staff members did not equate this with having any influence over Sure Start as a whole. This, they said, was the prerogative of the Partnership Board. For staff members to feel that they are not influential in the overall development of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start enterprise suggests a lack of group identity. Of course, this is difficult to maintain in such a loosely organised programme which thrives on its myriad of different activities and services provided by a multitude of workers from different professional backgrounds.

*Table 9 Staff who believe they can influence Sure Start*

Responses: Staff who believe they have had an opportunity to influence Sure Start			
Yes I have	No I haven't	Not sure/ limited influence	No reply
4	2	4	2

How staff say they have influenced Sure Start

- Suggested practical problem solving ideas
- Suggested changes to family outreach project
- Developed service
- Changed working practices

The researcher identified many formal and informal settings in which staff are able to exert influence. These are listed below:

- Formal
  - staff meetings - exchange/sharing of ideas and ways of putting them into practice
  - one-to-ones – manager/individual staff member meetings
  - Sub committee meetings - interagency meetings to discuss practice issues, such as information sharing.
  - Away Days - for staff and Partnership Board members (including parent Board members) to discuss and identify shared problems and issues
  - Reports - progress reports, monitoring forms
- Informal
  - Informal meeting places (eg the Food for Thought community café)

Most of the staff thought that their ability to influence was related to their opportunity to take part in formal meetings. Two people mentioned that formal settings (such as staff meetings and sub-committee membership), provided the opportunity to influence programmes. However some, particularly some of the staff from Positive Steps, seemed to regard these as token forms of engagement.

*'I think we have a voice.... but I do sometimes feel that we're not quite listened to. So I think there are things in place to be heard but I don't think we are always heard.'*  
(Interview 7 12/06/02)

Sure Start advocates collaborative ways of working between agencies and staff members. The creation of networks at an informal and formal level is an opportunity for staff to exchange views and spark off ideas. However, during the evaluation period the researcher noticed that there were no established inductions for new members of staff. At least two staff members said that they had never met staff at other sites. For example, newly appointed staff at the Britwell Clinic had not been introduced to staff at Positive Steps. Even some longer-standing staff members had not met each other. One staff member had never met the library worker and another did not know the ethnic minority worker. This seems bound to affect the collaborative working practices advocated by Sure Start and reduce the opportunity for informal influence.

## 4.6 The Partnership Board

The governance and management of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start was described in Chapter One but is summarised below as a reminder

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Partnership Board comprises four representatives each from statutory agencies, voluntary/community organisations, and local parents. Two project sub-groups, focusing on the main activity areas, report to a Steering Group. The Steering Group is made up of representatives from the project sub-groups, from the lead partner, Slough Borough Council, and from the accountable body, Slough Primary Care Trust. The Steering Group reports to the Partnership Board, through the Programme Manager. The Sure Start Core Team members have employment rights through Slough Primary Care Trust and the Programme Director is line-managed by the Director of Service Delivery.

### *Strategic partnerships*

At the time of the evaluation interviews, Britwell-Northborough Sure Start governance arrangements had been fully established and the Partnership Board and various other sub-committees were central to these arrangements. The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start partnership comprised a diverse set of stakeholders who brought to the Board their own embedded professional and experiential knowledge and organisational practices. Three of these stakeholders were interviewed for the evaluation, along with the programme manager and three parent members. The interviews included a series of questions which sought to elicit members' impressions about Board membership.

Some felt that they were already building on sound working relationships at the interface of health, education and social care. They saw Britwell-Northborough Sure Start as providing an opportunity to deepen and consolidate these partnership associations. By accepting the governance arrangements outlined in the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Service Delivery Plan, they had committed themselves to a shared agenda in terms of local objectives.

*'I think we have a real responsibility to monitor the overall effectiveness of the programme and the individual effectiveness of the providers. I think we've got responsibility to be flexible and adapt to different challenges as they come up. To involve the community. And to plan for the future.'*  
(Interview 24 30/10/02)

However, some were concerned that partners and individuals were not yet engaging in the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start as a shared multi-agency endeavour.

There were diverse views about the value and effectiveness of the Partnership Board as a working group. One Partnership Board member thought that there was an overlap and

lack of clarity about their role and accountability and was impatient with the Board's tendency to discuss the minutiae of service delivery.

*'I think we need to get operational type sub groups working much better and having a much clearer voice on the Partnership Board. ... And we need to not discuss operational things in such sort of detail, well we need not discuss operational things at all. We need to sort of take a higher level sort of decision making. So I suppose it is about reviewing the membership but it's also about empowering the community, it's, it's circular isn't it?'*  
(Interview 24 30/10/02)

However, another stakeholder thought that it was very difficult to divorce strategic and operational thinking and in any case, a Board level discussion of just how plans could be operationalised added to the Board's knowledge and understanding of the services.

Some members struggled with the idea of Partnership and why they, personally were there... One person, in particular, did not feel very comfortable, saying he had nothing to contribute. Others could see the benefit of membership:

*'I can keep tabs on the Sure Start approach and in touch with how it's developing, which would be a loss if I didn't do that. ... I suppose I can work out possible future need for my service in terms of what's happening.'*  
(Interview 24 30/10/02)

The programme manager and the chair seemed to dominate the meetings and discussions tended to move between issues of strategy and practical issues relating to service delivery, which not everybody liked. Some stakeholders met each other at a number of different, but related, local strategic-decision making groups. This, plus different levels of seniority amongst the Partnership Board stakeholders, contributed to miscommunication and imperfect knowledge and understanding of issues raised. It made decision-making more difficult.

*"There's a big overlap between Sure Start and the children's fund in terms of representation. And the same people arrive at the children's strategy group or some of them. So yes, that is, that is partly a problem. And we don't have a, Sure Start is not the only place where we don't have a clear split between strategy and operations, so meetings tend to be an unholy mix of both, with not necessarily the right members at the right level with the right, you know.'*  
(Interview 24 30/10/02)

There was a sense that the Partnership Board did not really know what went on in Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, and towards the end of the evaluation period, the programme manager arranged for different project managers to give presentations about their work to the Board members. This was very much appreciated by the members because:

*'We try and get these projects a bit more live to the other Board members because otherwise it's a very dry sort of thing. And that informs me as well as the other members, you know, as to what's working well and what isn't and what have you, and also as I say, with then I've got to look at the sustainability issue.'*

(Interview 26 3/12/02)

There was a view that the meetings were rather uninspiring.

*'Sure Start Board meetings are so tacky, it's just a business meeting isn't it?'*

(Interview 24 30/10/02)

It is true that the meetings were formal and bureaucratic. There are, however good reasons for this. For example, during the evaluation period The Sure Start Unit classified Britwell-Northborough as a medium risk programme in a comprehensive risk assessment of its first 18 months and the Partnership Board needed to develop a wide range of policies and procedures to address this assessment. Since then the programme achieved low-risk status but the whole business had an effect on Partnership Board meetings, heavily weighting them to 'bureaucratic' issues.

### Meeting arrangements and attendance

The meetings are scheduled to take place every six weeks. A buffet lunch is provided for the Board members and a crèche for the parent Board members. White professionals dominate the membership and one of the Board members was particularly scathing about this:

*'The fact that it's a white working class community doesn't necessarily justify the programme providers and the Partnership Board all being white.'*

(Interview 24 30/10/02)

*'I think that the Chair and the programme manager probably steer most, 90 percent of what goes on through. But that's probably not that different to other Sure Starts, well I don't know, maybe if we had stronger community groups and some very assertive parents, it would be entirely different. So I mean that would be my picture of working well. It's, cos if really vibrant community groups aren't there in the beginning, how does Sure Start build that capacity up. It is quite hard.'*

(Interview 24 30/10/02)

Some of the Partnership Board members attend irregularly. Although the dates and times of the meetings are fixed well in advance and the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting are circulated beforehand, there were two occasions during the evaluation period when the programme manager had to cancel the meetings for lack of attendance. On one occasion, several of the members failed to inform her that they would be absent until the day concerned. On another, the programme manager sat waiting in vain for members to arrive... On the one hand there is no excuse for this and it raises questions about the

level of commitment to Britwell-Northborough Sure Start in particular and partnership working in general. On the other hand, there was a real sense that members were overburdened with responsibilities.

*'It can be a bit time consuming at times [...] I suppose it can be a little bit frustrating ... because of the sort of mis-match issues we've talked about and the sort of wondering if we're getting things right and how we can get it better. You know, a feeling we're not getting things entirely right but, but not, solutions not being that easy really. And I suppose another thing is that Sure Start with everywhere else has real sort of staffing difficulties, of getting different sorts of staff to such a challenge. So I suppose that's a bit negative as well cos of those problems everywhere else, you know.'*  
(Interview 24 30/10/02)

### The Primary Care Trust and Partnership working

At Partnership Board level, the Primary Care Trust is clearly a key player in the Britwell Northborough Sure Start programme, but there was little sense of a broad and sustained involvement in partnership initiatives by the stakeholders. The main reason given for this was other demands on their time and competing demands from other groups. These can interfere with partnership working. In addition, it appears that formal and informal networks linking social services, education and the health sector were very limited. Although, Britwell Northborough Sure Start did not place much priority on developing this infrastructure during the evaluation period, it is doing so now. The work that was undertaken earlier, however, served an important function in that it helped to legitimise the whole approach of working in partnership and is now strengthening some existing partnerships and developing new ones. An important contribution has been the bringing together of individuals and networks.

## 4.7 Parent participation at Partnership Board level

On the surface, parent representation at Partnership Board level was broadly encouraging because three parents (later four) attended the Board meetings. Becoming a parent Board member is not the outcome of a democratic selection process. All the parent Board members were initially members of a sub group before becoming Board members. The programme manager invites parents onto the Board if she perceives them to be interested in taking part in planning Sure Start activities. This process clearly lacked transparency, but it worked pragmatically, because, as already discussed earlier in this chapter, very few parents showed any interest at all in taking part at this level.

The three parent members who were interviewed for this evaluation demonstrated particularly high levels of commitment although other reasons for joining were that they were curious or wanted something to do:

*'I was at home with the baby and I wanted something to do....and I found [Partnership Board meetings] interesting. I'm quite quiet and reserved and wouldn't normally do anything.'*

(Interview 20 25/11/02)

They also believed it was an opportunity to voice their views, although much remains to be done if the involvement of parents in strategic planning is to become active and meaningful, rather than passive and tokenist. One parent was clearly frustrated by it all:

*'They've got us on the committee so it would be nice to be involved that bit more. I mean they asked us to come and then it's two hours sitting there listening to other peoples views. It would be nice if we could sit there and put ours forward.'*

(Interview 15 19/7/02)

The parents found being a Board member was worthwhile because the other members listened to what they had to say, but they found much of the meeting irrelevant and difficult to follow as it was about professional matters to which they could not relate:

*'I would say if I was to do it in a percentage, I'd say 30% is to do with us and the rest of it is their work. Like a lot of it is facts and figures.'*

(Interview 18 19/10/02)

While the parent members were valued for their views and a crèche was provided for their children who were under four years, none were paid for their time. This set them apart from the other stakeholders.

