



**Summary report for the end of the 4th year of the evaluation of Denaby
Main and Conisbrough 2004/05**

Summary

This report outlines activity and findings from work on a number of topics. Plans are presented for evaluation work next year. This year the evaluation will not attempt a summative statement about the impact of the programme on the Sure Start area.

The evaluation is progressing well and will be in a good position to report on the impact of several pieces of Sure Start work over the coming year.

Contents	Page
1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Background	3
3.0 Baseline survey	4
4.0 Evaluation topics – progress reports	6
5.0 Ongoing work	16
6.0 New Steps	17
7.0 Summary	18

1.0 Introduction

This report provides an end of year summary of the evaluation work that has been undertaken with the Denaby Main and Conisbrough programme.

The evaluation began in 2004/05 and takes a long term view. Some of the projects are ongoing with impacts likely over a period of several years. Some of the impacts are more immediate. The evaluation and the presentation of findings reflect this.

2.0 Background

History of the programme

Denaby Main and Conisbrough is a Sure Start trailblazer. As such it is experiencing a reduction in its budgets. It has been operating as a Children's Centre for 18 months on the Denaby Main site. A new Children's Centre is due to open shortly in Conisbrough.

The current Sure Start provision is run out of the new building in Denaby Main which houses a private nursery and community training facilities as well as a café. In addition outreach services are run out of the old library building which was the original Sure start building.

3.0 Baseline survey

A survey was conducted at the Sure Start Gala held on 21st August 2004. The gala was organised and run by staff from Denaby Main and Conisbrough Sure Start.

Findings

- ❑ The survey was self-completed by 41 adults attending the Gala.
- ❑ The large majority of respondents (97 per cent) were female, the average age being 28 years.
- ❑ The average number of children per household was 1.46.
- ❑ All of the respondents had heard about Sure Start, most hearing about it either from a Sure Start leaflet or leaflet about a parent toddler group.
- ❑ A significant number of parents had heard about the agency from two main sources: friends and professionals. The latter comprise mainly teachers, health visitors and nursery staff.
- ❑ The majority (63 per cent) of respondents have had contact with a Sure Start worker during the last 12 months. Only 11 (27 per cent) have had no contact with a Sure Start worker (see Chart 1.0)
- ❑ 27 or 66 percent had actually used a Sure Start service
- ❑ Sure Start interviewees demonstrate an insightful understanding of the role of the agency. When asked what kind of services they perceive Sure Start to offer, interviewees' responses indicate a belief on the part of local people that Sure Start provides a wide range of services for the support of families. At the same time they believe that Sure Start has little to do with social services
- ❑ Interviewees also believe that Sure Start offers a comprehensive range of services for families in the area and those services are available particularly for families with children of all ages

- Given that the survey was conducted during a gala organised by Sure Start the sample may have included a larger proportion of Sure Start users than the local population as a whole.

Outputs

- A Gala report has been submitted.

4.0 Evaluation topics

The following section will look at the areas of work that have been carried out in the past year.

4.1 The process used for deciding the evaluation focus

In the original tender document a focus was placed upon three main areas for evaluation. These were:

- ❑ Partnership working
- ❑ Barriers to engagement
- ❑ Mainstreaming and tapering.

Reports on partnership working and barriers to engagement have now been completed. The mainstreaming and tapering project is on-going.

In addition to the above, we plan to support six small projects in the second year of the evaluation. The nature of these projects is in the process of being decided.

4.1 Summary of the process used and findings to date for each topic

What follows is a summary of the processes used, activity delivered and any findings to date together. Next steps are presented for longitudinal studies.

Project 1: Partnership working

Aim

To look at internal and external partnership working within the Denaby Main and Conisbrough Sure Start.

Objectives

- ❑ To establish where partnerships works well internally and externally.
- ❑ To establish barriers to partnership working internally that have been encountered and solutions developed.
- ❑ Where barriers to partnership working internally continue, to work with partners in developing an action plan for future working.
- ❑ To establish barriers to partnership working externally that have been encountered and solutions developed.
- ❑ Where barriers to partnership working externally continue, to work with partners in developing an action plan for future working.

