



Baseline Survey of Parental  
Attitudes within the Sure Start area  
of Wellingborough

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# Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

## 1.0 Introduction

- Consultation and evaluation play a highly valued role within Sure Start programmes across the country, and in Wellingborough it was felt that the programme had reached a point where the collection of baseline data regarding the current views of parents would prove to be a useful exercise.
- When considering the type of data which was to be collected, it was felt that both qualitative and quantitative information would be of use to the programme in the coming year. For this reason, it was decided that a 'mixed methods' approach would be most effective, triangulating the quantitative approach best encapsulated in the self-administered survey alongside the qualitative techniques used in face to face qualitative interviews.
- The objectives of the research project were initially very broad: the research was to enable the Sure Start team to gain a sufficiently detailed view of the current views of parents to enable them to plan useful and relevant services in the year ahead.
- Upon reflection, it was recognised that the aims of the research were quite substantial, and therefore two separate questionnaires were designed.
- The first questionnaire was designed to be completed by the respondent themselves, either by means of a postal mailshot or through distribution at local playgroups and pre-schools.
- The second questionnaire was designed to be administered face to face with parents attending local parent and toddler groups within the Sure Start area.
- Ethical issues were considered at all stages of the research process, with respondents' confidentiality and comfort given utmost priority at all times.
- Data obtained as a result of the project was analysed using the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and remained confidential at all times.
- In total, fifty two responses were received as a result of the various data collection methods employed. Of these, thirty-eight respondents had responded to the shorter questionnaire, with twenty being completed by parents themselves and returned via childcare or healthcare providers, and eighteen being returned by post following the mailshot. The remaining fourteen longer questionnaires had been administered face to face in parent and toddler groups around the town.

## 2.0 Demographic Information

- Almost half of respondents reside within the Queensway estate, with a further third living upon the Hemmingwell estate and the remaining 19% coming from the Kingsway area.
- Over half of respondents (54%) had lived in their current area for five years or less.
- 96% of survey respondents were female, with one response coming from a male parent or carer, and a further two respondents choosing not to provide information about their gender.
- The most common age-group among all of those responding appeared to be '19-28', with a little under half of all parents or carers (46%) falling into this category.
- Data relating to ethnicity shows that 90% of respondents consider themselves to be White British, with the remaining 10% being equally divided between White Other, Black African, Afro-British, Pakistani and mixed – White and Black Caribbean. (2% each)
- Parents or carers were also asked whether they considered themselves to have any disability or special needs, to which two respondents declined to answer, a further two answered affirmatively, and 92% stated that they did not have any disability.
- Respondents were also asked whether they were currently expecting a child, to which three replied that they were.
- Almost two-thirds (59%) of survey respondents are not currently in work. However, when considering these figures it should be remembered that parents who *do* work may well be difficult to contact through playgroups and weighing clinics, and therefore may be under-represented within this survey.
- Over one-fifth of parents responding to the survey (22%) currently have a child aged under one year, and precisely double this many families (44%) have a child aged between one and two years. Meanwhile, almost one-third of families have a child aged between two and three (32%) and over half contain a child aged between three and four (52%).
- In total, nearly three-fifths of families (29 cases) currently have only one child aged under four, while over one-third (17 cases) have two children and the remaining 8% (4 cases) have three children. 46% of families were also found to contain older children, with ages ranging between four and nineteen years.

### 3.0 Use of Local Services

- Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) stated that they use doctor's surgeries now, with a further 6% claiming to have used this in the past, suggesting that they are likely to be registered locally but have not required medical attention recently. A further proportion of respondents stated that they do not use medical services within their local area, with 8% stating that such facilities do not exist locally and another five respondents giving examples of having to travel across Wellingborough to visit their doctor.
- Almost half of respondents currently use such baby weighing clinics (47%), with a further 31% having done so in the past. Once again, a number of parents complained that such services did not exist locally, with several from the Queensway and Kingsway estates travelling to Isebrooke Hospital to weigh their babies.
- Seven out of ten parents stated that that they had used antenatal facilities in the past (70%). Once again, a number of respondents stated that such services were not available locally, having to travel either to Isebrooke Hospital or even to Kettering General Hospital to receive such care.
- More than nine out of ten parents were either currently registered with a Health Visitor, or had been in the past (60% and 33% respectively).
- Only seven parents had had cause to use local speech and languages services, either currently or in the past.
- Half of all respondents (50%) claimed to be currently registered locally with a dentist, with a further 10% claiming to have used these services in the past. Several respondents stated that they use dental services outside of their local area – either in the town centre or even in other towns and villages.
- The most popular source of information regarding health-related services was the respondent's doctor, with over half of all parents (56%) gaining information in this manner. The Health Visitor also proved to be a valuable source of information concerning health-related services, with almost the same proportion of parents (54%) finding out about services in this way.
- Only one of the ten most popular parent and toddler groups takes place upon the Queensway estate, this being the Little Stars drop-in group currently run by Homestart on Monday afternoons.
- If we compare this picture to the Kingsway estate, we find a different pattern, with three different groups being utilised; these being the Little Stars session run by Homestart on Tuesday afternoons, the playgroup and weighing clinic held at Warwick School on Wednesday mornings, and Little Ones playgroup which runs on a Thursday morning.
- On the Hemmingwell estate, a larger number of parent and toddler facilities are used by parents: The Kingfishers group, held at Hemmingwell Community

Centre, appears to be the most popular, with parents also using Hemmingwell Playgroup, the playhour held at Oakway School on Thursday afternoons, and the Lifeline Group currently being facilitated by the Family Centre.

- As we can see, in relation to finding information about parent and toddler groups, respondent's Health Visitors were frequently cited as a good source of information, with more than two fifths of parents (44%) having gained information in this way. A very similar proportion of parents (42%) heard about local toddler facilities through their friends.
- A variety of pre-schools and day nurseries were used by respondents, located in all three Sure Start estates and also in the town centre.
- Four respondents stated that they leave their child with a childminder, which accounts for 7% of survey respondents overall. This relatively low usage may be a reflection on the high numbers of respondents who are not currently in paid employment.
- Three-fifths of respondents (60%) stated that it had been a friend who had provided them with information concerning pre-schools, nurseries and/ or childminders. A further fifth (20%) claimed that their Health Visitor had provided the information.
- Of the three respondents currently aged under eighteen, two claim to be utilising the Young Mums Group at St. Mark's Church, and among those aged 18-29, a further two parents also attend this group.
- Among those living within the Hemmingwell area, almost half currently attend the Lifeline group (47%), although a further third claim never to have heard of Lifeline suggesting that Sure Start will have scope to improve the take-up of this service in the future.
- Almost half of all respondents currently use the Bookstart service or have done so in the past (48%), with a further 26% stating that they may be interested in using the service in the future.
- Almost a third of respondents claimed never to have heard of the Toy Library (29%), with a further 16% stating that they were not likely to be interested in using such a service in the future. Only one respondent claimed to be currently using this service. Nevertheless, the most popular response to this question was that parents had not yet used this service, but would like to do so in the future.
- Over a quarter of respondents claimed never to have heard of the Family Centre, with a further 21% stating that they were not likely to be interested in using the services which it provides. Nevertheless, over a quarter of parents stated that they either currently use the Family Centre, or have done so in the past (26%), and a further 23% showed interest in possibly using this facility in the future.

- The most popular source of information concerning support groups and other family services appears to be respondents' friends, although healthcare workers such as doctors and Health Visitors also have a large role to play, accounting for 36% of total responses.
- Almost three quarters of those parents living on the Queensway Estate stated that they currently use Glamis Hall or have done so in the past (74%). When asked about local play areas and parks, an even higher usage was suggested, with more than four fifths (83%) using local play areas and almost all respondents (96%) using local parks, either currently or in the past.
- Kingsway estate currently lacks its own community centre, but local parents were still asked about their usage of parks and play areas. In response to this question, six respondents (84%) stated that they currently use local play areas or have done so in the past, while all eight respondents answering this question claimed to use the nearby parks.
- When asked about Hemmingwell community centre, almost three quarters of those answering the question (73%) claimed to currently use the facility, or to have done so in the past. However, the remaining 27% stated that they had not used the community centre and were not likely to do so in the future.
- Only half of Hemmingwell respondents claim to currently use play areas, or to have done so in the past, with 8% stating that no such services exist within their area, and a further third (33%) asserting that they are not likely to use local facilities in the future.

## 4.0 Satisfaction Levels with Local Services

- Respondents were pleased with the cost of health-related services, with almost all of those answering the question considering this to be 'very good' or 'quite good' (97%).
- Three-fifths of respondents (60%) stated that the friendliness of health-related staff was 'very good', while approximately half of respondents felt that the informative nature and sensitivity of staff to be equally high (53% and 49% respectively).
- A little under half of all respondents reported that opening times for these services were 'very good' and in relation to the location and choice of services, this very positive response was reduced to approximately one-third (34% and 32% respectively.)
- Parents appear to be especially happy with the skills and personal characteristics exhibited by staff working at childcare groups, with almost all respondents (97%) stating that the friendliness of staff is either 'very good' or 'quite good'. Nine out of ten respondents (90%) gave a positive evaluation of the informative nature of staff, and a similar proportion (93%) stated that staff were sensitive to the needs of their family.
- Almost three quarters of respondents stating that the cost of these groups was 'very good' (71%).
- Once again, respondents were slightly less satisfied with the location and choice of services currently available, with only 50% stating that the location of groups was 'very good'. A similar amount felt that the opening times of services was very good (46%), while a lower proportion felt as positively about the choice of services currently available (33%). Nevertheless, in all aspects of satisfaction relating to these childcare services, positive responses outweigh the negative by far.
- Parents appear to be particularly impressed by the friendliness of pre-school childcare staff, with more than nine out of every ten respondents stating that this was 'very good' (92%). Respondents also appear to have been pleased with the informative nature of staff, and their sensitivity to the needs of families, with more than four-fifths of respondents stating that these factors were also 'very good'.
- More than one in ten respondents stating that the cost of childcare services was 'quite poor' or 'very poor' (12%) and an even higher 18% expressed dissatisfaction with the choice of services. However, even with these two factors, the majority of respondents claimed that services were 'very good'.
- Overall, more than nine out of ten respondents are satisfied with the services which are currently being provided (95%). Nevertheless, this does not mean that there is no room for improvement: Almost two-thirds of parents stated that they are 'quite satisfied' with services, suggesting that there may be minor

improvements which could be made. Furthermore, a small minority of respondents showed dissatisfaction with current services, and efforts should therefore be made to raise the opinions of these parents and others who may hold similarly negative views.

## 5.0 Questions Relating Specifically to the Sure Start Programme

- The majority of parents interviewed had heard of Sure Start prior to being interviewed, and had some level of knowledge regarding the aims of the project. Encouragingly, almost one in five parents felt that they had a clear idea both of the project's goals and the services which are currently being provided.
- A further 52% of respondents either had some knowledge of current services, or of the overall aims of the project.
- When considering attending an event, parents appear to prioritise their children's enjoyment above their own needs. More than nine out of ten respondents stated that their children having an opportunity to play or to learn would be an influential factor in their decision to attend an event.
- More than nine out of ten parents (92%) stated that the friendliness of staff was an important factor in their attendance at groups.
- The possibility of making new friends was also important to over four-fifths of respondents (82%). Furthermore, almost half of respondents (49%) stated that already having friends at a group would also encourage them to attend.
- The location of the event being important to 82% of respondents, who stated that it would encourage them to attend if the event was held upon their local estate.
- Almost two-thirds of respondents said that they would be encouraged to attend if an event was free of charge.
- The provision of refreshments and transport were also considered to be important by a substantial percentage of parents (47% and 45% respectively), although just over half of respondents stated that these factors would be unlikely to influence their decision to attend an event.
- The predominant factor which may deter respondents from attending an event appears to be the location, with more than two-thirds (62%) stating that they would not attend an event if they felt uncomfortable at the venue where it was being held.
- Factors relating to specific family circumstances were also considered to discourage attendance among some parents, with over half of all respondents (60%) stating that their child's routine may be an influential factor deterring them from attending a Sure Start event.
- A small number of respondents felt that they had too many children to organise, or that their children were too young to make attendance a worthwhile option (19% and 17% respectively).

- Several respondents felt that ‘traditional’ barriers to accessing services, such as disabilities or language difficulties, might discourage their attendance at events, - this is clearly not a scenario which Sure Start staff would like to imagine, and will doubtlessly be addressed in the near future.
- Travel was seen as a problematic factor to a number of respondents, as was feeling uncomfortable with the other people attending the group.
- Toilet facilities and the weather were also seen as important influences by several respondents, and a wide variety of other views were also put forward, all of which can be seen above.

## 6.0 Issues Relating to Travel and Transport

- The most popular method of transport among respondents is walking, with over three quarters of parents stating that they walk to local services (78%).
- Meanwhile, a third of respondents stated that they use a car, while more than one in ten stated that they used local buses and taxis (12% each).
- Only two respondents stated that they obtain lifts from friends in order to attend events.
- Responses were divided reasonably equally between parents stating that they would not travel further than their own estate, and those claiming that they would be happy to attend such events if free transport were to be provided by Sure Start (42% and 33% respectively, with a further 17% stating that their views fell somewhere between the two options).