The agendas often contained financial information, which the parents said they did not understand. On some occasions, there were discussions about complex legal issues, but the parents were rarely given any explanation about these. While there did not seem to be any Board members with any visible form of disability or low levels of literacy, there were no provisions made for them in any case. Information was not presented in ways that made it accessible to people without much formal education or work experience who were unfamiliar with meeting procedures and protocols. A parent brought this home when she said:

*'Maybe the way the minutes are written, not in simple terms. But maybe they could be written in a way people understood them. Generally, across the Board, from a parent up to someone of a higher level. So it's written in the sort of language everybody understands.'*

(Interview 20 25/11/02)

The lack of fully accessible information represents a failure on the part of the Partnership Board to make meetings inclusive. Unless parents can access relevant information they will remain unable to participate fully in either discussions or decision-making. This problem is surmountable, but does require the other Board members to translate complex information into simpler language and avoid the use of specialist language, which can be exclusionary.



*'Because I'm a parent and a lot of them are professional people, if you say you don't understand, you feel a bit silly.'*

(Interview 20 25/11/02)

She went on to add:

*'Maybe they had a meeting where they got the parents together and they went through it, but then again it's time.'*

(Interview 20 25/11/02)

The research evidence suggests that there is still a long way to go before the Partnership Board succeeds in enabling parents to play a full part in the strategic decision-making that affects their lives however as time went on, the programme manager became aware that the parent Board members, especially the parent Chair (elected in autumn 2002) were being disadvantaged through lack of knowledge and understanding. The researcher raised this with the programme manager, who was sympathetic but said that the agenda was so full that it was very hard to find time for explanations. After reflecting on this, though she arranged pre-meetings with the parent chair so that they could go through the agenda. While these meetings were rather irregular the feedback from the parent chair to the researcher was that they had increased her understanding of the agenda items and, indeed, the agenda language and this had boosted her confidence in her ability to chair the meeting. This is a positive outcome, which has been relayed back to the programme manager.

The programme manager has made a sterling effort in the last six months to integrate stakeholder and parent Partnership Board members by organising team 'bonding' days and shortly before Christmas 2002, she arranged an Away Day for them.. This was an occasion away from the Britwell Clinic where the members could discuss their roles and responsibilities and get to know each other a little better. The parents were hoping to come but arranging childcare was not straightforward, especially when some had an older child at school, as this parent explained:

*'If I can get someone to pick him up from school and if there was a crèche space, because it [the Away Day] finishes at 3 o'clock I think, doesn't it? Yeah. 3 o'clock. I said to her I'd let her know. I've forgotten what day it was now, I've written it down somewhere.'*

(Interview 18 19/10/02)

However Sure Start paid for the parents' childcare, and for taxis to enable them to get back to collect children from school.

One of the positive outcomes of the Away Day has been that parent members have felt able to strike up conversations with some of the professionals, discovering that they are

ordinary people with similar vulnerabilities, experiences and pre-occupations about parenting.

One of the parents was much happier:

*'I've been on the Board for over a year now so I've got to know some of the people.'*  
(Interview 20 25/11/02)

Figure 10. Parents' experiences of Partnership Board

<p>PARENTS' POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF PARTNERSHIP BOARD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents like 'having a say'</li> <li>• feel valued for their experiential knowledge</li> <li>• find the discussions interesting</li> </ul>
<p>PARENTS' NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNERSHIP BOARD</p> <p>Feel intimidated &amp; excluded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional knowledge</li> <li>• Professional 'language'</li> <li>• Formal committee process</li> </ul>

### Partnership Board: Parents & changing partnership practices

There is evidence to suggest that changes are taking place which should ensure that meaningful parent participation is achieved in the future. Over the last year, parent members were contributing more and more to the discussions and the programme manager gave a helping hand by deliberately placing agenda items of interest to the parents at the beginning of the meeting so that they were encouraged to talk early on in the proceedings.

## 4.8 Partnerships between agencies and professionals

### Professional partners

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start works in partnership with a wide range of professionals and agencies in the statutory and voluntary/community sector and the programme manager also co-manages a large number of staff working in other agencies. Many of these staff members have links with their professional associations.

A key element of government policy is the promotion and development of inter-professional practice. In the case of Sure Start, health, education and welfare

professionals have to collaborate and co-ordinate their practice in order to provide a comprehensive and integrated service for the parents and children in the community.

This way of working is not easy because professional workers tend to place a high value on professional autonomy and some have been more resistant than others towards the prospect of eroding or overlapping professional boundaries. Health visitors, midwives and counsellors, for example, have very onerous responsibilities towards the parents and children who are their clients and at Sure Start they had legitimate anxieties about sharing confidential knowledge with non-professionals, or different professionals. Joint training can help break down professional and institutional barriers.

## Training

There have been some recent inter-agency and inter-disciplinary training sessions. Britwell-Northborough commissions services from a wide range of agencies and staff benefit from the training, management and appraisal systems provided by their employing organisations. However, a key principle of the Sure Start programme is to ensure effective joint working across agencies, towards shared aims and objectives and so in addition to regular project group meetings, the programme manager has put into place a number of joint training opportunities to ensure that all services share a common ethos, and send the same key messages to parents. Individual staff members have shared and presented their approach to the working practices which help break down professional barriers. An example of this was a staff training day in May 2003 when the health visitor and the library project worker both gave talks about how they evaluated their services. Each used very different but effective methods and this information can be very helpful to other staff members who may worry about how to approach the task.

## The Family Support and Outreach Sub-Group

The Family Support and outreach Sub group membership provides one example of how different professionals are working together. The membership includes:

- Representatives from the Sure Start core team.
- Representatives from Positive Steps.
- Health Visiting Service (Slough PCT).
- Midwifery/Childbirth education (Heatherwood & Wexham NHS Trust).
- Speech and Language Early Intervention Service.
- Slough Borough Council- Social Services.

The group meets bi-monthly and acts as a forum for information sharing. Within the sub group there is a family co-ordination meeting with membership drawn from the family

support and outreach sub group as appropriate. The aim of this meeting is to discuss individual casework issues in line with an agreed protocol (see Appendix 6) for referral and information sharing between agencies. The meeting also covers action planning and on-going review in respect of individual families where a range of Sure Start service providers are involved.

### The Play and Learn Sub-Group

The Play and Learn sub group also meets bi-monthly and has a similarly diverse membership representing local agencies and professions.

While there is a growing philosophy of sharing information and a spoken willingness to work towards shared caseloads and activities, the programme manager appears to be the driving force in organising the agenda. She chairs both meetings and has a tendency to volunteer to do most of the follow up work arising from the meetings rather than share the tasks. This was very noticeable to the researcher when she attended some of the meetings. She fed her observations back to the programme manager, who now minutes the agreed action to be taken and by whom. Latest minutes of these meetings show that she still undertakes many of the agreed tasks but they are clearly minuted.

Although meeting dates in respect of both sub groups are set in advance and the agenda is circulated to members in good time, some members also attend these meetings irregularly, and this hampers information sharing and the development of shared practice. It also mirrors the attendance problems commented on earlier in this chapter.

### Working with Positive Steps

Positive Steps is the chief partner in the delivery of Sure Start services in Britwell and Northborough and the relationship between these two agencies ranged from uneasy to fairly acrimonious during most of the time that the researcher was carrying out the participant interviews.

As already explained, Positive Steps has been running since July 1999, working with families with children of all ages on the Britwell estate. It receives Single Regeneration Budget funding (£90,000) and Home Office funding through its parent organisation the Family Welfare Association but both these sources of funding are now coming to an end. Although Positive Steps predated Sure Start, its continuation is now largely dependent on Sure Start funding. The programme manager has no direct responsibility for the provision of Positive Steps services, but she has a pivotal role in its service delivery. Thus the

service delivery model is that of holistic partnership rather than a sharply defined provider purchaser mode of service delivery.

One of the key issues for the programme manager was to develop shared ownership of Sure Start aims amongst the staff of Positive Steps and core Sure Start staff. As part of this process, some level of cultural change was needed amongst Positive Steps front line staff.

#### *Constructing working relationships*

The staff participant interviews reflect a particular stage in the development of the working relationship between the two agencies. Positive Steps had been under the day to day management of a series of local managers and was managed by a temporary manager at the time of the interviews. Although she was a stabilising force for the staff at Positive Steps, she and the Sure Start programme manager had an uneasy relationship, neither really appreciating the other's talents and work priorities.

#### *Tensions and lack of understanding*

Tensions and lack of understanding can frequently arise when organisations with very different philosophical approaches, working practices and organisational cultures seek to work together. This was evident in the organisation and management of the two agencies and was voiced in the interviews with staff from both agencies.

During the summer of 2002, conversations and interviews with staff from both agencies displayed a lack of understanding of their different aims and working practices. The front line staff at Positive Steps found the Sure Start programme to be overly concerned with the number of Sure Start parents and children who used their services. In turn, Sure Start management were very worried about the failure of Positive Steps staff to produce monitoring data required by the National Sure Start Unit and regarded them as uncooperative and either unwilling or lacking the ability to do the job for which they were being paid. It seemed from what some of the interview participants told the researcher, that some Positive Steps front line staff viewed Britwell-Northborough Sure Start as an interloper in the local community. They did not understand the reason for the four years of age cut off for service provision, nor for the monitoring reports required by the Sure Start Unit. They felt that the local Sure Start programme was being unreasonable in demanding that these requirements be met.

Positive Steps had been established as a community project before Sure Start arrived and many of the front line staff of Positive Steps really did not want to work within systems which were defined and dominated by Sure Start. They preferred to maintain

their distance and autonomy. Others were prepared to co-operate but were wary of encounters with the programme manager who they perceived as controlling. When she reminded them that Sure Start was now their main funder, one of the Positive Steps staff perceived her to have said:

*"We are paying your wages. And if you don't do your jobs, you'll lose your jobs..."*  
(Interview 5 5/06/02)

Some of the programme manager's criticisms were valid. While Positive Steps is a valuable community asset with a wide remit in terms of the range of services they offer and their client group, some of the Positive Steps staff were not very proactive in reaching out to clients or networking with other agencies.

The relationship between Positive Steps front line staff and the Sure Start programme manager, and to a lesser extent the Sure Start core staff, was difficult during most of the evaluation period. The Positive Steps staff did not feel safe with Sure Start 'holding the purse strings' and having the capacity to determine their survival. They felt that it was a struggle to maintain the identity of their service under Sure Start management. In the context of these very real challenges, staff from both services have worked hard to reconcile their differences.

It is important to recognise that the perspectives reported from Positive Steps reflect primarily the views of the front line staff rather than those of its parent organisation, the Family Welfare Association. The Family Welfare Association area manager was aware of the tensions between Sure Start and Positive Steps and was working with the Sure Start programme manager to overcome these management and boundary issues. He was not interviewed as part of this evaluation and it is possible that an off-site management view may have given a different perspective, particularly about the sensitive nature of Positive Steps work and the management of risk. It would have also given more information about Positive Steps in the context of the broad work of the Family Welfare Association.

The nature of the relationship between Britwell-Northborough Sure Start and all the commissioned agencies was influenced by the power relations involved in the purchaser/provider funding arrangements. We have focused in this report on the relationship with one agency where there were recognised problems and do not know the extent to which this was an issue for the other agencies. It was not possible to interview the staff and managers of all the agencies commissioned to provide services because of the research programme time constraints.

