

Sure Start Tamworth

Annual Evaluation Report

2003

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Author - Evaluation Officer

The authors would like to thank the programme manager, the programme staff and all parents and children who took part in the evaluation.

1. Executive Summary

This annual report provides an overview of the evaluation and monitoring activities of Sure Start Tamworth during 2003.

1.1 Background

1.2 Methods

The evaluation has involved a range of quantitative and qualitative information. Different methods have been employed to provide a variety of useful information to help the programme to progress.

The report includes an analysis of the monitoring information and the progression of the programme to meet these targets. This is discussed under the objectives, listed below.

Objective 1: Improving Social and Emotional Development

Objective 2: Improving Health.

Objective 3: Improving children's ability to Learn.

Objective 4: Strengthening Families and Communities.

1.3 Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations from the Partnership evaluation was that: overall the partnership appeared to be developing well, but important issues had to be addressed for the progress to continue i.e. the involvement of more new parents in the partnership was vital for the development of the board to avoid the 'clique' of parents developing.

It was also important that a diverse range of views and ideas were heard, to reflect those of the wider community.

2. Background

Sure Start Tamworth is a fourth round local programme and was granted full written approval on 14th November 2001 and covers Glascote Heath and part of Belgrave ward in Tamworth.

We have approx 600 children in the area under four with less than 2% coming from minority ethnic groups. The housing is a mix of local authority, social landlords and privately owned dwellings. The majority of both of the estates were built at the end of the 1960's / early 1970's and were used to re-house "overspill" from Birmingham.

3. Methods

3.1 Evaluation of Sure Start Tamworth is carried out by the evaluation team based in a central resource team within Staffordshire County Council working with 6 Sure Start Programmes in Staffordshire to provide expertise on evaluation methods and techniques. The local evaluator is based part-time at the programmes central office. The evaluation has been led by the programme team and the evaluation officer. The evaluation approach also incorporates key elements of the Action Research approach the main aim for the local evaluation is to produce practically useful findings and to enable the programme to reflect upon and remodel services where necessary.

The evaluation has involved the use of a range of methods to analyse the impact of Sure Start Tamworth. The evaluation officer has worked with different members of the team to progress the evaluation. This has been a two way process with the evaluation officer supporting team members to pursue evaluation of their own activities and providing feedback on the progress of the evaluation to the information officer so that it can be disseminated more widely.

The evaluation work that has been undertaken has involved the use of a range of methods to assess the impact of Sure Start Tamworth. Both quantitative and qualitative information has been involved and the evaluation officer has worked with the programmes monitoring assistant to provide feedback on the programmes progress towards national and local targets. All monitoring data used in this report was collected by the programme and its partners and passed to the evaluation team for use in this report.

This report incorporates the evaluation work carried out by Sure Start Tamworth during 2002/2003.

- 2 Partnership working evaluation
- 3 Child Consultation

The original evaluation plan has been modified and amended throughout the year to mirror the needs of the programme.

3.2 Document Analysis

An assessment of both National and programme based documents was carried out to gain a clear insight into the programme, background information on service provision and current activities nationwide. This information helped to shape interview schedules and questionnaire formats. The analysis included methodologies and research found on the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) website, and various other Internet sites

Documents acquired from programme staff included:

- 1 Details of service provision
- 2 Strategies
- 3 Delivery plan
- 4 Newsletters

Evaluation reports

Methodologies

Below is a brief overview of the methodology of the Partnership working evaluation. The full report can be found in Annex 1

Face to face interviews were selected as the most appropriate data collection method. Interviews offer a considerable amount of flexibility and can be used as a retrospective tool. Participants can be asked to reflect on both past and present experiences. Semi-structured interviews were selected meaning that the main questions are open ended and fixed, but follow up questions are improvised in order to gain more insight into the answers given.

The Sure Start Tamworth partnership board is composed of 1/3 voluntary sector representatives 1/3 parent representatives and 1/3 statutory sector representatives. It was therefore decided that the sample must be representative of this composition with 3 individuals to be selected from each sector to take part in the interview process. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method this is the deliberate selection of individuals that are typical or interesting cases. A sample was built up to satisfy the specific needs of the research in this case the participants must have been involved with the partnership board for at least the past six month and regularly attend board meetings. Individuals meeting the criteria for each sector were then approached and asked to take part in the interviews. The planning sampling and selection of participants was completed by the end of March 2003.

4 Findings

Partnership working

The evaluation found that overall across all 3 sectors they felt that the Board was working well and that 4 main successes had been identified:

- 1 Equality amongst the various sectors
- 2 The way jargon had been avoided was seen as very positive and enabled

- the Board to work together successfully.
- 3 The Programme Manager and Chair pushing things along and being supportive.
 - 4 The Sure Start partnership enabled relationships to build on the networks that were already there.

The Partnership limitations that had come out of the interviews was poor attendance at Board Meetings, particularly within the statutory sector and although partnership members did appreciate that professionals did have hectic schedules, they still felt that the non attendance reflected negatively.

Members were advised that because of the small community it always seemed to be the same people involved in the agencies and although this was good in keeping continuity and being able to exchange ideas, conversely it can have a negative impact when trying to encourage new people to become involved in the Board because the group can be seen as a 'clique' and thus discouraging new people to become involved.