Methodology

- ❑ To work with Sure Start staff in identifying key external partners.
- ❑ To interview up to 5 Sure Start partners to establish difficulties encountered, lessons learned and solutions developed for external partnership working.
- ❑ To interview up to 5 Sure Start staff to establish difficulties encountered, lessons learned and solutions developed for external partnership working.

Findings

- ❑ While there have been many difficulties in the past, Sure Start is now well positioned to build on the successes achieved and to re-establish good working relationships with external partners. There are many positive factors which will help to facilitate this, and successful partnership working is a central element which runs through all service delivery.

- ❑ Staff are dedicated and work well within their teams, working together to improve the service being delivered. Partnership working at practitioner level may be seen as a real strength of Sure Start programmes, and the co-location of health visitors within the Family Support team is a good example of how value can be greatly added through joint planning and working.
- ❑ The importance of involving parents and the wider community and supporting their involvement cannot be over-stressed in order to ensure that the services being delivered are the ones they want and need. It is encouraging to see that new parent representatives have recently been recruited to the board, and they should be given on-going support and encouragement. The use of jargon should continue to be minimised, and consideration should be given to developing a Parent Development plan.
- ❑ Representation from partner organisations is good, although attendance at board meetings can be patchy. Other Sure Starts have also found this to be the case¹. This may reflect the workload of those representatives, along with the requirement for attendance at a wide range of different partnerships. However, these different experiences, skills and knowledge can add greatly to the co-ordination and planning of Sure Start activities and ensure that they are placed in a wider context.
- ❑ Now that Local Authorities have lead responsibility for planning and co-ordinating delivery of Sure Start, it is recommended they have more involvement at board level. The Nominated Strategic Officer for the Authority has responsibility to take on oversight of the LA's performance in respect of the Sure Start agenda, troubleshooting areas of difficulty, to have a strategic overview of other policy agendas, and to also be an advocate for early years and childcare provision. Their closer involvement would help facilitate partnership working still further.
- ❑ Working with education and Social Services has obviously created tensions in the past. However, both indicate willingness for closer co-operation and communication and these opportunities should be embraced. There is much potential to improve and enhance service delivery by their closer involvement in Sure Start activities.

- ❑ The main barriers which remain are around communication, both internally and externally. Therefore the work of the communications sub-group which has recently been set up will be of vital importance in contributing to the success of bringing all partners together to deliver the Sure Start objectives. Understanding partners' objectives and unique perspectives takes time and effort, and should be an on-going process to ensure that new partner representatives are fully included.

Outputs

- ❑ A report detailing the current situation in terms of partnership working has been submitted.
- ❑ An action plan for the development on internal and external partnership working has been submitted.

Project 2: Barriers to engagement.

Aim

To establish the barriers to engagement with Sure Start in the Denaby Main and Conisbrough area with a focus on men.

Objectives

- ❑ To work with Sure Start staff in identifying routes to potential interviewers.
- ❑ To work with Sure Start staff in developing a suitable methodology including a questionnaire.
- ❑ To hold up to ten focus groups within the Sure Start area on barriers to engagement.

Methodology

- ❑ To use a house group model to conduct focus groups with Sure Start users and non-users.
- ❑ Each focus group to include the completion of questionnaires.
- ❑ To analyse questionnaires using Access database to obtain quantitative data on perceived barriers.
- ❑ To analyse the focus group data to obtain qualitative data on perceived barriers.

Findings

- ❑ Females comprised the large majority of questionnaire respondents (99 per cent) and the focus groups (93 per cent). The great majority of respondents were aged between 21 and 40 years.
- ❑ The occupation most common amongst the respondents was homemaker, accounting for 47 per cent.
- ❑ Of those completing the questionnaires less than twenty per cent identified themselves as being 'semi-skilled manual', 'skilled manual' or 'professional', which was interpreted during the analysis as 'waged or salaried'. Only eleven per cent were 'unemployed'.

The majority (67 per cent) of the respondents had used Sure Start. This is almost identical to the result obtained during the earlier Sure Start Gala survey conducted in August 2004. Approximately one third of respondents (31 per cent) have not used Sure Start, while almost two thirds of survey participants live in Conisbrough.