## 4.9 Sustainability and mainstreaming

### Mainstreaming - why do it?

A key challenge for Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, in line with government policy, is to develop plans for mainstreaming its services, so that services can be maintained in the face of decreasing funding of the Sure Start programme over time.

The mainstreaming of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start services was uppermost in the minds of the stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation and regularly raised as an agenda item at the Partnership Board and sub-group meetings. However "mainstreaming is not a simple concept. This shift in approach will take many forms. It is about skewing the allocation of mainstream resources – such as the police and health services –to better target the most deprived areas. Other action based on the following common principles will be essential:

- Re-shaping services to ensure they can benefit deprived areas by removing any blockages to deprived areas receiving an increased level of support.
- Joining up different of programmes to avoid gaps.
- Developing and running policies that target the needs of deprived people or areas.
- Learning from what works and improving the way we do things based on those lessons. "

[Source: <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/>]

Some stakeholders spoke about the challenges of balancing short and longer-term aims, in other words, constructing Sure Start programmes in a way that would both lay the foundations for long term community development and improvements in early family life, health and education, and also deliver early, identifiable successes. Achieving this balance was regarded as important because Britwell-Northborough Sure Start would receive the resources and support to continue to implement their longer-term agenda only by demonstrating their ability to succeed in the short term. One stakeholder said succinctly:

*'The battle I expect to have will be the battle between things which deliver now, and things which I anticipate as delivering in the future. And it's always very difficult to protect .. programmes which have a long, long time scale for delivery, from those which are short.'*

(Interview 25 12/11/02)

At their April meeting 2003, the Partnership Board agreed a strategic plan for mainstreaming services, for ensuring their sustainability and for integrating Sure Start services into wider service provision. It is planned that the Britwell-Northborough

Partnership Board will work with other key stakeholders in Slough towards a local preventative strategy in relation to services for young children and their families.

Evidence based planning, in the broadest sense, is an element of strategic thinking. This involves identifying the needs of local communities within Britwell-Northborough and gathering sufficient information about them to adopt a strategic approach to planning appropriate interventions. The emphasis on building an evidence base is hardly surprising given that it is one of the founding principles of Sure Start. What is interesting in this research is how different interview participants perceived the process and outcome of this evaluation. It is a qualitative, collaborative enterprise focusing on a cycle of perception, reflection and change and so the interview participant who wanted '*to see the evaluation against intended outcomes and objectives*' is bound to be disappointed.

Needs-assessment strategies include gathering existing evidence about local health needs (source: Sinclair, 2000). As already been stated in Chapter 2, both the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 (IMD) and the Jarman Underprivileged Area Score (UPA) show Britwell to be one of the three most deprived areas in Slough and this suggests a high risk of heart disease and other cardiovascular conditions. This evidence, which has informed Slough's healthy eating programme, led to the Primary Care Trust part funding the Britwell Northborough community café in the hope that there would be evidence to justify the support of similar initiatives in other parts of Slough.

Most are optimistic about the effect of the café on the local community:

*'Not only is [the community café] providing food, good food for the people but is actually also starting to embark on some educational sessions so that people can learn. Learn the necessary skills themselves. We're hoping that this will translate into healthy behaviour. If that's successful that will be an internal lesson as to how things can be done.'*  
(Interview 25 12.11.02)

Members of the Partnership Board are stakeholders because they have an interest in making Sure Start work. This is true of all people involved in Sure Start, but these stakeholders have a specific interest in Sure Start policy and strategy and its synergy with organisations beyond the local community. These are the people who will be responsible for mainstreaming services, for assessing what works now and how it can be sustained for the future.

#### 4.10 Reaching the hard to reach

An essential task of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start team is to engage with hard to reach parents. The programme manager and core staff members regularly discussed



how this could be achieved, but could not agree on the definition of the 'hard to reach'. Such people are not a heterogeneous group as they comprise some people who are not known; some people who are known but difficult to contact and some people who have expressed a wish not to take part in the Sure Start programme. Finally, they include people who are unable to use services (because, for example, they are at work) but wish to do so. Any hard to reach strategy needs to consider how or whether to include some or all of these groups.

In November 2002, the hard to reach were defined as follows:

*'The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Partnership is of the view that any families not accessing Sure Start services can be considered more difficult to reach.'* (Source: Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Strategy and Plan to reach all sections of the community, November 2002).

The staff and parent interview participants were unanimous in the view that there were parents in the area with children under four who did not use the Sure Start services but would benefit from them. The database confirmed staff perceptions that Sure Start services were used by the same core parents, and that there was likely to be a large number of families who had not been reached by the programme. All known and eligible parents receive Sure Start information packs, but it is still parents' choice as to whether they use the services provided:

*'You know, there are parents who, no matter what you do they're not coming out and they don't want to access the service.'*  
(Interview 9 26/06/02)

Equally, it was felt that parents could lack the confidence to join in or just miss the information.

*'We all receive things through the door...it can be like...put it in the bin.'*  
(Interview 9 26/06/02)

It was also widely perceived (although without any reliable confirming evidence) that a large number of families living in Northborough were not signed up to Sure Start. While Sure Start services and activities are easily accessible, outreach work is not well developed. One interview participant, who was a member of the Family Outreach Sub-Group, suggested mounting an energetic outreach recruitment campaign, organised by the Sub Group, but involving *all* parents and staff members, including the programme manager.

## Marginalised ethnic minority parents and children

There was an assumption, based on the 1991 census, that ethnic minority families were not particularly well represented in Britwell-Northborough, and there is no doubt that they were not particularly visible in the Sure Start programmes. However staff need to take care about in the way they speak about people from minority ethnic groups, especially as they are not homogeneous and many are fully integrated into the community, having been born and brought up as citizens in this country. This is amply illustrated by the salutary comments below:

*'A comment was 'and we had an ethnic parent.' And I thought 'Okay.' And then another comment further down 'We had two ethnic mums coming in.' and it's like 'right, well, what do we mean by it?' and I wanted to ask but I just .. I didn't. And I kicked myself at the end of it for not asking...[...]. Ethnic, what do they mean? Who are they targeting? Is it English as a second language, .. Is it Asian people? Is it the black community?'*  
(Interview 9 26/06/02)

It was pointed out by the same member of staff that a lack of sensitivity to culturally specific beliefs and behaviour norms might deter some people who would participate if they could see people to whom they could relate. Even wall posters that display certain images can cause offence and create barriers:

*'Maybe it's the same colour as you, who dresses the same, cos obviously there's lots of people who are Muslims now, whether you're white, black, Asian, whatever, you have that certain kind of dress code and not, you know, say maybe a top that I'm wearing today could be quite offensive.'*  
(Interview 9 26/06/02)

## Introducing inclusive practice

While there was some deeply felt criticism from some quarters about the lack of effort in engaging marginalised ethnic groups, there was evidence that it was changing. Criticisms of the ethnic composition of the Partnership Board members has been acknowledged elsewhere in this report, but the ethnic backgrounds of Sure Start staff delivering services, broadly reflected the racial mix and languages of the population served (although health services staff members were exclusively white British.)

Some recently developed services provide very good examples of an inclusive approach.

- *Enabling participation in exercise classes*

The new health visitor was interested in developing exercise classes and enabling participation by Muslim women whose dress codes and modesty can deter them from taking exercise in public: It is clear from the quote below that she has been successful:

*'I love the idea of the aerobics [...] and they've been very very good because obviously it would have to be private and it's fantastic, she was like, nothing was a problem. She was like, oh we can do that and no-one can see, we'll put a notice in the door. And to me it made me feel much more at ease that they were gonna do that, do you know what I mean?'*

(Interview 21 27/11/02)

- *Awareness of dietary needs*

The Food for Thought Café' offers vegetarian food, although it does not provide halal food, which would be appreciated by some parents. Low demand and lack of cooking space was a deterrent.

- *English as a Second Language classes*

The Sure Start core team set up classes in May 2002 without any clear expectation of their popularity. An entry in the research diary stated:

*'The programme manager is amazed at how quickly the ethnic minority grapevine has work and it confounds their belief that such ethnic groups were isolated and did not really want to be involved in community activities. Men, who could usually speak English, were accompanying their wives. The programme manager said that maybe they were biting off more than they could chew because they hadn't planned this activity. All staff were very pleased as it is a way of getting more ethnic minority groups to join Britwell-Northborough Sure Start activities. Apparently one woman who had attended an English class for the first time returned the next day to join in another activity - so the assumption is that there is a need which Sure Start are now satisfying.'*

(Research diary entry 8/5/02).

- *Targeted activities through ethnic minority outreach work*

A designated ethnic minority outreach worker was commissioned through Positive Steps. Until recently this was not a very productive service but more supportive management, better data monitoring systems, clearer goal expectations and better systems of joint working between Sure Start and Positive Steps have resulted in a much more responsive service and an increase in worker morale.

## Making use of the views and experiences of staff belonging to minority ethnic groups

This brief review of services and approaches towards some of the hard to reach is not intended to be exhaustive but it has highlighted some of the proactive approaches taking place. More use could be made of the experiences and perceptions of Sure Start staff members who belong to minority groups. They are a valuable and underused resource with strong views about existing approaches to involvement. However they need to be encouraged to speak because they are reticent about stating their views in public.

## SUMMARY - HARD TO REACH

### EXAMPLES OF CHANGES INTRODUCED SINCE APRIL 2002:

#### BRITWELL-NORTHBOROUGH SURE START

There is an agreed definition of the hard to reach.

A new strategy has been introduced to enable parents with children of 4 years and over to access services

There is greater awareness of the needs of marginalised ethnic groups & more services are being developed to meet their needs.

### Identifying Sure Start workers

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start staff work in the local community and many are part of that community as they live in Britwell or Northborough or are closely associated with it. However many parents did not know the Sure Start staff. They did not wear name badges and there was no specific dress code and so could not be distinguished from parents. This sets them apart from some Sure Start programmes elsewhere in the country where staff are expected to wear distinctive Sure Start clothing.

It was clear from the parents interviewed that some could not identify some of the Sure Start workers and this inhibited them from asking about services and activities. For example, some knew that there was an ethnic minority worker but they did not know who she was.

Showing parents some form of Sure Start identification was a regular topic of discussion within the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start core team. They ruminated that on the one hand a uniform would draw attention to the local programme and serve to legitimise speculative home visits, but on the other hand, it could create barriers by formalising their relationships with local parents. Uniformed nurses, however, are always welcomed in the community. The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start community midwife viewed her uniform as her pass into the community and a talisman safeguarding her personal safety:

*'They always know I'm coming, that's the difference. I don't do opportunistic visits. They know I'm coming [...] and that's why I generally stay in uniform.'*  
(Interview 10 28/6/02)

Nevertheless, many parents were naturally distrustful of 'officials' who were not welcome into their homes. The point was driven home by one parent talking about ways of recruiting more parents into the programme.

*'One (suggestion) was to go round people's houses but then people might think you're an official, you're interfering.'*  
(Interview 18 19/10/02)

Some parents said they would not even welcome Sure Start staff. Nevertheless, issues around risk, home visiting and child protection meant that it was important that there was some means by which Britwell-Northborough Sure Start staff could be easily identified. It was decided that they would probably wear name badges but this was still being discussed at the close of the evaluation period.

