PEN GREEN SURE START

ANNUAL EVALUATION 2004

OUTREACH PROVISION USERS' SATISFACTION SURVEY

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Executive Summary

The evaluation of Pen Green Sure Start in 2004 took the form of a Users' Satisfaction Survey of parents and families who used any of the Pen Green Sure Start Outreach groups or services, i.e. all the provision which took place in locations other than on the Pen Green Centre Campus, in 2003

- A Satisfaction Survey of parents was conducted from late May to mid-June of 2004.
- Interviews were conducted by a team of 13 locally recruited and trained parent-interviewers. Most of them had attended units on a course, 'Developing the Practice of Parent-Researcher', accredited by the Open College Network.
- A total of 78 interviews were completed, however only 66 of these could be used for the purposes of the evaluation as closer examination of 12 of the interviews showed that the parents had used services at Pen Green and not at any of the Outreach locations.
- Ratings and comments across the range of groups and services evaluated were consistently high and positive respectively. 85% of ratings were in the High Range, 13% in the Medium Range and 1% in the Low Range.
- The data produced by the evaluation interviewing is presented individually for all the groups and services which parents commented on. Considerable attention has been paid to the comments made by parents in order to provide an essentially formative evaluation.
- Four patterns emerged from the analysis of parents' comments. These patterns have been analysed and commented on and recommendations have been made in terms of their implications for service provision, staff practices and training needs.
- Parents' comments which reflect poor or negative experiences of specific services should be treated seriously as they articulate parents' feeling about what happened to them; parents' beliefs about their experiences shape their perceptions of Corby Sure Start as a whole and influence how they use it.
- Recommendations have also been made regarding the Corby Sure Start database and its potential to use information from group registers to identify parents and

families who may need support; for example, if a parent attendance at groups stops abruptly.

- The need for accurate completion of Initial Contact Forms, group registers and records of services provided needs to be emphasised; the reliability of the information on the database is vital for day-to-day running of the Programme as well as for forward planning and evaluation work.
- A small number of parents were excluded from the interviewing process for this evaluation on the advice of Corby Sure Start staff. Staff felt that, at the time the interviewing of parents was taking place, it would be inappropriate to approach these families due to their particularly difficult family circumstances. However, these parents may have very valuable contributions to make regarding the quality of Corby Sure Start's provision. Some kind of follow-up work affording these parents the opportunity to be part of the evaluation process needs to be devised.
- This evaluation is about Corby Sure start's 'Outreach' provision. It would be interesting and informative to find out what proportion of parents access services predominantly or exclusively at the Kingswood Centre and/or Wick Close Community House. Work on this could ascertain if these parents feel themselves to be at the 'periphery' of a provision centred at Pen Green; alternatively, parents may feel that the 'outreach' location they use is at the 'core' with Pen Green being peripheral. Parents' perceptions of the Programme, and their 'place' within it, will have implications as to how they use it and whether or not they truly have access to the full range of services offered.
- The same criteria could be applied to staff who work predominantly or exclusively at the Kingswood Centre and/or Wick Close; their perceptions of being at the 'core' or on the 'periphery' may influence how they work with and support parents in groups and services. However, the potential for workers based at the Outreach locations to feel isolated from the rest of the programme is counterbalanced by three key factors; Corby Sure Start's consistency of culture, the multiple roles played by workers and the frequent and regular contact and representation that occurs through formal and informal meetings.
- The increase in provision of services, and the work performed by those who have direct contact with parents and families, has increased the workload for managers and administrators; their contribution needs to be acknowledged.

- We feel that we know quite a lot about the outcomes for parents and families who use Corby Sure Start services and that they are well received. However, we still do not know enough about the process which produces these outcomes. The workers in Corby Sure Start demonstrate distinctive skills which have yet to be accounted for, especially those of working in high-risk situations for the 'visitor' or other responsible person.
- The workers in Corby Sure Start are carrying out high-quality, small-scale outreach work which touches families, some of whom other agencies and services may have found 'hard to reach'. The Programme is making a distinctive contribution to family welfare and child development providing trusted and confidential help. This could have long-term positive consequences for families in terms of their expectations and future engagement with education, health and social services. This work may be low-profile but may have a high impact and is one of Corby Sure Start's 'hidden' strengths.

