

Adwick and Bentley Sure Start

Year 1 Evaluation Report Summary of Key Findings



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1 Background to the Research

Research was conducted during February and March 2004¹.

The broad aims of this stage of the evaluation were to undertake a user satisfaction survey with families in the Sure Start catchment area, to establish satisfaction with Family Support Services provided by Health, Social Services and Family Centres. In addition to this, the research evaluates the service delivery of core Sure Start team provision and health, with particular focus on partnership working and the accessibility of these services.

The more specific objectives of the first year evaluation were to:

- Measure the impact of Sure Start provision on families living in the programme catchment area
- Enable participation of all families with under fours in the Adwick and Bentley Sure Start catchment area
- Assess current systems established with families and health in terms of partnership working
- Assess current service delivery in terms of accessibility to families of under fours

The service delivery to be assessed includes:

- Tots 'n' Toys
- Toy Library
- Community Clinic
- Baby Massage
- Mums 'n' Tums

¹ A copy of the full report is available from the programme manager

2 Methods

2.1 *User satisfaction survey*

- The aims of the survey were to establish baseline data and to inform future development
- 7 local parents were trained to complete surveys with other parents/ carers within the community
- 234 questionnaires were completed
- Which is 23% of the 1017 families in the programme area

2.2 *Parental focus group*

- The aims of the focus group were to consider the experiences of non-users of Sure Start and any barriers they might have experienced to accessing Sure Start services
- 6 mothers attended the focus group

2.3 *Interviews with staff*

- To review current service delivery
- To consider effectiveness of programme management structure
- To assess extent to which structure supports achievement of objectives
- To examine parental involvement in the programme
- Seven in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with staff members
- Respondents included staff in a range of job roles

2.4 *Interviews with management board members*

- To assess effectiveness of management board
- To examine inter-agency working
- To consider programme management structure
- Eleven in-depth telephone interviews were completed in total
- Respondents included representatives from voluntary and community groups, representatives from the statutory sector and parents living locally

2.5 Small scale service evaluation

- A variation of methods were used to evaluate the service provision including, individual interviews, self-completion questionnaires and group discussions

3 Executive Summary

3.1 User Satisfaction Survey

- In total, 234 questionnaires were completed by families living in the programme catchment area out of a total of 1017 families. This is a 23% response rate.
- Over half of respondents lived in Bentley (55%), 19% live in Woodlands, 13% live in Highfields, 9% live in Adwick and 2% in Toll Bar.
- The majority of respondents were female (96%) and the majority described themselves as White British (94%).
- The greatest number of respondents were aged 16-25 years (43%), 33% were aged between 26-35 years.
- Just under two-thirds of respondents (62%) were married or living with a partner, 36% were lone parents or divorced.
- 55% of respondents had lived in the area for over 10 years, 13% had lived in the area between 5 and 10 years, 15% had lived there for between 2 and 5 years, 16% had lived in the area for less than two years.
- In terms of satisfaction with the area 59% felt that the area is ok, although they would like some things changing. Few respondents really disliked the area.
- Over three-quarters of respondents (77%) planned to live in the area for the foreseeable future.
- A majority of respondents had two children (37%), whilst 36% had just one child. A further 16% cared for three children whilst 7% had four children.
- Overall 6% of respondents or respondent's partners were expecting a baby.
- 70% of respondents said that they make use of childcare facilities; this could be full/part-time or sessional care.
- The majority of respondents (54%) that were not accessing childcare said this was because they preferred to look after their child themselves.
- A high proportion of respondents (88%) were aware of Sure Start prior to completing the questionnaire.
- The most common way that respondents had heard about Sure Start was through their midwife or health visitor (50%), 35% had heard about it through friends and relatives, 21% had heard about the programme through leaflets or flyers.
- Overall 146 respondents (62%) had used Sure Start services and 88 respondents (38%) had not used services.