## 7.0 Childcare Advice and Support Groups

- Just over half of parents stated that they either had breastfed or were currently breastfeeding (54% combined) while just under half responded that they had not breastfed at all (46%).
- The amount of time for which parents chose to breastfeed their babies differed considerably, varying from two days to a year and a half.
- The most common reason for ending breastfeeding was that breastfeeding was simply too painful, with almost one third of respondents (30%) stating that this was a contributory factor in their decision to cease feeding.
- A number of respondents also felt that bottle feeding allowed them more independence, as they could share the responsibility with their partner or other family members.
- Results suggest that Midwives and Health Visitors appear to offer the most advice and support among those interviewed, although further research would be necessary in order to establish whether this pattern is representative of the wider population of parents.
- The majority of parents answering these questions asserted that they would have appreciated breastfeeding support and advice from Sure Start, had it been available.
- Among parents answering the relevant questions, the majority stated that they had experienced a negative change in their levels of happiness since giving birth, with more than half of respondents (55%) stating that they had felt “quite depressed” and a further 18% asserting that they had felt “a little low”.
- Among those feeling depressed, five out of six had sought help to alleviate their feelings. Interestingly, those describing their feelings in less severe terms appear to be less willing to seek help, with no respondents claiming to have felt a little low and to have sought help.
- Respondents appear to have been most willing to discuss these matters with their Health Visitor, with three quarters of respondents (75%) stating that they would use this avenue of support. More than half of those responding would also be happy to discuss their feelings with their doctor (63%), while half would talk about this problem with their partner (50%) and slightly more would talk with another family member (63%) , with mothers and sisters being mentioned by a number of respondents.
- Interestingly, respondents appear to be more reluctant to discuss postnatal depression with their friends. This could be an anomaly caused by the small sample answering this survey, or it could be indicative of a genuine trend among parents.

- When considering support provided by Sure Start, the reaction among parents was very positive, with eight of the nine respondents stating that they would find the provision of such a service useful.
- Respondents were divided quite equally between smokers and non-smokers. More than two fifths (43%) stated that they do not currently smoke, with a further 12% stating that they used to smoke but gave up when they were pregnant. Nevertheless, a further 46% claim to currently smoke, including two respondents who pointed out that they had cut down considerably since giving birth, or that they do not smoke in the presence of their child.
- No respondents stated that they would use a smoking cessation support group, were such a service to be provided by Sure Start.
- Friends appear to play a far more important role when talking about general childcare matters than they do in relation to specific issues such as breastfeeding and postnatal depression.
- Family and friends were also seen as a very valuable resource by the majority of parents responding to this question.
- In terms of formal advice, many respondents appear to discuss general childcare matters with their Health Visitor, while a minority would also speak to their doctor.

## 8.0 Conclusion

- The majority of those responding to the questionnaire would like to become part of the Sure Start project, either by attending events or receiving one-to-one support of some kind.

# Overall Report

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the Research Project

In the past six months, Wellingborough's Sure Start scheme has truly started to flourish and make an initial impact in the lives of local families. Having moved to new premises in January and recruited a strong team of dedicated staff, it was felt that the programme had reached a point where the collection of baseline data regarding the current views of parents would prove to be a useful exercise.

Consultation and evaluation play a highly valued role within Sure Start programmes across the country, and in Wellingborough this was certainly the case, with the team being keen to use this opportunity to explore the insights and suggestions put forward by local parents.

Research began in February 2003, with the intention of gathering baseline information while still in the 'Early Services' phase of the project, and before Year One of the project officially started in April. This limited timescale, along with the infancy of the scheme itself, impacted upon the methodology in a number of ways.

Having studied the examples of good practice provided in Sure Start's guidelines\* we were impressed by the range of innovative research methods used throughout the country. However, while reading about the research-oriented fun-days and group exercises used by other programmes was very inspiring, we felt that due to our restricted timescale these methods may be of more use at a later date, and opted to use a straightforward survey in this first instance.

### 1.2 Methodology

When considering the type of data which was to be collected, it was felt that both qualitative and quantitative information would be of use to the programme in the coming year: In order to ascertain widespread trends among local parents, it was important that we gain a sufficient amount of quantitative data to enable us to make decisions regarding the possible interest in future services and events. Meanwhile, it was also important that we gained sufficient *depth* of local knowledge and feelings, and gained rich qualitative data relating to the more complex needs and views of our target population.

For this reason, it was decided that a 'mixed methods' approach would be most effective, triangulating the quantitative approach best encapsulated in the self-administered survey alongside the qualitative techniques used in face to face qualitative interviews.

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\* [Sure Start: a guide to planning and delivering your programme](#), Summer 2002, and [How Was It For You? A brief guide to conducting user satisfaction surveys for local Sure Start programmes](#), by Mog Ball, July 2002

The timing of the research also suggested that this combination of complementary methods would be the best approach, as it was felt that neither method would in itself be likely to produce sufficient data at this point: Firstly, as the project was still in its early stages, there had not been time to compile a sufficiently large database of consenting Sure Start members to enable the use of a large-scale mail-out. Secondly, as frontline services were not yet in place and many staff were still making their first contacts with parents living in the area, it was not felt that sufficient rapport had been established to encourage large numbers of parents to feel comfortable with taking part in face to face research.

By combining the two approaches it was felt that we could gain the optimum number of respondents, given our tight timescale. While we recognised that the number of completed interviews was unlikely to accurately represent the views of *all* families living within the Sure Start area, it was nevertheless felt that this method would allow us to offer the opportunity to take part in the research to the widest range of parents known to the project at this time, and to collect sufficiently detailed data to be meaningful to those planning services in the short-term while also compiling data to enable comparison in future years.

### 1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research project were initially very broad: the research was to enable the Sure Start team to gain a sufficiently detailed view of the current views of parents to enable them to plan useful and relevant services in the year ahead. Alongside this general goal, the research had a number of more specific aims, which were kept firmly in mind when designing the topic areas to be included in the research.

In the first place, it was important to gain sufficient demographic information to ensure that the survey was broadly representative of local parents in relation to factors such as age, ethnicity, disability and working status. Due to the unorthodox distribution of Wellingborough's target population over three distinct areas of the town, it was also important to gain information relating to the specific location of respondents.

- A main priority of the research was considered to be the acquisition of an overview of services currently used by local families, and parents' satisfaction levels in relation to these facilities. Services discussed were to include all facilities used in relation to pre-school children, ranging from antenatal and postnatal healthcare, through to medical care, childcare and social provision such as pre-schools and toddler groups.
- Due to the importance of information distribution and acquisition, it was deemed necessary to establish the methods by which local parents initially learned of the services which were currently accessed in relation to their families.

- Alongside this data, it was also important to gain an overview of current trends relating to breastfeeding, postnatal depression and smoking among local parents.
- As the Wellingborough Sure Start area is distributed across three estates within the town, transport-related issues were also felt to be worthy of discussion.
- In relation to the planning of future services, some detailed information was deemed to be useful relating to support and advice which the programme may offer in the future; specifically relating to breastfeeding, smoking and postnatal depression.
- In relation to future Sure Start promotional activities, support groups and general events, it was felt that parents could provide useful information explaining the factors which may encourage or discourage their attendance.
- Due to the infancy of the Sure Start programme in Wellingborough, it was recognised that at this point in time, professionals working within the project may not have sufficient local knowledge to be aware of *all* issues deemed to be important to local families. It was therefore envisioned that the survey might offer parents an opportunity to express their more general views and insights into local life, their needs and their ideas.
- Lastly, as the nature of the research process was to involve the contacting of local parents, it was also hoped that the opportunity could be taken to not only gain their current views, but also to inform parents about the Sure Start programme and gain their consent to become part of the project. Naturally, it was understood that this aim must not take priority over the maintenance of impartiality, and could only be attempted if confident that such attempts would not unduly influence the results of the survey itself.

Upon reflection, it was recognised that these aims were quite substantial, and therefore a strategy was adopted to divide this information between two separate questionnaires. These were designed in conjunction with staff at the Sure Start programme, and were piloted using the 'cognitive response' approach to ensure that all questions were likely to be fully understood by recipients.

## 1.4 The First Questionnaire

The first questionnaire was designed to be completed by the respondent themselves, either by means of a postal mailshot or through distribution at local playgroups and pre-schools. The questionnaire focused upon obtaining the bare minimum information deemed to be important by the programme, which included:

- Demographic information
- Views on current service provision
- Questions relating to acquisition of information
- Questions relating to attendance at Sure Start events
- Basic information relating to transport, breastfeeding and smoking

This questionnaire was predominantly quantitative, using a variety of Likert Scales and similar questions, while offering a small number of opportunities for parents to add more detailed answers if they so desired.

In total, the questionnaire reached seven sides of A4 in length and was anticipated to take approximately ten minutes to complete. A full copy of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

## 1.5 The Second Questionnaire

The second questionnaire (which can be found in Appendix B) was a little longer – nine sides of A4 in total – and was anticipated to take approximately fifteen minutes to administer. It comprised of all of the questions contained in the shorter version, alongside several further topic areas:

- Detailed questions relating to transport
- Detailed questions relating to breastfeeding and related support groups
- Detailed questions relating to smoking and related support groups
- Questions relating to postnatal depression and general childcare issues
- Further opportunities to offer qualitative comments and suggestions on all of the aforementioned topics

This questionnaire was designed to be administered face to face with parents attending local parent and toddler groups within the Sure Start area. Initially it was envisioned that ten groups would be visited, with these being distributed as equally as possible among the three estates in order to ensure that the views of parents living in each area were adequately represented.

## 1.6 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues were considered at all stages of the research process, with respondents' confidentiality and comfort being given utmost priority at all times. For example, questions relating to sensitive topics such as postnatal depression were only asked during the face to face interviews, and respondents were reassured that they were not obliged to answer any

questions which made them feel uncomfortable. Throughout the face to face interviews, it was also made clear to parents that no questions had a 'preferred answer', and that nobody would be judged or criticised for any of their responses.

The initial aim of using the face to face interviews as a method of informing parents about the Sure Start programme was considered carefully, and it was felt that this was indeed possible without tainting the research, if approached in a sensible and sensitive manner. In order to achieve this, questionnaires were first administered impartially, and respondents were subsequently provided with additional information about the Sure Start project, if they had stated that they were interested.

In order to maximise response levels, several incentives was offered to parents taking part in the research project: A prize draw was established for all participants, offering High Street Vouchers to a number of winning respondents, and all parents completing the longer version of the questionnaire were also offered a chocolate bar, in recognition of the time taken in answering the extra questions. In order to maintain confidentiality, it was stressed to all participants that address details provided in order to enter the prize draw would not be linked to their responses in any way.

## 1.7 Data Collation and Analysis

Data obtained as a result of the project was analysed using the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and remained confidential at all times. In relation to the qualitative data, this was intended to be coded and analysed using the SPSS programme, but due to the varied nature of responses to each question such formal analysis was not possible or indeed necessary.

## 1.8 Results

All three methods of distributing the questionnaires took place between February and April, with varying degrees of success. A mailshot of the shorter questionnaire was sent out to eighty-five families with whom contact had been made during the 'Early Services' phase of the programme. Short questionnaires were also distributed to local pre-schools and day nurseries by Sure Start staff, with the intention that staff within these childcare facilities then distribute them among local parents.

Face to face interviews were conducted at five local toddler groups, distributed across the three locations: The original target of visiting ten groups was altered as it became noticeable that many of the groups shared the same small nucleus of parents. Furthermore, in the course of these five visits it became apparent that the longer version of the questionnaire was taking far longer to administer than had originally been anticipated: Parents were answering while simultaneously caring for their children and discussing childcare matters with friends, which meant that interviews frequently took up to an hour to complete. Due to the ethical obligation to inform potential respondents of the likely length of the interview, it was felt that this was too

much of an imposition upon parents attending such groups. Nevertheless, the qualitative data gained as a result of the few interviews which were completed was very useful and added much insight into the research process overall.

In total, fifty two responses were received as a result of the various data collection methods employed. Of these, thirty-eight respondents had completed the shorter questionnaire, with twenty being filled in by parents themselves and returned via childcare or healthcare providers, and eighteen being returned by post following the mailshot. The remaining fourteen longer questionnaires had been administered face to face in parent and toddler groups around the town.

## 2.0 Demographic Information

Before we consider the views of our survey respondents, it may be useful to gain an overview of the demographic information generated by the questionnaires, which will help us to understand the location, demographic breakdown, shape and size of the families surveyed. We shall begin by examining the location of respondents, in terms of the three Sure Start areas of Wellingborough.