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

This evaluation is the fourth to be undertaken since the Corby Sure Start Programme was established in October 1999. The original 1999 study was a Parent-Led Needs Assessment which ascertained what people in the local community wanted from the proposed Sure Start Programme in Corby (Tait et al, 1999). The second piece of work, conducted in 2001, was a User Satisfaction Survey which focussed on working parents with children under 3 years of age and how Corby Sure Start was meeting their needs (Tait et al, 2001). The third study, carried out in 2003, encompassed a User Satisfaction Survey, focus group work with the staff of Corby Sure Start and interviews with members of the Programme's Management Board (McKinnon et al, 2003; (a) and (b); summaries of the main findings of these studies can be found in Appendix A)

All studies have been based on the need for both formative and summative evaluations as Corby Sure Start was set up to make a significant difference to the lives of families who use the groups and services it provides. The evaluations of 1999, 2001 and 2003 attempted to measure the impact which Corby Sure Start has had on the families it serves and the improvements it has made to their lives. This has been done by conducting User Satisfaction Surveys of parents and families involved with the Programme.

The Background of the 2004 Survey

In 2003 the Corby Sure Start staff team worked on and produced their own document 'Annual Report 2003 – Corby Sure Start' (Corby Sure Start, 2003). This provided a detailed summary of the work undertaken by the Sure Start team in the previous year. It deliberately used an informal style because it wanted to present a "balance of facts, figures and 'real stories'" to complement the monitoring and financial reports which were included (Corby Sure Start, 2003 page 5). The Introduction to this document referred readers to the annual evaluation work being completed by Pen Green Research, Development and Training in the same year. This work was in the form of a Users' Satisfaction Survey and was published in two documents, 'Parent to Parent' and 'Evaluations from Staff Focus Groups and a Survey of Management Board' (McKinnon et al, 2003; (a) and (b)).

As a result of,

- the work carried out by the whole of the Corby Sure Start staff team to produce their own Annual Report
- the two documents produced by the Annual Evaluation in 2003

and, not least, by

- Corby Sure Start staff's own day-to-day involvement within the programme

the staff in Corby Sure Start felt that they had developed a deep level of understanding of their Programme in terms of,

- its day-to-day operation
- its strengths and weaknesses

The 2003 evaluation work focussed specifically on Corby Sure Start's provision at the Pen Green Centre and its outreach locations, primarily the two Community Houses and seven other smaller venues. However, most of the data in the report reflected the work undertaken by Corby Sure Start at the Pen Green Centre campus. There were several reasons why this occurred;

- Pen Green already had a long history of involving parents and their children in groups, consequently people in the community knew of and used the Pen Green Centre before the advent of Corby Sure Start in 1999
- Parents continuing to use Pen Green after Sure start was up and running were able to use the new groups and services provided by Sure Start
- In addition to this, the size of the Pen Green Centre meant that staff could provide facilities that were not available elsewhere (for example, a spacious room for Baby Massage sessions, a Snoezelen Room, extensive outdoor spaces including the Discovery Area and a huge area for sand and water play called 'The Beach'). As a result, a large number of people in the area were attracted to the Centre and used the groups and services available

(some figures which illustrate these points can be found in Appendices B and C)

During 2003 the staff in Corby Sure Start had learned a great deal about the programme in general and about its operation in and around the Pen Green Centre in particular. However, it was also recognised that a significant area of Corby Sure Start's provision was its 'outreach work'. This encompassed all of the work which took place in a variety of locations away from the Pen Green Centre site, but mainly in the two Community Houses at Wick Close and the Kingswood Community Centre. As the figures in Table 1 show, the Outreach locations made up a quarter of the overall attendances at Corby Sure Start's groups and services.