### Publicising Sure Start

Concentrated efforts were being made to publicise Sure Start services and activities to local parents. Each new parent/baby was sent a Sure Start pack and visited in the home by one of the core staff members, who made efforts to sign up the parent to Sure Start. This was important as it enabled Britwell-Northborough Sure Start to include the parent on the database. A Sure Start birthday card was sent to each baby on its first birthday.

Publicity materials were being constantly developed. They took the form of leaflets and posters and also included an updated calendar of activities sent each quarter, and a newsletter, sent periodically. As nobody expressed any real difficulty in locating Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, the researcher has concluded that the services are accessible to the majority of parents and young children living in the area, unless, of course, they were in paid employment during the day. There was always an immediate response by Sure Start staff to requests for information and advice and there was adequate information available about the services and activities.

#### *The Sure Start video*

The programme manager commissioned a 15-minute video of Sure Start activities, to be used as a marketing and informational aid. It was intended for parents who lacked literacy skills, for parent groups and for outreach work and featured different activities and case studies of some families.

#### *Dissemination & publicity about Britwell-Northborough Sure Start*

Dissemination about activities were varied and included:

- -Sure Start newsletters and mail shots about Sure Start activities and events
- Annual reports
- Conference presentations about Britwell-Northborough Sure Start
- Parent and community meetings
- Community events and feedback to community groups

- Training and education
- Videos (local/national usage)
- Publicity launches
- General networking activities
- The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start internet site.

Information has been disseminated to involved agencies and partners, local communities and other professionals both regionally and nationally. However, little evidence is available regarding the effectiveness of dissemination.

#### 4.11 Impact of the four-year-old cut off

The parents interviewed for this evaluation were universally satisfied with the Sure Start services and activities but there was a strong objection to the target 0-3 year age range, a national policy, which was perceived by parents as being far too narrow because: -

- It excluded older siblings.
- It made it difficult for parents - pre-school children between 4-5 years did not attend school full-time but could not join in the activities of their younger siblings.
- Parents with more than one pre school child tended to drift away from Sure Start once their older child reached four years.

Some parents whose child had reached four years, felt newly isolated when they found themselves without their Sure Start friendships and activities. They had become dependent on Sure Start and there were no local substitutes. Several said they were tempted to have another baby just so that they could continue belonging to Sure Start

Other parents decided not to join Sure Start because older siblings were not allowed to take part in the activities. The summer trips were an anomaly in this respect; because older siblings were able to come. However, some parents expressed a legitimate grievance about this because only over fours that had a sibling who was under four was able to go on a trip. These subsidised trips were extremely popular within the community and the only time that many parents were able to go out as a family. The policy was divisive and many thought that Sure Start should be family oriented rather than age oriented.

In conclusion, while this chapter has described many of the challenges facing Britwell-Northborough Sure Start and there is still much to be done, it is important to celebrate what has been achieved and to commend the effort and commitment of Sure Start staff.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

Britwell-Northborough is a second wave Sure Start and this evaluation covers the development of the programme from April 2002–December 2002. We have documented a thriving programme which has had many successes and is dealing imaginatively with a number of challenges, some of which face all Sure Starts and some of which are unique to Britwell-Northborough. Here we conclude the report on this phase of the evaluation by summing up the programme's strengths to date and also identifying areas where it might be helpful to devote more attention in the next phase of the evaluation.

#### 5.2 Strengths

##### i). Changing perspective on parent participation

This evaluation has focused on partnerships and parent involvement and it was part of the process to tease out the way these terms were understood. Problems emerged mainly with reference to parent partnership. As noted earlier, there was a lack of clear understanding of the meaning of participation and involvement. While it was widely recognised that parent involvement was a Britwell Northborough Sure Start priority, what was understood by this was not clearly formulated by the staff or communicated to the parents. The programme is, as a result, working with a range of different conceptions of involvement which may or may not hamper the pace of parent participation and community development. However real headway is being made in the involvement of parents at all levels and the programme manager and the core staff are driving this. While there has been a growing awareness amongst the core team and some of the commissioned services that consultation is not the only means of involvement, the lack of a shared understanding is still apparent.

##### ii). Innovativeness

The programme manager and staff have shown themselves able to confront problems and make appropriate changes in their working practices. They are starting to develop more integrated ways of working – in Chapter 3 we described the development of joint working arrangements between, for example, the midwife and health visitor.

A difficult relationship with one of the key partner agencies - Positive Steps - has improved and closer links are being forged to offer a seamless service for local parents. Funding from

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start has enabled Positive Steps to expand. Close links are also being forged with other agencies.

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start team are prepared to try out new ideas even when they are not an apparent priority. A key achievement has been the response to ethnic minority issues. The English as a Second Language classes have been noted elsewhere as a good example of community involvement. Exercise classes have been introduced for ethnic & other women and the gains for those involved include improvements in general fitness and aspects of mental health. Other successful initiatives which have been earmarked for further funding include the Smoking Cessation Project and the Healthy Eating Project.

Britwell-Northborough Sure Start is raising parents' expectations and parents are becoming more able to express their needs. It is important that that these raised expectations continue. A number of parents are having their skills and confidence developed through Britwell-Northborough Sure Start.

### iii). Hard work

Near the beginning of the evaluation, the researcher made this entry in her research diary:

*'X asked me what I thought of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start so far - I said that I was impressed with the high level of motivation of the staff and how they were attempting to resolve their differences. Also, that parents were very positive about the activities.'*  
(Research diary note 17/6/02)

The note still holds true at the end of this evaluation.

There are some really committed staff. Some have said that it has not been easy to fathom just what Sure Start expects of them and they had been 'muddling through ' for a long time, but at last their roles are becoming clearer. Some of the early staff appointments were not ideal as they were not suited to the Sure Start way of working. There is, however, a core of people who are enthusiastic and who have said that they feel privileged to work for Sure Start.

Some of the staff have multiple talents which are being used for the benefit of the Sure Start programmes, for example, the health visitor offers high quality health care and also holds an aerobics class.

The skills and experience of the staff are being used to inform other staff members and the training day on evaluation is a case in point.

Local parents have made many positive remarks about the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme. The appointment of the health visitor has made a big contribution in signalling to parents that their health issues are being given greater attention than hitherto. The working



practices of members of the Britwell Northborough staff team have also received positive comments from the parents. Their approachability, enthusiasm, supportiveness and light touch on the various Sure Start projects have contributed to positive changes in the relationships between staff and parents.

#### iv). Capacity building

The capacity of the staff is developing in other ways. In addition to the development of evaluation skills mentioned above, recent Britwell-Northborough training days provided opportunities for sharing the activities and the learning that came from them, although many projects were not at a stage to present complete evaluations.

### 5.3 Weaknesses

#### i). Premises and space

Sure Start aims to deliver services which are accessible to local parents by establishing them in community based settings. The availability of underused local premises was an underpinning reason for basing a local programme in Britwell-Northborough, but finding and negotiating the use of existing and future premises seems to have taken a disproportionate amount of time and presents ongoing challenges. Working from a variety of sites, even within the relatively small Sure Start area, can hamper the development of the Sure Start ethos of collaborative ways of working because staff members at different sites do not necessarily meet unless there is a system in place for them to do so. Nor are the buildings sited in the most convenient of places, for example, the needs of parents and children living in Northborough are inadequately served, despite an exhaustive search by the programme manager and her staff.

Many of the premises are not large enough to hold more than a few dozen people and this has inhibited the development of popular services, for example the Food for Thought community café. Sure Start does not own any of the premises it uses and so lacks control over their current and future use and availability. Added to this, any expenditure plans for the development of Sure Start premises must also be sanctioned by the Sure Start Unit, which centralises decision-making and increases bureaucracy.

There is inadequate office space for the Sure Start programme manager and staff. The programme manager has only recently moved into her own office in the face of competing demands for the space.

Finally, as this evaluation has revealed, some parents are inhibited from visiting certain premises because they bring back unpleasant memories. This goes some way to negate the idea of using under-occupied buildings.

#### ii). Database, evaluation and monitoring systems

The importance of monitoring and evaluation are clearly accepted in the Britwell Northborough programme and funded activities. The programme manager has put a huge amount of effort into data gathering, sometimes to the detriment of her relationship with the staff. She has been anxious to improve and extend the use of the database and this work must be clearly acknowledged. However the establishment of an evaluation culture is not easy, particularly when staff are under pressure to deliver new, innovative services. As in many Sure Starts, there have been problems with evaluation and monitoring in Britwell Northborough, some of which are ongoing and some of which may be in the process of resolution with a new database and a new staff appointment. These problems include:

- A failure of the core team to make use of the database capacity.
- A lack of vision in collecting data and in analysing existing data.
- A lack of systematic evaluations - no uniformity in staff evaluations.
- No evaluation training for the staff or parents.

#### iii). Lack of support for the programme manager

The programme manager is in an isolated position, acting as a buffer between the Sure Start Unit, the local programme and the key stakeholders. At present she does not have a mentor with time to fully support her. She manages very well without, but some of the problems the staff we interviewed told us about might be attributable to this lack of support and the feeling that she is single handily shouldering responsibility for a large innovative programme.

#### iv). Lack of engagement of stakeholders

At Partnership Board level, the Primary Care Trust is clearly a key player in the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme, but there was little sense of a broad and sustained involvement in partnership initiatives. The main reason given for this was other demands on time and competing demands from other groups. These competing commitments and demands can make partnership working difficult. In addition, it appears that formal and informal networks linking social services, education and the health sector were very limited.

During the evaluation period the researcher observed that Britwell-Northborough Sure Start did not identify the need to develop this infrastructure as a priority (although it is being addressed now and formal and informal networks are being expanded, for example, through the Britwell Initiative; The Early Years programme). Britwell-Northborough Sure Start is now

strengthening some existing partnerships and developing new ones. A key contribution of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start work on partnerships had been the bringing together of individuals and networks in the voluntary and statutory sector.

#### v). More focus is needed on emotional and social development

While we have not been able to provide an exhaustive description of all the services that this Sure Start is providing, we have observed that the main focus of activity is on parent support and facilities for children to play and learn. As noted above, community development is happening as parents start to take a greater role in the programme development and organisation and as they start to access new opportunities for training and employment. These changes will have a beneficial effect on family life. However, what we have also observed is that only recently has there been any provision of programmes which enable parents to better support their children's emotional and social development. As the antisocial behaviour of older children was expressed as a key concern in this community, there is clearly a need for such programmes in Britwell-Northborough. Sure Start offers a unique opportunity to normalise infant mental health and parenting education and support programmes. Positive Steps has started to offer one such programme and this is clearly popular and oversubscribed. Parenting programmes appear to be very effective in enabling parents to handle problem behaviour constructively, in strengthening the parent/child relationship and in enabling parents to gain a deeper understanding of both their own and their children's emotional and social needs. This is an aspect of programme development which the programme manager has recently discussed with the researcher. As the programme manager has personal experience of delivering a programme, she is aware of their value and intends to give the idea some thought, with the intention of introducing more opportunities for parents to join a parenting programme at Sure Start.