- In terms of respondents awareness of services the parents/ carers were most likely to be aware of the Community Clinic (55%), the Baby Group (50%) and the Toy Library (42%).
- Respondents were least likely to be aware of Take a Break, Baby Swimming Group and training for parents.
- It is worth noting that respondents may have shown greater awareness of training for parents if they had been listed by their individual course titles.
- The highest proportion of respondents, that had accessed services, had just accessed one service.
- When asked why they had not accessed services the most common reason given by respondents was that they were not aware of them (34%), 27% said they were too busy, 22% felt that they did not need to access services, 11% felt that they would not know anybody there and 3% stated that they were unable to get to services or facilities.
- In terms of respondents general satisfaction with the services for families and children in the Sure Start area 19% were very satisfied, 45% satisfied and 27% neither satisfied or dissatisfied, 3% of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the services in the area.
- Over one-third of respondents (40%) feel that Sure Start activities do not encourage the involvement of fathers.
- Suggestions for encouraging the involvement of fathers included; holding fathers only groups, having publicity that encourages fathers' participation, a change to the times of some activities to suit working fathers, introducing activities to suit dads such as sports (dads' football sessions) and employing male crèche/childcare workers.
- The majority of respondents (65%) felt able to access a safe and usable play area, 18% said they could not.
- In terms of the respondents health a majority of respondents stated that they generally feel ok, but with some room for improvement (46%), a small proportion of parents stated that they 'couldn't be better' (8%), whilst 6% said their health had a lot of room for improvement. Just 1% stated that they feel dreadful.
- 6% of parents/ carers said that they suffer from a long standing illness, health problem or disability, which limits their daily activities in some way
- Just under a third of respondents (32%) stated that they smoke on a daily basis, whilst 12% stated that they smoke occasionally. Overall 47% of respondents that smoke suggested that they would like to give up.
- 11% of respondents did not feel that they have a healthy diet.
- In total four respondents (2%) said they had a child with a disability or special need.

- Overall, the responses were fairly positive about all aspects of the GP surgeries.
- Nearly eight in ten respondents (79%) stated that they were very or fairly satisfied with the support offered by their community midwife.
- A majority of respondents were very satisfied with the health visitors (40%), whilst a further 36% were satisfied.
- A majority of parents go to appointments, shops; toddler groups etc by foot (67%), a further 43% drive themselves, whilst just under a quarter of the respondents travel by bus (24%).
- Lone parents were more likely to be using public transport or relying on lifts from others compared to married or co-habiting respondents.
- 68% of respondents stated that someone in their house was in paid employment.
- Respondents from Highfields were most likely to be living in a workless household.
- A majority of respondents were not working and not seeking employment (28%), 25% of respondents were employed part-time and 13% were employed full-time, 8% were unemployed and looking for work.
- Almost a third of respondents (30%) said that there was a training course that they would like to undertake in the near future.
- Courses frequently mentioned were: childcare, computing, first-aid, hairdressing, midwifery, and nursing.
- 21% of respondents reported that they would like to improve their basic skills.

3.2 Parental focus group – non users of Sure Start

- Six mothers with children under 4 years living in the programme area attended a focus group.
- Although participants had indicated in the questionnaire that they had not used Sure Start services, it became apparent that some had used facilities such as the Toy Library and attended one-day events.
- Five participants had been aware of Sure Start prior to completing the satisfaction questionnaire, one participant had not.
- The parents did not feel they knew very much about Sure Start although they described it as being for families with children aged 0-4 years. They were most uncertain about the area it covered. One participant asked whether Sure Start worked in partnership with other services that work with families.
- Participants felt that dropping leaflets door-to-door, putting an advertisement in the free newspaper and distributing information through schools (e.g. in school letters) would all be good ways of letting families know about Sure Start.

- The main barriers experienced when accessing services were delays in receiving information about services or parents feeling that their enquiries are not followed up sufficiently, in addition parents would like to receive information about Sure Start services, groups and activities further in advance. Some parents feel concerned about what they can do with their older children when accessing Sure Start services with their 0-4 year olds.
- Participants generally seemed happy with the antenatal and postnatal support that they had received. They suggested that they would have been keen to access practical groups around these issues.
- Parents felt the playgroups in Bentley were friendly and had good equipment. It was discussed that they had improved in the last 12 months.
- Some participants were aware of the Sure Start Toy Library, others were not. It was felt that it was a good facility and could be improved if it was made more accessible to families outside of Bentley.
- Parents wanted to be able to access services with their children where both they and their child would learn something, or where they could watch their child do an activity they would not be able to do at home and where they could relax.
- Some parents were aware of the children's centre and discussed that they hoped there would be facilities there for older children and that it would be a safe environment.

