

Hyndburn, Sure Start Church and West Accrington

Tri-ennial Evaluation Report

Introduction

During a period of significant organisational development and the establishment of Sure Start Hyndburn Charitable Trust, the focus of evaluation to date has been on raising the awareness of the importance of evaluation amongst the families, the core team, Board Trustees and other partners associated with the development of the Programme.

The Board of Trustees and the core team have been fully committed to the evaluation of the Programme and have worked hard to develop strong partnerships and joined working, with a focus on the need for the shared monitoring and evaluation of service delivery.

All core team members have monitoring and evaluation within their job descriptions, and much work has been undertaken to develop a culture of continual learning and evaluation. Sure Start Hyndburn has developed a working tool for the purposes of monitoring and evaluating every individual activity and service, and the core team has established wider processes to undertake evaluation.

The Board therefore invited a consultant to facilitate the consolidation of all this work and learning and, following consultation, to complete the formalisation of a Sure Start Hyndburn Evaluation Framework.

In December, 2004, the Board approved this overall framework.

This establishes clear accountabilities, with specific delegations of functions, respectively, to the Sure Start Hyndburn Manager, and to the Performance Monitoring Group. It clarifies how stakeholders should be involved in the evaluation process; how evaluation should be conducted; and how consultation and publication should take place.

The Board has committed itself to the production of an annual evaluation report and associated summaries, and to a three-yearly report which focuses particularly on the achievements and progress of the programme, in terms of the impact and outcomes of key services.

It has charged its Performance Monitoring Group with the regular oversight of the programme's evaluation and of all arrangements for external evaluation, and the Sure Start Hyndburn Manager, with the production of an annual report on the

application of the evaluation framework, confirming that all aspects are in place and in operation.

Evaluation During the Past Year

During the past year, all activities developed by the programme have been continuously evaluated within a firm, supervision schedule for all individual team members. All core team members are encouraged to see themselves as evaluators and have kept evaluation records at the end of every session. These focus on any lessons with regard to empowerment, accessibility, service delivery and contribution to learning. They have been based on attendance records, behaviour observation and on the casual or structured views of parents. Systematic supervision by senior activity coordinators harnesses and develops these evaluation records.

In play and learning activities, the main challenge has been to encourage parents to join in rather than spectate. It has been found that reducing background noise and providing a regular structure and routine has been key to a noticeable improvement in parental involvement and a more positive attitude to team members and activities.

Using 'word of mouth' rather than posters and notices and providing activities on a drop-in, rather than pre-booked, basis has proved to be far more successful in widening access, engaging fathers and encouraging consistent attendance.

The provision of family support has been offered at different levels. Information has been available at the Park Child and Family Centre, where a programme of family drop-in sessions has also been arranged. Finally, individual family support has also been made available, either as an extension of the above, or by self-referral or referral by other agencies.

Informal evaluations indicate that the drop-in sessions have been seen to be accessible and to have helped parents regain confidence, give each other emotional support, and develop more patience with relationship management. Individual family support has tended to be of short duration, with virtually all parents indicating positive outcomes and commenting on the quality of family support services.

A number of new health-related activities have been started during the year, and there have been early positive evaluations of the accessibility of the facilities, with promising levels of attendance. Five fathers, for example, have attended the baby massage sessions. The flexibility of sessions has been an important factor. Informal evaluations suggest that the pamper, baby massage, and ante-natal sessions have greatly contributed to reductions in stress, and increases in self-confidence and self-esteem. All parents, for example, stated that they felt

competent to massage their babies at home. Several mothers have become involved in the publicity and promotion of breast-feeding.

Future Developments in Evaluation

Harnessing all work undertaken to date, the establishment of the core team and the model of shared learning, Sure Start Hyndburn's evaluation will now move into a new stage of development.

The relatively informal, but structured, mode of evaluation will now be supplemented by systematic meetings between the Sure Start Hyndburn Manager and the relevant senior Activity Coordinators, where all relevant monitoring information and details of relevant milestones will be made available by the programme monitoring officer. This should encourage the widest possible discussion and evaluation.

Up to this point, community service satisfaction surveys have been limited in nature and restricted to specific activities. During the coming year, there will be a full community service satisfaction survey which will provide baseline, comparative information for future parallel surveys. All respondents will be either parents/ carers of at least one child aged 0-3 years 11 months, or expecting to become a parent within the next six months. The survey will involve questionnaires delivered by trained staff. This will be externally co-ordinated and evaluated. The process will be subject to competitive tender.

April 2006 will see the establishment of a fully coordinated development plan for all Sure Start Hyndburn activity to March 2007 this will be a working document for both the Board and core team and will link clearly to our evaluation strategy.

Annual development plans will be a continual process and support the strategic development of Sure Start Hyndburn.

Focused Evaluation Work for the Coming Year

There will be three foci for evaluation work in this coming year.

The programme is determined to achieve progress with its health related activities and their accessibility. It wishes to review the extent to which it is achieving its health targets. The Board will be undertaking a competitive tender. The research itself will involve a mix of data study, questionnaires, case-studies and one-to-one interviews, externally co-ordinated and evaluated.

The same approach will be applied to the second focus - the impact of the newly-established family support system on the level of activity and sense of well-being of currently isolated and vulnerable families. It is proposed that this will be again an externally co-ordinated and evaluated study, involving case-studies and

individual interviews conducted by existing staff. The process will again be subject to competitive tender.

The final piece of evaluation work will again be subject to competitive tender. It will examine the extent to which Sure Start Hyndburn's status as an independent organisation has added value to its service delivery - specifically in relation to joint working. It will involve the study of existing data, one-to-one interviews and questionnaires with parents and staff of different agencies.

The Oversight of, and Response to, the Focused Evaluation Work

The conduct of all pieces of evaluation will be subject to regular scrutiny by the Performance Monitoring Group.

Each final evaluation report will be subject to consultation, as outlined in the Board's framework, and the Sure Start Hyndburn Manager will subsequently produce a report for the Board, outlining the implications of the research, and any measures that s/he recommends to the Board in the light of it.

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