Table 1 - Frequency of Attendances at the Pen Green Centre and Outreach Provision in 2003

	Pen Green Centre	Outreach Provision
Frequency of Attendances	21583	7162
% of Attendances	75.08%	24.91%

The senior management of Corby Sure Start felt that, since the outreach provision was such an important aspect of the Programme's work, it needed to be evaluated in its own right. It was anticipated that the data produced would provide Corby Sure Start with a deeper understanding of parental views about the groups and services operating across the Outreach locations. The information would also allow better-informed decisions to be taken about how the focus for development work could be enhanced in the future. These two points have formed the rationale for this evaluation.

In order to meet both the needs of the Corby Sure Start management and the requirements of the Sure Start Unit, the Programme Manager of Corby Sure Start requested that a User Satisfaction Survey be conducted involving parents and families who had used any of the Outreach Provision run by Corby Sure Start. The focus would be on the parents' assessment of the quality of the provision as indicated by ratings of, and comments about, the groups and services they had used. As with previous surveys, a team of interviewers were recruited from the local community and trained to carry out semi-structured interviews with the parents. The Project Coordinator organised the research and dealt with the allocation of interviewees to interviewers, the provision of necessary materials and other logistical aspects of the work. To ensure consistency across the

evaluations and allow comparisons to be made, this study adopted the same philosophical position and methodological approach as the previous three evaluations (the main findings of the evaluations conducted in 1999, 2001 and 2003 can be found in Appendix A).

PART TWO

THE OUTREACH PROVISION USER SATISFACTION SURVEY 2004

The Survey Structure

We took the most recent complete calendar year for which full attendance data was available – i.e. 2003. During 2003 the total number of users of Corby Sure Start Outreach services was 408. Rather than attempt to take a sample of service users from this list it was decided that the list would simultaneously be the population **and** the sample for the research, in order to maximise the number of potential interviews. Data on attendance provided the Evaluation Research Coordinator with the opportunity to divide the list of parents into 'low', 'medium' and 'high' users of Sure Start groups and services. However, these categories are abstract and lack the human dimension inherent in the actual pattern of attendance which parents follow, and the day-to-day circumstances which shape this. We wanted to look at frequency of attendance in more human terms, so we defined parents as 'belonging', 'participating' or 'visiting' depending on their level of attendance during the year. This is shown in Table 2 below,

Table 2 - Category of Attendance at Outreach Provision in 2003

Level of Usage	Number of Attendances in 2003	Number of Parents in this category
Belonging/'Belongers'	52 or more	25
Participating/'Participators'	from 13 to 51	82
Visiting/'Visitors'	12 or less	298

(A more complete breakdown of attendance patterns and figures can be found in Appendices B, C, D and E).

As well as 'defining' parents in these ways we also sought to establish the subjective value of attendance as well as its influence or impact. The criteria for the choice of these specific ranges are as follows,

- If a parent attends a group or service 52 or more times in a year their attendance averages at once a week. Many of the groups and services provided follow exactly this pattern. For parents in this category the group or service has become a weekly

event; it has become embedded in their lives, they are committed. The service can be something to which they feel they 'belong' **and** which they also feel 'belongs' to them

- Between 13 to 51 attendances we reason that parents are 'participating' in groups and services, in the sense that they are involved in them to a greater or lesser extent, but without the high commitment which characterises the 'Belongers'; this is not to devalue the worth of the group or service to them, or their reciprocal value to it, but only to suggest that, for a variety of reasons and circumstances, their attendance is at a lower level

- 12 attendances in a year averages out at once a month and these parents can be seen to be 'Visitors' to the groups and services. Similar to the 'Participators', there may be various reasons why their attendance falls into the lowest of the categories.