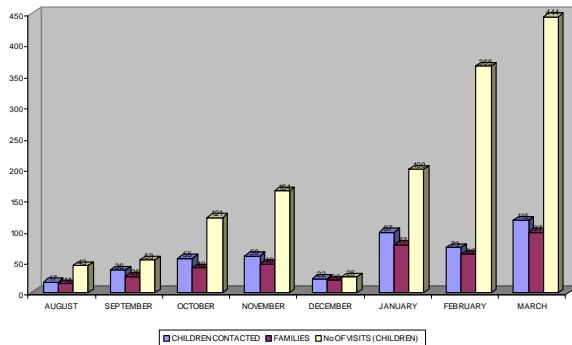
Members were advised that the conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation was that overall the partnership appeared to be developing well, but important issues had to be addressed for the progress to continue.

Members were advised that the involvement of more new parents in the partnership was vital for the development of the board to avoid the 'clique' of parents developing. It was also important that a diverse range of views and ideas were heard, to reflect those of the wider community.

Sure Start Tamworth Contact Figures

- 1 Sure Start activities began in August 2002.
- 2 From the period August 2002 to March 2003 (end of the financial year) we had contact with 186 individual children, representing contact with 144 families with a total of 1456 child-visits (i.e. total multiple contacts with children).
- 3 Monthly figures relating to contact with individual children and families from Aug 02 to March 03 are represented on the attached graph

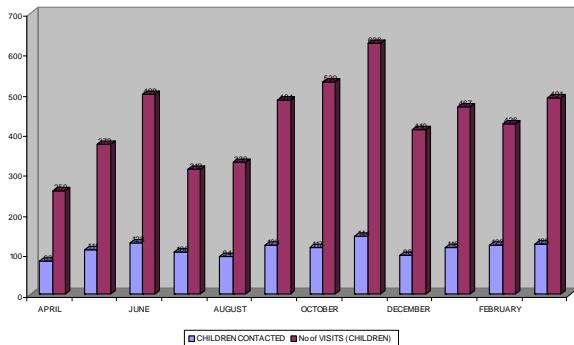
CHILD AND FAMILY CONTACTS
TAMWORTH SURE START AUGUST 2002 TO MARCH 2003



(Please note that although the figures relate to individual children and not their multiple attendances, the individual children may nevertheless have had contact with Sure Start over multiple months (i.e. each month may include children also seen in other months)

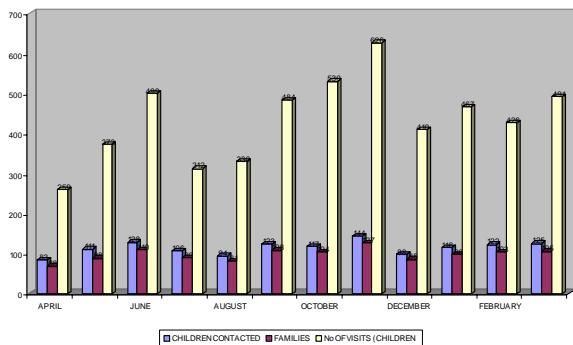
- 4 Mean number of child contacts stood at 7.9 per child (range 1 to 52) for Aug 2002 to March 2003.
- 5 Attendances and contacts increased steadily in the financial year April 2003 to March 2004. 347 individual children were contacted from 285 families with a total of 5389 child-visits. Monthly figures are represented on the graph below.

CHILDREN CONTACTED & NUMBERS OF VISITS
TAMWORTH SURE START APRIL 2003 TO MARCH 2004



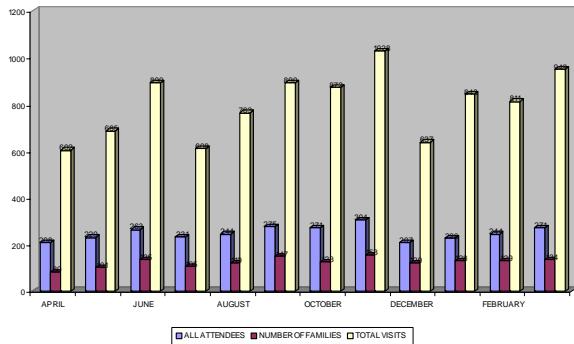
- 6 Child and family contacts and total visits are represented on the graph below

CHILD AND FAMILY CONTACTS
TAMWORTH SURE START APRIL 2003 TO MARCH 2004



- 7 A total of 9578 visits were recorded for all attendees (adults & children) representing contact with 326 families.
- 8 Monthly figures for these are represented on the graph below.

ALL ATTENDEES & ATTENDANCES TAMWORTH SURE START APRIL 2003 TO MARCH 2004



- 9 During financial year 2003 to 2004 Sure Start had contact with approximately 81% of registered children (based upon mail merge figures). This represents approximately 71% of contact with all children in Sure Start area - registered or not (based on NHS figures of 488 0-3s as of Oct 2 004).
- 10 The mean rate of child contacts for financial year 2003 to 2004 had doubled from the previous year at 15.3 contacts per child (range 1 to 102) with 27.6% having only one contact and 72.4% have more than one contact (I can probably categorise and do a pie chart if required).