3.3 Recommendations from parental research

- Consider doing further work to advertise the individual services, because although the majority of parents were aware of Sure Start generally, fewer were aware of the specific services and support that Sure Start can offer.
- It seems to be particularly important to target those families that are not already accessing Sure Start as many users of services during the individual service evaluations said that they had found out about Sure Start from Sure Start workers when attending other groups. Advertise more widely, as parents suggest, through schools, mail drops and local papers and encourage users of services to tell their friends about Sure Start.
- Continue to encourage health visitors and midwives to inform families about Sure Start, as this appeared to be the most effective method of raising awareness of the programme.
- Ensure that all those who contact Sure Start are given up to date information well in advance of the event.
- Ensure follow up to all who register or contact the service and consider sending regular information to parents when they register to maintain contact with families that may not have taken up services initially.

- Consider asking parents whether they have accessed Sure Start before when they phone/visit Park Lodge to make an enquiry and use this as an opportunity to familiarise them with other aspects of the programme.
- Ensure families are aware that they are welcome to bring older children to a group. Carefully consider the activities that are available for the older children. As this was seen as barrier by some and many parents have older children in addition to their under 4's.
- Do further work to inform the community about the benefits of Sure Start, the programme area and the ways of working (e.g. working in partnership and parent led).
- Continue to encourage the involvement of fathers in the programme, through father friendly initiatives such as those suggested by respondents e.g. Dad's groups, advertising specifically to dads and activities on the evenings and weekends. Consider holding groups which could be attended by Mums and Dads together, e.g. on the weekends.
- In addition Sure Start could also improve the information that is available to new fathers. Consider offering 'Dads packs' or information that could be offered to dads through health professionals. Also consider holding antenatal and postnatal groups that could be attended by Mums and Dads in the evenings and weekends. The needs of new fathers was identified in the initial consultation with dads.
- Try to review the quality of play equipment in the parks and play areas in the programme area.
- The survey has highlighted the greater needs of families in Highfields in some areas. Consider prioritising the support available to families in Highfields in particular around health issues and employment and training.
- Try to offer support to smokers through professionals. Respondents reported that this would be the most effective way of helping them to give up.
- Although the programme offers transport, consider distributing information about public transport routes to families that do not live in Bentley.
- Continue to offer training, ensuring that courses that have been well attended/oversubscribed are repeated. In addition consider offering training courses that survey respondents were interested in.

3.4 Staff Interviews

- Seven Sure Start staff members were interviewed.
- The majority of interviewees work between 20 and 30 hours a week and have been working for the programme between 6 months and a year.
- Some staff feel that they are meeting the aims of their role and others do not.

- Barriers to meetings aims of their role included; lack of take up of services, reluctance from families to change behaviour and the lack of a suitable building.
- All staff feel that their role is very essential to the running of programme.
- The majority of staff discussed that they feel very aware of the range of services that Adwick and Bentley Sure Start are providing. They felt that this was necessary so that they can raise awareness in the area. A couple of interviewees felt that they were more of services in Bentley than in other areas.
- Tots 'n' Toys, the Toy Library, one off events and training for parents were some of the services that staff felt were working particularly well.
- Staff described that parents usually find out about their services through other Sure Start workers and word of mouth.
- Additional types of support offered to attract families, in addition to practical support, includes staff meeting families before services or accompanying families to services.
- General benefits to families of using services included increased self-confidence and that Sure Start does not come with the stigma that is attached to Social Services. Other more service specific benefits were also mentioned e.g. increasing library attendance.
- Engaging travellers was perceived to be a particular problem for the programme.
- One interviewee discussed that families located in the Highfields area are not accessing services yet.
- Staff discussed that outreach work is the main way the programme is trying to reach 'hard to reach' groups.
- Lack of space and lack of computers hindered the day-to-day work of some staff.
- Staff are aware that the lack of space is temporary and feel that the lack of space and lack of computers will be resolved when they move to the children's centre.
- In terms of mainstreaming, some interviewees discussed that once Sure Start funding has ceased the children's centre and the nursery will function independently.
- Some staff discussed that the key new way of working, which they have developed through Sure Start, is that the work that they do is parent led.
- Some interviewees discussed conflicts that they had experienced in the past with mainstream agencies e.g. mainstream agencies not following up enquiries made by the Sure Start team and the different approaches that they take to problems that have arisen.
- Interviewees feel they receive good support from their manager which is aided by monthly one to one meetings and an open door policy.