It is important that we clarify how we see and interpret these different levels of attendance;

- A high level of use may indeed indicate that the person has a profound and persistent need which the group or service is meeting. These parents could initially be seen to be 'Sure Start dependent'. However, this need may be a need to 'give' something back to the group or service, Many parents feel that they contribute to the groups and services in various ways; this could range from practical things like helping to set-up and put away equipment to listening and talking to other parents in helpful and supportive ways, and it could also mean something more substantial such as co-leading a group. So, in some cases the notion of 'dependence' could be inverted; parents may continue to regularly attend a group because they still get what they need from it and simultaneously they feel that the success of the group or service depends, in some part, on them and the contribution they make. It is likely that some of the parents we have identified above as 'Belongers' probably feel this way about Corby Sure Start – that it 'belongs' to them

- A medium to low amount of contact in itself does not necessarily equate to a small amount of significance for the parent. People may have got what they wanted or needed from the group or service after a relatively small number of attendances. They may have experienced an important change of direction as a result of the contact or intervention they have experienced. Indeed, their initial involvement with the group or service may have allowed them to identify **another group or service** which they feel will meet their needs more effectively and to which they want to 'move on'. Equally, their **needs may have changed** so that 'moving on' is identifiably a form of progression for the parent – e.g. a parent may learn how to relate more confidently with their baby, help their infant to relax and aid its digestion at a Baby Massage group, then 'move on' to a Growing Together group where they will have the opportunity to learn about child development concepts, and from this they may 'move on' to a Parents Involvement in their Children's Learning course and get an accredited qualification which acknowledges their deeper understanding of child development concepts. It may also be the case that their circumstances may have changed to the extent that they can no longer attend the service in the same way, or feel that they no longer require the support it provides. A parent going back to work would be an example of both of these circumstances.

- For those people who we have defined as 'Visitors' attending up to 12 times in the year it would seem that the service is meeting some kind of need, otherwise why would they bother at all? Their needs may be of a lower degree than those of the 'Belongers' and 'Participators' but we assume that whatever their needs are they are being met in some way, shape or form.

- Clearly, those parents who have attended a group or service only once or twice may be dissatisfied with it, and this would be a concern for any provider of services in the public or private sector. The data for the Outreach Provision in 2003 showed that there were 81 parents who had attended only once, 40 parents who had attended twice and another 40 who had attended three times. However, it is also possible that, as suggested above, parents may have been signposted to other, more appropriate services early in their involvement with Corby Sure Start. This

is a situation where it is Corby Sure Start as the provider of services which has a need – they need to be aware of parents who are unhappy or dissatisfied with a service and the reasons why.

Conducting the 2004 Evaluation Interviewing.

For this year's evaluation interviewing we took the schedule format used last year and extended it in terms of the number of questions asked and we also sought ratings for more specific things. We were attempting to 'dig deeper' and produce a more focussed and detailed set of responses from those parents interviewed about the groups and services they had used. The interview schedules for the evaluations of 2003 and 2004 can be found on pages 14-16 and the differences and contrasts can be clearly seen (these schedules are also reproduced in Appendices F and G)

The format for 2003 consisted of

- The name of the service or group. This included the names of group leaders and workers as prompts to help parents identify things which they had used and interviewers were provided with a crib-sheet of further details about groups and services
- It asked immediately for a rating for the group or service from 1 to 10 (10 = top of the scale)
- Then comments as to the choice of rating in terms of the differences it had made for the parent and family
- And finally, any ideas the parent had as to how the group or service could be improved.

In addition to the name of the service or group, the format for 2004 identified the day, timing and location of the group or service and the names of those who provided it and then went on to ask a series of questions about,

- How they came to use the service in the first place
- If they continued to use it

- If so what did they think of it
- If not, why did they stop using it
- If they used it for a time and then stopped what were the reasons for this
- Six ratings for Particular Aspects of the Service Delivery ranging from 0 to 9 (9 = top of the scale)
- What should be kept
- What should be changed
- Would they recommend the service to others
- Would they give the service an overall rating ranging from 0 to 10 (10 = top of the scale) and the reasons for their rating
- Any other comments they would like to make

In this study we used the same model for ratings as had been employed in the three previous evaluations. This was to ensure some methodological consistency and allow comparisons to be made between the evaluations of successive years. In this study a small but important change was made to the overall rating scale in that a zero was added at the lower end. In this way the same three empirical groups of ratings used in the evaluation of 2003 could be employed and parents were given the opportunity to give a rating of 0 if they wanted to;