## 5.4 The Future

Britwell-Northborough has decided not to allocate further funding for a full time evaluation and the current evaluation is now coming to an end. The programme is developing an evaluation strategy which will include:

- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of individual services by service providers, using a variety of methods (for example, user fora; satisfaction questionnaires; pre and post intervention assessments)
- A detailed survey of levels of awareness and satisfaction with services, and the perceived impact of services – to be carried out by a team of community surveyors.
- 'Spotlight' evaluations of individual services

This evaluation is recognised to have made a valuable contribution to the programme, over and above that required by the national Sure Start Unit in its monitoring and evaluation plans. It has provided explanations for why people use some services and not others. It has provided a historical record of the development of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start, which can act as a benchmark for measuring future progress. It has provided a balanced account of the successes and challenges facing the programme.

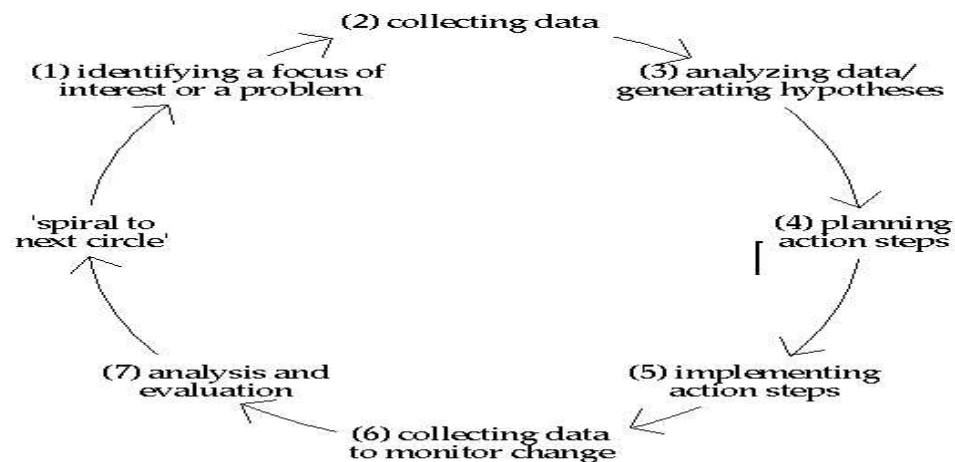
Perhaps the most important and significant attribute of this evaluation is the action research approach. This has given the local Sure Start community - staff, parents and stakeholders - the opportunity to reflect, in confidence with the researcher, on the issues that concern them and this has empowered them to bring about change. Reflecting on the impact of the evaluation, the programme manager said that it had been helpful to her. Even though some of the feedback was uncomfortable it was valuable in the long term. The action research approach has been of particular value to the parents because they have been encouraged to speak up for themselves and feel that their thoughts and views matter.

## THE EVALUATION METHOD

### 1. The action research approach.

Action research is an approach to research rather than a specific method. It is undertaken in social situations to improve practices and understanding and aims to integrate action and reflection, so that the knowledge developed in the inquiry process is directly relevant to the issues being studied (Reason, 2001).

Action Research is often represented in diagrammatic form (see below). It moves between action and reflection with various degrees of collaboration between the researcher and organisation members and so lends itself to organisational development, particularly with respect to projects that include a number of stakeholder groups. Specifically, action research is a process that: is educative; deals with individuals as members of social groups; is problem-focussed, context-specific and future-oriented. It involves a change intervention; aims at improvement and involvement; involves a cyclic process in which research, action and evaluation are interlinked and is founded on a research relationship in which those involved are participants in the change process.



THE ACTION RESEARCH CYCLE

Action research is part of a qualitative research paradigm. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to uncover knowledge and learn from it. In this study, qualitative interviews were chosen to obtain an in-depth insight into the perceptions and experiences of a wide number of stakeholders to the programme at a strategic and operational level. The interviews were semi-structured, face to face, taped encounters lasting about one hour each. They were subsequently transcribed and a copy of the transcript was returned

to the interviewees to give them an opportunity to make further comments, amplify or modify their remarks if they wished to do so.

## Working in partnership

### *Methodological compromises between utility and validity of the research*

If evaluation is to be useful it must be relevant to the information needs of the programme manager. Evaluation theory has recently stressed the need to take into account a wide range of interests and values in and around the programme or policy stakeholders. While the management and supervision of the research process was by Oxford University, the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme manager was an influential partner. There were regular meetings between the researcher and the programme manager about the progress of the research and opportunities for the research team to respond to any concerns of the programme manager – for example in relation to changes in the research design, changes in the type and size of the interview sample and consultations and suggestions about who to interview. This bound the researcher tightly to the concerns and interests of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start staff and parents.

## 2. Ethical issues

### Submission for ethics approval

As the research was to involve interviews with human subjects, in early May 2002 the researcher made an application for ethics approval to the East Berkshire Local Research Ethics Committee. Previous experience of seeking approval for similar types of research from health authorities elsewhere suggested that this might be a lengthy process, but happily the researcher was informed within the month that ethical approval was not required. The East Berkshire Local Research Ethics Committee considered the proposed evaluation to be a monitoring exercise rather than research.

### *Maintaining confidentiality and restricting access to confidential information.*

#### *(Research ethics and Data Protection Act requirements)*

All interviews were recorded on audio-cassette tape and kept in a secure filing cabinet. Information has been reported only in an unattributable form and efforts have been made to disguise specific sources. Each interview tape was given an arbitrary code, which was used to identify transcript notes made from the tape and the electronic files containing transcripts have only been accessible to the research team.

### Participant Informed Consent

A copy of each Interview transcript was returned to each respective participant for validation and confirmation that extracts could be used in the final report. This formed

part of an explicit methodological procedure (participant validation) and ethical code which avoids covert research. The use of transcript material was negotiated with each individual to take into account their particular need for confidentiality. In general, the interviewees were happy for their accounts to be used in an anonymous form although some staff were made aware that they might be identified by contextual details. Occasionally an interviewee stipulated that what they had to say was 'off the record'.

All participants were also asked to sign a consent form (see copy on page 129) at the time of the interview with the understanding that they could withdraw consent to share information about themselves at any time.

*i). Consent from parents who were interviewed*

The researcher gave a verbal explanation to the proposed participants coupled by an information sheet (see page 130).

*ii). Consent from staff members (Including core staff, commissioned service providers and other stakeholders) who were interviewed*

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme manager informed all about the evaluation. In addition to this, the researcher gave a detailed explanation of the proposed aims, methods and action research approach to the Partnership Board and sub-committees members. Individual staff and stakeholder interview participants were also given an information sheet (see page 131) and a consent form to sign before the interview took place.

The quality of data collected depended to a large extent on the willingness of the interviewees to share their experiences and insights openly with the researcher. This means having absolute trust in the confidentiality of the interview. This potentially conflicts with the need of the project manager to know about problems that are occurring, therefore a feedback loop system was introduced (described on page 13 of the main report).

### 3. Data collection

#### The Interviews

A qualitative approach using one to one semi-structured interviews was the main method used as this was most appropriate to the development of an in-depth understanding of the processes that have taken place and the thinking of stakeholders about these processes.

Between June 2002 and January 2003, 29 people occupying diverse roles within the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start community were interviewed for the research. These included interviews with 11 parents with children under four years old, 12 core or commissioned staff members delivering Sure Start services, 5 strategic partners responsible for its governance, and the programme manager, who was formally interviewed 6 times over the course of the evaluation period.

*The sample - method of selection and recruitment*

A purposeful sampling method was used. The decision about which members of staff and stakeholders should be interviewed was made in consultation with the programme manager, while the parents interviewed were chosen by the researcher to reflect differences in gender, ethnicity, stages of parenthood and experiences and preferences in their use of Sure Start services and activities.

*The interview setting*

Interviews were held in private. Interviews with staff members and stakeholders took place at their places of work. Parent interviews took place either in their own homes, or in the interview rooms at the Britwell Clinic or Positive Steps.

#### 4. Interview structure and content

The interviews took place between May 2002-January 2003 and each lasted about an hour.

*Parent and staff interviews*

(Copies of the semi-structured interview questions are on pages 132/3)

The same semi-structured interview schedule was used for parents and staff and at times, follow up or probing questions were added. Some questions were not put to some participants because they were not appropriate.

There were four sections to the interview:

Section 1 - questions about experiences of living and working in Britwell (broadly defined as social capital).

Section 2 - questions relating to the occupation and role of staff working for Britwell-Northborough Sure Start.

Section 3 - questions about Britwell-Northborough Sure Start activities and services, including partnership working and user involvement.

Section 4 - questions about interagency relationships and the future of the local Sure Start programme.



*Interviews with the programme manager*

The programme manager was interviewed formally on six separate occasions. The semi-structured interview guide was used in the first interview with the programme manager but subsequent interviews were unstructured and explored specific topical issues.

*Interviews with the stakeholders*

Individual tape recorded interviews were also held with the stakeholders. These interviews focused on perceptions of the development of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start in terms of policy, strategy and influence on mainstream services. Individual stakeholder perceptions and interests were explored (see copy of the interview guide on page 134/5)

*The Research Diary* - The researcher also kept a research diary to record observations, discussions and conversations during all formal and casual encounters.

## 5. The participants to the research interviews - A description

Number of interview participants who live in Britwell or Northborough

	LIVE IN BRITWELL	LIVE IN NORTHBOROUGH	LIVE ELSEWHERE	<b>TOTAL</b>
Parents	8	3	0	<b>11</b>
Staff & Programme Manager	3	2	8	<b>13</b>
Stakeholders			5	<b>5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29</b>

Individual interviews were conducted with 11 parents with children under 4 years, 13 staff including the programme manager and 5 stakeholders. 3 of the 11 parents were also staff members but have been treated primarily as parents for the purpose of this research. One parent interview participant was a childminder of a child under 4 years. The interview participants were identified in consultation with the programme manager to reflect a range of different perspectives on Britwell-Northborough Sure Start and included representatives from some of the main stakeholder agencies and Britwell-Northborough Sure Start funded projects.

### Interview participants by gender

- (11) Parents interviewed - 10 female  
- 1 male
- (13) staff members interviewed - 13 female  
0 male
- (5) stakeholders interviewed - 3 female  
- 2 male

### Interview participants by ethnicity

A total of 6 interview participants were from a minority ethnic group

- *staff (13)*
  - 1 staff member belonged to a black ethnic minority group
  - 1 staff member belonged to a white ethnic minority group.
  - 11 staff members were white British
- *stakeholders (5)*
  - All 5 stakeholders were white British.
- *parents (11)*
  - 4 parents belonged to a black ethnic minority group (2 were born in the UK; 2 had settled here within the last three years).
  - 7 parents were White British

### Cohabiting and lone parents.

5 parents were married or cohabiting with a partner

5 parents were separated from their partner (but in regular contact).

1 parent – circumstances were not known (It was not possible to elicit these details from one parent participant because her English was not fluent. Her 12-year-old daughter acted as an interpreter).

### Housing

#### *Parents*

4 parents were owner/occupiers

7 parents were tenants

#### *Staff & stakeholders*

Not known

## Length of residence in Britwell or Northborough

(see table below)

- Parents
  - 1 parent had only come to live in Britwell-Northborough six months before this study, while several other parents had lived in the area all their lives.
- Staff
  - All 5 staff members who lived in Britwell or Northborough had done so all their lives.