Currently we have 444 children under 4 registered at Sure Start. NHS Children's Health Unit stated that as of Oct 04 there were 488 under 4s in the area. Therefore approximately 90.9% of eligible children in the Tamworth Sure Start area are registered with the programme.

Child consultation

A Consultation with children aged 3-5 year olds is currently being carried out throughout Staffordshire in disadvantaged wards and Sure Start areas. The project began in December 2003 and is due for completion at the end of April 2004. The aim of the project is to find out what things children enjoy doing and what things are important to them. The sessions involve a maximum of 7 children per group with two groups being conducted in the Tamworth area. Individual children are selected with the assistance of staff who are familiar with the children.

The researchers ask the children a variety of simple questions such as 'what do you like playing with at nursery' and 'what is the most important thing about going to nursery' The aim is to start to build a rapport with the children and get them thinking and telling us about their routines and likes / dislikes. By asking them about their daily routine, this will highlight to us the things they remember and therefore what stands out in their mind as a major part of childcare, indicating to us what may be important and can also lead to further discussion.

The methods used are drawn from the Mosaic approach (Clarke & Moss 2001) and involve:

- 1 Children drawing pictures
- 2 Children taking photographs with disposable cameras of what they like & don't like to do
- 3 Researchers observe and make field notes during these sessions
- 4 Child led tours in which children can reveal their favourite places/activities/people and discuss their daily routine will also be carried out.
- 5 Short informal interviews with parents and staff to gain their perspectives of the child's experiences of childcare

The use of cameras was piloted with 2 year olds however they found the equipment too difficult to use therefore it was decided that the only children 3 years and over should be included.

The researchers visit the setting on two occasions initially to carry out the activities returning to discuss the photographs and clarify what is important to the children and how they felt about the results. It is particularly important that the children are at the centre of the analysis process to avoid misinterpretation of the photographs by the adults. The researcher records the information and themes discussed by the children on a record sheet (See annex 4) and takes field notes and observations of the children and the setting. These notes will be transcribed and analysed using a system of open coding to identify any themes that emerge.

Day nurseries were chosen as the setting in which this research should take place, because they predominantly provide full time childcare provision and have indoor and outdoor facilities, thereby allowing the children to illustrate their likes and dislikes from a variety of different forms of play . The Day Nurseries involved were selected through purposive random sampling this method was selected because it allows for the deliberate or strategic selection of specific cases where the overall potential purposeful sample is larger than that required for the study. This method also reduces bias within the purposeful category.

Ethical issues were particularly important when working with young children. Researchers attended child protection training and prepared a strategy to deal with any potential issues that could be uncovered by the research.

Consent forms were sent out to all parents regardless of whether their child was involved in the consultation process; this was important because the children were using cameras and could potentially have taken photographs of any of the children. An information sheet was also provided with the consent form to give parents as much information about the research as possible giving details of how

to contact the researchers if they had any questions or queries. If the parents declined consent the children did not take part in the exercise. The children were also asked on the day if they wanted to take part the research was explained in child friendly language and the children were able to withdraw at any time. A key worker was also present at all times during the research process.

In the situations where consent had not been gained from parents the researcher and setting manager examined all photographs and any containing those children that had not consented were destroyed. No photographs containing children will be used or displayed.

Objective 1: Improving Social and Emotional Development

The number of children aged 0-3 living in the Sure Start area who have been re-registered on the child protection register within a twelve month period was 0 for both the years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003. This continues the progress of maintaining the 0% of registered children that was recorded as the start point data.

The percentage of mothers identified with Post Natal Depression in 2000 -.2001 was 0.8% and in 2002-2003 was 3.6%.

The Number of babies living in the Sure Start area whose families have been contacted by local Sure Start programme within the first 2 months of their child's birth increased from 0 in 2001-2002 to 89 in 2003-2004.

The number of babies who reached the age of 2 months within the measurement period increased from 0 in 2001-2002 to 110 in 2003-2004.

100% of babies were not visited due to some difficulties with the timely receipt of accurate data from the PCT.

>From the previous figures it can be seen that the percentage of families with young children contacted within two months of birth by a member of the Sure Start programme rose from 0% to 80.9%

During 2001-2002 certain systems for data collection had not been established and there were therefore few returns. During 2002-2003 the milestones were partially achieved but progress was restricted due to difficulties in obtaining data regarding new births. This situation is now resolved and the programme is addressing the shortfall.

There are a number of services and activities that work towards Objective 1. these are listed below.

- 6 Home Start
- 7 Family Support Project which includes Relax & Play (drop-in sessions), Parents Advice Shop, Parenting courses
- 8 Parent Participation Worker, whose brief is to engage parents, in particular those who are not “natural joiners.”

Objective 2: Improving Health

During the measurement period we were unable to obtain accurate figures for the number of women who smoked during pregnancy. This was due to a

changeover in the data collection system used by the PCT.

However, we now have access to systems to collect the data and are reasonably confident that we will be able to monitor this target in the next period.

Our community midwife is working to increase awareness of the impact of smoking during pregnancy and after the birth.

Smoking cessation will be furthered not only by the midwife but also the whole staff team who have undergone smoking cessation awareness and smoke free homes training.