- Staff reported that managers do not let any managerial problems affect their relationships with staff.
- The majority of interviewees do not feel very aware of how the management board operates.
- Some staff said that there is not as much parental involvement in the management board as they would like there to be.
- One staff member felt that some parents involved in the management board feel overwhelmed by it.
- Staff discussed that they will work in partnership with any organisations, in order to provide the best support to families.
- Some staff explained that they had benefited from sharing best practice with other Sure Start programmes.
- Most respondents feel very aware of NCH guidance and explained that National Sure Start guidance is fed down to them through their line manager if it is relevant to them.
- Additional services that interviewees would like to provide included: a pre-school induction group, a bus to take to hard to reach groups, more support for hard to reach groups including teenage pregnancies and offering swimming sessions to every child under 4 years old.

3.5 Recommendations from staff interviews

- Consider the high expectations held by staff members about the children's centre and try to ensure that systems are in place to meet these expectations e.g. adequate provision of computers, desk space and storage facilities.
- Consider the availability of suitable venues for service delivery in areas outside of Bentley. Raise all staff members awareness of current service delivery outside of Park Lodge.
- Ensure that the work already undertaken with hard to reach group continues and ensure all staff are aware of plans that are in place for reaching these group, as some staff seemed less aware of provision that is available than others. Also try to do further work with health to ensure that all staff have details about the families in the programme area with disabilities and special needs.
- Encourage staff members to visit other Sure Start programmes to gain ideas, as this appears to have been beneficial to some interviewees.
- As one respondent discussed that the demands on the programme will become greater as the programme develops, ensure that the programme expands to meet these needs. Respondents suggested that in the future the programme area would benefit from more health professionals and additional childcare staff.

3.6 Management board interviews

- Eleven management board members were interviewed. Including representatives from mainstream agencies, voluntary and community organisations and parents living in the programme area.
- Most management board members feel that they have a good overview of Sure Start services, some do not and these expressed a desire to know more.
- Management board members appear to share the same understanding of the aims of the programme.
- Barriers encountered in the development stage of the programme were a general scepticism from the community about funding initiatives and the large programme area.
- The management board feel that the programme has already added value to existing services in Adwick and Bentley. In particular, it was discussed that the parent and toddler groups have benefited greatly and that parents have noticeably developed in confidence.
- Problems experienced when developing services were building trust between staff already working in the area and Sure Start staff, and accommodating interests between the aims of Sure Start and the aims of the organisations that it works in partnership with.
- Some respondents said that it was important to keep the channels of communication open between the programme and partnership organisations by holding regular meetings.
- One interviewee discussed that current service delivery needs to put more emphasis on teenage pregnancy, as this was felt to be lacking in terms of current service provision.
- Interviewees that had been involved in developing services for other Sure Start programmes discussed that this had helped them to avoid problems when developing services for Adwick and Bentley Sure Start.
- Parent board members have been involved in developing and delivering services for the programme.
- The programme management is perceived to be very hard working and inclusive. It is seen to 'rise to the challenge' when problems do occur.
- Some interviewees were unclear about their role as a management board member.
- There are mixed feelings about how effectively the board work together; some feel that they work well, while others feel it is not working to its full potential.
- Barriers to successful management board meetings were discussed as being a lack of focus and clarity at the meetings, communication from the programme to

board members, the ratio of parents to professionals and the timing and planning of meetings.

- The main benefit of partnership working was perceived to be that it achieves the best results for the families.
- Most interviewees feel the programme has been good at maintaining links with mainstream agencies. Although one respondent felt that there was a need to raise awareness of Sure Start with schools outside of Bentley.
- Over half of the interviewees have had some involvement with other Sure Start programmes. This helps them with difficulties that might arise and has meant that they were able to offer this experience to the programme.
- The majority of respondents do not feel that there is enough parental involvement in the management board, although it was recognised that the programme works very hard to encourage parents to become involved.
- It was suggested that the management board has suffered from a high turnover of parent management board members.
- It was felt that the timing of meetings could be changed to encourage the involvement of parents. Some interviewees suggested that parents would benefit from more support and training to enable them to participate more fully in the management of the programme e.g. a pre-management board meeting and a buddy system.
- In terms of hard to reach groups, as mentioned by staff, travellers and fathers were perceived to difficult to engage.
- Management board members have different levels of understanding about plans to mainstream services.
- Some feel that working with Sure Start has helped them to focus their own work around what the parents want. Although some did not feel that they have changed their way of working through their involvement with Sure Start.