PARTICIPANTS LIVING IN BRITWELL-NORTHBOROUGH					
Length of residence	Since early childhood	13-30 years	6-12 years	2-5 years	1 year or less
Number of parents (11)	4	2	2	2	1
Number of staff (5)	5				

### Parents' current employment status

- 1 parent was in part time work (working for Britwell-Northborough Sure Start)
- 4 parents were in full time work (working for Britwell-Northborough Sure Start)
- 6 parents were not in paid work

## 6. The analysis

*Explanation of qualitative data analysis using N5 (source: N5 Viewer notes)*

Qualitative data analysis is a term applied to a very wide range of methods for handling data which is relatively unstructured and cannot appropriately be reduced to numbers. Any researcher using such data is usually seeking to gain new understanding of a situation, experience or process, by learning from the detailed accounts that people give in their own words, or by recording observations or documentary evidence in a research diary. Analysis of such data requires sensitivity to detail and context, as well as accurate access to information and ways of rigorously and carefully exploring themes and discovering and testing patterns on a project, since such different methods will clearly require different sorts of data and ways of handling data.

In this study, each interview tape was transcribed and analysed using N5, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis programme, to draw out common themes and

differences in perception about Britwell-Northborough Sure Start services and activities. Where appropriate and possible, data were triangulated and validated through discussion with relevant stakeholders. Material recorded in the research diary has also been included in the analysis. All the collected material vividly captures some of the most important issues concerning the implementation of the Britwell-Northborough Sure Start programme.

The analysis followed the coding processes recommended by Straus and Corbin (1990): It started with an open coding - a line by line examination where the data were broken down into discrete parts and substantive codes were identified. The interview transcripts were coded individually and independently and were constantly compared, whereby similar and different phenomena and concepts were discovered and combined. This open coding resulted in the grouping of codes by descriptive category. Substantive codes with similar content formed a category. These categories were organised into themes from which the structure of this report is derived.

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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## Evaluation of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start

### Consent from participants

- 1 I confirm that I have read and understood the Participation Information Sheet and that I have had an opportunity to ask questions.
  
- 2 I understand that being interviewed is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without giving reasons and without any of my rights being affected.
  
- 3 I understand that anything I say may be used as anonymous quotes in any presentation of the evaluation, whether verbal or written.
  
- 4 I agree to be interviewed and for the interview to be recorded.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Health Services Research Unit, Department of Public Health, University of Oxford**

## Information for parents taking part in the evaluation of Britwell- Northborough Sure Start

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with friends, relatives, your GP or any member of Britwell-Northborough Sure Start if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form a copy of which you will be given to keep. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. This will not affect the standard of care you receive.

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Project has been set up to improve existing services and provide additional services to children under 4 and their families. I have been asked to evaluate the project both to ensure that the needs of the local community are being met and to find out which services are most widely known and valued.

I would like to interview you because I am interested in your views. It is important to have the views of people who live in the area. You would be asked about living in this area and the services that have always been here. You would also be asked about the difference you think Sure Start may be making, and how you would like the services to work. There are no right or wrong answers - it is opinions that are important.

Whatever you say in an interview will be confidential and you would not be named in any report or publication. Interviews will normally be tape-recorded and later transcribed so that your own words will not be lost. Any information from your interview that is used will be anonymous; your name would be changed or removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. Once an issue has been raised, and time has been allowed for the issue to be voiced through forums such as an Open Meeting, the concerns will be reported to the Director of Sure Start and to the Research Advisory Group. These concerns would not be attributed to individuals, and any written reports will keep the anonymity of the persons involved. Positive feedback will also be shared with the Director of Sure Start and the Research Advisory Group and will remain anonymous.

Information from people like you will be collected together and reported to both the local and national management of Sure Start. Being interviewed is one way that you can affect the future of this programme and others like it.

If you would like more information about the evaluation or interviews

**Please contact: - Virginia MacNeill, Sure Start, at Britwell health Clinic**

Health Services Research Unit, Department of Public Health, University of Oxford

## Information for staff & other stakeholders taking part in the evaluation of Britwell - Northborough Sure Start

The Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Project has been set up to improve existing services and provide additional services to children under 4 and their families. I have been asked to evaluate the project both to ensure that the needs of the local community are being well met and to find out which services are most widely known and valued.

I would like to interview you because I am interested in your views. It is important to have the views of people who are working within or alongside the Sure Start project as well as those of people who live in the area. People working within the system will have very useful information about how the project is working.

You would be asked about living and working in this area and the services that have always been here. You would also be asked about the difference you think Sure Start may be making, and how you would like the services to work. There are no right or wrong answers - it is opinions that are important.

Whatever you say in an interview will be confidential and you would not be named in any report or publication. Information which is used from your interview will be anonymous; your name would be changed or removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. Once an issue has been raised by several people, and time has been allowed for an individual to raise the issue themselves, the concerns may be reported to the Director of Sure Start and to the Research Advisory Group. These concerns would not be attributed to individuals, and any written reports will keep the anonymity of the persons involved. Positive feedback will also be shared with the Director of Sure Start and the Research Advisory Group and will remain anonymous.

Information from people like you will be collected together and reported to both the local and national management of Sure Start. Being interviewed is one way that you can affect the future of this programme and others like it.

If you would like more information about the evaluation or interviews

**Please contact: - Virginia MacNeill, Sure Start, Britwell Clinic**

## Britwell and Northborough Sure Start

### PARENT & STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS,

1. How long have you lived in
2. Where did you live before?
3. What is good about living here?
4. What is not good about living here?
5. If you were able to, would you like to move?
6. In general, do you feel most people living in the area look out for each other? Or do you feel that people would take advantage of you if they got the chance?
7. If you (a parent) needed support with child care, where would you (they) go? (in an emergency, and/or if you wanted to work)
8. If you (a parent) needed advice about your (their) child's behaviour, where would you (they) go?
9. If you (they) needed support for yourself (themselves), where would you (they) go?
10. When did you first hear about the Sure Start project?
11. How did you hear about it?
12. What do you think the project is trying to achieve?
13. How has it changed or developed since you first heard about it?
14. Do you feel you've had an opportunity to influence Sure Start?
  - a) Have you been invited to any Sure Start meetings?
  - b) Have you attended any?
  - c) If not, why not?
  - d) If yes, how did you find the meetings?
  - e) Would you attend again, and would you recommend to a friend that they attend?
  - f) What could be done to make it easier/better/ideal for parents to participate in decision-making?
15. (IF YES TO 14) Do you think you have influenced Sure Start?
16. Can you tell me about any specific Sure Start initiatives you have heard about?
17. Have you been involved with them?
18. (IF YES) What did/do you like about them?
19. (IF YES TO 17) What did you think could have been better?
20. (IF NO TO 17) Why not? Is it because the service is not what you (parents) need, or because you (they) aren't able to access the service for whatever reason (e.g. language, practical difficulties)?
21. What services or events would you (parents) use/participate in if they were offered?
22. (FOR USERS ONLY) Do you feel that your life has changed at all because of your participation in Sure Start?
23. Are you aware of any areas of conflict or disagreement within Sure Start?
24. (IF YES) Can you tell me how these have been handled?
25. How well do you think people delivering services to under 4s and their parents in this area work together (people from the health service, social services, education and charities?)



26. Do you think Sure Start has made a difference to how these services are delivered?
27. Do you think there are (OTHER) people in the area with children under four who don't get involved in the initiatives or use the services, but would benefit from them?
28. Why do you think they don't get involved or use the services?
29. How would you change things to make it easier for them?
30. How do you think the services for under 4s in Britwell and Northborough compared to the services elsewhere in Berkshire (OR WHERE YOU LIVED PREVIOUSLY) before Sure Start began?
31. What about after Sure Start began?
32. What would you like Sure Start to achieve in the next 12 months?
33. How would you like Britwell and Northborough to be in the next 12 months?
34. How do you think it will be in 12 months time?
35. Do you think the local community will welcome change?
36. Is there anything you would like to add that we didn't cover with our questions?

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

*(Some stakeholders were not asked all the questions because of time constraints or because they were irrelevant or inappropriate)*

### Questions about occupational /professional status and background

1. Could you start by telling me about your job? [Prompt: job title, occupational history, length of service, professional background, overall responsibilities]
2. Do you live in Slough? [In B-N?] Have you ever?

### Questions about Britwell-Northborough

3. What are the needs of the B-N community?
4. What are the needs of the Slough community?

### Questions about Sure Start

1. Why was B-N chosen as one of the Sure Start programme areas? [What are the goals of Sure Start programme at a national level?]
2. Goals - What are the goals of the B-N Sure Start programme?
3. What are the main issues [challenges] in the implementation and delivery of those goals?
4. How did you become involved with B-N Sure Start?
5. What effect has Sure Start had on the Britwell and Northborough areas?
6. Have any aspects of the Sure Start programme surprised you?
7. Do you feel you have an improved understanding of local problems and issues because of being involved with Sure Start? [Explain]
8. How were the various agencies working together before Sure Start, in your opinion? Can you give a specific example?
9. How do you perceive them to be working together now? Can you give a specific example?
10. Has Sure Start changed or influenced the way they work together now?
11. Will the changes be sustainable when the funding for Sure Start stops?
12. Would you say Sure Start has had an effect on your organisation at the level of practice and/or policy? If yes, please describe.
13. Has Sure Start had an effect on you and the way you work? Can you give a specific example?
14. Has it had an effect on others in your organisation at an individual level? Can you give a specific example?
15. What would you pass on to other Sure Starts from your experience of working with Britwell-Northborough Sure Start?
16. Have you had an influence on Sure Start? If yes, in what way? If no, would you like more opportunity to influence it?
17. What are the obstacles to getting parents' input into your own services and into Sure Start's operations as a whole?
18. What are your plans or suggestions to overcome these obstacles?
19. What was the level and type of parent involvement in your work before Sure Start?

20. How well are providers working together? Is there a shared ethos and understanding? Are the services seamless?
21. Have local services changed since Sure Start started?

### **Questions about Partnership**

22. When did you become a board member?
23. How has the partnership board changed since you first become a member?
24. How well do you know the other members on a professional or personal level?
25. How well are agencies working together? Is the Partnership Board useful?
26. Have working relationships changed since Sure Start was launched and if so how?
27. What do you think are the key skills and capabilities needed for effective partnership working?
28. What are the benefits/negative aspects of board membership to the individual member?
29. How are partnership board decisions disseminated?
30. How does the partnership board support the sure start programme manager?
31. What do you bring to the partnership board?
32. Are you a member of other committees? Interagency committees? What are they?
33. Who else sits on them/which other agencies sit on them?
34. What contact do you have with board members outside the B-N Partnership Board?
35. How are parents involved enough in partnership board planning and decision making?
36. How can this be improved?
37. What do you think might be obstacles to their participation in decision making?
38. How could the partnership board make better use of the parent board members?

### **Questions about interagency working**

39. Do you think the local community will welcome change? How well do you think people delivering services to under 4s and their parents in this area work together (people from the health service, social services, education and charities?)
40. Do you think Sure Start has made a difference to how these services are delivered?
41. How do you think the services for under 4s in Britwell and Northborough compared to the services elsewhere in Berkshire (OR WHERE YOU LIVED PREVIOUSLY) before Sure Start began?
42. What about after Sure Start began?
43. What would you like Sure Start to achieve in the next 12 months?
44. How would you like Britwell and Northborough to be in the next 12 months?
45. How do you think it will be in 12 months time?