The number of mothers' breastfeeding at birth was 41 for 2001 and 13 for 2002.

The number of mothers with new born babies where feeding status is known was 101 for 2001-2002 and for 111 2002-2003.

>From these figures the percentage of mothers breast feeding at birth was 40% for 2001-2002 and 12% for 2002-2003.

Data regarding the number of mothers' breastfeeding at 4 weeks has not available from the PCT in the form required by the Sure Start Unit. However, the percentage of mothers breastfeeding at 8 weeks was 5.6% for 2001-2002 and 6% for 2002-2003.

During 2001-2002 we did not have a midwife on the local programme team.

Currently guidance and support are available for all parents. This is through a number of pathways.

- 1 The Sure Start midwife – Breast feeding group and one to one support
- 2 Family support project
- 3 Homestart
- 4 Parent Participation worker

The whole programme team are engaged upon generic awareness raising training to cover breastfeeding and health & safety. This is to ensure that

consistent messages are conveyed to families and to ensure that families can make informed decisions.

The collection of figures relating to the number of emergency admissions to hospital of children aged 0-3 living in Sure Start area with gastro-enteritis, lower respiratory infection, or severe injury has been very difficult. This is due to the geographical location of the Sure Start local programme. We are on the boundaries of two NHS Trusts and a Primary Care Unit. The collection systems used by each organisation do not match.

The start point data indicated that 24% (144 children) were recorded as being admitted to hospital between 01/04/00 and 31/03/01. However, we are aware that the above figure included children who presented at the minor injuries unit at the local hospital, not all of whom were actually admitted to a ward.

There are a number of services and activities that work towards Objective 2. These are listed below.

- 4 Sure Start Tamworth Low Cost Safety Equipment Scheme - safety equipment available at reduced prices, a partnership scheme with Staffordshire Fire Service.
- 5 Bumps 2 Babies group - hints & tips for mums-to-be & partners/support persons and new parents with babies up to six months. Info about pregnancy, labour, health & care of newborns.
- 6 Fun, Food and Fitness project. Runs the Food co-op / soup kitchen, Food for Thought (cook and eat sessions, food hygiene, managing allergies, etc) and Exercise sessions.

Objective 3: Improving the Ability to Learn

PSA Target

Achieve by 2004 in the 500 Sure Start areas a reduction of five percentage points in the number of children with speech and language problems requiring specialist intervention by the age of 4

SDA Targets

All children in Sure Start areas to have access to good quality play and learning opportunities, helping progress towards early learning goals when they get to school

Increased use of libraries by families with young children in Sure Start area

Figures would indicate that 18% of children aged four living in the Sure Start area had a speech and language development delay during 2002-2003.

The number of children aged four living in Sure Start area in measurement period was approx.120 for the year 2002-2003.

The percentage of children with speech and language development delay at age 4 was 19% for 2001-2002, which was calculated by the three year check, and 18% for the year 2002-2003.

These figures indicate progress towards the speech and language targets. A target of 5% reduction that is set for year three has a good basis on which this target can be achieved. The speech and language team run a number of activities throughout the week and have worked with local settings to include speech and language activities and language enrichment within the groups. Also, specialist workshops have been held with early years practitioners to disseminate goods practice.

The percentage of children that had access to good quality play and learning opportunities was determined as 33% for the start point data.

During 2001-2002 progress had been made to contribute to two outdoor play areas and to improve access to play and learning through the provision of toys and equipment. During 2002-2003 the programme had set up two weekly sensory and soft play sessions, one for 0 to 2 year olds and one for 2 to 4 year olds. Also the programme has supported a number of existing stay and play

sessions in the area. The toy library provides a variety of toys, games and learning materials to families across the Sure Start area.

The number of children 0-3 who are an active member of a library has increased from 47 in 2001-2002, to 78 in 2002-2003.

The number of children aged 0-3 living in the Sure Start area was 355 for 2001-2002 and 368 for 2002-2003.

These figures have resulted in the percentage of children aged 0-3 in Sure Start area with active membership of a library at 7.7% for 2001-2002 and 16.95% for 2002-2003.

>From this information it can be seen that the number of children accessing the library facilities has increased. The membership of under fours has increased and this had meant that the programme has met its target of 12% active membership for the period.

There are a number of services and activities that work towards Objective 3. These are listed below.

- 7 Roving Support Service to Toddler groups - planned activities, such as messy play & stories, for parents & children to work together in a safe & stimulating environment.
- 8 Child Development/Crèche project – providing developmentally appropriate crèches and play activities for children under four, with and without parents.
- 9 Jumping Beans Soft Play sessions. This aims to develop and stimulate the all round development of children aged between 2 and 4 years. Parents are encouraged to join in the activities.
- 10 Toy Library great opportunity for children, parents and carers. To drop in and choose from an exciting and stimulating range of toys, to take away

- and enjoy at home.
- 11 Baby, Bop and Roll, sensory and physical sessions for parents and children under two to enjoy.

Objective 4: Strengthening Families and Communities

PSA Target

Reduce the number of 0-3 year old children in Sure Start areas living in households where no-one is working by 12%

SDA Target

75% of families report personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of services providing family support

All Sure Start local programmes to have parent representation on local programme boards

All Sure Start programmes to ensuring links between local Sure Start partnerships and Employment Service Jobcentres.