- ❑ The high priority respondents accorded to families and family life is a prominent feature both of the questionnaire and focus group data. Most respondents believe that parents do activities together with their children, over 70 per cent believe that children are cared for by their families and most disagree with the statements that men and women want somewhere away from their families.
- ❑ However, the responses also indicate a marked ambivalence about the male role in the family. A significant minority don't agree that men are good at looking after their children. Moreover, 25 per cent also disagree that parents do things together with their children. At the same time 23 per cent disagree with the suggestion that men think it is a woman's job to look after the children.
- ❑ The ambivalent character of the responses is most apparent in the focus group data. Whilst the majority of respondents felt that men don't normally meet together in groups with their children, they feel that dads are gradually taking on a greater share of parenting responsibilities.
- ❑ A recurrent theme within the focus group discussions was the lack of amenities in the Denaby Main and Conisbrough area. Respondents were especially animated about the poor recreational activities for children. Sure Start was seen as a welcome attempt to improve the social and recreational activities on offer for the community, though much greater efforts were deemed necessary. Like other recent local initiatives, Sure Start was seen typically to have contributed to the regeneration of the area but in the very process has raised expectations as to what is possible and reminded many how far there is still to go.
- ❑ During the research local people were asked why they thought some people in the area do not use Sure Start and the barriers that stood in the way of increased participation. The types of responses offered by those

who had accessed Sure Start tended to differ to those who had never done so. For example, those who either in the past or currently make use of the service believe that the main barriers are parents' lack of motivation and fear of the unknown.

- ❑ Those respondents who had not used Sure Start also believed that, for many people, lack of motivation and fear of the unknown stood in the way of their participation. However, the main barrier was thought to be that Sure Start only caters for the under 5s.
- ❑ In the focus group sessions a common refrain was that many parents who would like their children to access sure start are unable to either because they are slightly too old or, more commonly, that, owing to the lack of crèche facilities, Sure Start is unable to cater for parents with children over a range of ages. As one parent argued, 'if you're taking an under 5 child to sure start what do you do with your over 5s'?
- ❑ Interviewees were equally convinced that, due to issues of cost and lack of facilities for older children, women who work are the main beneficiaries of the service.
- ❑ Few respondents believe that sure start is widely perceived as a service for families with problems – though the proportion of those that does so is greater amongst users than non-users. It seems that the issue of stigma is something that users project on to non-users' motivations when considering why some families don't access sure start.
- ❑ Similarly, compared to users a smaller proportion of those who do not use Sure Start believe that cost is a significant barrier to participation. By contrast, non-users cite the issue of access more frequently than users. The distance from place of residence and lack of transport is seen as particularly problematic.
- ❑ Survey participants were asked their opinion as to the impact of Sure Start on the local community. The great majority of respondents believed that Sure Start has made a big difference to Denaby and Conisborough. The follow-up discussions revealed this difference to be a wholly positive one. Again the weight of responses to the options on the questionnaire differed according to whether they accessed or did not access sure start.

- ❑ Slightly more users than non-users believed Sure Start to have made a big difference (74 per cent and 62.5 per cent respectively). However, perhaps the most significant aspect of this is that the proportion of non-users feeling this way is so high. Only 10 per cent of the latter believed Sure Start hadn't had a big impact.
- ❑ The percentage of respondents believing that sure start to be a good resource for women and does good work supporting families was equally impressive, with a similar distribution between those accessing sure start and who don't use the service.
- ❑ A greater percentage of users to non-users believed sure start to have made a big difference to families with children (82.5 per cent against 59 per cent). However, the difference is primarily determined by those of the latter group who did not agree or disagree, rather than those who straightforwardly disagreed, with the statement.
- ❑ One of the aims of the research project was to determine local people's views about what changes Sure Start needed to implement to make the service more welcoming, improve the service and attract more clients. The overwhelming response from both the questionnaires (66 per cent) and the focus groups was for more activities during the evenings and weekends. Because many of the respondents worked during the week they stated that they were unable to access the service as much as they would like.
- ❑ Weekend and evening sessions were seen as an essential means of ensuring more dads accessed the service. This is in contrast to the relatively small proportion of respondents who argued for dad-only events (34 per cent) or suggested that Sure Start employed more male staff (20 per cent). While some thought that many more men now look after children than previously and that dad-only events might attract some male parents, respondents typically remarked that most men rarely got together in groups with their children and that such activities would deter rather than attract fathers.
- ❑ A number of respondents similarly believed that more male staff might help, though most argued otherwise. Of the latter, some suggested that staff should be employed according to their ability to do the job rather than

their gender. Others argued against employing male staff on the basis of child protection issues.