Table 3 – Levels of Service Quality and Ratings in 2003 and 2004

Level of Service Quality	**Objective**	**Ratings group 2003**	**Ratings group 2004**
High	Maintain	8-10	8-10
Acceptable	Improve	5-7	5-7
Unacceptable	Reduce or eliminate	1-4	0-4

The ratings for the Particular Aspects of Service Delivery used a rating scale from 0 to 9 to allow parents the opportunity to differentiate between several aspects of the quality of service delivery; how useful, helpful and reliable the service had been in meeting their needs and making a difference in their lives, as well as how well it was managed. This also allowed differentiation into three groups with 'High' being ratings from 7-9, 'Medium' from 4-6 and 'Low' being 0-3. The frequencies of these ratings can be found in the tables for each group or service in Part Three of this report under 'The Results of the Survey'.

Interview Schedule for Users' Satisfaction Survey 2003

SURE START EVALUATION 2003: INTERVIEW FOR USERS OF SERVICES

Name of Service or Group:	

Use of Service: Current=C; Previous=P; Not Used=N (circle letter)	C	P	N

Rating based on the value of the service/group for you/your child/family (circle number given)									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Reasons for Rating: e.g. What differences has this service/group made to you/your child/your family?

Room for Improvement: e.g. How could this service/group be made better for you/your child/your family?

Interview Schedule for Users' Satisfaction Survey 2004

OUTREACH PROVISION USER SATISFACTION SURVEY: SURE START EVALUATION 2004

Group/Service Name/Code		No.	Location/Day/Time			
			Leader/Worker			

Use of Service:	Current=C; Previous=P; Not Used=N (circle letter)	C	P	N

A – Could you tell me how you started to use this service?			
B - (1) Did you continue to use this service?			
No		Yes	
(2) If you answered 'No' can I ask you why you stopped using it?			
(3) If you answered 'Yes', and continue to use it, can I ask you what your experience of the service has been?			
(4) If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?			

C – Was the service,

1	Useful?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

D – What should definitely be kept about the service?

E – What should definitely be changed about the service?

F – Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

G – (1) Would you like to give an overall rating for the service?

Low - 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - High

(2) What made you choose that rating?

H – Is there anything else you would like to say about this service?

The interview schedule for 2004 was deliberately more highly structured than that of 2003 for the reasons given above. Interviewers were asked about how easy or otherwise they found the schedules to use, along with other aspects of the interviewing experience. Interviewers who had been involved in the evaluation work for 2003 said that they found the 2004 schedule more difficult to use in the interviews. One said that the structure of the schedule,

"..got in the way of getting the story from people"

Others said,

"Last year the schedule allowed the conversation to flow naturally without all the interruptions which this year's schedule had built into it"

and

"Last year we got all the same information but with only three questions"

These comments were made at a debriefing meeting held with the interviewing team after the fieldwork was completed (a full set of points which came out of this meeting can be found in Appendix H). In previous evaluations members of the interviewing team and parents were involved in the co-construction of the interviewing schedule. The changes to the schedule for 2004 were made by the Evaluation Research Coordinator alone, and this explains why it was not as productive as an interviewing instrument as previous schedules have been. The feedback from the interviewing team will inform the design of future interviewing schedules as a way of ensuring that they are as effective as possible.

The Sample

A complete list of all parents who used any group or service not based at the Pen Green Centre in 2003 was drawn from the Corby Sure Start database. The Evaluation Research Coordinator circulated the list of 408 names to three senior members of staff in Corby Sure Start. They identified 25 names of people who were to be excluded from the evaluation interviewing. The reasons for people's exclusion ranged from the slight to those

which were more complex and serious. For example, 5 of the people identified were parents whose involvement with Corby Sure Start had led to them being employed by the programme. However, the remaining 20 were excluded on the basis of such things as recent bereavement or ongoing casework related to a variety of issues including domestic violence, children being on the child protection register, care proceedings and the like. Obviously, these were individuals and families whom it would have been inappropriate to interview at this time. It should be noted at this point that the Evaluation Research Coordinator was not privy to the reasons for exclusion regarding individuals but asked the three Sure Start staff for the kinds of criteria they used in general terms.