### 2.1 Location

Of the fifty two completed questionnaires, two respondents were found to live outside the Sure Start area, yet their responses have been included within this report as both have strong links to the target communities.\* If we include these cases within the appropriate estates, then the breakdown of respondents according to their location can be shown in Table 2A below:

Table 2A: Location of Respondents,  
According to the Three Sure Start Estates

Estate	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Queensway	25	48%
Kingsway	10	19%
Hemmingwell	17	33%
Total	52	100%

As we can see, almost half of respondents reside within the Queensway estate, with a further third living upon the Hemmingwell estate and the remaining 19% coming from the Kingsway area. This result may be slightly surprising, as recent statistics show the Hemmingwell estate to be home to the largest number of children under the age of four. One possible explanation for this divergence may be that early Sure Start services have been more predominantly established within the Queensway area than the other two estates, and therefore local parents and carers may have felt more inclined to respond to this questionnaire.

Information was also collected regarding the precise location of respondents *within* the estates, in order to ascertain whether certain areas are proving to be easier than others in relation to establishing contact with parents and carers. However, upon analysis of the data collected it was found that this was

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\* One respondent had lived within the Sure Start area until very recently, and received the questionnaire as she was still collecting mail from her previous address. The second respondent lives just outside the Sure Start boundary, but regularly uses services upon the estates, as well as looking after a relative's child who does live within the target area.

\* The 2003 Jigsaw Audit of Childcare services states that the Hemmingwell ward is home to 398 children aged 0-3, while Queensway is home to 354 children and Croyland ward contains 285 such children. Clearly, this can only be used as a guideline, as these wards do not correspond precisely to the Sure Start target areas, but in the absence of up to date census data at a local level, such information does at least provide us with some guideline with which to compare our data.

not currently the case. On the Queensway estate, questionnaires were completed by parents living on approximately one-third of all streets within the area, and these streets were dispersed quite evenly across the estate. On both the Kingsway and Hemmingwell estates, responses were received from parents living on more than half of the streets in each area and once again, these were dispersed quite evenly, leaving no noticeable areas which appear to be especially hard to reach.

After establishing their current address, respondents were next asked to provide an approximate estimate of how long they have lived within this area. A broad range of responses were received, varying from two months to over forty years, all of which are shown in Table 2B below:

Table 2B: “How long have you lived in your current area?”

Length of Time	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses*	Cumulative Percentage of Responses
Less than one year	5	10%	10%
One to five years	23	44%	54%
Six to ten years	5	10%	64%
Eleven to fifteen years	7	13%	77%
Sixteen to twenty years	6	11%	89%
Over twenty one years	6	11%	100%
Total	52	99%*	100%

Due to outlying extremes, it would not be wise to consider the mean length of time which people have spent living in their current area. More useful, perhaps, is the modal average which tells us that the most common answer to this question, given by over 17% of respondents, was ‘Two years’. This is substantiated by the fact that over half of respondents (54%) had lived in the area for five years or less.

This pattern is *broadly* similar across all three estates, with many respondents in each estate having moved to the area within the last five years. On the Queensway estate, the figure is precisely the same as for the overall survey, with 54% having lived in the are for five years or less. The Kingsway estate appears to have a slightly more rooted population, as only 40% of respondents fit into this category. Meanwhile, the Hemmingwell estate appears to have the most transient population, with more than six out of every ten respondents (63%) having moved to the area within the past five years, and precisely half (50%) having lived on the estate for two years or less.

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\* Due to the combination of the results of the long and short questionnaire, all questions were not necessarily asked to all respondents. Therefore, throughout this analysis ‘Percentage of Responses’ should be understood as the percentage of *valid* responses as opposed to the percentage of responses overall and including blank answers.

\* Percentages throughout this report may not add up to 100%, due to rounding.

## 2.2 Gender of Respondents

With regard to the gender of respondents, results show an overwhelming majority (96%) to be female, with one response coming from a male parent or carer, and a further two respondents choosing not to provide information about their gender. This imbalance is not surprising, as it has traditionally been women's role to provide the fundamental core of childcare responsibilities, and it is predominantly women who are present at parent and toddler groups, weighing clinics and Sure Start events in Wellingborough.

## 2.3 Age of Respondents

Clear graphic representation relating to the age of respondents can be found below in Table 2C, and Chart 2C overleaf. As these show, the most common age-group among all of those responding appeared to be '19-28', with a little under half of all parents or carers\* (46%) falling into this category. The age-group '29-38' was the second most popular, accounting for a further 38% of valid responses. Of the remaining eight respondents who chose to provide information about their age, five were aged 39 or over (10%) and three were aged 18 or under (6%), although it should be remembered that some of those in the '19-28' age-group may have been aged under 18 when they became parents.

Table 2C: Age of Respondents

Age	Overall		Queensway		Kingsway		Hemmingwell	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18 or under	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%	3	19%
19 to 28	23	46%	12	50%	3	30%	8	50%
29 to 38	19	38%	10	42%	4	40%	5	31%
39 or over	5	10%	2	8%	3	30%	0	0%
Total	50	100%	24	100%	10	100%	16	100%

When we break this information down according to the estates upon which the respondents live, we can see interesting differences regarding the ages of parents and carers. For example, while the Queensway estate corresponds closely with the overall average, with half of all respondents being aged 28 or under, the other two estates diverge from this pattern in opposite ways: the Kingsway estate appears to have a slightly older population of parents and carers, with seven out of ten (70%) being over the age of 28. Conversely, on the Hemmingwell estate, almost the same percentage of parents (69%) are aged *under* 28.

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\* Throughout this report, statistics will be analysed according to the 52 responses received. Of these responses, 50 relate to parents, while two relate to carers, or more specifically childminders. In the interest of brevity, respondents will frequently be referred to a 'parents' throughout this report, and this phrase should be taken to include the responses of the two childminders unless specifically noted in the text.

Chart 2C

We must not forget that the ages of those responding to this survey may not be representative of all parents living within these locations, but should a similar pattern be found in further data, then this could have an impact on the services required in each of the three estates.

## 2.4 Ethnicity of Respondents

Respondents were also asked about their ethnicity, the results of which can be found in Table 2D below. Up-to-date information concerning the ethnic breakdown of residents living within the Sure Start areas will not be available until the 2002 census information is released at ward level and it is therefore difficult to ascertain whether or not our survey is representative of families living within the area.

Table 2D: Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnicity	Overall		Queensway		Kingsway		Hemmingwell	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
White British	45	86%	22	92%	10	100%	13	81%
White Irish	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
White Other	1	2%	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%
Black British	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Black Caribbean	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Black African	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%
Black Other	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Chinese	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Indian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Pakistani	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%
Bangladeshi	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian Other	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	1	6%
Mixed White and Black African	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Mixed White and Asian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other mixed background	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other ethnic group	1	2%	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%

In summary, these results show that 90% of respondents consider themselves to be White British, with the remaining 10% being equally divided between White Other, Black African, Afro-British, Pakistani and Mixed – White and Black Caribbean. (2% each)

When we look at this information in relation to the three estates, we find that once again, the largest discrepancy occurs between the Kingsway and Hemmingwell areas: while the Queensway estate concurs quite closely with the overall figures (92% White British), we find that those interviewed from the Kingsway estate all came from this ethnic group (100%), while the Hemmingwell estate showed the greatest ethnic diversity, with nearly one in five of those interviewed (19%) coming from an ethnic minority background.

## 2.5 Disabilities, Special Needs and Pregnancies

Parents or carers were also asked whether they considered themselves to have any disability or special needs, to which two respondents declined to answer, a further two answered affirmatively, and 92% stated that they did not have any disability.

Furthermore, respondents were asked whether they were currently expecting a child, to which three replied that they were.

## 2.6 Employment Status

Respondents were provided with a series of scenarios, and asked which most closely described their current working status, the results of which can be found in Table 2E below and Chart 2E overleaf. In order to gain a clearer picture of the working status of *parents*, the responses of local childminders who do not have children of their own aged under four have temporarily been excluded in the above analysis. However, when considering these figures it should be remembered that parents who *do* work may well be difficult to contact through playgroups and weighing clinics, and therefore may be under-represented within this survey. Therefore, the fact that almost two-thirds (59%) of survey respondents are not currently in work does not necessarily reflect employment trends among parents in general within the Sure Start area.

Table 2E: Employment Status of Respondents

Current working status	Overall		Queensway		Kingsway		Hemmingwell	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Not currently employed	26	59%	14	67%	4	50%	8	53%
Full time paid work	2	5%	1	5%	0	0%	1	7%
Part time paid work	12	24%	5	24%	3	38%	4	27%
Training or college course	2	5%	0	0%	0	0%	2	14%
Work and training/ college course	2	5%	1	5%	1	13%	0	0%

Total	46	100%	21	101%	8	101%	15	101%
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Chart 2E

Bearing this fact in mind and assuming that it is equally applicable to all areas of Wellingborough, it may nevertheless be interesting to explore the differences in working patterns between the three estates. For example, on the Queensway estate unemployed parents account for more than three fifths of respondents (67%), whereas the Kingsway and Hemmingwell estates appear to be home to a higher proportion of parents who are working, either on a full or part time basis (38% for the Kingsway estate and 34% for the Hemmingwell). However, while these patterns may show interesting differences between the three areas, they would also need to be substantiated by a larger data-set in order to be truly meaningful.

Interestingly, although provided with an option stating 'I am on maternity leave and intending to return to work within the next six months', no respondents in *any* area chose this scenario to describe their current situation. There may be a number of explanations for this: parents may not have been working prior to falling pregnant, or may not yet know whether or not returning to work will be feasible in the near future. If the latter is the case for some parents, then this certainly provides scope for Sure Start to ensure that employment and childcare information is more readily available in the future, to assist parents in assessing their career options.

## 2.7 The Families of Respondents

Respondents were asked to provide information about their children, starting with those under the age of four. The results of this section of the survey can be found in Table 2F below and Chart 2F overleaf. For the purposes of this question, the responses of the two childminders who completed the questionnaire were excluded, as it was not clear whether the children minded belonged to one family or several.

Table 2F: Children Aged Under Four within Respondents' Families

Age of Child	Number of Cases	Percentage of Responses	Percentage of Cases
Under 12 months	11	15%	22%
1-2 years	22	29%	44%
2-3 years	16	21%	32%
3-4 years	26	35%	52%
Total	75	100%	150%

If we consider these statistics in terms of the seventy-five *children* aged under four, as opposed to the fifty *families* to which they belong, we see that by far the largest amount fall into the 'three to four' year age group, accounting for over one-third of all children included in the data (35%). Close behind are children in the 'one to two' age-group, accounting for 29% of responses. Lastly, more than one-fifth of children fall into the 'two to three years' category and the remaining 15% are aged under 12 months.

Chart 2F

In order to effectively plan future Sure Start events and services, it may also be useful to understand the proportion of families which contain children in each of the age-groups: Over one-fifth of parents responding to the survey (22%) currently have a child aged under one year, and precisely double this many families (44%) have a child aged between one and two years. Meanwhile, almost one-third of families have a child aged between two and three (32%) and over half contain a child aged between three and four (52%).

It may also be useful to consider the size of families responding to the survey. In total, nearly three-fifths of families (29 cases) currently have only one child aged under four, while over one-third (17 cases) have two children and the remaining 8% (4 cases) have three children.

Furthermore, in order to gain a fuller picture of complete families rather than just those children aged under four years, parents were also asked to provide information about any older children within their families, the results of which can be found in Table 2G below. In total, 46% of families were found to contain older children, with ages ranging between four and nineteen years.

Table 2G: Older Children within Respondents' Families

Age of Child	Number of Cases	Percentage of Responses	Percentage of Cases
4-7 years	12	29%	52%
8-11 years	14	34%	61%
12-15 years	6	15%	26%
16-19 years	9	22%	39%
Total	41	100%	178%

As can be seen in this table, over half of families with older children contained at least one child aged between four and seven. An even larger percentage of families – more than three-fifths – contained at least one child aged between eight and eleven years. Interestingly, a similar proportion of families (65%) contained children of secondary-school age or older.

## 3.0 Use of Local Services

One of the primary objectives of this survey was to gain baseline information regarding satisfaction with local services among parents and carers. In order to gain a comprehensive overview, local services were divided into four categories:

- Health-related services
- Childcare services (e.g. parent and toddler groups, playgroups)
- Childcare services (e.g. day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders)
- Support groups and other family-related services

In relation to each category, parents and carers were asked precisely which services they currently use, which they have used in the past or are likely to use in the future, and to rate their satisfaction level with these facilities. Information was also collected concerning the different ways in which parents and carers learned of the availability of services. Lastly, in the case of those answering the longer questionnaire, an opportunity was provided for respondents to offer further suggestions regarding ways in which Sure Start may be able to improve their local facilities.

### 3.1 Health-Related Services

In relation to their usage of health-related services, respondents were initially provided with six possible responses from which to choose; these being:

- This service doesn't exist in my area
- I have never heard of this
- I have used this in the past
- I use this now
- I have not yet used this, but may well do so in the future
- I have not yet used this, and am not likely to in the future

However, for the purpose of analysis it may be simpler to combine the first two of these responses: While there may in theory have been services which exist in Wellingborough but not locally to individual respondents, among those answering the questionnaire it was largely the case that parents had not heard of certain services and therefore did not know whether they were local to their vicinity or not. Bearing this in mind, the amalgamated results can be found in Table 3A, overleaf.

