

SureStart

MILTON KEYNES LOCAL PROGRAMME

Evaluation Activity

2004 - 2005

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the children's charity

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NB: Other Evaluation Reports are available on request. Contact the Local Programme for details.

Introduction

This report is a summary of the evaluation activity undertaken within Sure Start Milton Keynes during 2004. The evaluations seek to establish baselines for future research.

Though each individual project provides a unique insight into the objectives and achievements of the service, it is useful to draw out common themes that have emerged through the completion of the research. These themes will help determine the priorities for evaluation work in 2005/6.

The evaluations from 2004 fall into three categories:

- Service delivery & user satisfaction – activities and trips.
- Partnership work – Interagency work towards common objectives;
- Thematic evaluation – exploring aspects of Local Programme activity.

The integration of evaluation within service delivery is becoming routine with Core Services, Family Support and other agencies incorporating evaluative procedures into their working practice. This reinforces the basis for evidence-driven decision making in the operational strategy.

Within Sure Start Milton Keynes evaluation is now closely aligned with performance management. Robust monitoring systems have aided the development of a quality and learning driven culture within the Programme. The Sure Start database provides accurate information on population and reach, enabling quantitative assessment of delivery.

Identification of the benefits to the Sure Start community reinforces the need to maintain a community development role within future service provision.

The importance of evidence and the alignment of our service to the needs of the Sure Start Milton Keynes community has become a more apparent issue in light of the Children's Centre agenda and the "Every Child Matters" strategy from the Children's Commissioner. The increasing importance of the Children's Centres strategy throughout Milton Keynes places great emphasis on the identification of best value and good practice as models of future working. Sure Start Milton Keynes is being seen as a model or good practice and evidence is required to support this view.

Monitoring

Sure Start Milton Keynes covers six estates in North West Milton Keynes – Fullers Slade, Galley Hill, Greenleys, Hodge Lea, Stacey Bushes and Wolverton.

Census 2001 figures provide the following data about the total population for these areas:

Ethnicity	Ethnicity – number of individuals						Total
	Fullers Slade	Galley Hill	Greenleys	Hodge Lea	Stacey Bushes	Wolverton	
White British	1453	880	1876	1040	1144	4894	11287
White Irish	22	21	29	16	15	67	170
White Other	9	9	45	18	24	109	214
Asian Indian	16	15	29	17		67	144
Asian Pakistani	24	8	48	14	57	338	489
Asian Bangladeshi	3		9	5		22	39
Asian Other			6		3	24	33
Black Caribbean	18	12	6	16	6	38	96
Black African	25	9	46	21	37	51	189
Black Other				6	14	18	38
White Asian							0
White Black Caribbean							0
White Black African							0
Other Mixed	14	12	39	24	21	113	223
Chinese	14	4	9	9		14	50
Other Ethnicity	4	7	5	3	3	14	36
Total	1602	977	2147	1189	1324	5769	13008

The main ethnic categories reflected in these figures are White British (87%), Asian Pakistani (4%) and Black African (2%).

The Index of Multiple Deprivation identifies that:

- Two of the estates have areas that are within the 10% most deprived in England – Fullers Slade and Galley Hill;
- Four of the estates have areas that are within the 30% most deprived in England – Greenleys, Hodge Lea, Stacey Bushes and Wolverton.

In January 2004 the Local Programme installed a SmartStart database, which has allowed greater accuracy in monitoring and statistical information. The database identifies the Sure Start population (families with children aged 0 to 4) as follows:

Ethnicity	Ethnicity – number of individuals						Total
	Fullers Slade	Galley Hill	Greenleys	Hodge Lea	Stacey Bushes	Wolverton	
White British	267	59	217	99	87	530	1259
White Irish		1	7	1		9	18
White Other	2		6	5		36	49
Asian Indian	5		6	4		22	37
Asian Pakistani	16	11	44	20	29	243	363
Asian Bangladeshi	5		3		2	13	23
Asian Other	11		3	7	3	1	25
Black Caribbean						5	5
Black African	14		19	8	9	18	68
Black Other	4		1	3		15	23
White Asian	10		1	1		8	20
White Black Caribbean	3		2		4	3	12
White Black African	9	4	2	8	10	3	36
Other Mixed	1		4			8	13
Chinese				5		2	7
Other Ethnicity					1	2	3
Unknown	108	22	106	83	48	204	571
Total	455	97	421	244	193	1123	2532

Source: Sure Start database

These figures confirm the main ethnic categories as White British (50%), Asian Pakistani (14%) and Black African (3%).

The Unknown category represents 23% of the population on the database. This figure will decrease as the accuracy of the data improves.

The database has provided analysis on language prevalence among Sure Start families. In addition to English, the Local Programme has 21 other languages being spoken by families that are registered. The most common foreign language is Urdu with 94 registered families. As a result of this information the Local Programme has developed Urdu versions of some literature.

Throughout 2004 the monitoring methods have been refined and enhanced. Core Services, Family Support and Health Visiting provide information on contacts and these reporting processes have been streamlined to improve efficiency.

The Local Programme provides quarterly reporting to the National Sure Start Unit, examining the number of families and children seen. The enhanced monitoring mechanisms have led to a notable improvement in the accuracy of the reporting.