A discussion about this process took place at a meeting of the Corby Sure Start Management Board and a number of interesting points were made,

- While it was not appropriate to contact these parents at that time it could be feasible do so at a later date
- the same three members of Corby Sure Start staff could be consulted to see if this is the case and to advise on how contact should be made with any of the 'excluded' parents
- it would be wrong for these parents not to be given the same opportunities as others to have their experiences and opinions included in the evaluation work
- in the light of the work which was being done with them at that time these parents could have particularly valuable stories to tell
- they may be in a position to provide highly informative comments about the quality of the services and support they have received

In addition to the 25 names taken out by the Corby Sure Start Staff, the Project Coordinator removed three names from the list as they were members of the interviewing team itself. These processes reduced the number of people who were viable potential interviewees to 380. Aiming to complete interviews with 20% of the remainder gave us a target figure of 76 interviews.

As was the practice in previous evaluations, the letters informing parents about the evaluation and its purposes were sent out in 4 'waves' rather than all at once. The letters

were sent out in 4 batches at 2-3 week intervals from late April to late June. This was so that a telephone contact from one of the interviewing team could be made shortly after the letter's arrival when its contents were still fresh in the minds of parents rather than several weeks later when the may have been put aside or forgotten about. An information sheet was enclosed with the letter giving further details about the research, why it was being carried out, who was conducting the work and what parents' rights were in terms of choosing to participate in the research or not (copies of the letter and information sheet are in Appendices J and K; a full version of the NESS guidelines on anonymity and confidentiality can be found on the NESS website, www.ness.bbk.ac.uk)

Names, addresses and contact numbers were distributed among the interviewing team by the Evaluation Research Coordinator immediately after a wave of letters had been sent so that contact could be made soon after the letter had arrived. Several criteria influenced the allocation of parents' contact details to members of the interviewing team including,

- some interviewers had no car, or limited use of one, and wanted names and addresses close to home and in walking distance
- others had access to a car and were happy to go anywhere and interview anyone
- others wanted to interview in areas away from their own home, for example to limit the chances of their list containing someone they knew; if this did occur interviewers were given the choice of returning the name to the Evaluation Research Coordinator for recirculation or going ahead with it if both they and the interviewee were happy to do so
- the fieldwork took place at a time when people were going on family holidays so other members of the interviewing team shouldered the burden at these times

In spite of these difficulties the quality of data gathered by this team of interviewers, who knew the community and were part of that community, was very rich. The issue of the quality of data acquired using locally-recruited interviewers as opposed to professional ones is discussed in more detail in Appendix P - Research into the Use of Local People as Interviewers – A Critique

The difficulties in achieving a sample of responses is outlined in Table 4 below, and discussed in both general and specific terms afterwards.

Table 4 – The Sample Structure

Category in the Sample	**No.**	**%**
Total number of families in contact with Corby Sure Start Outreach services in 2003	408	100
Number of names removed from the list by Sure Start staff and Project Coordinator	28	7
Number remaining as potential interviewees (universe)	380	100
20% of the population as target number of interviews	76	20
Number of contacts made for interviews by letter	374	98
Number of contact letters returned by the Royal Mail	6	1.5
Number of people who declined to be interviewed when contacted by phone	57	15
Number of people not contactable after 3 attempts	102	27
Number of completed interviews	78	20.5
Number of completed interviews relevant to Outreach provision only	66	17.3

This year's evaluation has followed the national guidelines for this kind of work. Table 5 below compares the structuring of the survey for this evaluation compared to the guidance provided by the National Evaluation of Sure Start at The University of London. This guidance was written by Mog Ball and published as 'How was it for you? A brief guide to conducting user satisfaction surveys for local Sure Start programmes'. (Ball; 2002)