#### **Doctor's Surgeries**

When asked about their use of local doctor's surgeries, almost three quarters of respondents (72%) stated that they use this service now, with a further 6% claiming to have used it in the past, suggesting that they are likely to be registered locally but have not required medical attention recently. A further proportion of respondents stated that they do not use medical services within

Table 3A: Respondents' Use of Local Health-Related Services

	Local doctor's surgery		Baby weighing clinic		Ante-natal care		Post-natal care		Health Visitor		Speech and Language Therapist		Local dentist	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I have never heard of this/ This service does not exist in my area	4	8%	3	6%	4	9%	2	4%	0	0	14	31	5	10%
I have used this in the past	3	6%	16	31%	32	70%	36	75%	16	33	4	9	5	10%
I use this now	36	72%	24	47%	5	11%	5	10%	29	60	3	7	24	50%
I have not yet used this, but may well do so in the future	1	2%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	2	4	5	11	9	19%
I have not yet used this, and am not likely to in the future	1	2%	3	6%	1	2%	2	4%	0	0	19	42	1	2%
Other response	5	10%	4	8%	4	9%	3	6%	1	2	0	0	4	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>99%</b>

their local area, with 8% stating that such facilities do not exist locally and another five respondents giving examples of having to travel across Wellingborough to visit their doctor: Several respondents from the Queensway and Kingsway areas use medical facilities within the town centre, such as Albany House, while one parent from the Queensway estate travels to Gold Street Medical Centre to visit her doctor and another from the Hemmingwell area must travel to Redwell Medical Centre, which she complains is “a long way away”.

### **Baby Weighing Clinics**

With regard to baby weighing clinics, almost half of respondents currently use such services (47%), with a further 31% having done so in the past. Once again, a number of parents complained that such services did not exist locally, with several from the Queensway and Kingsway estates travelling to Isebrooke Hospital to weigh their babies. Several other respondents commented that by the time they moved to Wellingborough, their children were too old to require such services.

### **Ante-Natal and Post-Natal Services**

Parents were next asked about their use of ante-natal services, prior to the birth of their babies, to which seven out of ten replied that they had used such facilities in the past (70%). Once again, a number of respondents stated that such services were not available locally, having to travel either to Isebrooke Hospital or even to Kettering General Hospital to receive such care. A further 11% claimed to be using ante-natal services currently, which does not correspond exactly with the information discussed in Section 2.5. Several possible explanations for this discrepancy may be available: Firstly, it may be the case that several of the respondents currently receiving ante-natal care are among those choosing not to provide demographic information about themselves. Alternatively, it could simply be that some respondents confused the meaning of ante-natal and post-natal care. With regard to post-natal care, 10% of parents stated that they are currently using these services, and a further three-quarters of respondents (75%) claimed to have had home visits from midwives following the birth of their child.

### **Health Visitors and Speech and Language Therapists**

Somewhat reassuringly, none of our survey's respondents stated that they had not heard of Health Visitors, or that such services did not exist in their local area. On the contrary, more than nine out of ten parents were either currently registered with a Health Visitor, or had been in the past (60% and 33% respectively). Speech and Language Therapists were less well utilised, which is not surprising due to the specialist nature of their work: Only seven parents had had cause to use local speech and languages services, either currently or in the past.

## Dentists

When asked about their use of dentists, half of all respondents (50%) claimed to be currently registered locally, with a further 10% stating that they had used these services in the past, which may mean that they have been de-registered if a significant amount of time has elapsed. Several respondents stated that they use dental services outside of their local area – either in the town centre or even in other towns and villages. In these cases, respondents had not grown up in their current location, but had moved within the past five years, and thus may have chosen to maintain their existing dental services rather than relocating to more local facilities. However, as with many of the other health-related services, a number of respondents complained that dental services were not available locally, with one parent living on the Hemmingwell estate stating that all local dentists had reached full capacity, and she had therefore been unable to register her family.

## Other Health-Related Services

Lastly, respondents were asked to name any other health-related services which they had made use of, to which there were several responses: One parent had telephoned a breastfeeding helpline, another had telephoned NHS Direct, and one other visited Kettering in order for her child to visit a specialist paediatrician.

## Gaining Information about Health-Related Services

When asked how they had first heard about the medical services mentioned above, parents responded with a number of answers, shown below in Table 3B:

Table 3B: “How did you learn about health-related services?”

	Yes		No		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Doctor	28	56%	22	44%	50	100%
Health Visitor	27	54%	23	46%	50	100%
Friend	12	24%	38	76%	50	100%
Leaflet or poster	4	8%	46	92%	50	100%
Local newspaper	1	2%	49	98%	50	100%
Other	6	12%	44	88%	50	100%

As we can see, the most popular source of information regarding health-related services was the respondent's doctor, with over half of all parents (56%) gaining information in this manner. The Health Visitor also proved to be a valuable source of information concerning health-related services, with almost the same proportion of parents (54%) finding out about services in this fashion. Almost a quarter of respondents (24%) found out about services

through a friend, and another 10% heard of services via leaflets, posters, or the local newspaper. Six respondents mentioned other ways in which they had gained information about health-related services, these being:

- Through the local nursery
- From their mother
- From their sister
- Through Sure Start
- From helpful staff at a local chemist
- From the NHS Direct Book

### 3.2 Play Groups Attended *With* Parents

When designing this survey, it was assumed to be necessary to distinguish between groups which are attended by children accompanied by a parent or carer (i.e. parent and toddler groups), childcare groups such as pre-schools and day nurseries where children are cared for by qualified staff while parents are elsewhere, and groups whose primary goal is family support or information.

However, upon analysing the data generated by this questionnaire, it became clear that parents themselves do not always utilise such boundaries in their thoughts about childcare-related activities. For example, some respondents chose to include the family support group 'Lifeline' in their discussion of parent and toddler groups, and groups held at Warwick School and Hemmingwell Community Centre were similarly placed in a variety of categories by different parents. Therefore, the following analysis can only provide a broad overview of the childcare groups used, and distinctions cannot always be made between services provided within this category.

Initially, respondents were asked to provide information about groups which they currently attend with their children, or those which they have attended in the past. The results can be found in Table 3C and Chart 3C overleaf. Wherever possible, information has been included concerning the location and time that the group runs, but several responses were given without clarification and have therefore been included as originally written by respondents.

If we consider these responses according to the three Sure Start locations, then we can see that a different pattern of attendance and usage exists in each area.

#### **Queensway Estate**

Only one of the ten most popular parent and toddler groups takes place upon the Queensway estate, this being the 'Little Stars' drop-in group currently run by Homestart on Monday afternoons. Perhaps due to the lack of other groups in the area, or due to its combination with a Health Visitors' weighing clinic, this group is very well attended, being mentioned by twelve parents (42% of

respondents to the question) and accounting for twice as many responses as any other playgroup mentioned in the survey.

Table 3C: Childcare Groups Attended by Parents and Carers

	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses	Percent of Cases
Little Stars, Glamis Hall, Monday afternoon	12	18%	42%
Little Stars, St. Andrews Church, Tuesday afternoon	6	9%	21%
Warwick School Playgroup, Wednesday morning	6	9%	21%
Kingfishers, Hemmingwell Community Centre	5	8%	18%
Hemmingwell Playgroup	4	6%	14%
Oakway Playhour, Thursday afternoon, Oakway School	4	6%	14%
Lifeline Group, Hemmingwell Community Centre	4	6%	14%
Little Ones, Tuesday morning, St. Andrews Church Hall	4	6%	14%
Mums & Tots at St. Andrews in the past (Could refer to Wishing Well or Little Stars)	4	6%	14%
Homestart (No more specific information given)	3	5%	11%
Salvation Army Parent & Toddler group	2	3%	7%
Rock Street Playgroup	2	3%	7%
Homestart – No. 8 Park Road	1	2%	4%
Postnatal Depression Group at the Family Centre	1	2%	4%
Beekaboo's	1	2%	4%
Little Lambs	1	2%	4%
Wakey	1	2%	4%
Young Mum's Group, St. Marks Church	1	2%	4%
Castle	1	2%	4%
Our Lady's	1	2%	4%
Swimming Pool	1	2%	4%
Total	65	101%	233%

## Chart 3C

### **Kingsway Estate**

If we compare this picture to the Kingsway estate, we find a different pattern, with the a slightly larger number of responses (16) being divided between three different groups; these being the 'Little Stars' session run by Homestart on Tuesday afternoons, the playgroup and weighing clinic held at Warwick School on Wednesday mornings, and 'Little Ones' playgroup which runs on a Thursday morning. Each of the first two of these groups is attended by six respondents and accounts for 21% of those answering to this question, while 'Little Ones' was mentioned by four parents.

This however, does not tell us whether it is the same six parents who are attending up to three groups each week, or whether all ten parents interviewed from the Kingsway area each attend a smaller number of groups. Further analysis shows the latter to be closer to the truth, with only two parents attending all three groups, and many parents attending only one or two.

### **Hemmingwell Estate**

Lastly, we should consider the Hemmingwell estate, where results show a larger number of parent and toddler facilities to exist, with each being attended by four or five respondents. The 'Kingfisher's group, held at Hemmingwell Community Centre, appears to be the most popular, being mentioned by five respondents in total. Alongside this, four respondents each mentioned Hemmingwell Playgroup, the playhour held at Oakway School on Thursday afternoons, and the 'Lifeline' group currently facilitated by the Family Centre.

Once again, it is interesting to examine patterns among these groups, to find out whether distinct and separate membership groups exist for each session, or whether the same families attend several of the groups mentioned. Results show that there is certainly a great deal of crossover between those attending the 'Kingfisher' group, the Hemmingwell Playgroup and the 'Lifeline group', all of which are held at the same venue. However, there is less cross-over between these families and those attending the Oakway Playhour: Anecdotal evidence would suggest that while some parents who use services located at the community centre also attend the Oakway Playhour, the reverse is less likely, with some of the parents attending the school session stating that they find Hemmingwell Community Centre too intimidating to visit.

### **Gaining Information about Children's Groups**

Having listed the parent and toddler groups that they currently attend or have attended in the past, parents were next asked about the ways in which they learned about these groups, the results of which follow in Table 3D overleaf:

Table 3D: “How did you learn about the groups which you attend with your child?”

	Yes		No		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Doctor	3	7%	38	93%	41	100%
Health Visitor	18	44%	23	56%	41	100%
Friend	17	42%	24	59%	41	100%
Leaflet or poster	6	15%	35	85%	41	100%
Local newspaper	0	0%	41	100%	41	100%
Other	9	22%	32	78%	41	100%

As we can see, in relation to finding information about parent and toddler groups, respondent’s Health Visitors were frequently cited as a good source of information, with more than two fifths of parents (44%) having gained information in this way. A very similar proportion of parents (42%) heard about local toddler facilities through their friends, with a smaller number finding this information through posters and leaflets or their doctor (15% and 7% respectively).

A further nine respondents stated that they had gained this information through other channels, which appear to be quite diverse. One respondent stated that she helps to run certain playgroups, while another has been attending groups for many years and stated that she ‘just knows’ what is going on. Another respondent gained information through her local community centre, while another discovered a group occurring when she happened to pass by. One of the younger respondents stated that her Connexions Worker had told her about local groups, and another stated that she had found the information at her local clinic, although she did not specify whether she gained the information through a doctor, Health Visitor, poster or some other means.

Interestingly, despite only coming into existence in recent months, Sure Start itself appears to already be having an impact on the dissemination of information in Wellingborough, with one respondent stating that the Bookstart worker had told her about groups, and another stating that she had simply heard of the groups ‘through Sure Start’. Considering the infancy of the Wellingborough Sure Start scheme, this small impact should certainly be viewed in a very positive light.

### 3.3 Childcare Facilities Used *Without* Parents

Following this, respondents moved on to discuss the various forms of childcare at which their children are *not* accompanied by a parent. It is at this point that there appeared to be considerable confusion among respondents concerning the difference between pre-schools and day nurseries, with a number of groups being placed in both categories at one point or another. Therefore, in order to gain a clearer picture of the overall service usage, the data relating to these two types of childcare provision have been combined, with results being shown in Table 3E overleaf:

## Pre-Schools and Day Nurseries

As the results shown in Table 3E show, respondents from all three estates utilise a variety of Childcare facilities, dispersed across the three areas and also including several establishments within the town centre, such as 'Cedrics' and 'Little Stones'.

Preliminary analysis may give a distorted view, exaggerating the usage of 'Jack and Jill's' nursery among parents in Sure Start areas. In actual fact, it is the case that parents leaving their children at this facility are especially well represented due to the diligent efforts of staff working at this nursery in promoting and collecting responses to this survey.

Table 3E: "Which childcare facilities do you leave your child with?"

Childcare Provision	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses	Percentage of Cases
Jack and Jill's, Queensway	7	22%	25%
Highfield Nursery,	4	13%	14%
Warwick School, Kingsway	3	9%	11%
Hemmingwell Playgroup, Hemmingwell	3	9%	11%
Hardwick School, Queensway	3	9%	11%
Croyland, near Kingsway	3	9%	11%
Little Acorns, Hemmingwell	2	6%	7%
Stepping Stones, Oakway School, Hemmingwell	2	6%	7%
Playmates	1	3%	4%
Sir Christopher Hatton, near Hemmingwell	1	3%	4%
Cedrics, Family Centre, town centre	1	3%	4%
Little Stones, town centre	1	3%	4%
Our Lady's, near Kingsway	1	3%	4%

## Childminders

A further four respondents stated that they leave their child with a childminder, which accounts for 7% of survey respondents overall. This relatively low usage may be a reflection on the high numbers of respondents who are not currently undertaking paid employment.