The table below shows the figures that were provided to the Sure Start Unit for December 2002, December 2003 and most recently December 2004:

	December '02	December '03	December '04
Children Seen			
Aged under 1	8	79	119
Over 1 but under 2	11	67	107
Over 2 but under 3	16	58	79
Over 3 but under 4	15	43	25
Total number of children seen	51	247	330
Ethnic breakdown of children seen			
White	45	94	202
Mixed	3	9	6
Asian	3	57	78
Black or Black British			11
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group			1
Unknown		87	32
Ethnic Origin Total	51	247	330
Pregnant Women			
Total Pregnant Women seen		5	28
Teenage Women (under 18)	2		1
Lone Women			1
Parents			
Total Parents Seen in last month	51	181	249
Lone parent - Mother	3	11	10
Lone parent - Father			
Teenage parents (under 18)		3	3

NB: December 2002 stats compiled prior to appointment of Monitoring and Evaluation Officer; December 2003 stats compiled by M & E Officer prior to installation of SmartStart database; December 2004 stats compiled by M & E Officer using implemented monitoring mechanisms and SmartStart database.

Monitoring information informs the sampling process; the improvements in data collection and analysis help the Local Programme understand how services are being delivered and provide the sampling data required for evaluation.

The methods used for data collection in the Local Programme will help inform the decisions made within the Children's Centre agenda in respect of monitoring methods.

Service Delivery and User Satisfaction

Sure Start Milton Keynes operates a wide range of activities and services. User satisfaction identifies areas of strength and weakness and informs future service provision. It is, therefore, essential to understand the effectiveness of the service delivery and benefits among service users.

Sure Start activities fall into two broad categories:

- Activity Calendar – coordinated by Core Services.
- Support activities – in partnership with existing agencies.

The activity calendar provides a major part of the service delivery for the Local Programme and an examination of those activities is considered a priority.

In the term September to December 2004, 9 activities were evaluated to establish the success of existing service delivery. Individual activity questionnaires were developed incorporating standard questions that would provide an overarching perspective on aspects of delivery. Subjects addressed in the questionnaires included parent and child satisfaction, staff attitude, safety, community development and target alignment.

Questionnaires for 15 activities were developed in total. To prevent parents feeling overwhelmed by questions, a measured approach was taken. The remaining questionnaires will be implemented in the January to March term. The questionnaires were taken to the activities during one week in November and the attendees were asked to complete them at each session. This was considered the most effective way of ensuring a full response rate.

External factors including illness meant that the attendance rate for activities that week were lower than normal, affecting the number of responses obtained. The level of response enabled some basic conclusions to be drawn.

In addition to the questionnaires a discussion forum was arranged for the Asian Women's Group as a more effective way of addressing current issues. This took place on 18th November. The report from this evaluation is found in Appendix One.

Activity Evaluation Summary

The activities delivered through the Sure Start activity can be classified into two main categories – Independent Contractor Delivery and Core Service Delivery.

Independent Contractor Delivery

Buskin Bunnies - Parent and Child activity involving music and movement. 4 responses. Positive feedback but little evidence of learning.

Dance Time - Parent and Child activity involving music and movement. 8 responses. Positive feedback, parents felt that their children developed interaction skills and benefited from the physical aspects.

Kathie's Kiddies - Parent and Child activity involving music and movement. 4 responses. Positive feedback, parents highlighted their children's increased confidence and social skills.

MK Springers - Parent and Child activity involving soft play equipment. 5 responses. This activity was seen to promote confidence, balance and movement in young children.

Sewing/Dressmaking - Adult Learning with crèche support. 4 responses. The opportunity to learn to sew or develop existing skills, with the children being in a safe environment was the main benefits cited.

Yoga for Teenage Mothers-to-be - Adult Learning activity. Milton Keynes Christian Foundation has a contract with Teenage Pregnancy to provide learning and support to young parents across Milton Keynes. The Foundation for Parents provides this support service and Sure Start pay for the Yoga Tutor. 5 responses. The benefits of yoga to aid relaxation and improve health were noted and the course is well received.

Yoga - Adult Learning with crèche support. 8 responses. High praise for the course tutor. Parents understood and felt the health benefits and were confident in their children's safety within the crèche.

Core Services Delivery

Playing 2Gether takes place in two locations and facilitates parents and children to play together. Parents are encouraged to be more confident and involved in their child's learning. Children learn social skills and have the opportunity for good quality play. Evaluations were conducted at two locations:

Galley Hill - 5 responses. The benefits of quality play and interaction with other families from the same community and children were emergent themes.

Greenleys - 9 responses. Parents observed that learning occurs through interaction with other children and quality play. Families develop friendships through coming to the activity.

Stories, Songs & Rhymes - Parent and Child activity involving story time and messy play in partnership with MK Library Services. This activity features a story telling activity with the Sure Start Librarian and a messy play session facilitated by the Core Services team. The group has recently been split into sessions for 0-1 years old and 1-4 year olds; 1-4 years olds have a story session while 0-1s have play and then the groups swap over. 20 responses were obtained. The activity received high praise for all involved. Parents felt this group fostered a sense of community within the Sure Start families crossing cultural as well as geographic boundaries. The children develop social interaction skills, learn about playing and sharing and get to spend quality time with their parents. The library service is promoted and the benefits of reading are emphasised.