## **Delivery Plan - Sure Start Reference Group (78 members)**

1. Heatherwood & Wexham Park NHS Trust (Midwifery)
2. Community Services
3. E. Berks Com Health Trust (Locality Team Leader)
4. E. Berks Com Health Trust (Locality Manager)
5. Employment Services Job Centre
6. Slough BC (Health Partnerships)
7. NSPCC
8. Employment Service Job Centre
9. E. Berks Com Health Trust (Director Of Nursing)
10. E. Berks Com Health Trust
11. Primary Care Group (Chief Executive)
12. Social Services (Director Of)
13. Assistant Chief Education Officer, Slough BC
14. Regeneration Manager, Town Services, Slough BC
15. Head Of Environmental Policy, Development & Consumer Protection
16. Councillor Slough BC
17. Councillor
18. Slough BC
19. Social Services (Assistant Chief Officer)
20. Garden Clinic (Upton Hospital)
21. Berks Health Authority (Director Of Public Health)
22. E. Berks Com Health Trust
23. E. Berks Com Health Trust (Child Development)
24. Newmed Surgery Beechwood School
25. The Avenue Medical Centre
26. Berkshire Health Authority
27. E. Berks Com Health Trust
28. Community Services Slough BC
29. Chief Officer Assets & Resources
30. Community Services (Library Services)
31. Heatherwood & Wexham Park NHS Trust (Midwifery)
32. E. Berks Com Health Trust (Health Visitor)
33. E. Berks Com Health Trust (Business Development)
34. Parent
35. Heatherwood & Wexham NHS Trust
36. Chief Officer, Community Services, Slough BC.
37. Home Start, Slough
38. Community Services (Library Services)
39. Head Of Town & Estate Services, Slough BC
40. Chief Education Officer, Slough BC
41. Upton Hospital
42. Social Services (Under 8's Team) Slough BC
43. Head Of Strategy & Support, Social Services
44. Head Of Policy, Assets & Resources, Slough BC
45. Chief Executive, Heatherwood & Wexham NHS Trust
46. Social Services, Slough BC
47. E. Berks Com Health Trust (Speech & Language Therapy)
48. Home Start, Slough
49. Reading Borough Council
50. Slough Sure Start Advisor
51. Slough Family Centre
52. Chief Executive, Berkshire Health Authority
53. Social Services (CWD)
54. Social Services, Slough BC.
55. Chief Executive, Development & Consumer Protection
56. E Berks. Com Health Trust (Health Visitor)

57. Home Maker Birdwell
58. Public Health Berkshire Health Authority
59. Chief Officer, Housing & Benefits, Slough BC
60. E. Berks. Com Health Trust, Chief Executive
61. Berkshire Health Authority (Head Of Service Development)
62. Social Services (Policy & Performance)
63. Youth Offending Team, Slough BC
64. Head Of Housing, Slough BC
65. Positive Steps
66. Assistant Chief Education Officer, Slough BC
67. Community Services
68. Social Services, Slough BC
69. Education Psychology Service
70. Head Of Equalities, Education
71. Berkshire Health Authority (Head Of Partnerships)
72. Chief Officer, Legal & Corporate, Slough BC
73. Birdwell Initiative
74. E. Berks. Com Health Trust (Health Visitor)
75. Service Manager. Children & Families, Slough BC
76. Education (Early Years), Slough BC
77. Community Services (Play Service)
78. Life Housing

### **Steering Group (6 members)**

1. Health Partnerships Officer, Slough BC
2. Service Manager, Early Years 7 Disabilities, Slough BC
3. Health Visitor, East Berks Community Health NHS Trust
4. Policy & Performance Officer, Slough BC
5. Manager, Positive Steps
6. Early Years Co-ordinator, Slough BC

### **Senior Management Group (6 members)**

Health Partnerships Officer, Slough BC (Project Manager)  
 Director of Nursing, East Berks Community Health NHS Trust  
 Chief Executive, Slough Primary Care Group  
 Regeneration Manager, Town Services, Slough BC  
 Policy & Performance Officer, Slough BC (Project Co-ordinator)

### Britwell-Northborough Service Delivery Plan - Risk Management

Risk	Risk Management Strategy
Transition from interim Partnership Board to Partnership Board. This may take more time than anticipated, as there will be more new members including parents who need to be able to represent their community	Develop clear timetable for establishing Partnership Board and make available to all parties. Develop training programme for interested parents and introduce them to other key partners informally. Establish a clear remit for the Board and roles of members -utilise experience of Sure Start trailblazers
Planning permission for capital expenditure is not granted or delayed	The programme has a number of projects with capital expenditure, however there are a number of other potential sites available within the area. Ensure close contact is established with Town Services as the redevelopment of some of the area is planned. Keep Sure Start Unit updated on potential changes to plans
Recruitment and personnel -it may be difficult to recruit for some posts within projects	Work with the steering group to combine some posts for support workers to establish full-time posts. Consider secondment opportunities and creative ways of back-filling. Also encourage flexible working and offer childcare in line with Sure Start principles.
Ensuring inter-agency commitment	Establish the Partnership Board with a fair and broad representation. Provide regular information on the project's progress to all relevant agencies and the wider community. Ensure performance monitoring data is provided to senior managers.
Commitment of local community and positive involvement sustained	Ensure parents are representative of local community on Partnership Board. Hold regular community events to raise profile of Sure Start and actively listen to feedback. Link with other programmes running in the area-
Sustainability of Sure Start in longer term	Ensure all projects have provided their plan for future sustainability. Programme Director to regularly review progress and development with Partnership Board

## Money Plan 2002-2004

The following financial forecasts should be seen as an indication of what *may* be achievable in terms of securing funding from non-Sure Start sources, and of mainstreaming Sure Start services. However, we are not yet at the stage of securing firm funding commitments from our partners.

Plans to ensure the sustainability of services will be developed in conjunction with our statutory, voluntary and community partners. Robust monitoring and evaluation over time will provide evidence as to the effectiveness of services, and this evidence will be a crucial element in the planning process.

Planned activities  [Britwell-Northborough Slough Sure Start	Spending per activity per financial year							
	2002-03				2003-04			
	Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought		Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought	
	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital
<b>Core activities (Total)</b>	<b>61,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>435,365</b>	<b>280,000</b>	<b>66,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>472,811</b>	<b>100,000</b>
<b>Outreach and home visiting (sub-total)</b>	<b>51,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>54,104</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>56,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>85,500</b>	<b>0</b>
Services to Pregnant Women	36,000	0	17,604	0	41,000	0	34,000	0
NNEB Home Visiting	15,000	0	0	0	15,000	0	0	0
Community Parents Project	0	0	36,500	0	0	0	51,500	0
<b>Support for families and parents (sub-total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>74,225</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>72,674</b>	<b>0</b>
Family Support Project	0	0	63,487	0	0	0	61,853	0
Ethnic Minorities Project	0	0	10,738	0	0	0	10,821	0
<b>Play, learning and childcare (sub-total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>181,286</b>	<b>280,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>188,631</b>	<b>0</b>
TOPS	0	0	3,900	0	0	0	3,900	0
Neighbourhood Nursery	0	0	0	0	As yet unconfirmed	120,000	0	100,000
Childcare Project	0	0	57,286	0	0	0	59,481	0
Parent/Carer and Toddler Groups	0	0	6,750	0	0	0	7,150	0
Sure Start Creche	0	0	6,600	0	0	0	7,000	0
Britwell Play and Learn Library	0	0	58,000	265,000	0	0	60,000	0
Early Years Outreach	0	0	36,750	15,000	0	0	38,500	0
Childminding Project	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	10,000	0
Baby Gym	0	0	2,000	0	0	0	2,600	0
<b>Primary and</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>94,750</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>96,006</b>	<b>0</b>

Planned activities [Britwell-Northborough Slough Sure Start	Spending per activity per financial year							
	2002-03				2003-04			
	Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought		Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought	
	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital
<b>Community Healthcare (sub-total)</b>								
SALT Early Intervention Project	0	0	47,000	0	0	0	48,000	0
Smoking Cessation	?	0	1,000	0	?	0	1,000	0
Exercise Classes	0	0	4,000	0	0	0	4,000	0
Community Cafe	10,000	0	32,500	0	10,000	0	32,500	0
GP Services			10,250	0	0	0	10,506	0
<b>Special needs support (sub-total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Special Needs Project	0	0	33,000	0	0	0	30,000	0
<b>Additional activities (total)</b>	<b>11,000</b>		<b>50,908</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>50,123</b>	<b>0</b>
Teenage Parents Project	0	0	30,908	0	0	0	30,123	0
Relevant crime prevention and reduction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relevant improvements to parents' employability	11,000	As yet unconfirmed	20,000	0	11,000	0	20,000	0
<b>Capital &amp; Revenue expenditure on building maintenance/occupation (total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33,202</b>	<b>288,800</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31,680</b>	<b>16,050</b>
Improvements to buildings and other capital assets used to deliver these activities	0	0	10,202	235,000	0	0	9,000	0
Relevant improvements to local housing – Homemaker	0	0	23,000	13,800	0	0	22,680	16,050
Relevant improvements to local environment	0	0	0	40,000	0	0	0	0
<b>Management &amp; development (total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>145,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>160,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Building community involvement in services	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	10,000	0
Programme management	0	0	120,000	0	0	0	120,000	0
Evaluation of these activities	0	0	15,000	0	0	0	30,000	0
Other (specify)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand total per year</b>	<b>72,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>666,475</b>	<b>568,800</b>	<b>77,000</b>	<b>120,000</b>	<b>714,614</b>	<b>116,050</b>
Totals of Sure Start contributions over three years								
Grand total for all three years								



Planned activities [Britwell-Northborough Slough Sure Start	Spending per activity per financial year							
	2004-05				2005-06			
	Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought		Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought	
	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital
<b>Core activities (Total)</b>	<b>72,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>481,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>187,850</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>379,350</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Outreach and home visiting (sub-total)</b>	<b>56,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>89,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>91,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>74,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Services to Pregnant Women	41,000	0	34,000	0	51,000	0	24,000	0
NNEB Home Visiting	15,000	0	0	0	15,000	0	0	0
Community Parents Project	0	0	55,000	0	5,000	0	50,000	0
<b>Support for families and parents (sub-total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>73,850</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,850</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>61,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Family Support Project	0	0	63,000	0	8,000	0	55,000	0
Ethnic Minorities Project	0	0	10,850	0	4,850	0	6,000	0
<b>Play, learning and childcare (sub-total)</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>189,150</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>153,100</b>	<b>0</b>
TOPS	0	0	3,900	0	2,000	0	1,500	0
Neighbourhood Nursery	As yet unconfirmed	0	0	0	As yet unconfirmed	0	0	0
Childcare Project	0	0	60,000	0	10,000	0	50,000	0
Parent/Carer and Toddler Groups	0	0	7,150	0	1,000	0	6,000	0
Sure Start Creche	0	0	7,000	0	0	0	6,000	0
Britwell Play and Learn Library	5,000	0	60,000	0	10,000	0	55,000	0
Early Years Outreach	0	0	38,500	0	11,000	0	25,000	0
Childminding Project	0	0	10,000	0	2,000	0	8,000	0
Baby Gym	0	0	2,600	0	1,000	0	1,600	0
<b>Primary and Community Healthcare (sub-total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>96,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>68,250</b>	<b>0</b>
SALT Early Intervention Project	0	0	48,000	0	13,000	0	35,000	0
Smoking Cessation	0	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0	0
Exercise Classes	0	0	4,000	0	1,000	0	3,000	0
Community Cafe	0	0	32,500	0	17,000	0	25,000	0
GP Services	0	0	10,500	0	5,000	0	5,250	0
<b>Special needs support (sub-total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Special Needs Project	0	0	33,000	0	10,000	0	23,000	0
<b>Additional activities (total)</b>	<b>11,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>50,123</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Teenage Parents Project	0	0	30,123	0	9,000	0	22,000	0
Relevant crime prevention and reduction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Planned activities [Britwell-Northborough Slough Sure Start	Spending per activity per financial year							
	2004-05				2005-06			
	Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought		Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought	
	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital
Relevant improvements to parents' employability	11,000	As yet unconfirmed	20,000	0	11,000	0	20,000	0
<b>Capital &amp; Revenue expenditure on building maintenance/occupation (total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34,000</b>	<b>16,451</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>10,000</b>
Improvements to buildings and other capital assets used to deliver these activities	0	0	9,000	0	0	0	8,000	0
Relevant improvements to local housing – Homemaker	0	0	25,000	16,451	0	0	22,000	10,000
Relevant improvements to local environment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Management &amp; development (total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>145,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>131,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Building community involvement in services	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	6,000	0
Programme management	0	0	120,000	0	0	0	110,000	0
Evaluation of these activities	0	0	15,000	0	0	0	15,000	0
Other (specify)								
Grand total per year	<b>83,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>710,123</b>	<b>16,451</b>	<b>207,850</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>582,350</b>	<b>10,000</b>
Totals of Sure Start contributions over three years								
Grand total for all three years								