## Gaining Information about Childcare Services

Respondents were next asked to discuss the ways in which they gained information about these childcare services, the results of which can be found in Table 3F below:

Table 3F: “How did you learn about these childcare services?”

	Yes		No		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Doctor	1	3%	34	97%	35	100%
Health Visitor	7	20%	28	80%	35	100%
Friend	21	60%	14	40%	35	100%
Leaflet or poster	1	3%	34	97%	35	100%
Local newspaper	0	0%	35	100%	35	100%
Other	10	29%	25	71%	35	100%

As these results show, three-fifths of those responding (60%) stated that it had been a friend who had provided them with this information. A further fifth (20%) claimed that their Health Visitor had provided the information, with only one respondent claiming to have asked their doctor, and one stating that they had learned of such services through a leaflet or poster.

Over a quarter of respondents claimed to have learned about childcare services through other means, the most popular of which being the telephone directory and/ or Yellow Pages (Three responses). Several parents stated that they had used these services with their older children and naturally chose to use them again more recently (Two responses). Two further respondents claimed simply to have ‘looked around’ or investigated by themselves, while one heard about services through her church and another heard via a local shopkeeper.

### 3.4 Support Groups and Other Family-Related Services

Following the discussion of childcare provision, respondents were next asked about their usage of specific support groups and family-related services which are currently affiliated to the Sure Start project, or are likely to be linked to the project in the future. The results of these questions can be found in Table 3G overleaf:

Table 3G: Other Services used by Respondents

	Young Mums Group		Lifeline Group		Bookstart project		Toy Library		Wellingboro' Family Centre	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
This service does not exist in my area	4	9%	4	9%	1	2%	2	4%	1	2%
I have never heard of this	19	43%	20	47%	4	9%	13	29%	12	26%
I have used this in the past	0	0%	0	0%	5	11%	3	7%	8	17%
I use this now	4	9%	7	16%	17	37%	1	2%	4	9%
I have not yet used this, but may well do so in the future	7	16%	2	5%	12	26%	18	40%	11	23%
I have not yet used this, and am not likely to in the future	9	21%	9	21%	6	13%	7	16%	10	21%
Not yet used	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%	1	2%
Total	44	101%	43	100%	46	100%	45	100%	47	100%

### Young Mums Group

The first service to be discussed was the Young Mums Group held at St. Mark's Church on Wednesdays, and currently facilitated by the Lifelong Learning organisation. Overall, the majority of parents responding to this question either stated that they had not heard of this group, or that it did not run in their area (52%). A further fifth of respondents (21%) stated that they were not likely to attend such a group in the future. However, the very nature of this group implies that it will not be relevant to the majority of parents responding to this questionnaire, as they will no longer be within the service's target age-group. Reassuringly, of the three respondents currently aged under eighteen, two do claim to be utilising this service, and among those aged 18-29, a further two parents also attend.

## **Lifeline Group**

Parents were next asked about the Lifeline Group, held at Hemmingwell Community Centre on Wednesdays and soon to become one of Sure Start's weekly services. Once again, if we consider the figures in totality, it appears that over half of all respondents have not heard of this service, or do not think that it exists within their area. However, as the service is only currently targeting those families living upon the Hemmingwell estate, this is not surprising. If we solely consider the responses of those living within the area, almost half currently attend this group (47%), although a further third claim never to have heard of Lifeline suggesting that Sure Start will have scope to improve the take-up of this service in the future.

## **Bookstart**

Next, parents were asked about the Bookstart project, currently run by Wellingborough Library, with an additional worker being employed specifically to publicise the scheme within the Sure Start area. Results show that almost half of all respondents currently use this service or have done so in the past (48%), with a further 26% stating that they may be interested in using the service in the future. These encouraging statistics may partially be explained by the fact that the Bookstart project was incorporated in Sure Start's Early Services provision, and has therefore been actively promoted for longer than some of the other groups. Furthermore, in promoting this survey, many parents were contacted by post having given their details to the Bookstart project and had therefore by necessity heard of this project. Nevertheless, these figures are still very heartening, and suggest that other Sure Start projects may become equally well publicised within the next year.

## **Toy Library**

Respondents were next asked about their use of the Toy Library, which currently resides within Wellingborough Family Centre. Disappointingly, almost a third of respondents claimed never to have heard of this service (29%), with a further 16% stating that they were not likely to be interested in using such a service in the future. Only one respondent claimed to be currently using this service. Nevertheless, the most popular response to this question was that parents had not yet used this service, but would like to do so in the future, suggesting that with greater publicity and access to all of the Sure Start areas, investment in a Toy Library would be welcomed by parents in Wellingborough.

## **Wellingborough Family Centre**

Parents were next asked about the Family Centre in general, in relation to the various support groups and services which are run from within it. In total, over a quarter of respondents claimed never to have heard of the Family Centre, with a further 21% stating that they were not likely to be interested in using the services which it provides. Nevertheless, over a quarter of parents stated that they either currently use the Family Centre, or have done so in the past (26%), and a further 23% showed interest in possibly using this facility in the future.

## Other Services

Lastly, parents were given the opportunity to mention any other family-related services which they currently utilise, to which one respondent suggested Wellingborough Library, and another mentioned 'Friendly Faces' on Mill Road.

## Gaining Information about Support Groups and Family Related Services

Once again, parents were asked to think about the various ways in which they had heard of these services. Thirty-four parents answered this question, with this lower than average response rate reflecting the fact that many parents had stated that they did not use the services referred to. Responses to this question can be found in Table 3H below:

Table 3H: "How did you hear about these other groups and services?"

	Yes		No		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Doctor	4	12%	30	88%	34	100%
Health Visitor	8	24%	26	77%	34	101%
Friend	16	47%	18	53%	34	100%
Leaflet or poster	5	15%	29	85%	34	100%
Local newspaper	2	6%	32	94%	34	100%
Other	7	21%	27	79%	34	100%

As these results show, the most popular source of information concerning support groups and other family services appears to be respondents' friends, although healthcare workers such as doctors and Health Visitors also have a large role to play, accounting for 36% of total responses. Wider publicity also seems to play a slightly larger role in relation to these services, with five parents having heard about these services through leaflets and posters, and a further two reading about the services in the local newspaper.

Seven parents offered alternative answers to this question, with four respondents having learned about the services through the Bookstart Project Worker, one via Sure Start's project workers, one through Homestart and another through her Connexions worker. All of these responses combine to show the importance of word-of-mouth, and talking with parents about the services and facilities on offer.

## 3.5 Community Facilities

In the final section relating to their use of services, parents were asked about the community facilities within their area, the results of which have been divided into the respective estates and are shown in Table 3I overleaf:

Table 3I: Respondents' use of Community Facilities, According to Location

	Queensway						Kingsway				Hemmingwell					
	Glamis Hall Community Centre		Local play areas		Local parks		Local play areas		Local parks		Hemmingwell Community Centre		Local play areas		Local parks	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
This service does not exist in my area	0	0%	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	8%	0	0%
I have never heard of this	2	9%	1	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
I have used this in the past	5	22%	3	13%	3	13%	1	17%	0	0%	2	13%	1	8%	2	13%
I use this now	12	52%	16	70%	20	83%	4	67%	8	100%	9	60%	5	42%	11	73%
I have not yet used this, but may well do so in the future	4	17%	2	9%	1	4%	1	17%	0	0%	0	0%	1	8%	0	0%
I have not yet used this, and am not likely to in the future	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	27%	4	33%	2	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>99%</b>

### **Queensway Estate**

Firstly, parents living within the Queensway area were asked whether they use services at Glamis Hall Community Centre, to which almost three quarters stated that they currently use this facility or have done so in the past (74%). When asked about local play areas and parks, an even higher usage was suggested, with more than four fifths (83%) using local play areas and almost all respondents (96%) using local parks, either currently or in the past.

### **Kingsway Estate**

Kingsway estate currently lacks its own community centre, but local parents were still asked about their usage of parks and play areas. In response to this question, six respondents (84%) stated that they currently use local play areas or have done so in the past, while all eight respondents answering this question claimed to use the nearby parks.

### **Hemmingwell Estate**

Lastly, those living upon the Hemmingwell estate were asked about their local community facilities. When asked about the community centre itself, almost three quarters of those answering the question (73%) claimed to currently use the facility, or to have done so in the past. However, the remaining 27% stated that they had not used the community centre and were not likely to do so in the future; a sentiment which was not paralleled by those not using Glamis Hall on the Queensway estate, where 17% asserted that they were not currently using the facility but they may well do so in the future.

A similar trend can be found in relation to the usage of parks and play areas in the Hemmingwell location: Only half of respondents claim to currently use play areas, or to have done so in the past, with 8% stating that no such services exist within their area, and a further third (33%) asserting that they are not likely to use local facilities in the future. In relation to local parks, a higher proportion of parents answering the question claim to have used these facilities at some point (86%), but there are still a significant number of respondents who state that they are not likely to use local parks in the future, with one parent writing "We go to Kettering for a safe and clean park". Clearly, travelling such a distance is not an option for all parents living in the Hemmingwell area, and the Sure Start project will doubtlessly be called upon to rectify the discrepancy between the standard of community facilities on the three estates.

## 4.0 Satisfaction Levels with Local Services

### 4.1 Levels of Satisfaction with Health-Related Services

Having fully explored the range of services used by respondents, we next enquired about their levels of satisfaction, beginning with their views on health-related services. The results can be found in Table 4A below and Chart 4A overleaf, and show that overall satisfaction levels are high, with over 75% of respondents considering all elements of these services to be either 'very good' or 'quite good'.

Table 4A: Satisfaction with Health-Related Services

	Very good		Quite good		Quite poor		Very poor		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Convenience of location	15	34%	21	48%	7	16%	1	2%	44	100%
Choice of services	13	32%	18	44%	9	22%	1	2%	41	100%
Convenience of opening times	19	46%	16	39%	6	15%	0	0%	41	100%
Reasonable cost	25	76%	7	21%	1	3%	0	0%	33	100%
Friendliness of staff	24	60%	15	38%	1	3%	0	0%	40	100%
Informative staff	20	53%	14	37%	4	11%	0	0%	38	100%
Sensitive staff	19	49%	18	46%	2	5%	0	0%	39	100%

#### **Cost of Services**

When we look at the individual components of this satisfaction, we find that respondents were most pleased with the cost of health-related services, with almost all of those answering the question considering this to be 'very good' or 'quite good' (97%). This reflects the fact that the cost of many health-related services are absorbed by the National Health Service: although parents with children over twelve months of age may still have to pay for their own prescriptions and dental care, there is nevertheless no charge for visiting the G.P. or attending a Health Visitors clinic. Consequently, many respondents did not consider health-related services to have a cost at all, and answered 'Not Applicable', accounting for the lower response rate to this particular question.

## Chart 4A

### **Friendliness, Sensitivity and Helpfulness of Staff**

Following this, parents appeared to be most impressed by the service which they received from health-related staff. Three-fifths of respondents (60%) stated that the friendliness of staff was 'very good', while approximately half of respondents felt that the informative nature and sensitivity of staff to be equally high (53% and 49% respectively).

### **Opening Times, Location and Choice of Services**

While satisfaction levels were still very high, respondents were slightly less impressed by some of the other factors relating to local health facilities. A little under half of all respondents reported that opening times for these services were 'very good' and in relation to the location and choice of services, this very positive response was reduced to approximately one-third (34% and 32% respectively.)

### **Suggestions for Improvement**

Respondents answering the longer version of the questionnaire were next asked to propose suggestions for ways in which local health-related services might be improved, to which a total of seven ideas were offered. Two parents from the Queensway and Kingsway estates suggested that services could be improved by the provision of more local medical facilities, and one respondent from the Hemmingwell area stated that a local dentist with vacancies to take on new clients would be useful.

Three further responses related to the availability of information, with one being a general plea and another two being appeals for information about health-related services to be displayed in local schools and shops. Lastly, one parent suggested that parking at Isebrooke Hospital could be improved, but was aware that this may unfortunately be beyond the remit of the Sure Start project!

## **4.2 Levels of Satisfaction with Childcare Groups Attended *with* Parents**

Parents were next asked about their satisfaction with the childcare services that they attended along with their children (i.e. parent and toddler groups), and their responses can be found in Table 4B and Chart 4B. Once again we find high levels of satisfaction, with all elements of this question receiving at least 70% positive responses.

### **Friendliness, Sensitivity and Helpfulness of Staff**

Parents appear to be especially happy with the skills and personal characteristics exhibited by staff working at these groups, with almost all respondents (97%) stating that the friendliness of staff is either 'very good' or 'quite good'. Nine out of ten respondents (90%) gave a positive evaluation of

the informative nature of staff, and a similar proportion (93%) stated that staff were sensitive to the needs of their family.