Overview Evaluation

This examined the responses to questions that had been replicated throughout the activity evaluations. The following statistics were generated:

Statement	Number of responses	Opinion
My child enjoys the group/activity	33	61% Strongly Agree, 33% Agree, 6% No Answer
I enjoy the group/activity/course	54	78% Strongly Agree, 22% Agree
The group is friendly and welcoming	64	75% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree
My child benefits from the activity	36	61% Strongly Agree, 33% Agree, 6% No Answer
I feel confident raising queries or concerns with staff members	67	55% Strongly Agree, 39% Agree, 5% Neither Agree or Disagree, 2% No Answer
I have made new friends at this activity	28	46% Strongly Agree, 39% Agree, 11% Neither, 4% No Answer
I am kept informed of news, activities and events	47	51% Agree, 36% Strongly Agree, 5% No Answer, 5% Disagree, 4% Neither
I would recommend the course to other parents	67	69% Strongly Agree, 29% Agree, 2% Neither

The following conclusions were drawn:

- o The overall opinion of the services on the activity calendar in the responses is high.
- o Parents indicate the Programme is having a beneficial impact on their lives – children’s social and emotional development is being enhanced by Sure Start activities, parental confidence and awareness is growing and local communities are being strengthened.
- o The activities evaluated are based in three areas in Fullers Slade, Greenleys and Wolverton in seven locations. Responses show that friendships are being formed as a

consequence of Sure Start activity. Further work on personal and community capacity building may be undertaken.

- Activities and courses are inviting and non-threatening; both Core Services and private contractor staff are approachable.

In addition to the activity questionnaires, evaluations were conducted on two trips that were organised by the Local Programme. The first was to Wicksteed Park on two days in April, providing fun activities for the whole family. The second was to Mead Open Farm in December which included the chance to interact with small farm animals.

The evaluations were carried out on the return journey from the venues in the form of questionnaires and the response rate was over 50% in each case. The questionnaires sought to establish how families had benefited from the trip, whether such a trip would have been possible without Sure Start assistance, and if new relationships had formed among families. The responses were positive and indicated that the costs of trips are matched by the benefits. The subsidised travel and entry costs enabled families to overcome financial barriers to visiting such attractions. The opportunity for quality time with the family was a strong theme in both evaluations. The trips served as positive experiences and helped develop a sense of the Sure Start community among participants.

Conclusion

The evaluations provided an initial insight into the strengths of current service provision and provide a framework for further evaluations.

The activities were well received and most respondents identified clear benefits to them and their children.

Most activities encouraged the early development of social skills, the long-term effects of which can be examined through future liaison with local first schools. Other common benefits included physical development of children and increased bonding between parent and child. The crèche support was seen as a welcome enhancement to the Adult Learning activities, providing parents with a sense of security about their children's wellbeing.

All parent and child activities help develop new friendships among participants and foster a sense of community among Sure Start families. The Asian Women's Group is a notable success and the group are taking the initiative in driving forward their own development.

Community Development is essential to the life of the Local Programme and it is clear from responses that Sure Start has facilitated friendships and a sense of community.

Participants were asked if they felt the activity was reaching its Government objective or target. Those that responded felt that targets were being worked towards, although the responses were limited. These particular questions were intended to assess whether parents understood the underlying reasons for Sure Start services, and to enhance their awareness of the Sure Start agenda. The questions generated a higher than anticipated response rate.

The findings of the evaluations were disseminated to the Manager of Core Services and the Programme Director, and presented to the Implementation Board in December.

By executing these evaluations, practical lessons have been learned in the best ways to conduct such exercises. The processes of undertaking activity calendar evaluations have now been established and the implementation of future evaluations can be shared between workers and local parents to increase participation and understanding. This will develop stronger relationships between service providers and users.

The activities will be evaluated both individually and in categories. Many activities are based on the same format - Parent & Child, Adult Learning, Child Learning and Play - and can be examined in these genres. Comparison helps identify strengths and best practice among the services which can be shared among the agencies. This comparative study enables a more reactive approach to service delivery ensuring that quality is maintained. The mainstreaming agenda places increased emphasis on cost effectiveness; the Local Programme has to deliver high quality services from the beginning. The Core Services team have to use reflective skills to inform their decision making in developing the effectiveness of existing services.

Recommendations

Evaluations undertaken in 2005/6 will observe potential changes in service delivery and user benefit.

Further investigation of work towards targets involving Sure Start parents will help develop understanding and ownership of the Local Programme among the community.

Questionnaires have been developed for other activities that feature on the Sure Start calendar and these will be implemented in January to March 2005. The results of these evaluations will enhance the work done to date, and help inform future activity provision.

Repeating this exercise in 2005/6 will identify how service delivery has adapted to user feedback and the changing Sure Start agenda.