3.7 Recommendations from management board interviews

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure the adequate distribution of minutes prior to board meetings and that meeting dates are fixed well in advance.• Consider appropriateness of current timing of meetings – perhaps alternative day/ evening.• Develop/ improve systems to ensure effective communication between programme staff and board members.• The programme could consider inviting staff to report to the board about any key developments/ successes/ changes in current service. This would increase board members awareness of current service provision and staffs' understanding of the working of the board. |
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- Consider organising a partnership day to review progress to date, clarify roles of partners and plan strategy for future work.
- Work to encourage more consistent parent representation and to enable participants to take a more active role in the meetings e.g. pre-management board meeting for parent board members to view the agenda and discuss issues, and the introduction of buddy system between parent board members and professional board members.
- Perhaps do further work to raise the awareness and the benefits of Sure Start in schools and nursery schools.

3.8 Toy Library

- Five members of the Sure Start Toy Library completed a self-completion questionnaire.
- Because of the very low response, these findings should be treated as interim rather than conclusive.
- Members had heard about the Toy Library through a range of methods these included: a flyer/leaflet, relative/friend, a Sure Start worker and a health visitor.
- The majority of respondents were very satisfied with all the toys they had borrowed.
- The majority of respondents were very satisfied with other aspects of the Toy Library including: length of borrowing, the condition of toys and the overall quality of the Toy Library.
- Three respondents felt the Toy Library had helped improve their child's development.
- Four respondents reported the Toy Library had helped them to meet new friends or other parents.
- Two respondents reported it had helped their child to meet other children.
- Four respondents stated that the Toy Library had helped to raise their awareness of Sure Start.

3.9 Tots 'n' Toys

- Small group discussions were undertaken with 5 parents attending a Tots 'n' Toys session.
- Most parents became aware of the group through a Sure Start worker.
- Parents described how the group gave them a welcome opportunity to meet other parents.

- Parents were offering and receiving support from each other.
- Children were interacting with other children.
- Children also had the opportunity to experience new things.
- Some parents suggested that a single room might offer a better environment.

3.10 Community Clinic

- A total of 20 interviews were completed with mums and dads attending the Community Clinic.
- The majority of parents were informed of the clinic through their health visitor or midwife.
- Many parents enjoy the social aspect of the clinic and welcome the opportunity to have a chat and cup of coffee with friends and meet new people.
- Parents especially fathers, enjoyed being updated on their baby's weight and general progress.
- Being able to talk to and seek advice from a health visitor was also valued.
- Many parents enjoyed being able to use the crèche and felt they and their children had benefited from this.
- Two of the couples felt that the clinic helped them to talk as a family about parenting issues.
- Most of the parents were satisfied with the clinic.
- Some suggested that it may be useful to have a greater presence of Sure Start staff at the sessions.
- Slight concerns were expressed about the amount of time parents were able to spend with the health visitor as the clinic became more popular.

3.11 Baby Massage

- This evaluation involved an analysis of self-completion surveys that had been completed by parents attending the course between May 2003 and February 2004 and through a focus group that was held in March 2004 involving current course participants.
- A total of 16 surveys were completed by parents attending the course during the period May 2003 to February 2004.
- Respondents gave the instructor was 'good', 'very good' or 'great' ratings on all of the aspects that they were asked to rate them on.

- In an open question, the respondents described the environment of the course as being welcoming, calming and relaxing.
- All 16 respondents felt that the course had met their expectations.
- Fifteen respondents felt that the course had had a positive effect on their relationship with their baby.
- Most respondents did not feel that any changes needed to be made to the course.
- Three mums attended the focus groups after their third baby massage session.
- All participants had heard about the course through their midwife and some had been waiting for a considerable length of time (up to 5 months) to attend.
- Two of the mums self-referred to the course, although one suggested that it was recommended to her at the postnatal visit.
- There were no problems identified with accessing the venue.
- Parents were then asked to describe what they most liked about the course. The social benefits and being able to spend one to one time with their baby was also mentioned.
- The benefits that the mums felt the course had brought to themselves or their baby included being able to get to know their baby more and being able to understand the interaction with their baby.
- All participants described the course as very good. They felt that it might be useful to have more space, but they also recognized that it was valuable to have a small group working together.