Table 4B: Satisfaction with Childcare Services (e.g. Parent and Toddler Groups)

	Very good		Quite good		Quite poor		Very poor		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Convenience of location	17	50%	13	38%	3	9%	1	3%	34	100%
Choice of services	11	33%	12	36%	4	12%	6	18%	33	100%
Convenience of opening times	15	46%	12	36%	5	15%	1	3%	33	100%
Reasonable cost	22	71%	7	23%	1	3%	1	3%	31	100%
Friendliness of staff	26	79%	6	18%	0	0%	1	3%	33	100%
Informative staff	22	73%	5	17%	2	7%	1	3%	30	100%
Sensitive staff	19	61%	10	32%	1	3%	1	3%	31	100%

### **Cost of Services**

When asked about the cost of these services, parents gave a similarly favourable response, with almost three quarters of respondents stating that this was 'very good' (71%). Respondents were not directly asked how much they currently pay to access these services, but local knowledge suggests that when local groups do charge parents to attend, these charges are kept to a minimum.

### **Opening Times, Location and Choice of Services**

Once again, respondents were slightly less satisfied with the location and choice of services currently available, with only 50% stating that the location of groups was 'very good'. A similar amount felt that the opening times of services was very good (46%), while a lower proportion felt as positively about the choice of services currently available (33%). Nevertheless, in all aspects of satisfaction relating to these childcare services, positive responses outweigh the negative by far.

Chart 4B

### 4.3 Levels of Satisfaction with Childcare Attended without Parents

Following this, parents were asked to rate the services of pre-school childcare providers and day nurseries, the results of which can be found in Table 4C below, and Chart 4C overleaf. As we can see from this table, a smaller number of parents responded to this question, due to the fact that many are not currently using pre-school childcare services. Nevertheless, among those who did answer this question, the majority of responses were favourable.

**Table 4C: Satisfaction with Childcare Services  
(e.g. Preschools and Day Nurseries)**

	Very good		Quite good		Quite poor		Very poor		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Convenience of location	23	79%	3	10%	3	10%	0	0%	29	99%
Choice of services	19	68%	4	14%	3	11%	2	7%	28	100%
Convenience of opening times	22	85%	2	8%	2	8%	0	0%	26	101%
Reasonable cost	18	72%	4	16%	2	8%	1	4%	25	100%
Friendliness of staff	24	92%	1	4%	1	4%	0	0%	26	100%
Informative staff	21	88%	2	8%	1	4%	0	0%	24	100%
Sensitive staff	21	84%	4	16%	0	0%	0	0%	25	100%

#### **Friendliness, Sensitivity and Helpfulness of Staff**

Parents appear to be particularly impressed by the friendliness of pre-school childcare staff, with more than nine out of every ten respondents stating that this was 'very good' (92%). Respondents also appear to have been pleased with the informative nature of staff, and their sensitivity to the needs of families, with more than four-fifths of respondents stating that these factors were also 'very good'.

#### **Cost and Choice of Services**

Meanwhile, factors which received slightly less positive results included the choice and cost of services, with more than one in ten respondents stating that the cost of services was 'quite poor' or 'very poor' (12%) and an even higher 18% expressed dissatisfaction with the choice of services. However, even with these two factors, the majority of respondents claimed that services were 'very good'.

## Chart 4C

## Suggestions for the Improvement of Childcare Groups and Services

Those responding to the longer of the two questionnaires were next asked if they had any suggestions for the improvement of play groups or childcare services within their area. Generally speaking, most parents were satisfied with the current services and could not suggest any improvements, but nevertheless a small number of ideas were put forward.

Several respondents pointed out that it was difficult to find out precisely what was available, and therefore suggested that Sure Start may be able to improve the availability of information relating to childcare services across Wellingborough. Another parent pointed out that the services currently available are only really suitable for those families wishing to arrange childcare on an ongoing basis, such as those going to work. However, she thought that there was a need for childcare to be available for those who occasionally require childcare for other reasons, such as needing some 'time out' for themselves, or to get everyday jobs around the house kept up-to-date.

### 4.4 Levels of Satisfaction with Support Groups & Family-Related Services

Respondents were next asked to rate their satisfaction with the various local services that are affiliated with Sure Start. The results of this question can be found in Table 4D below, but do not warrant further analysis due to the small number of respondents and the ambiguity of responses: It was not clear in all cases precisely which support group or service was being referred to in respondents' answers. Nevertheless, the results do show that the views of these parents are broadly positive.

Table 4D: Satisfaction with Support Groups and Family-Related Services

	Very good		Quite good		Quite poor		Very poor		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Convenience of location	3	60%	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%	5	99%
Choice of services	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%
Convenience of opening times	2	50%	2	50%	0	0%	0	0%	4	100%
Reasonable cost	3	75%	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%	4	100%
Friendliness of staff	4	80%	1	20%	0	0%	0	0%	5	100%
Informative staff	2	40%	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%	5	100%
Sensitive staff	2	40%	1	20%	1	20%	1	20%	5	100%

## 4.5 Suggestions for the Improvement of Community Facilities

As a consequence of the unique nature of community facilities, many of the standardised questions used to ascertain satisfaction with other local services (i.e. those relating to relating to cost, choice and staffing) were not considered likely to generate meaningful data. Nevertheless, respondents answering the longer questionnaire were provided with the opportunity to make suggestions for the improvement of their local facilities.

Previous concerns regarding community facilities in the Hemmingwell area were certainly reinforced by the responses to this question: Respondents from the Queensway and Kingsway estates could not generate any ideas for the improvement of their community, implying that they may already be reasonably satisfied with their local facilities, while those living upon the Hemmingwell estate made a number of suggestions, all of which related to the state of their local parks and playgrounds: Two respondents stated that there should be more parklands, closer to the Hemmingwell area, while another suggested that the existing play area should be fenced off and made safe for small children. Safety also seemed to concern the other respondents, who asked that the local parks be purged of dog faeces, hypodermic needles, broken glass and litter.

## 4.6 Overall Satisfaction with Services

Lastly, respondents were asked to provide one overall summary regarding their satisfaction levels with the complete spectrum of local childcare services, the results of which are shown in Chart 4E, and in Table 4E below.

Table 4E: Overall Satisfaction with Services

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Very Satisfied	19	37%
Quite Satisfied	30	58%
Quite Dissatisfied	2	4%
Very Dissatisfied	1	2%
Total	52	101%

As these results show, more than nine out of ten respondents are satisfied with the services which are currently being provided (95%). Nevertheless, this does not mean that there is no room for improvement: Almost two-thirds of parents stated that they are 'quite satisfied' with services, suggesting that there may be minor improvements which could be made. Furthermore, a small minority of respondents showed dissatisfaction with current services, and efforts should therefore be made to raise the opinions of these parents and others who may hold similarly negative views.

## Chart 4e

## Suggestions of Facilities which are Currently Lacking

In order to aid in the improvement of services, parents were asked to provide specific suggestions regarding services which they feel are currently missing in their local area. A wide variety of responses were received, with over half of respondents offering at least one suggestion. However, the range of ideas provided were of such diversity as to make formal analysis impossible and a full list of responses can therefore be found overleaf in Table 4F, collected into comparable groups.

Clearly, some of these suggestions fall outside of the remit of the Sure Start project. Nevertheless, many others provide valuable insight into parents' perceptions of gaps in current service provision, while several others lend support to activities which have already been planned by the project, such as the installation of play equipment in the Hemmingwell area, and a summer trip to Wicksteed Park for local parents.

Table 4F: Respondents' Suggestions for the Improvement of Local Services

Suggestion	Number of responses
<b>Play and Learning Opportunities:-</b>	
• More parent and toddler groups	6
• Children's play area/ outside play area/ swings and slides	5
• Children's activities and classes e.g. dance, gym, ballet, trampolining, self defence	3
• Indoor play area	2
• "Places for my son to interact with children his age where you don't have to be dry and mum or dad can stay."	1
• "More mums and tots groups specifically for under 2's"	1
• Playgroups at different times	1
• Play area for smaller children	1
• 3 Sandpit (one that cats can't get into)	1
• More regular things to do	1
<b>Childcare:-</b>	
• Holiday clubs for older children	2
• More pre-school places on offer	1
• Crèche facilities	1
• Youth clubs on the Hemmingwell estate	1
• Summer schemes on the Hemmingwell estate	1
• Affordable playschemes	1
• Holiday schemes	1
• After school clubs for older children	1
<b>Local Facilities:-</b>	
• Swimming pool	4
• Cinema	1
• Zoo (obviously very unlikely!)	1
• Better town centre/ more shops	1

Suggestion	Number of responses
• Park	1
• Community Centre on Kingsway estate	1
<b>Support for Parents:-</b>	
• Ways to meet other young parents my own age	1
• Miscarriage group	1
• Single parent group	1
<b>Health-Related :-</b>	
• Health clinic	1
• Medical Centre on Kingsway estate	1
• Drug rehab centers	1
• More health-based meetings e.g. behaviour, diet, eczema, asthma etc.	1
• Weight Watchers group with crèche	1
• More local gyms with nursery facilities	1
<b>Daytrips and Visits:-</b>	
• Picnic Day at Wicksteed Park	1
• Links with the disabled community e.g. a joint visit	1

## 5.0 Questions Relating Specifically to the Sure Start Programme

### 5.1 Knowledge of the Sure Start Programme

Parents were next asked a number of questions relating directly to the Sure Start project itself. Firstly they were questioned about their knowledge of the project prior to being interviewed, the results of which can be found in Tables 5A and 5B below and Chart 5B overleaf.

Table 5A: “Had you heard of Sure Start prior to being interviewed today?”

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes, I had heard of Sure Start before today	41	79%
No, I hadn't heard of Sure Start before today	11	21%
Total	52	100%

Table 5B: Respondents' Current Understanding of the Sure Start Project

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
I am quite confident that I understand what Sure Start are aiming to do, and I'm aware of the services that they already provide.	10	19%
I think I understand the overall aims of Sure Start, but I couldn't name any services that they already provide.	19	37%
I know of a couple of local services which Sure Start support, but I'm not so sure about the overall aims of the scheme.	8	15%
I've heard of Sure Start but I don't really know what it means.	6	12%
I've never heard of Sure Start before.	7	14%
My views fit somewhere between first and second options.	2	4%

As these results show, the majority of parents interviewed had heard of Sure Start prior to being interviewed, and had some level of knowledge regarding the aims of the project. Encouragingly, almost one in five parents felt that they had a clear idea both of the project's goals and the services which are currently being provided.

A further 52% of respondents either had some knowledge of current services, or of the overall aims of the project. Several respondents felt that their views could not be categorised so easily, saying that they *thought* they understood the project quite well, but were not sure that they knew of all of the services

Chart 5B

being provided currently. When considered in conjunction with the 12% of respondents who had heard of Sure Start but did not really know what the phrase stood for, and the 14% who had never heard of the project at all, it is clear that Sure Start Wellingborough still have plenty of scope for raising their local profile in the months ahead.

## 5.2 Factors Encouraging Attendance at Sure Start Events

Having had the goals of the Sure Start programme explained to them, respondents were next asked to consider the factors which may encourage their attendance at future Sure Start events, the full results of which can be found in Table 5C below, and Chart 5C overleaf.

**Table 5C: Factors Which May Encourage Attendance at a Sure Start Event**

	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
My child will have an opportunity to play	47	96%	2	4%	49	100%
The staff are friendly	45	92%	4	8%	49	100%
My child will have an opportunity to learn	45	92%	4	8%	49	100%
It is at a time which fits in with my child's routine	41	84%	8	16%	49	100%
It is held at a venue on my estate	40	82%	9	18%	49	100%
I will be able to make new friends	40	82%	9	18%	49	100%
The event will give me quality time with my child	35	71%	14	29%	49	100%
The event will be free of charge	31	65%	17	35%	48	100%
The event will give me quality time on my own while my child is looked after	29	60%	19	40%	48	100%
I will already know people at the event	24	49%	25	51%	49	100%
There will be lunch or refreshments provided	23	47%	26	53%	49	100%
Transport across town will be provided	22	45%	27	55%	49	100%

## Chart 5C

## **The Needs of the Children**

These results suggest that when considering attending an event, parents appear to prioritise their children's enjoyment above their own needs. More than nine out of ten respondents stated that their children having an opportunity to play or to learn would be an influential factor in their decision to attend an event, and more than four fifths of respondents stated that an event would have to fit in with their child's routine in order for them to consider attending.

## **The Needs of the Parents**

Nevertheless, many respondents suggested that *their* needs were also important, and that factors encouraging them feel at ease may also persuade them to attend an event. More than nine out of ten parents (92%) stated that the friendliness of staff was an important factor in their attendance at groups, while the possibility of making new friends was important to over four-fifths of respondents (82%). Furthermore, almost half of respondents (49%) stated that already having friends at a group would also encourage them to attend.