Partnership Working

Sure Start Milton Keynes works with many other agencies in the delivery of service provision. The mainstreaming agenda places emphasis on the need for early identification of collaborative advantage and strengthened partnership links. The Local Programme currently works in partnership with:

- MK Library Service in the provision of story-based activities and book gifting initiatives;
- Milton Keynes Christian Foundation for Family Support;
- Health in a range of services including ante-natal support, Speech & Language, Health Visiting and infant massage;
- Brook Advisory Service for contraceptive and family planning advice;
- Milton Keynes Safety Centre for educational trips exploring safety issues;
- Milton Keynes Stop Smoking Service for advice and support;
- Oral Health for advice and support;
- Bucks Fire Service in a free smoke alarm initiative.

These agencies are encouraged to work with each other within the remit of the Local Programme. The Book Start+ and Treasure Box Programmes supported by MK Library Service will involve joint working with Health for delivery. Oral Health is combining with Health Visiting to deliver a Doidy cup initiative throughout the Local Programme area. Evaluation of these projects during 2005/6 will identify the effectiveness of interagency work and act as a guide for future partnership protocol.

Evaluation of the partnership work is largely driven by Local Programme requirements and available resource. There is a synergy in joining up services and the Local Programme is a conduit for this process. Methods are being developed to examine specific areas of delivery being carried out by these agencies. In 2004 two pieces of work were carried out within the realm of Partnership Working - the Family Support Service evaluation and examination of the effectiveness of a Smoking Cessation training day.

Milton Keynes Christian Foundation Family Support Service.

MKCF began providing a Family Support Service in June 2004. It works in partnership with the Local Programme and Health Visiting who refer families to the Service. Government target SDA 4A requires "*75% of families providing personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of services providing family support*". The Family Support service was established to deliver this objective and identify levels of extreme need within the local community. The Service works with families for a specific period of time, with agreements being made at the start of the service. At the end of the provision period, a questionnaire is given to the

family to assess the effectiveness of the service. The responses from June to November were collated and evaluated.

The results of the evaluation showed that the Service is making a marked difference to the families it serves. All respondents were able to provide personal evidence of an improvement in the support they received. The scope of need has been wide, ranging from supportive telephone calls to the provision of shoes, and the Family Support Service has been effective in addressing most of those needs. Further examination of the Service will identify areas where the involvement of other agencies can be engaged and highlight the gaps in existing statutory service provision. The Family Support Service is developing new partnerships with other agencies to streamline the provision of goods and services; this is another area for future evaluation.

Smoking Cessation Training

The Smoking Cessation training day took place in October. It was organised by MK Stop Smoking Service with support from the Local Programme. The trainer was Jennifer Percival, recognised as one of the UK's leading advisors on Smoking Cessation. The course was attended by workers from Sure Start, Health, MK Christian Foundation, Oral Health and the NCH Fullers Slade Family Centre.

The course was very well received. The new methods of addressing the smoking cessation issue inspired the attendees and responses indicated a new enthusiasm towards the subject. All participants received the latest advice and guidance on best practice in Smoking Cessation advice. It is anticipated that the good practices shown in the course would be passed on to other workers in the participating agencies and this was supported by the answers received. A future evaluation is planned to examine the practical applications of this advice and the success rate in utilising new techniques and knowledge.

One of the benefits cited by respondents was the opportunity to strengthen links with other agencies. This is fundamental to the Sure Start agenda of enhancing partnership working. With better understanding of the available resources, workers can provide more appropriate signposting.

The success of this training session reinforced the need to use existing skills and knowledge bases to provide training throughout the Sure Start area. Different agencies have specialised skills and the Local Programme will seek to use these 'local experts' to share best practice and latest advice with all partner organisations, ensuring consistency of information.

Conclusion

In 2004 the Programme has begun to examine its partnership working. Early indications are that the interagency working will continue to develop positively and that the agencies in the Sure Start area are benefiting from the Local Programme.

The Book Start+ project will be evaluated after its implementation which is expected in 2005/6. Oral Health will be coordinating evaluations of the Doidy cup initiative in partnership with the Local Programme.

The evaluation of the Family Support Service shows a positive result in specific work towards the family support target. Additional work will now be undertaken to explore the full impact of the Service and the requirements for other statutory agencies.

Thematic Evaluation

The Sure Start agenda covers a wide range of physical, social and emotional issues. Local Programmes are established to provide a holistic service to their community and tasked with supporting all families with 0 to 4 year old children. The external influence of the Children's Centre agenda and "Every Child Matters" require evidence to be developed that addresses key issues. Through evaluation and enquiry Local Programmes can establish how existing practice works towards specific goals - such as Hard To Reach families - and how more effective service can be achieved.

Key themes for Sure Start Milton Keynes include:

- Hard To Reach families - identifying families who do not attend existing activities and addressing the reasons why;
- Outreach work - providing services in areas where existing provision is lacking;
- Fathers - engagement and identification of common issues;
- Community Development - identifying positive change and empowering communities to take ownership of local initiatives;
- Cultural issues - ensuring an inclusive and culturally aware policy programme;
- Mainstreaming - developing collaborative advantage to ensure longevity of services;
- Children's Centres - providing a model of good practice to influence Milton Keynes Council's Children's Centre strategy;
- Every Child Matters - working with schools and other childcare facilities to encourage positive child development.