3.12 Mums 'n' Tums

- Telephone interviews were undertaken with 4 mums that had previously attended the Mums 'n' Tums group/course.
- All the respondents' had found out about the group in a different way; through a leaflet at the Sure Start building, through a Health Visitor, through a midwife and through a Sure Start worker.
- They had attended the group for varying lengths of time. One respondent described that it had taken her a while to build up the courage to attend and then her baby was almost due.
- The mums explained that they expected the group to be an opportunity for parents to get together and to gain advice and share ideas about how to deal with pregnancy, labour and the baby.
- All the respondents that had expectations felt that they had been met.
- All the respondents stated that they were very satisfied with the course.

- None of the respondents experienced any difficulties accessing the venue.
- Respondents explained that they had found getting to know new people and being able to share experiences with other mums the most useful element of the course. One described that she had found a video shown by the midwife very useful.
- Two respondents suggested that encouraging more people to attend would improve the group.

3.13 Consulting with children

- Four children attending Little Voices at the Whisper completed an interactive children's survey with their mum and a researcher.
- Two of the children were 2 years and two were 3 years.
- All of the child pointed to a happy face when asked how they felt when they attended Little Voices at the Whisper.
- Three of the children most enjoyed playing with toys when they attend the group and most enjoyed seeing the carers or staff.
- The children were asked to pick their three favourite indoor toys/activities, colour them, cut them out and stick them onto the survey.
- All of the children commented that one of their favourite activities was colouring, drawing and painting, two children felt that dressing up was one of their favourite activities and two children mentioned that musical instruments was one of their favourite activities.
- The children were asked whether they usually play alone or with an adult when they attend Little Voices at the Whisper, two children answered 'alone' and 2 answered 'with an adult'.
- The parents that were with the children suggested improvement that could be made these were a warmer room and an outdoor area.

3.14 Recommendations from the small scale project evaluations

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake further evaluation of the Toy Library with a larger sample of respondents; also consider interviewing staff and volunteers about the Toy Library.• Consider venue for Tots 'n' Toys and possibility of holding it in a larger room.• Consider extra staff/ information available at Community Clinic to further publicise range of services and support offered by Sure Start. |
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- Arrange to run the Baby Massage course more frequently, as it seems to be very popular, and consider ways to keep in regular contact with those on the current waiting list.
- Undertake further evaluation of the Mums 'n' Tums group with more recent participants. Consider offering a similar group that is accessible to mums and dads.

3.15 Recommendations for future evaluation

- Do further consultations with children using a range of other services e.g. the crèche at the community clinic.
- It is very positive that the community have been involved in this first year evaluation. The programme should consider building on the skills developed by the parents and consider involving them in further evaluation work e.g. developing questionnaires, analysing results and report writing.
- Use the positive experiences of parents involved in the research to encourage the involvement of more parents in this aspect of the programme.
- Consider forming an evaluation sub-group with representation from parents, to consider key areas for evaluation and suitable methods to be used.
- Consider holding an event involving partners, staff, and the community to establish areas that they feel need to be considered in the second year evaluation.
- Consider asking families when they register with the programme if they are willing to be contacted for research purposes. This makes accessing potential research participants easier, in line with the Data Protection Act, it also emphasises to users that evaluation is an essential aspect of the programme.
- The evaluation perhaps suffered from the short timescale that was allocated to it. The programme could consider conducting the evaluation work for the second year evaluation report throughout the year, to ensure that groups can be evaluated when they are running and so that the community, staff and partnership agencies do not get 'research fatigue' over a short period.
- The programme will need to refocus its evaluation work to take into account the movement towards the children's centre, as set out in guidelines provided by the Sure Start Unit.
- The involvement of children in this evaluation, although minimal, is positive. Consider ways that children could be further involved in the evaluation e.g. through observation work, through use of photographs and drawings.