Table 5 – The Survey Structure

	Guidance from Mog Ball	**Corby Sure Start Evaluation 2004**
Sample Size	Eligible Parents in Area 15-20%	Users interviewed = 78 (20.5% of universe, i.e. 380 potential interviewees) Of this 78 only 66 were eligible to be used in the evaluation (i.e. 17.3% of the universe)
Response Rate (number who actually respond)	Over 70%	20% of universe of 380 = target of 76. 78 completed interviews 66 eligible interviews = 87% of target
Rate improved by	"..several waves of follow-up"	"three strikes and out"

(Ball – 2002; pages 11-14)

While 78 interviews were completed 12 were undertaken with parents who, it turned out, had only attended groups and services run by Corby Sure Start at the Pen Green Centre. Consequently, these interviews have not been used as part of the dataset for this evaluation, however the information gained from these 12 interviews has been summarised in Appendix R. The remaining 66 interviews (17.3%) still fall within the recommended range in the guidelines given above and form the dataset for this evaluation.

The names of the 12 parents whose interviews were not eligible had been entered on the Corby Sure Start database as having attended a group or service provided at one or other of the Outreach locations. Interviewers contacted the 12 parents and arranged interviews and visited them only to discover that they had not attended any services at the Outreach locations at all. Having arrived, the interviewers neither wanted to leave empty-handed nor say to the parents that, in the circumstances, their experiences and views were of little relevance to the current evaluation. They went ahead and conducted the interviews in the normal way, using the page for 'Notes' at the end of the interview schedule to record what these parents wanted to say (the interviewers' records of these interviews can be found in Appendix Q)

There may be several reasons why this chain of events occurred in these 12 cases,

- Clearly there had been some errors in entering the details of these 12 parents' attendances at groups and services into the database. When interviewed the parents pointed out that they had not attended any groups or services at any of the Outreach locations, nevertheless the database records that they had done so
- Parents may not have read the Information Sheet accompanying the letter and were unaware of the focus of the evaluation research being on the Outreach provision. When called by an interviewer they may have assumed that the evaluation was about all Sure Start provision, including that at Pen Green, and agreed to take part
- In these 12 cases the interviewers may not have made the focus of the evaluation sufficiently clear when they spoke to parents who, pleased that their views were sought, agreed to take part

These points should not be seen as criticisms of parents, interviewers or data-entry staff. People make inadvertent mistakes; our explanations may not be as clear as we believe them to be; misunderstandings do happen; few of us read completely all the mail we receive.

This problem was not encountered during the 2003 evaluation as it encompassed groups and services across **all** the locations including the Pen Green Centre. However, 2004's interviewing team experienced a variety of difficulties in contacting parents and securing interviews which were familiar from 2003. Many of the problems were connected to practical issues, such as,

- The land-line and mobile phone numbers in the database no longer functioning – the number is 'not recognised' in the language of the telecoms industry (48 cases)
- People who no longer live, or are not known, at the address in the database (11 cases)
- People are contacted but decline to take part and be interviewed (63 cases)
- Interview appointments are made and have to be rearranged by the interviewer, either because of a change of circumstances for the parent or difficulties for the interviewer (1 cases)
- Interview appointments were made but not kept by the interviewee (9 cases)

(Further details of these examples and others can be found in Appendix L – 2004 Interviewing – Status of Interviewing).

Consistent with the practice used in previous evaluations, these difficulties were dealt with via a '3 strikes' principle. Interviewers made three attempts to contact each name on their lists and if contact was not made, or a parent declined to be interviewed, then they would move on to subsequent names and numbers. This year a larger 'Interviewee Details' sheet, containing up to 12 names, was used for this purpose so as to give each interviewer as much flexibility in the field work as possible (see Appendix M) If an interview had not been completed by the third attempt then the interviewer moved on to other names on their list.

The 66 completed interviews are testimony to the commitment, persistence and tenacity of the interviewers. As with the previous studies the Evaluation Research Coordinator was also engaged in the interviewing process both to gain findings and to be able to discuss the process with parent researchers. The interviewers who had worked on previous evaluations said that, this time around, they felt it was harder to contact people and encourage them to participate and be interviewed. Some possible explanations of this are put forward in the appendix which summarises the debriefing work conducted with the interviewing team (see Appendix H).