We have had little success in obtaining accurate figures regarding the number of children aged 0-3 living in households in the Sure Start Tamworth area where there is no adult of working age in employment in 2002-2003.

This is due to the measurement area not matching the way in which data is collected by our partners in the employment service. We are hopeful that the latest work on the Census will be able to give us the information in the near future.

However, we are currently undertaking an exercise to track the destinations of adults who attend our adult learning opportunities. This data will be available by December 2004.

The start point data (which was extracted via DSS) indicated that the percentage of children 0-3 years living in workless households was 25.7% for Glascote Heath and 16.6% in Belgrave.

]

The Sure Start programme has sustained six parents on the partnership board since 2001-2002. The number of parents on the board has remained at 33% of the total board members.

Sure Start Tamworth approaches this objective in the following ways:

- 1 By collaborating with local organisations and partnerships to provide guidance and support for local people and families regarding future employment and careers.
- 2 There are links with the local job centres, who also have a seat on the partnership board, but also participation in events such as Adult Learners Week and Family Learning Events.

There are a number of services and activities that work towards Objective 4.

These are listed below.

- 12 Looking at learning Together a six week course for parents to support them to help their child's early learning. It also identifies parents own learning needs.
- 13 Parenting courses through Positive Parenting which includes hints about handling your children's behaviour and needs, and feeling better about yourself as a parent.
- 14 First Aid Courses – tailored to parents of young children and run by the Red Cross.
- 15 Parents Forum - All parents and carers are welcome, make new friends, influence the direction of the programme and gain confidence.
- 16 Relax and Play for parents/carers with young children, wanting to gain more confidence and build their esteem
- 17 Access all Areas – Adult learning opportunities, from recreational to vocational to academic courses. The project aims to remove the barriers to engaging in learning activities and mentors individuals to progress to

more in-depth learning or employment.

Recommendations

Data collection systems

We need to ensure that the data we require, for certain objectives, can be collected in a useful form.

To this end we have undertaken a review of the systems, which are under our direct control, i.e. contact forms, attendance monitoring forms, contract review paperwork etc. Some modifications have been made i.e. asking for employment status on the contact forms.

We have also contacted key agencies i.e. PCT, Employment Service etc to work with them to ensure a “better fit” in terms of our data requirements.

By adopting this partnership approach we hope to improve the sharing of data and to be able to provide even more meaningful evidence for our practice.

Build upon work done so far

We need to continue build upon the work done so far and to constantly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of service delivery against the objectives set.

Most importantly we must keep consulting with communities within our Sure Start area, to ensure sustainable change.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Partnership evaluation

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

The partnership board of Sure Start Tamworth came into being in early 2002, a great deal has been achieved by the programme during year one. As the first phase of development draws to a close it was felt that a period of reflection on the partnership would be beneficial. The purpose of this evaluation is to explore people's experiences of the partnership.

1.2 Methods

Interviews were selected as the most appropriate method of data collection for this evaluation carried out in spring 2003. This method allows for an exploration of the experiences and perceptions of participants in a confidential setting.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen, this method involves the use of main questions which are open ended and fixed, and follow up questions which are improvised in order to gain more insight into the answers given. Allowing any issues that arise in the interviews to be clarified and developed.

Nine interviews were carried out in total with three representatives of each sector, lasting approximately 45 minutes the interviews were recorded and analysed using a system of open coding.

1.3 Findings

In general people feel that the partnership is working well, having overcome some initial problems it was felt that the board is continuing to develop well with a good representation of the various groups within the Tamworth Sure Start area.

Several issues were raised as successes of the partnership (for more information see section 5.3). The equal status of all sectors was seen particularly positively, it was felt that all voices were listened to within the board processes. The exclusion of jargon and acronyms was highlighted as a positive step providing a level playing field for all board members. The supportive management structure of Sure Start Tamworth was also seen to facilitate success.

Factors that limit the partnerships effectiveness (for more information see section 5.4) included poor attendance rates at meetings and development sessions particularly from the statutory sector representatives. Development sessions are perceived as particularly important for parents to attend however other sectors do not see them as necessary for themselves. The issue of the divided communities of Glascote Heath and Belgrave was also seen as having a negative impact on the partnership. Work is being done to overcome this, however the conflicts can impact on the board.

Participants made several suggestions to improve the partnership (for more information see section 5.5). It was seen as important that new parents become involved in the board in order to gain a wide variety of views and ensure the board is effective. The introduction of board elections and a programme of support for potential board members were suggested as possibilities for the partnership. The interviews showed that the partnership reacted quickly to make decisions and find solutions these qualities are particularly important during the initial setting up phase of the

programme, however it was suggested that the board now needs to evolve as the programme. In order to become more proactive a process of reflecting on the work done so far and looking strategically to the future is required.

1.4 Recommendations & Conclusions

This evaluation has shown that the board members of Sure Start Tamworth feel that the partnership is mostly effective and has continued to improve over the past year.