- ❑ Over half of respondents believed that better advertising of sure start activities were required to improve take up of services. This was also reflected in the focus groups.

Outputs

- ❑ A report on barriers to engagement in the local area has been submitted.

Project 3: Mainstreaming and tapering

Aim

To demonstrate the achievements of individual projects to mainstream partners.

Objectives

- ❑ To establish the key criteria for partners in terms of mainstreaming individual initiatives.
- ❑ To develop a check-list for individual projects and initiatives against the criteria.

Methodology

- ❑ Document review of national and local policy and implementation literature to establish priorities.
- ❑ Interviews with potential funding partners to establish the criteria against which to assess projects (max. 10).
- ❑ Development of check-list for projects.
- ❑ Work with projects to implement the check-list.
- ❑ Establish those projects that most clearly meet the criteria of funding partners.
- ❑ Work with projects to feed the findings from the check-list back to mainstream partners via meetings.

Progress

- ❑ Staff members have been interviewed and have completed questionnaires about how they currently evaluate their work.
- ❑ The logic model of project has been introduced to the team leaders.
- ❑ Interviews with mainstream partners are on-going.

Outputs

- ❑ Check-list against which each project can assess itself.

5.0 Ongoing work

Mainstreaming and tapering

The next steps on this project are to:

- ❑ Look at different models of evaluating
- ❑ Be able to say for each service the problem, the response and the outcome (what it is for/ who it is for/what is expected out of it)
- ❑ Set up ways of identifying how far progress has been made towards outcomes in the short, medium and long-term

Possible follow-ons from this work might usefully involve the development of skills and recording methods to demonstrate the value of Sure Start projects and activities. Possibilities for inclusion might be:

- ❑ Looking at the development of a Sure Start passport for children demonstrating their achievements so far. This could be used on entry to school
- ❑ Looking at ways to measure maternal mental health
- ❑ Running a workshop on talking to mothers in order to capture their stories and thereby evidence the impact of Sure Start
- ❑ A workshop based upon APIR.

6.0 Next steps

A meeting is planned for April this year to select the projects for next year's evaluation. These will be projects carried out by the Sure Start workers with the support of Arc.

Aim

To support Sure Start workers in evaluating an area of their work.

Objectives

- ❑ To work with each Sure Start team in selecting an area for supported evaluation.
- ❑ To support the Sure Start workers in that area in carrying out an evaluation.
- ❑ To support the Sure Start worker in disseminating and sharing the findings from their evaluation both internally and externally.

Methodology

- ❑ To hold a workshop with each Sure Start team to help them identify an area for evaluation.
- ❑ To hold regular mentoring sessions with the Sure Start workers involved on developing the aims, objectives and methodology of the evaluation and the desired outputs.
- ❑ To support the Sure Start worker during reporting and dissemination.

7.0 Summary

The evaluation to date has shown that Denaby Main and Conisbrough Sure Start has succeeded in becoming part of its local community and knowledge about it is widespread. Moreover people are generally positive about the work that it does and where areas for development have been identified these are clearly identifiable and achievable.

The three main areas identified across the evaluation are:

- ❑ Difficulties in communication with the community, with stakeholders, with the Board and internally between different teams (see reports on partnership working and barriers to engagement).
- ❑ A lack of systems for recording or evaluating practice (mainstreaming and tapering)
- ❑ Engaging with the wider community (barriers to engagement).

The programme manager, staff and Board have started to put measures in place to address these namely:

- ❑ The recruitment drive of local parents to the Board
- ❑ Staff awaydays to look at cross team working and development
- ❑ The development of action planning at team manager level
- ❑ The introduction of the logic model for self evaluation
- ❑ The consideration of weekend and evening opening.

These changes augur well for the future development of Denaby Main and Conisbrough Sure Start.