Planned activities [Britwell-Northborough Slough Sure Start	Spending per activity per financial year							
	2006-07				2007-08			
	Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought		Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought	
	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital
<b>Core activities (Total)</b>	<b>233,600</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>300,750</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>317,500</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>216,850</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Outreach and home visiting (sub-total)</b>	<b>81,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>60,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>106,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Services to Pregnant Women	66,000	0	10,000	0	66,000	0	10,000	0
NNEB Home Visiting	15,000	0	0	0	15,000	0	0	0
Community Parents Project	0	0	50,000	0	25,000	0	25,000	0
<b>Support for families and parents (sub-total)</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>55,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Family Support Project	10,000	0	55,000	0	15,000	0	50,000	0
Ethnic Minorities Project	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Play, learning and childcare (sub-total)</b>	<b>69,600</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>119,500</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>98,500</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>90,600</b>	<b>0</b>

Planned activities  [Britwell-Northborough Slough Sure Start	Spending per activity per financial year							
	2006-07				2007-08			
	Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought		Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought	
	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital
TOPS	2,000	0	1,500	0	2,500	0	1,000	0
Neighbourhood Nursery	As yet unconfirmed	0	0	0	As yet unconfirmed	0	0	0
Childcare Project	20,000	0	40,000	0	30,000	0	30,000	0
Parent/Carer and Toddler Groups	2,000	0	5,000	0	3,000	0	4,000	0
Sure Start Creche	0	0	5,000	0	0	0	5,000	0
Britwell Play and Learn Library	25,000	0	40,000	0	35,000	0	30,000	0
Early Years Outreach	16,000	0	20,000	0	21,000	0	15,000	0
Childminding Project	3,000	0	7,000	0	5,000	0	5,000	0
Baby Gym	1,600	0	1,000	0	2,000	0	600	0
<b>Primary and Community Healthcare (sub-total)</b>	<b>55,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>51,250</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31,250</b>	<b>0</b>
SALT Early Intervention Project	23,000	0	25,000	0	33,000	0	15,000	0
Smoking Cessation	1,000	0	0	0	1,000	0	0	0
Exercise Classes	2,000	0	2,000	0	3,000	0	1,000	0
Community Cafe	23,000	0	20,000	0	30,000	0	13,000	0
GP Services	6,000	0	4,250	0	8,000	0	2,250	0
<b>Special needs support (sub-total)</b>	<b>18,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Special Needs Project	18,000	0	15,000	0	23,000	0	10,000	0
<b>Additional activities (total)</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19,000</b>	<b>0</b>
Teenage Parents Project	14,000	0	15,000	0	20,000	0	9,000	0
Relevant crime prevention and reduction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relevant improvements to parents' employability	11,000	0	20,000	0	20,000	0	10,000	0
<b>Capital &amp; Revenue expenditure on building maintenance/occupation (total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>10,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>
Improvements to buildings and other capital assets used to deliver these activities	0	0	8,000	0	0	0	5,000	0
Relevant improvements to local housing – Homemaker	0	0	15,000	10,000	0	0	10,000	5,000
Relevant improvements to local environment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Management &amp; development (total)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>120,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>99,000</b>	<b>0</b>

Planned activities [Britwell-Northborough Slough Sure Start	Spending per activity per financial year							
	<b>2006-07</b>				<b>2007-08</b>			
	Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought		Contribution from non-Sure Start sources		Amount of Sure Start grant sought	
	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital	Current	Capital
Building community involvement in services	0	0	5,000	0	0	0	4,000	0
Programme management	0	0	100,000	0	0	0	80,000	0
Evaluation of these activities	0	0	15,000	0	0	0	15,000	0
Other (specify)								
<b>Grand total per year</b>	<b>269,600</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>478,750</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>377,500</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>349,850</b>	<b>0</b>
Totals of Sure Start contributions over three years								
Grand total for all three years								

**Timetable of development of Sure Start Programme  
July 1999 - May 2000**

<b>MONTH</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>VENUE</b>
July	Sure Start Meeting -key agencies invited	Slough Town Hall
September	Sure Start reference group meeting - discussion of selection criteria and current service provision	Slough Town Hall
October	Sure Start Reference Group Meeting -discussion of consultation process	Slough Town Hall
November	Sure Start Reference Group Meeting -selection of Britwell-Northborough from criteria	Slough Town Hall
December 10th	Sure Start south-east Regional Meeting	Guildford
December 13th	Sure Start Reference Group Meeting -feedback from regional meeting and from consultation	Britwell Clinic
January 10th	Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Reference Group Meeting - Sure Start Advisor attended, steering groups initiated as well as Senior Managers Group. Consultation consultants appointed	Britwell Clinic
January 21st	Sure Start south-east Regional Meeting	Guildford
January 24th	Senior Managers Group Meeting with Sure Start Project Manager and Co-ordinator	Slough Town Hall
February 1st	Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Steering Group Meeting	Positive Steps, Britwell
February 3rd	Senior Managers Meeting with Sure Start Project Manager and Co-ordinator	Slough Town Hall
February 7 <sup>th</sup>	Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Reference Group Meeting - Feedback on consultation	Britwell Clinic
February 14th	Britwell-Northborough Parents Lunchtime Meeting	Positive Steps, Britwell
February 17th	Britwell- Northborough Steering Group -walk around and viewing premises for activities	Britwell/Northborough
February 21st	Senior Managers Meeting with Sure Start Project Manager and Co-ordinator	Slough Town Hall
February 29th	Outline Plan submitted	
March 6th	Senior Managers Meeting with Sure Start Project Manager and Slough Town Hall Co-ordinator	Slough Town Hall

March 13th	Britwell-Northborough Sure Start Reference Group Meeting - Discussion of Outline Plan and way forward	Britwell Clinic
March 17th	Britwell-Northborough Steering Group Meeting	Positive Steps, Britwell
March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Senior Managers Meeting with Sure Start Project Manager and Co-ordinator	Slough Town Hall
March 23 <sup>rd</sup> & 24 <sup>th</sup>	Britwell-Northborough Community Focus Groups with Parents	Positive Steps, Britwell
April 3rd	Parents Lunch to discuss ideas for Sure Start project and their needs	Positive Steps, Britwell
April 7 <sup>th</sup>	Senior managers meeting with Sure Start Project Manager and co-ordinator	Slough Town Hall
April 14 <sup>th</sup>	Britwell-Northborough Steering Group Meeting. Discussion of planning for real event	Positive Steps, Britwell
April 28 <sup>th</sup>	Senior managers meeting with Sure Start Project Manager and co-ordinator	Slough Town Hall
May 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Britwell-Northborough Steering Group Meeting. Final discussion of planning for real event	Positive Steps, Britwell
May 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sure Start Unit visit to Britwell-Northborough and Planning for Real consultation with local parents and children	Britwell Youth & Community Centre
May 12 <sup>th</sup>	Britwell-Northborough Steering Group Meeting -assessment of consultation feedback and selection of projects	Britwell Clinic
May 15 <sup>th</sup>	Senior Managers Meeting with Sure Start Project Manager and Co-ordinator- discussion of delivery plan and projects to be submitted	Slough Town Hall
May 16th	Sure Start Advisor visit to discuss delivery plan with steering group	Slough Town Hall
<b>May 23rd</b>	<b>Delivery Plan submitted to Sure Start Unit</b>	

## **Britwell- Northborough Sure Start protocol for referral and information sharing between agencies as agreed by the Family Support and Outreach Sub-group**

This agreement is made in order to facilitate the working relationships between all the following agencies working in the Sure Start area:

- Sure Start Midwife
- Health Visitors
- Positive Steps
- Sure Start Family and Outreach Project Co-ordinator
- Sure Start Core Team
- Slough Social Services
- Speech & Language Therapist
- Sure Start Speech and Language Early Intervention Service

It recognises that improvements in the outcomes for children in need can only be achieved by close collaboration between all those involved with young children and their families.

1. Information about Sure Start activities and services for young children is made widely available through publicity, and the Sure Start folder, which is given to all families by the Midwife or Health Visitor.
2. Where a member of the Sure Start Core Team, or any other worker, first registers a family with the Sure Start programme, they will 'signpost' the family to appropriate activities and services. This will not require completion of a formal referral form.
3. Where a worker identifies specific issues with a family, that worker will discuss issues with the family, agree appropriate referrals, and make those referrals. The referral form should indicate other agencies involved.
4. It is the responsibility of agencies receiving referrals to report back to the referrer. This will ensure that the referrer is aware of the take-up, or otherwise, of services, and can review this with the family.
5. When any service makes a decision that no further work/service will be provided, the referrer must be informed.
6. Agencies or services will see from the referral form which other agencies may be involved, and can make direct contact with those agencies as appropriate.
7. Family Co-ordination meetings will be held on a six-weekly basis, focusing on action planning and on-going review in respect on individual families where there is involvement with a range of Sure Start service providers.
8. All workers will be aware of, and work to, the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families, issued jointly by the Department of Health, the DfES and the Home Office.
9. All workers will be aware of, and work to, their agency's Child Protection Policy, Britwell-Northborough Sure Start's Child Protection Policy, and the Berkshire Area Child Protection Committee's Manual on Child Protection Procedures.
10. All workers will be aware of client confidentiality and share information on a 'need to know' basis. Families should be involved in making decisions about information sharing.
11. The duty of confidentiality to clients may be overridden where there is a strong case for disclosure in the public interest. There are some occasions when information can and should be passed on without the need for the individual's consent:
  - The protection of children
  - In order to prevent serious crime
  - In order to comply with a court order

In all these cases reference must be made to a senior manager before any disclosure is made.

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