Consideration needs to be given to methods of recruiting new parent representatives it is vital that new parents join to provide a diverse range of views and ideas that reflect those of the wider community

The partnership needs to work together to define the purpose and content of development sessions. There appears to be conflicting ideas as to the reasons for holding these sessions and what can be gained from them

Consideration needs to be given to introducing a rolling programme of development to involve new board members from all sectors.

A partnership development session should be held to look at the issues raised within this report in order to move the partnership forward

2. Background

2.1 The Sure Start Tamworth partnership board was established in early 2002 consisting of a mix of local parents, voluntary and statutory sector representatives. The partnership's role includes overseeing the aims of the programme, monitoring progress, and recommending changes and amendments to individual projects and the delivery plan.

2.2 Sure Start Tamworth's evaluation is lead by a core group consisting of parents, front line service providers, the programme manager and the evaluation co-ordinator. It was decided by the core group that an evaluation of the partnership board, focusing on its development over the past year, would be particularly useful having completed the initial phase of the programme with all projects and services now up and running. It was decided that at this stage it would be beneficial to consider the thoughts and perceptions of board members.

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1 The aim of the partnership evaluation was:

To explore the perceptions and experiences of members of the Sure Start Tamworth partnership during their first year

The objectives were to:

- Understand how people view the partnership
- Examine the successes and weaknesses of the partnership
- Investigate people experiences of working in partnership

4. Methods

4.1 Face to face interviews were selected as the most appropriate data collection method.

Interviews offer a considerable amount of flexibility and can be used as a retrospective tool. Participants can be asked to reflect on both past and present experiences. Semi-structured interviews were selected meaning that the main questions are open ended and fixed, but follow up questions are improvised in order to gain more insight into the answers given.

This method of questioning importantly allows for the participant to identify the issues that they feel are particularly salient. This helps to reduce the influence of the researcher on the responses. Interviews also have the advantages of a high response rate; because they are prearranged with participants, a convenient time and location can be selected to ensure a relatively low drop out rate. The direct contact between the researcher and participant means that the accuracy and relevance of the data can be checked as it is collected, adding validity to the study. The interview schedule (see appendix A) was pre-tested on a small number of staff in the Early Years Unit of Staffordshire County Council.

4.2 A purposive sampling method was used to recruit participants due to the composition of the board, the partnership is made up of 1/3 voluntary sector representatives 1/3 parent representatives and 1/3 statutory sector representatives. It was therefore decided that the sample must be representative of this composition with 3 individuals to be selected from each sector to take part in the interview process.

Purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of individuals that are typical or interesting cases. A sample was built up to satisfy the specific needs of the research, in this case the participants must have been involved with the partnership board for at least the past six month and regularly attend board meetings. Individuals meeting the criteria for each sector were then invited by letter (see Appendix B) to take part in the interviews.

4.3 All interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder. This was done with the permission of the individual, and was discussed before the start of each interview. All of the interviews were confidential, and the informants were made aware of this before the interview began and informed that the files would be kept in password protected files on the researchers PC and not made available to the programme at any time. Confidentiality was important for this study, so individuals felt comfortable talking openly about the positive and negative issues of their organisation and its involvement in partnership. In attempting to gain an insight into individual's perceptions and experiences, it was important that those taking part felt they could talk openly and in confidence to the researcher. The interviews were transcribed in full and the method of open coding was used to analyse the data. Any themes and relationships that were identified in the data as a result were compared and contrasted with the other interviews to discover any patterns or exceptions.

5. Findings & Discussion

5.1 The interviews with board members from Sure Start Tamworth took place over a two month period. Nine interviews were carried out in total three with parents, three with representatives of the voluntary sector and three with statutory sector employees. All interviews were completed and included in the final report.

The interviews offered people the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of partnership working. The issues discussed were based around the effectiveness of the partnership, the achievements so far, any problematic areas and suggestions of ways in which the partnership can be improved.

5.2 It was agreed that in general the partnership is working well; it was felt that a continual process of improvement was taking place as new situations were dealt with and lessons learnt. It was also felt that this process needed to continue in the future.

The board was seen as made up of a representative mix of the various sectors however the lack of a racial equality representative was discussed. In several interviews concerns were also raised about the lack of representation of teenage parents in the area.

5.3 Partnership Successes

Equality

The equality of partners within the board was highlighted as a particular strength of the partnership. Individuals from all sectors felt all members views were treated equally, they also felt able to raise issues within meeting discussions and debates. This is particularly important in a partnership made up of a variety of groups some of which are traditionally seen as having power over others.

"This is one of the few meetings where right from the start that voluntary sector felt equal usually if you go to something health based or social services based it takes a while before its equal but with Sure Start it was equal all the while"

"You could walk in the room a stranger and listen...and you wouldn't be able to pick out who was a parent and who was the voluntary sector and who was the council...apart from the suits you wouldn't be able to pick them out"

Avoiding jargon

The exclusion of acronyms and jargon from partnership meetings was referred to by a large number of participants as a success of the board working together and listening to each other.

"The parents said you've got to give us the 'Ladybird' version of that because we don't understand what your shortcuts are and they stopped it... they changed it instantly"

"I can't stand people that talk in initials by the time I've worked out what it is I've lost the drift of the conversation so it was decided early on that we wouldn't use any jargon that we didn't need to and I think that really helped"

Supportive management

The management of the partnership by both the chair and the programme manager were highlighted as important factors in facilitating a successful board. In particular the informal tone adopted in the meetings was seen as a positive step allowing people to feel comfortable and able to voice their opinions.