Pre-School Preparation

The Local Programme already delivers a wide range of services and activities to families in the Sure Start area. Government target SDA 3A requires that "*all children have access to good quality play and learning opportunities, helping progress towards early learning goals when they get to school.*" Learning is included in all Parent and Child activities run by Core Services and external contractors are encouraged to incorporate education into their operations. Adult Learning activities include a crèche for the children which provides an opportunity for further social and intellectual development. Children are encouraged to learn to interact with each other and develop social skills.

The Local Programme sought to understand if children in Sure Start families were being prepared for early schooling through the activities and services provided. Questionnaires were sent to families with 3 or 4 year old children to identify if existing services were making a difference or if further action was required. Of 104 questionnaires sent out, 14 responses were received. An inhibitor to having more questionnaires received was a question asking the

child's opinion on issues. Many parents advised the Local Programme that they did not know how to answer this question.

The main view that emerged from the responses was that pre-school preparation does occur within Sure Start activities. Most activities promote interaction between children of all ages (from 0 to 4) which develop social behaviours - sharing and communication - and children learn to follow instruction.

The most significant finding was that parents felt their children learned social skills when placed in the crèche. Children in crèches are looked after by an adult that is not a family member, for a specific period of time and with a structured framework of activity. Parents felt that this facilitated the development of social skills by providing a similar experience to that of school. Another benefit mentioned in the responses was that children of the same age develop friendships prior to going to school, easing the transition into classes. The support network that develops among parents with similarly aged children was a positive by-product of the activities provided by the Local Programme.

Conclusion

The pre-school preparation was examined in 2004 as a method of understanding whether the work of the preceding years was providing the benefits required in Target SDA 4A. The findings act as a foundation for future research and influence strategic decisions in delivering services in 2005. The work can be repeated in future years to identify changes and to increase the understanding of the requirements for preparation for school.

The evaluation identified that the Local Programme does prepare children for early schooling, primarily as a by-product of existing service provision. Parents feel that the Local Programme does not actively prepare children for school but they acknowledge the influence of Sure Start in developing their children's physical, social and emotional wellbeing. Liaison with local first schools will help to assess any change in the integration of children into the schooling system. Sure Start Milton Keynes has been operating for over four years; children that have been with Sure Start for the length of their life will have entered the school system in the past year. The local schools may be able to identify if these children have shown any difference in their levels of socialisation and assimilation. The Local Programme will work Education to ensure this level of knowledge is sustained.

Themed evaluations provide insights into issues that have relevance for all agencies working with the Local Programme. The various themes identified in this report all require examination but local needs drive the prioritisation of these projects. With the influence of the Children's Centre agenda and "Every Child Matters", examination of the levels of Community Development and links with extended schools will feature in forthcoming evaluation projects.

Conclusion

In 2004 the Local Programme began evaluating service delivery. It was important to establish baselines to provide qualitative evidence to support existing opinion on quality of service.

Before the introduction of evaluation, the priority was to deliver services towards the targets.

Now the evidence of evaluation informs and advises the development for all services.

The evaluation of the activities delivered by Core Services through the activity calendar is fundamental in assessing the success of the Local Programme in the eyes of the service users. The responses identified strengths and weaknesses in both Core Service and independent contractor services. These findings are used to direct future provision, ensuring good quality and efficient work towards Government targets.

The initial investigations into the effectiveness of partnership working have also been driven by Local Programme needs. The Family Support service evaluation ensured that a newly established contract was effectively fulfilling requirements within three months of the start date. This work will be continued in 2005 and in-depth examination of the scope of need is recommended. The Smoking Cessation training was the first opportunity for Sure Start to facilitate shared learning among partner agencies. This has shown the validity in using existing knowledge bases and sharing best practice among agencies working within the Sure Start area. The feedback from these evaluations is used to enhance the links between the agencies, developing collaborative advantage and helping the Programme toward the Mainstreaming agenda.

Thematic evaluation in 2004 has shown that the Programme has been effective in part in preparing children for early schooling. These findings will act as a foundation for discussion with local schools about their experience of children that have used the Sure Start Programme.

Planned evaluations for 2005

Service Delivery & User Satisfaction:

- Evaluations of other activities currently being delivered
- Evaluation of activities themed by type to identify good practice

Partnership Working:

- Book Start+ Scheme
- Doidy Cup Project
- Interagency training as required

Thematic Evaluation:

- Outreach Work
- Community Development
- Further work on pre-school preparation

In addition to these evaluations, to be implemented by the Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, an overarching evaluation of the Local Programme is being developed with local parents to fulfil the requirements of the Year Three evaluation. Open College Network accreditation is being sought to reward participants. This project will examine all aspects of Sure Start Milton Keynes with a focus on community development and outreach work. Parental involvement in the design and execution of this evaluation will enhance local community understanding and ownership of the Local Programme.

Report written by J Chalmers, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer. January 2005.

Services mentioned in this report:

Fullers Slade Family Centre – 91-92 Weavers Hill, Fullers Slade, Milton Keynes. MK11 2BN.
01908 568813.

Contact: Chris Chapman, Manager.

Greenleys Family Centre – Ardwell Lane, Greenleys, Milton Keynes. MK12 6LU. 01908
313622.

Contact: Angus Forsythe, Manager.