## **Environmental Factors**

Environmental factors were also important to many parents, with the location of the event being important to 82% of respondents, who stated that it would encourage them to attend if the event was held upon their local estate. Almost two-thirds of respondents said that they would be encouraged to attend if an event was free of charge, The provision of refreshments and transport were also considered to be important by a substantial percentage of parents (47% and 45% respectively), although just over half of respondents stated that these factors would be unlikely to influence their decision to attend an event.

## **The Ranking of These Factors**

Parents were next asked to consider all of the aforementioned factors and rank the three which they felt to be the most influential; the results of which can be found in Table 5D overleaf. These results broadly reflect those found in Table 5C, although certain interesting differences are worth noting.

## **Playing versus Learning**

While both playing and learning were considered to be important by many parents, it is interesting to note that a higher proportion of respondents felt that it was important to offer their children opportunities to learn as opposed to playing. While this distinction may seem erroneous to Sure start staff, who recognise the complementary nature of many activities which combine both playing *and* learning, this insight into parents priorities may nevertheless influence the ways in which Sure Start choose to advertise or market their play activities.

### Children's Needs versus Parents' Needs

Secondly, it is interesting to note that children's needs are once again given higher priority than those of the parents: when offered the choice between spending quality time with their children and quality time on their own while their children were looked after, twice as many parents chose the former in their three most influential factors. However, Table 5D below shows that both of these options are considered to be important by parents, suggesting that a range of services incorporating both time alone for parents and quality time with their children may be a useful strategy.

Table 5D: Most Influential Factors Encouraging Attendance at a Sure Start Event

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Cases
My child will have an opportunity to learn	24	50%
The staff are friendly	23	48%
It is at a time which fits in with my child's routine	21	43%
My child will have an opportunity to play	18	38%
I will be able to make new friends	15	31%
It is held at a venue on my estate	11	23%
The event will give me quality time with my child	10	21%
The event will give me quality time on my own while my child is looked after	5	10%
The event will be free of charge	4	8%
I will already know people at the event	3	6%
Transport across town will be provided	2	4%
There will be lunch or refreshments provided	0	0%

### Additional Factors Encouraging Respondents to Attend Sure Start Events

Parents were next asked to list any additional factors which may influence their decision to attend future Sure Start events, the results of which can be found in Table 5E overleaf. Conventional analysis is impossible as each suggestion was made by only one parent. Nevertheless, a wide range of ideas were put forward which may all prove to be useful when planning future events.

Table 5E: Other Factors Which May Encourage Attendance at a Sure Start Event

Other Suggestions	Number of Respondents
Posters are put up well in advance	1
More notice of events	1
More publicity	1
My child gets to play with other kids	1
Older children could attend to if it's in the school holidays	1
To get new ideas	1
To get out of the house more	1
Parents from ethnic minorities are involved more	1
Employing more staff who are equipped to work with different cultures	1
Special events	1
My child is safe	1
Low cost if charging	1
Help with transport	1
It fits around my work	1
Relaxed atmosphere	1
"It would be nice if parents were given the opportunity of getting some education (or update education) while the children are playing."	1

### 5.3 Factors Discouraging Attendance at Sure Start Events

Following this discussion of the positive factors which may encourage their attendance at events, parents were next asked for their opinions relating to negative factors which may *discourage* their attendance, the initial results of which can be found in Table 5F below and in Chart 5F overleaf.

Table 5F: Factors Which May Discourage Attendance at a Sure Start Event

	Yes		No		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I don't feel comfortable at the venue where the event is being held	26	62%	16	38%	42	100%
The time does not fit in with my child's routine	25	60%	17	41%	42	101%
It might cost too much	19	46%	22	54%	41	100%
It might be too formal and uninteresting	15	36%	27	64%	42	100%
I don't think it would be relevant to me	13	31%	29	69%	42	100%
I have too many children to get out	8	19%	34	81%	42	100%
My child is too young	7	17%	35	83%	42	100%
I don't feel safe leaving the house	5	12%	37	88%	42	100%
My child has a disability which makes it difficult to get out	2	5%	40	95%	42	100%
I don't speak English well enough	1	2%	41	98%	42	100%

Chart 5F

## **Location of Events**

As these results show, the predominant factor which may deter respondents from attending an event appears to be the location, with more than two-thirds (62%) stating that they would not attend an event if they felt uncomfortable at the venue where it was being held.

## **Issues Relating to Family Circumstances**

Factors relating to specific family circumstances were also considered to discourage attendance among some parents, with over half of all respondents (60%) stating that their child's routine may be an influential factor deterring them from attending a Sure Start event. A small number of respondents felt that they had too many children to organise, or that their children were too young to make attendance a worthwhile option (19% and 17% respectively). In some cases, it may be correct that events are targeted at older pre-school children, but at other events Sure Start staff must make it clear to parents that children of *all* ages, including small babies, will be welcomed.

## **Cost and Formality of Events**

In relation to all of the other possible factors suggested, the majority of respondents felt that these were not a discouraging factor in their decision to attend events. Nevertheless, for a minority of parents, these issues were still influential and are therefore worthy of note. For example, almost half of respondents were worried about the cost of an event (46%), while just over a third (36%) were concerned that an event may be too formal or uninteresting to warrant their attendance. These concerns can easily be addressed by the Sure start team, in order to ensure that they do not discourage parents from attending future events.

## **'Traditional' Barriers to Access**

Lastly, several respondents felt that 'traditional' barriers to accessing services, such as disabilities or language difficulties, might discourage their attendance at events, - this is clearly not a scenario which Sure Start staff would like to imagine, and will doubtlessly be addressed in the near future.

## **The Ranking of these Factors**

Results showing parents' ranking of these factors broadly support the results shown above, and are shown in Table 5G overleaf, with approximately half of all respondents stating that their child's routine and the venue at which the event was held would be among the most important factors influencing their decision (51% and 49% respectively). Almost a third of respondents (32%) stated that the cost of the event would also be among the most important factors, while approximately a quarter (24%) placed emphasis on their level of interest in the event.

Table 5G: Most Influential Factors Discouraging Attendance at a Sure Start Event

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Cases
The time does not fit in with my child's routine	19	51%
I don't feel comfortable at the venue where the event is being held	18	49%
It might cost too much	12	32%
It might be too formal and uninteresting	9	24%
I don't think it would be relevant to me	6	16%
I have too many children to get out	6	16%
I don't feel safe leaving the house	6	16%
My child is too young	3	8%
My child has a disability which makes it difficult to get out	1	3%
I don't speak English well enough	0	0%

**Additional Factors Discouraging Respondents from Attending Sure Start Events**

Once again, parents were then offered the opportunity to put forward their own suggestions regarding further factors which may discourage them from attending events, the results of which can be found in Table 5H below:

Table 5H: Further factors Discouraging Attendance at Sure Start Events

Other Suggestions	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Cases
Too far to travel	4	33%
Feel uncomfortable with the other people attending	3	25%
No toilet	2	17%
Bad weather	2	17%
"Hemmingwell Community Centre has steps which make access difficult with a pushchair"	1	8%
No drinks	1	8%
I might not know anybody there	1	8%
Not enough information around	1	8%
Nothing to do	1	8%
"Doing stuff we don't"	1	8%
"If only older mothers attend as I'm a young mum"	1	8%
"If it was held on a council estate, even though I live on one!"	1	8%

As this table shows, travel was seen as a problematic factor to a number of respondents, as was feeling uncomfortable with the other people attending the group. Toilet facilities and the weather were also seen as important influences by several respondents, and a wide variety of other views were also put forward, all of which can be seen above.

## 6.0 Issues Relating to Travel and Transport

Due to the unconventional location of Wellingborough's Sure Start area, with its three separate and distinct communities, several questions were next asked relating to respondents' habits and feelings regarding travel, the results of which can be found in Tables 6A below, and in Table 6B and Chart 6A overleaf.

### 6.1 Methods of Transport

Table 6A: Respondents Usual Method of Travel to Access Child-Related Services

	Yes		No		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Walk	40	78%	11	22%	51	100%
Bus	6	12%	45	88%	51	100%
Drive by car	17	33%	34	67%	51	100%
Taxi	6	12%	45	88%	51	100%
Lift with a friend	2	4%	49	96%	51	100%

Table 6A provides details of the various methods of transport used by parents in order to access local child-related services and events. Respondents were given the opportunity to list numerous types of transport, and many recorded more than one response to this question. Nevertheless, it remains clear that the most popular method of transport among respondents is definitely walking, with over three quarters of parents stating that they walk to local services (78%). Meanwhile, a third of respondents stated that they use a car, while more than one in ten stated that they used local buses and taxis (12% each). Only two respondents stated that they obtain lifts from friends in order to attend events.

This data relating to travel may also be separated in relation to the three estates. However, in all three cases there was very little divergence from the patterns shown in Table 6A, making further analysis redundant.

### 6.2 Willingness to Travel

Respondents answering the longer version of the questionnaire were next asked if they would be willing to travel across Wellingborough in order to attend events in other locations, the responses to which can be found in Table 6B overleaf. As this shows, parents were divided reasonably equally between those stating that they would not travel further than their own estate, and those claiming that they would be happy to attend such events if free transport were to be provided by Sure Start (42% and 33% respectively, with a further 17% stating that their views fell somewhere between the two options). One respondent also stated that she would be happy to travel to some estates

Chart 6A

within Wellingborough, but would not travel to others. However, due to the small number of respondents answering this question, it would be wise to question a wider sample of parents before using these results to influence policy decisions.

Table 6B: “Would you be willing to travel across Wellingborough in order to attend events?”

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
I would not travel further than my own estate to attend events	5	42%
I would attend such events if free transport was provided by Sure Start	4	33%
I would be able to attend such events as I have my own transport	1	8%
Somewhere between first and second option	2	17%
Total	12	100%

### **Play, Learning and Support Groups**

Parents were next asked to state the type of event which would be likely to entice them to travel across Wellingborough to another Sure Start area, the results of which can be found in Table 6C overleaf. These results echo those found in Table 5D, with most respondents stating that *learning*-related events would be likely to encourage them to travel. Four out of five respondents stated that they would be likely to travel to attend learning-related events, in comparison to the two-fifths who claimed that they would travel to attend play-related events or services.\*

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\* It should be noted that while this response *may* accurately reflect the true views of respondents, there may also be an element of ‘conditioned response’ influencing parents’ answers, as some could have felt that this was the ‘correct’ answer to give, in spite of reassurances from interviewers that all responses were equally valid.

Table 6C: Types of Events Likely to Encourage Respondents to Travel Across Wellingborough.

	Yes		No		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
I would be more likely to travel to attend play-related events	2	40%	3	60%	5	100%
I would be more likely to travel to attend learning-related events	4	80%	1	20%	5	100%
I would be more likely to travel to attend support groups or gain information	3	60%	2	40%	5	100%

Over half of respondents also stated that they would travel to attend support groups or gain information (60%). One further respondent stated that she would be most enticed to travel by 'one-off' events over the summer period. However, once again, the figures responding to this question are very low, and should not therefore be regarded as representative of the views of a wider population.

## 7.0 Childcare Advice and Support Groups

The final section of the questionnaire consisted largely of questions asked only to those answering the longer version, and therefore the number of respondents to many of the following questions is very small. However, while these views cannot be taken as representative of a larger population, they do nevertheless provide us with *some* information on which to base further study.

### 7.1 Breastfeeding

We began by asking a number of questions relating to breastfeeding, the results of which can be found in Tables 7A below, and 7B to 7E overleaf.

#### Basic Breastfeeding Statistics

Initially, parents answering *both* questionnaires were asked whether or not they breastfed their last baby, to which just over half replied that either had breastfed or were currently breastfeeding (54% combined) while just under half responded that they had not breastfed at all (46%).

Table 7A: "Did you breastfeed your last baby?"

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Yes, I still do	2	4%
Yes, I did	24	50%
No, I didn't	22	46%

#### Age of Children when Breastfeeding was Discontinued

Those stating that they *did* breastfeed were next asked how old their child was when completely weaned from the breast.\* As the results displayed in Table 7B and Chart 7B overleaf show, the amount of time for which parents chose to breastfeed their babies differed considerably, varying from two days to a year and a half.

If we combine some of the results shown overleaf, we see that almost one in ten women who chose to breastfeed gave up within the first week (8%), while a further 12% had stopped breastfeeding by the end of the first month. By the end of the second month, just over half of the mothers were still feeding (56%) and by the end of the third month almost two thirds had weaned their baby from the breast (64%).

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\* This question was worded carefully, in order to include information on those parents choosing to combine breastfeeding with bottle-feeding. While it would also have been interesting to ask further questions comparing those who solely breastfed to those who combine-fed, space restrictions made this impossible with this piece of research.

By six months of age, only one in five babies was still being breastfed (20%) and by 1 year of age this figure had reduced further to 12%. Nevertheless, this remaining 12% continued to breastfeed their babies to some degree until they were eighteen months of age.