Building relationships

Existing relationships within statutory and voluntary sectors mean that within the Sure Start partnership people are able to build on the networks that they had already made.

"Because it is such a small community it tends to be the same people that are involved in a number of bodies the professional agencies involved are probably the same ones that would be involved in other forums as well. That can be helpful because you can actually get some continuity I suppose you do gain in terms of being able to share information".

"The sectors talk I think that they always did anyway the key people on the management committee, I was in other groups with them before anyway they all know each other and have a history"

This tight knit community of parents and representatives can be beneficial for those involved in the partnership, conversely however it can have a negative impact when trying to encourage new people to become involved in the board the group can be seen as a 'clique' and therefore intimidating for new people to become involved.

5.4 Partnership Limitations

Attendance

Poor attendance at board meetings particularly within the statutory sector was highlighted as a problem during the interviews. Partnership members appreciated that professionals have hectic schedules however it was felt that non attendance reflected negatively on organisations and individuals' commitment to the partnership.

"I know that [board members] ... have got important jobs, you know, and they've got full diaries but when they've got months ahead notice that there are going to be meetings on those dates and they still don't turn up, it's not on really"

I sometimes think attendance could do with being a little better, but I will say that the voluntary sector and the parents are always present"

Board development sessions

These sessions were seen as particularly important for the continuing development of the partnership particularly in terms of building relationships and understanding partner organisations.

All sectors could see the usefulness of such events however they were often seen as something that would benefit others particularly parents and not always seen as necessary for themselves.

"I quite like the fact that they do supportive training towards the board and have a training day and things like that I think that it's a shame that more organisations don't turn up"

"They're [development sessions] really useful and I think probably that there is not nearly enough people go to the board development. I think the voluntary sector go and the parents go, but the official people, if you like...don't tend to go and they should really even if they think they know it"

Again poor attendance at development sessions was highlighted particularly from the representatives of the statutory sector. Again however partners did appreciate the busy schedules of the statutory sector representatives with Sure Start making up only a small part of their working lives,

"Attendance at things like board development are pretty poor and we really do need to look at commitment, to getting people to see why it's so important to be involved"

Community divide

The Communities of Glascote Heath and Belgrave feel that they are very different; however similarities between the two are striking, a rift has existed between the two communities for many years;

"There's always been the huge divide between Glascote and Belgrave, which wasn't helped by the huge great bypass... the 'them and us' mentality has always been here since both estates were first built"

The conflict has been particularly problematic for the programme, the parent's forum was discussed as an area of worry by a large number of participants. The board was felt to be working to deal with these issues, however bridging the gap between divided communities is a very time consuming and lengthy process and problems along the way are to be expected.

"I must admit at one time I was thinking of packing it all up because of the differences but know the board is ok...we tent to be told not to bring that to the board so we don't"

"It's just parents on the agendas now not Glascote Heath parents and Belgrave parents it's just parent representatives now"

5.5 Improving the partnership

Developing the role of parents

The induction process for parents joining the partnership was described as quite lengthy. Support is needed to cover various aspects of being involved in the partnership.

"It took a while [to settle into the board] but that's because it's strange to me because it was something completely different when they're all there, there are a lot of people"

It was felt that new parents needed to become involved in the board to ensure new ideas could be explored; however it was felt that due to the current problems within the parent forum this was difficult.

"I'm not completely sure that they [parents representatives] are completely representative...the parents themselves raised this about the fact that 'you are asking us to make decisions based on our experience how do we know that what we think is really what everybody else wants'"

"I think it's really important that we do encourage new people because otherwise I think it could just be seen as a 'clique' ... it limits the ideas and it limits how effective we can be"

Participants were asked for ideas of ways to involve more people in the partnership, two suggestions were put forward, these were board elections and a process of development for potential members.

"It might also be a useful tool for organisations and community members to develop other people within their own organisations and give them the opportunity to see the way we are working"

"New people need to be nurtured to come forward and to come onto the board so that we actually get new ideas and a new buzz about it"

"I would like more parents on the board and I think I would quite like the board to change from time to time different people have different opinions to keep things alive"

If either of these methods were to be put into practice it would be crucial to apply it to all board members, rather than to one specific sector to avoid alienation of a group. Implementing an election within the Sure Start Tamworth board appears particularly difficult because some organisation, particularly in the voluntary sector, work on a very small scale perhaps employing one person in the area, it would therefore be impossible to hold an effective election.

Reactive to proactive

The partnership was seen as positive in the way that it reacted quickly to deal with questions, make decisions and find solutions to problem. These strengths are vital when initiating a new programme.

"I think the fact that people listen if something isn't working it gets listened to and actioned straight away we don't spend meeting after meeting airing the same thing,,, it is acted on and I think that's why it's moving forward now"

"[The board] is quite reactive, things are getting sorted...if you feel that there is a problem you can bring it up and people are going to listen and do something so the board is working really well for us"

Several of the interviews highlighted the idea that the board has reached a stage now where it needs to change from a purely reactive board to a more proactive one. Having established all the services it is important for the partnership to reflect on the work it has done so far in order to refocus for the future.