MK Christian Foundation – Foundation House, The Square, Wolverton, Milton Keynes.
MK12 5HX. 01908 311112.

Contact: Michael Donoghue, Family Support Service Coordinator.

MK Primary Care NHS Trust (North) – Stantonbury Health Centre, Purbeck, Stantonbury,
Milton Keynes. MK14 6BL. 01908 316262.

Contact: Helen Feeney, Professional Lead Health Visiting.

MK Educational Psychology – Holme Chase Centre, Buckingham Road, Bletchley. MK3
5HP. 01908 366042.

Contact: Jackie Andrew-Barratt, SEN Lead.

MK Stop Smoking Service – Shipley Court, Marsh End Road, Newport Pagnell, Milton
Keynes. MK16 8EA. 01908 500096.

Oral Health Promotions - Shipley Court, Marsh End Road, Newport Pagnell, Milton Keynes.
MK16 8EA. 01908 217030.

Contact: Susan Mallett, Senior Oral Health Promoter.

PreSchool Learning Alliance – 2 Burners Lane, Kiln Farm, Milton Keynes. MK11 3HB.
01908 263700.

Contact: Lynne Johnson, County Manager.

SoftSmart – Minster House, York Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex. BN21 4ST. 01323 419682.

Contact: Paul Richards, Director.

Appendix One



MILTON KEYNES LOCAL PROGRAMME

Evaluation Report

Asian Women's Group – Discussion Group

18 November 2004

The Asian Women's Group meets on Thursdays from 1.00pm to 2.30pm at the Old Bath House Community Centre in Wolverton, coordinated by Fozia Raja (Community Development Worker). The group is open to all Asian women with children aged 0 to 4 in the Sure Start area, although female extended family members are also welcome. It is designed to acknowledge the cultural and social differences faced by Asian women and allow them a forum to discuss parenting and family issues with others from similar ethnic backgrounds. A crèche is provided and each week the group has a different focus, from talks by agencies like Oral Health to proactive play together sessions. Since April 2004 there have been 26 families at this group, with a total of 252 individual contacts.

It was decided that a discussion forum would be a more suitable evaluation method than questionnaires to overcome any potential language and literacy issues. On the day of the discussion there were nine parents in the group. Seven of the women attending could speak English fluently, and Fozia was on hand to translate where necessary. The conversation lasted about half an hour.

A number of themes had been identified for discussion but the idea was to allow free-flowing discussion where possible:

What are the good things about the Asian Women's Group?

The group was identified as being beneficial to those parents who could not speak English, as it provides a support network and allows Asian women to interact in a secure environment. Parents take comfort from Fozia's presence and have come to rely upon her. This fact is reflected in the number of contacts she experiences throughout normal working practice. The crèche facilities provide an added sense of reassurance, knowing that the children are in safe hands, and allow the Mums a rare chance to be by themselves. Some children have had difficulties in settling into the crèche, but over time this has become easier. The group also helps introduce the parents to the Sure Start programme, and gives them the confidence to participate in more activities. The new calendar was well received.

Could the group be improved?

There was little comment on this matter, and this issue may require a different approach to facilitate more constructive criticism. Some parents felt that it would be beneficial to get advice and guidance on health topics, particularly healthy eating and exercise. This is something that may be possible with interagency working. This information will be shared with the Health Visiting service. The group is in the afternoon and this was seen as a positive thing, allowing the parents the time to complete domestic responsibilities in the morning and relax at the group.

Do you take part in any other groups or activities?

Many of the parents at this group also attend the Multi-cultural Toddler group run by Health Visitor Wilma Burns. This group is becoming more popular and it was felt that the room it is held in is becoming too small for the group, however the convenience of the Community Room at Wyvern School conflicted with this lack of space. Additionally, this activity is supported by Sure Start but run independently; the Local Programme will share the issues raised with Health Visitors.

What about Asian Fathers?

Asian Fathers are one of the more hard to reach categories of parent, but the Asian Women felt that the working schedules of the Dads made it highly unlikely that they would be able to attend any Sure Start activities. If Dads have free time, they spend it with their families, but at home; whether this matter could be pursued further may be considered. Future evaluation will examine what could be developed to provide services for fathers.

Any other comments?

This question evolved into a wish list for the group, and highlighted some interesting issues. The request for an Asian Women only swimming session was raised, although there is current provision on the activity calendar for swimming. There is some sensitivity about having male lifeguards, and some parents wondered whether the Asian Women's Network, a Milton Keynes-wide group, could be encouraged to develop a specific swimming activity. Sure Start may be able to act in a facilitation capacity in this instance, and further discussion on the matter may be required.

Conclusion

This session acted as a good introduction; the group became comfortable with sharing their views as the discussion developed and felt confident that their opinions were being heard. With a more defined focus and more time, future discussion groups will discover more information. It is intended that the themes raised in this group will be explored in greater detail by the Local Programme, Core Services and by the group themselves. The discussion group has been an effective tool in obtaining views in a more casual manner than questionnaires, overcoming language and literacy barriers.

It is clear that this group is benefiting the participants by acting as a meeting place and support network. It also provides an opportunity to promote specific Sure Start messages to a group that may not participate in other activities.