Table 7B: “How long did you breastfeed your last baby for?” \*

Length of time	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses	Cumulative Percentage of Responses (Given up feeding)	Cumulative Percentage of Responses (Still feeding)
			0%	100%
2 days	1	4%	4%	96%
4 days	1	4%	8%	92%
2 weeks	2	8%	16%	84%
3 weeks	1	4%	20%	80%
6 weeks	1	4%	24%	76%
6-8 weeks	1	4%	28%	72%
2 months	4	16%	44%	56%
2 or 3 months	1	4%	48%	52%
3 months	4	16%	64%	36%
4 months	3	12%	76%	24%
6 months	1	4%	80%	20%
7 months	1	4%	84%	16%
1 year	1	4%	88%	12%
18 months	3	12%	100%	0%

\* It must be noted that these figures do not include responses from those mothers who chose not to breastfeed at all. As table 7A showed these mothers to constitute approximately half of those interviewed, it would be sensible to assume that any of the statistics given can be divided by two in order to give a broad estimate of their significance in the overall population of respondents. For example, if 12% of mothers answering this question stated that they gave up breastfeeding at 18 months, then we can deduce that approximately 94% of parents overall had stopped feeding by this point. However, these responses have not been included formally, as the figures responding to the two questions vary slightly and would cause inconsistent results.

## Chart 7B

## Reason for Ending Breastfeeding

When asked to give an of their reasons for ending breastfeeding their child, ten parents replied, giving a variety of explanations. The most common reason offered by these parents was that breastfeeding was simply too painful, with almost one third of respondents (30%) stating that this was a contributory factor in their decision to cease feeding.

A number of respondents also felt that bottle feeding allowed them more independence, as they could share the responsibility with their partner or other family members. As Table 7C shows, a number of further explanations were also offered, such as the baby's feeds being too frequent with breastmilk, and the mother's feeling uncomfortable breastfeeding in public.

Table 7C: "What made you stop breastfeeding?"

	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Percentage of cases
It was painful	3	21%	30%
To share the responsibility	2	14%	20%
I hated it	2	14%	20%
My baby was feeding too frequently	2	14%	20%
To regain my independence	1	7%	10%
To be able to feed in public	1	7%	10%
More convenient to use a bottle	1	7%	10%
Problems with feeding	1	7%	10%
Not producing enough milk to satisfy my baby	1	7%	10%
Total	14	98%	140%

## Support Received

Respondents were next asked about the support which they received while breastfeeding, the results of which can be found in Table 7D overleaf. These results suggest that Midwives and Health Visitors appear to offer the most advice and support among those interviewed, although further research would be necessary in order to establish whether this pattern is representative of the wider population of parents.\*

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\* The results of this research as a whole suggest that further research may provide a different pattern of support than that shown in Table 7D. For example, when asked about the health-related services used in Section 1, one respondent claimed to have telephoned a breastfeeding support-line, unlike any of the respondents who did actually answer this question.

Table 7D: “While breastfeeding, did you receive support or advice from any of the following people?”

	Yes		No		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Health Visitor	3	43%	4	57%	7	100%
Midwife	3	38%	5	62%	8	100%
Family	2	29%	5	71%	7	100%
Doctor	1	14%	6	86%	7	100%
Friend	0	0%	7	100%	7	100%
Organisations	0	0%	7	100%	7	100%

### **Support Offered by Sure Start**

Following on from this, an explanation was given to respondents regarding the help and support which could be offered by Sure Start staff in the future, either in terms of one-to-one advice, or a support group with other parents. Respondents were asked whether they would have made use of such a service when they were breastfeeding, and whether they preferred the group approach or individual support. The results can be found in Table 7E below:

Table 7E: “Would you use (or have used) a breastfeeding support group?”

	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
No, as I didn’t experience any problems	1	13%
No, as it wouldn’t have helped	1	13%
No (No specific reason given)	1	13%
Yes, I would like to have joined a regular support group	2	25%
Yes, I would have liked advice from time to time, when I needed it	2	25%
Yes, I would have liked support, but have no preference between either one to one or in a group	1	13%
Total	8	102%

Among those answering this question, the majority gave a positive response, asserting that they would have appreciated this kind of advice, had it been available. However, no clear preference became apparent between the two approaches, with one parent even stating that she would like to have the option of accessing either type of support.

Among those stating that they would not use such a service, responses appeared to be divided: One parent stated that she did not experience any problems with breastfeeding, while another felt that no advice or support could have helped as it was the embarrassment of feeding in public which caused her to stop. On a positive note however, respondents were offered several other possible factors which may have prevented their attendance, such as embarrassment and lack of time, and yet none responded positively to these options.

## 7.2 Postnatal Depression

Parents were next asked a number of questions relating to postnatal depression, having been reassured that they were not obliged to talk about any subjects which made them feel uncomfortable. Nevertheless, eleven respondents answering the longer version of the questionnaire were happy to discuss this sensitive topic, and provided the results shown in Table 7F below, and in Tables 7G and 7H overleaf.

### Mood Changes Since Giving Birth

When asked about changes in their mood since the birth of the last child, the majority of parents stated that they had experienced a negative change in their levels of happiness, with more than half of respondents (55%) stating that they had felt “quite depressed” and a further 18% asserting that they had felt “a little low”.

While these figures are worryingly high, it is reassuring to find that among those feeling depressed, five out of six had sought help to alleviate their feelings. Interestingly, those describing their feelings in less severe terms appear to be less willing to seek help, with no respondents claiming to have felt a little low and to have sought help.

Table 7F: “Have you experienced any change in mood since giving birth?”

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
I have felt quite depressed and have sought help	5	46%
I have felt quite depressed but haven't sought help	1	9%
I have felt a little low but haven't sought help	2	18%
I have felt a little low and have sought help	0	0%
I have felt low at times but mostly happy	1	9%
I haven't felt any more unhappy than usual	2	18%
Total	11	100%

## Support and Advice

When asked who they had turned to for advice, or who they may turn to in the future, respondents appear to have been most willing to discuss these matters with their Health Visitor, with three quarters of respondents (75%) stating that they would use this avenue of support. Almost two-thirds of those responding would also be happy to discuss their feelings with their doctor (63%), while half would talk about this problem with their partner (50%) and slightly more would talk with another family member, with mothers and sisters being mentioned by a number of respondents.

Table 7G: “Have you sought, or would you seek, help or advice from any of the following?”

	Yes		No		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Health Visitor	6	75%	2	25%	8	100%
Doctor	5	63%	3	38%	8	101%
Partner	4	50%	4	50%	8	100%
Other family member	5	63%	3	38%	8	101%
Friend	2	25%	6	75%	8	100%
Other – Family Centre	1	-	-	-	-	-

Interestingly, respondents appear to be more reluctant to discuss postnatal depression with their friends. This could be an anomaly caused by the small sample answering this survey, or it could be indicative of a genuine trend among parents. Furthermore, only one respondents mentioned the Postnatal Support Group held at Wellingborough Family Centre, suggesting that such services might not currently be accessed by the majority of parents requiring help.

## Support Offered by Sure Start

Having discussed the services which Sure Start may possibly provide in the future, respondents were then asked whether they would be likely to use, or have used, such a support service in relation to postnatal depression. The reaction among parents was very positive, with eight of the nine respondents stating that they would find the provision of such a service useful. Once again, there was no clear preference between group and individual support, with several respondents stating that they would have found *both* types useful.

Table 7H: “Would you use a postnatal depression support group?”

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
No, as I haven't experience any problems	1	11%
Yes, I would like to have joined a regular support group	3	33%
Yes, I would have liked advice from time to time, when I needed it	2	22%
Yes, I would have liked to received both types of support	1	11%
Yes, I would like to start with one-to-one and move on to a group as I gained confidence	1	11%
Yes, I would like some one to come to me at home	1	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>99%</b>

### 7.3 Smoking

#### **Statistics Relating to Smoking**

Parents were next asked whether or not they smoke, having been reminded that there was no preferred answer to this question and they would not be judged or criticised due to their response. The results are shown in table 7I below, and show that respondents are divided quite equally between smokers and non-smokers. More than two fifths (43%) stated that they do not currently smoke, with a further 12% stating that they used to smoke but gave up when pregnant. Nevertheless, a further 46% claim to currently smoke, including two respondents who pointed out that they had cut down considerably since giving birth, or that they do not smoke in the presence of their child.

Table 7I: “Do you currently smoke?”

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Yes, I do	21	42%
No, I don't	22	43%
No, I stopped when I became pregnant	6	12%
No, I gave up after my baby was born	0	0%
Yes, but I have cut down a lot since the birth of my baby	1	2%
Yes, but I always smoke in a different room to my baby	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>101%</b>

### Support Offered by Sure Start

Following this question, respondents answering the longer version of the questionnaire were asked whether or not they would consider, or have considered, utilising a smoking cessation support group. The response was overwhelmingly negative, with no respondents stating that they would use such a service, as is shown by Table 7J below:

Table 7J: “Would you use, or have used, a smoking cessation support group?”

	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes (Either support group or one to one advice)	0	0%
No – I don’t want to give up at the moment	4	67%
No – If I want to give up I can do it by myself	2	33%
Total	6	100%

Among those responding, the majority stated that they would not use such a service as they do not currently wish to stop smoking, while several other respondents claimed that if they chose to stop smoking they could do so without the help of a support group.

While this response would need to be reinforced with research among a wider group of parents, it does suggest that Sure Start may face two main obstacles in relation to their goals of reducing smoking among parents: Firstly, they must convince parents of the benefits of giving up smoking, and secondly they must emphasise the value of advice and support for those attempting to abstain.

### 7.4 General Childcare Advice

Lastly, parents were asked to think about the people that they currently turn to for *general* advice and support in relation to their childrearing, the results of which can be seen in Table 7K overleaf. These seem to indicate that friends play a far more important role when talking about general childcare matters than they do in relation to specific issues such as breastfeeding and postnatal depression. Family and friends were also seen as a very valuable resource by the majority of parents responding to this question. In terms of formal advice, many respondents appear to discuss general childcare matters with their Health Visitor, while a minority would also speak to their doctor.

Table 7K: “Where do you turn for general advice and support about bringing up your child?”

	Yes		No		Totals	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Friends	8	73%	3	27%	11	100%
Health Visitor	7	64%	4	36%	11	100%
Mother	7	64%	4	36%	11	100%
Another family member	7	64%	4	36%	11	100%
Doctor	3	27%	8	73%	11	100%
Childminder/ Childcare provider	0	0%	11	100%	11	100%
Books	0	0%	11	100%	11	100%
TV	0	0%	11	100%	11	100%
Internet	0	0%	11	100%	11	100%
Other – Kingfishers	2	-	-	-	-	-

Other sources of information and advice do not appear to be used by the parents responding to this question. For example, childminders and childcare providers were not seen as a source of support of advice, although due to the small number of respondents to this question it could be the case that this particular sample of parents do not currently use formal childcare. However, it is more likely that all parents have access to television shows, childcare books and internet sites (available free of charge through the local library if not at home), yet none of those surveyed said that they would use any of these avenues of information.

When asked to mention other sources of support that they are currently using, two respondents mentioned the ‘Kingfishers’ group held on the Hemmingwell estate, which one again supports the indication that parents value face to face support from people close to them.

## 8.0 Conclusion

### 8.1 Future Involvement in the Sure Start Project

In the final section of the questionnaire, parents were asked whether they would be interested in becoming involved with the Sure Start project. The ultimate purpose of this question was to gain details of parents who may like to join the Sure Start mailing list or require support at the current time. However, a brief overview of the results show that the majority of those responding to the questionnaire would like to become part of the project, either by attending events or receiving one-to-one support of some kind. This is very encouraging, and along with the results of the questionnaire in general, suggest that once properly informed about the Sure Start project, many parents are likely to get involved in the near future.

Table 8A: Respondents' Attitudes Towards Future Involvement in the Sure Start Project.

	Yes		No		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I would like more information about Sure Start	28	62%	17	38%	45	100%
I would like to come to events	26	58%	19	42%	45	100%
I would like one-to-one support	2	4%	43	96%	45	100%
I don't think that I want to get involved with Sure Start right now	6	13%	39	87%	45	100%

### 8.2 Further Research and Evaluation

Following the success of this baseline survey, Sure Start Wellingborough will be undoubtedly be keen to continue evaluating the views of parents over the coming months, and even years. Such evaluation may prove to be vital to the success of the project, in terms of ensuring that staff remain in touch with the needs of their target population, and also as a means of communicating to parents that their opinions play an important and valued role in the programme.

Having collected this baseline data, it would be useful to perform a comparative exercise using a similarly quantitative survey at some point in the future. By this point, the Sure Start database of potential interviewees will certainly be more abundant, and therefore responses may be expected from a larger percentage of the target population, enabling a more accurate picture to develop concerning the views of local parents, and the ways in which these views may have changed over time.

Alongside a repeat of the exercise which has just been performed, Sure Start may also be able to consider adopting a wider range of research methods: With a more flexible timescale at their disposal, the team may be at liberty to experiment with a variety of methods ranging from traditional approaches such as focus groups through to more flamboyant exercises such as those explored in the Sure Start literature discussed earlier in this research.

Considering their commitment to conducting 'in-house' evaluation, it may be wise for Sure Start Wellingborough to devise a specific strategy to ensure that all elements of the community are consulted as fully as possible in the future. In the meantime, the team will be able to make full use of the data provided in this project to ensure that future services are tailored as closely as possible to the views put forward by local parents.