"Mainly because the whole focus has been about getting services off the ground that we've lost sight a little bit"

"The targets are important, of course they are but we've got services now that will deliver them, or should do, so we need to think a bit broader now"

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

Overall the partnership appears to be developing well there are some important issues that need to be addressed for progress to continue.

The involvement of more parents in the partnership is vital for the development of the board to avoiding a 'Clique' of parents developing. It is also important that a diverse range of views and ideas are heard, to reflect those of the wider community. The partnership needs to actively recruit new members from the community working closely with the programme and the parents forum.

The partnership needs to work together to define the purpose and content of development sessions. There appears to be conflicting ideas as to the reasons for holding these sessions and what can be gained from them. For development sessions to be effective a good attendance is essential, the sessions therefore need to be relevant to all board members.

Consideration needs to be given to introducing a rolling programme of development to involved new board members from all sectors.

A partnership development session should be held to look at the issues raised within this report reflecting on the original aims and objectives of the partnership and re-evaluating them within the current context of Sure Start Tamworth.

Appendix 2

Child consultation Record Sheet

1 Stage 1: Choosing the Sample

Choose approximately 7 children by asking them who would like to be involved in the project, with the help of the staff (who are familiar with the children).

Need to think about splitting the group by gender or by friend groups e.g. best friends. Will need to go with what works with the children chosen.

2 Stage 2: Discussion with the Children

Explain to the children that we would like to know what they like and don't like to do when at nursery, and so ask them if they could help us by telling us what is important to them at nursery and what are the things they don't like about nursery.

We want to understand their daily routine.

Could ask them to describe what things they would tell a new child at the nursery – best / worst things about the nursery.

Explain to the children that we would like them to show us what they like and don't like to do by a variety of methods; they can tell us; show us by taking us

to the places they like/dislike; take pictures with cameras; make pictures / symbolic maps.

The **aim of the first stage** is to start to build a rapport with the children and get them thinking and telling us about their routines and likes / dislikes. By asking them about their daily routine, this will highlight to us the things they remember and therefore what stands out in their mind as a major part of childcare, indicating to us what may be important and can also lead to further discussion.

Questions asked of parents as used by Clark & Moss (2001), these can be adapted to be used with children:

What would be a good day for you in the nursery?

What do you think would be a bad day in the nursery?

What do you like playing with in the nursery? (Lancaster 2003).

Basic questions for children e.g. what do you like about this? Which do you prefer? Not why questions (Sweeney 2003).

Other questions for children:

Favourite activities? Indoors? Outdoors?

Activities don't like to do? Indoors? Outdoors?

What is most important for the children at nursery?

What do grown ups do at the nursery? What should grown ups do?

3 Stage 3: Creating Pictures

The initial discussion will have refreshed the children's memories about their likes / dislikes of the nursery and therefore will prepare them for creating pictures. The children will be provided with a variety of arts and crafts materials and will be asked to create pictures / models to illustrate what they like / don't like at nursery – activities / areas / people etc.

4 Stage 4: Child Led Tour

The children will be asked to take the researchers on a tour of the nursery

showing us various areas/activities they feel are important and therefore wish to highlight to us. Each child on the tour will be given a disposable camera and will be asked to take pictures as they lead the tour. Need to work with each child to show them how to use the camera.

Ask the children about the photo's they had taken – what did they see? What did they like or dislike about something? What happened? Children's comments will be recorded. Can ask them what would they like to show Mummy & Daddy about their nursery? (Lancaster 2003).

5 Stage 5: Creation of Symbolic Maps and Child Consultation

The researchers will return to the childcare setting and will ask the children to choose the pictures / photographs that they want to include on their symbolic maps. At this stage it is important to listen to the children as they describe and explain their choices of pictures in order for the researchers to understand what is important to the children within childcare settings (Clark & Moss 2001). The session will be tape-recorded and statements / quotations from the children will be noted alongside their pictures.

6 Stage 6: Staff Consultation

Need to ask key workers whether they consult with the children for their ideas on activities/setting (Lancaster 2003).

Ask staff what the children prefer to play with / what are their favourite areas within the childcare settings / favourite activities / least liked activities – areas etc. and why? Male / female dominated activities / areas?

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Source: Adapted from Clark & Moss (2001) Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach

Could use the table to calculate the number of times the categories are mentioned e.g. use of bar gates.

The first three columns (initial discussion, picture drawing, tour & cameras,), the number of children talking about these categories is recorded – for picture drawing this is recording the object of each picture, this may include two different things e.g. playing outside and friends. The third category is observational and asking the children what they are taking photos of, but this is difficult to follow when there are 7 children running in different directions. For the fourth column (symbolic maps & child consultation), the children are asked to pick their 10 favourite pictures, their 10 reasons for choosing the pictures will be recorded in this column on the table. For the last column (staff consultation) the key worker(s) will be asked the children's favourite activities and will be recorded on the sheet.

During the consultation process where the children are actually making symbolic maps more detailed information can be collected, via field notes and quotations from the children.

Sure Start Tamworth Time Line