The recent work in organising an Eid celebration has inspired the group to take ownership and build capacity, and this is something that should be supported and developed. This group has the potential to become self-sustaining, and is already gaining interest from other BME organisations. By becoming an independent group, families from estates outside of the Sure Start area may become involved, furthering the lifespan of the group. This matter can be explored in future evaluations.

Recommendations

- That the information about new topics for the group to discuss is shared with Health Services.
- That the issues around the accommodation of the Multi-Cultural Group are discussed with Health Services.
- Future discussions take place about the involvement of fathers in their children's learning.
- That the use of the crèche is seen as preparation for school.
- That Fozia is supported in encouraging the group to become self-sustaining.

Stories Songs & Rhymes Evaluation

12 November 2004

Stories Songs & Rhymes is on Fridays at 9.30am at the Wolverton Youth and Community Centre. It is run by Michelle Herriman (Librarian) and Mary Dickson (Community Development Worker), with support from Angela Hodgson (PAFT) and a number of volunteers. This group is the most popular activity on the calendar, and has had 202 participants since April 2004, with a total of 1150 contacts¹. The course is split into two distinct sessions – a story time session with songs and actions, and a messy play session. On the day of the evaluation 20 responses were obtained. Here is a summary of the results:

Statement	Responses
My child and I enjoy this activity	70% Strongly Agree, 30% Agree
The activity is friendly and welcoming	80% Strongly Agree, 20% Agree
The room the activity uses is well equipped	85% Strongly Agree, 15% Agree
I have made new friends at this activity	55% Agree, 25% Strongly Agree
This activity is helping my child's communication skills	55% Agree, 40% Strongly Agree
The staff are approachable	70% Strongly Agree, 30% Agree
I feel confident raising queries or concerns with staff members	60% Strongly Agree, 35% Agree
There are too many people at this activity	45% Disagree, 30% Neither Agree or Disagree
This group encourages me to use the local library	55% Neither Agree or Disagree, 25% Strongly Agree
I would recommend this activity to other parents	75% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree

What are the best things about this course?

The variety and structure of the activity appear in the majority of answers: "*Variety of activities on offer, particularly opportunity for large group work.*"

What, if anything, could be done to improve this type of activity?

There were few comments; most parents said that the activity worked well. Recent changes – cold drinks to prevent accidents; splitting the group into two age categories and having separate story sessions - had been seen to improve the session. Staff name tags was suggested.

Is your child a member of your local library?

This question referred to Wolverton library. 80% of responses were positive. Some families felt that they had sufficient books at home or used the library at Stony Stratford.

If yes, how often do you use the local library?

Nearly half of the library users use Wolverton library weekly, and 80% of all library users use it at least once a month.

This activity is aligned to Government target 3A (good quality play and learning opportunities) – do you feel the activity reaches this objective?

¹ Source: Sure Start Milton Keynes Database.

Many positive answers, with the variety and nature of the activities present being the main reasons: "*The [messy play] activities help with fine motor and gross motor skills, it enables my child to experience activities I would not normally have at home.*" The range of options available to the families in the messy play area provide many things parents could not cope with at home and parents are encouraged to take the quality opportunities for interaction, and the number of attendees helps develop social skills: "*Because it's so busy, it teaches children to wait and share.*"

This activity is aligned to Government target 3B (increased use of libraries) – do you feel the activity reaches this objective?

Mixed responses, as some parents cited Michelle as encouraging library use, while others did not feel that the message about library use was particularly obvious. The main feeling from the responses was that the story telling session encouraged more reading at home, and would encourage library use by proxy.

This course is aligned to Government objective 4 (Strengthening Families and Communities) – do you feel the course reaches this objective?

Positive responses, with a number of parents stating that they have made new friends from this activity: "*Loads of people come to this course from all over Wolverton, we meet new people each week.*"

Any other comments?

A number of people expressed thanks and praise for the activity. Other ideas from parents were:

- Nappy bins;
- A larger area for buggy parking;
- Staff name badges;

These ideas will be taken forward; some will be easier to resolve than others.

Analysis

Stories Songs and Rhymes is a successful Sure Start activity in terms of consistent attendance by a large number of families. It is a good introduction to the Local Programme. Many parents state that their children look forward to the activity: "*We love it!*"

The activity has been on the calendar long time, and this is reliability is a reason for its success as families know that they can take their children to the Works on a Friday morning and have a good time: "*Everything is great, no one thing is better.*"

Only 20 responses were received, this is a low number in relation to the general attendance levels. They provide insight and will help establish general perceptions of the group.

All respondents agree that the group is friendly and that the staff are approachable. There is a strong feeling that this group helps develop the children's communication (95% agree or strongly agree) as well as social skills: "*Getting used to sharing toys and spending time with other children, gaining confidence in playing on [their] own without parents*"; "*It teaches children to wait and share.*"

Michelle receives a great deal of praise from the respondents; her enthusiasm and passion are noted and many families have been inspired to join the library as a result: "*By joining in the story time it encourages families with children to share books, [of] which there is always a good choice at the library.*" The story and rhyme time allows parents to enjoy the process of storytelling with their children, and many of the songs and rhymes are easily transferred to use at home. "*The course encourages use of libraries by showing how much fun reading books can be.*"

The activity has recently been divided into two sessions – one for babies and the other for children aged 1 to 4. This is seen as a positive step by parents, as it allows the maximum

benefit to be achieved for children of varying ages. There has been a request for more space for babies in the messy play area. On the whole parents seem happy with the splitting of the sessions: *"The new time and separate sessions is already a great improvement."*

Dads have attended Stories Songs and Rhymes even though it is a daytime session: *"As a Dad I really like having the chance to attend this activity with my son."* This is significant as the atmosphere at such large groups can often be unnerving for people attending for the first time, particularly fathers: *"Dads are made very welcome as well as Mums."*

This group is one of the Local Programmes main vehicles to address "strengthening families and communities". 85% of respondents agreed they had made new friends at the group, and many responses from Wolverton reinforced the increased sense of community. This extends to the sense of a Sure Start community, thanks to the efforts of Mary, Michelle and the team: *"I have met a lot of parents and their children from a diverse cultural background, we have been able to greet each other outside of the group."; "It is an all round family activity where the children play and interact and parents meet other parents with other views and opinions which can be shared."*

The Sure Start volunteer program has successfully helped local parents take a more active role in the development of this activity, and the volunteers now help newer parents and children settle into the group setting.

Conclusion

The parents have benefited from this activity being regularly held at the same time and venue over a long period of time.

The parents have appreciated the session being divided for the very young and for 1 to 4 year olds.

All are made very welcome, including fathers.

The formula – stories, songs, rhymes and messy play – is well supervised and well supported by skilled staff. This may be transferred to other estates within the Sure Start area, as well as for the Dads Zones.

To sustain this activity the introduction of a small charge is worthy of consideration. This should be considered within a community capacity and the Sure Start mainstreaming agenda. The recruitment of volunteers to this and other activities is important. A successful activity is encouraging for volunteer recruitment as the benefits can be seen.



MILTON KEYNES LOCAL PROGRAMME

Evaluation Overview
6 December 2004

In November 2004, 10 questionnaire based evaluations of Local Programme activities were undertaken. The aim of the questionnaires was to establish client satisfaction and service quality. Individual activity reports have been completed; the questionnaires explored the benefits to families and attitudes toward service delivery. Certain questions were repeated in numerous questionnaires to obtain a greater response. Overall comparison of those questions produces the following results:

Statement	Number of responses	Opinion
My child enjoys the group/activity	33	61% Strongly Agree, 33% Agree, 6% No Answer
I enjoy the group/activity/course	54	78% Strongly Agree, 22% Agree
The group is friendly and welcoming	64	75% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree
My child benefits from the activity	36	61% Strongly Agree, 33% Agree, 6% No Answer
I feel confident raising queries or concerns with staff members	67	55% Strongly Agree, 39% Agree, 5% Neither Agree or Disagree, 2% No Answer
I have made new friends at this activity	28	46% Strongly Agree, 39% Agree, 11% Neither, 4% No Answer
I am kept informed of news, activities and events	47	51% Agree, 36% Strongly Agree, 5% No Answer, 5% Disagree, 4% Neither
I would recommend the course to other parents	67	69% Strongly Agree, 29% Agree, 2% Neither

The week of implementation experienced unusually low attendance figures, resulting in a total of 67 responses from all evaluations.

Analysis

Monitoring information shows the Sure Start population as 713 families, representing 741 parents and 704 children aged under 4. From 1 April to 31 October 2004, there have been 351 active families (49%) in the Sure Start Milton Keynes area. The responses reflect a small sample of the overall Sure Start population.

Sure Start Local Programmes have to increase reach by 10% by March 2005. Baseline measurements indicated a reach of 51.8% for 2003/4. The Local Programme has to reach 61.8% of families by March 2005 - 440 families.

Parent and child satisfaction is evident.

94% of respondents agree or strongly agree that their child benefits from the activities.

85% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they have made new friends at Sure Start activities and courses.

Of the people who responded and attend activities, 87% are kept informed about the Local Programme. Two negative responses (4%) indicate even among activity users the information network is not flawless.

Conclusion

The overall opinion of service delivery in the responses is high. More detailed future research will highlight strengths and weaknesses.

Parents indicate the Programme is having a beneficial impact on their lives – children's social and emotional development is being enhanced by Sure Start activities, parental confidence and awareness is growing and local communities are being strengthened.

The activities evaluated are based at three locations in Fullers Slade, Greenleys and Wolverton. Responses show that friendships are being formed as a consequence of Sure Start activity. Further work on personal and community capacity building may be undertaken.

Activities and courses are inviting and non-threatening; staff are approachable, both Core Services and private contractors. The nature of the interagency relationships and the delivery of combined services will be examined in future work.

We are building a team of parents who are trained to help review Local Programme services on a qualitative agenda.

Information and news about the Local Programme is communicated to most people that responded. The responses are from parents who attend activities and are active within the Programme. There is a need to ensure those families not using services are consulted and included in evaluations. Barriers to access must be identified.

Future evaluation themes:

Activity types – Music & Movement, Physical Play, and Story based;

Adult Education courses;

Child Social Development;

Health promotion and awareness;

Access to Services/Hard to Reach;

Community Development;

Pre-school Preparation.