The Interviewers and their Training

The preparatory work for the annual evaluation undertaken in 2003 included two 3 hour training sessions for people who had responded to flyers and adverts about the research and Pen Green's need for parent interviewers. These people formed the interviewing team who carried out a total of 73 semi-structured interviews which formed the basis of the 'Parent to Parent' part of the 2003 Evaluation Report (McKinnon,, Fletcher and Whalley, 2003). This group of determined women worked hard to make the research a success and a promise was made to them that, when the exercise was repeated in 2004, we would have expanded and improved the materials and process and have in place an accredited course of training for interviewers. This was accomplished, and in January of 2003 we delivered the first of four units of an Open College Network accredited course called 'Developing the Practice of Parent-Researcher' (excerpts from the Learner Support guide for the course can be found in Appendix N). The response to the course was very encouraging with 25 participants involved in the initial unit on 'Parent-Researcher Interview Skills and Techniques'. From this group ten women were recruited to form the interviewing team for the 2004 Outreach Provision User Satisfaction Survey. These ten were joined by three women who had completed the training and interviewing in 2003 producing a team of thirteen interviewers for 2004.

The interviewers carried out semi-structured interviews with as many parents as possible, using the extended twelve-name Interviewee Details sheets as a tool to facilitate this. For all annual evaluations the interviewing teams have been drawn from the local

community and have been trained to carry out the interviews in an informal but professional manner. The evidence which has accrued over the three studies has indicated that there are important advantages in using local people to carry out this kind of work. For example, the interviewers' children go to the same schools as those of the interviewees; they use the same shops, pubs, clubs and sporting facilities; they go to the same churches. They have a **common cultural experience** in terms of the unique nature of Corby's development as a town and community. Consequently, they are able to strike up and develop a rapport and relationship of trust with the interviewees. People in Corby are highly aware of the town's history and several generations have lived through, or been told about, the changes and developments which the community has experienced over the last 60 years. The main changes are summarised in Figure A below

Figure A – Changes and Developments in Corby since the 1930s

Time Period	Main Changes and Developments
1930s and 1940s	Corby was a pioneering centre for steelmaking in the 1930s and 1940s in an area previously characterised by light industry, boot and shoe making and agriculture. In 1939 Corby was designated as an Urban District with its own elected Council. (Population: 1931 – circa 1,500; 1939 – circa 10,000; 1947 – circa 13,500)
1950s, 1960s and 1970s	Corby experienced a period of rapid expansion after being designated a 'New Town' in the 1950s. Thousands of new houses were constructed and the population of the town grew dramatically. A new Town Centre was built including a shopping area, a Civic Centre with concert/function hall and theatre and a large swimming pool. Corby enjoyed full employment throughout this period and consequently was an affluent and economically successful community in the 1960s and 1970s. New housing continued to be built to meet the demand of people migrating to the town from Scotland, Wales, London, the North-East and the Republic of Ireland. (Population: 1971 – 52, 611)
1980s and 1990s	As a post-industrial town in the wake of the decision by the British Steel Corporation to close down steel-making in Corby, the town experienced high levels of unemployment. Ironically, many of Corby's inhabitants had endured the hardships of high unemployment in the 1930s Depression in Glasgow and the West of Scotland, and had moved to Corby in the hope that neither they, nor their children, would experience this in the future. (Population: 1981 – 52,700; 1991 – 52,031; 2001 – 53,174)

(Corby District Council, 1989; www.statistics.gov.uk; www.visionofbritain.org)

The knowledge and understanding which local people have about Corby and its culture, norms, values and lore are all advantages in the type of interviewing we use. Local parents, interviewing local participants in the programme, know when to prompt and follow-up with a supplementary question, how to express it and when further prompting might become counter-productive. After the fieldwork was completed the Evaluation Research Coordinator and the interviewing team held a debriefing meeting to 'take stock'. During this meeting the subject of being 'a Corby person' was discussed. One of the interviewing team explicitly stated that she found that being from Corby and knowing the local culture was a big advantage in understanding the things that parents had to say about Sure Start and being able to pursue interesting things and find out more from them.

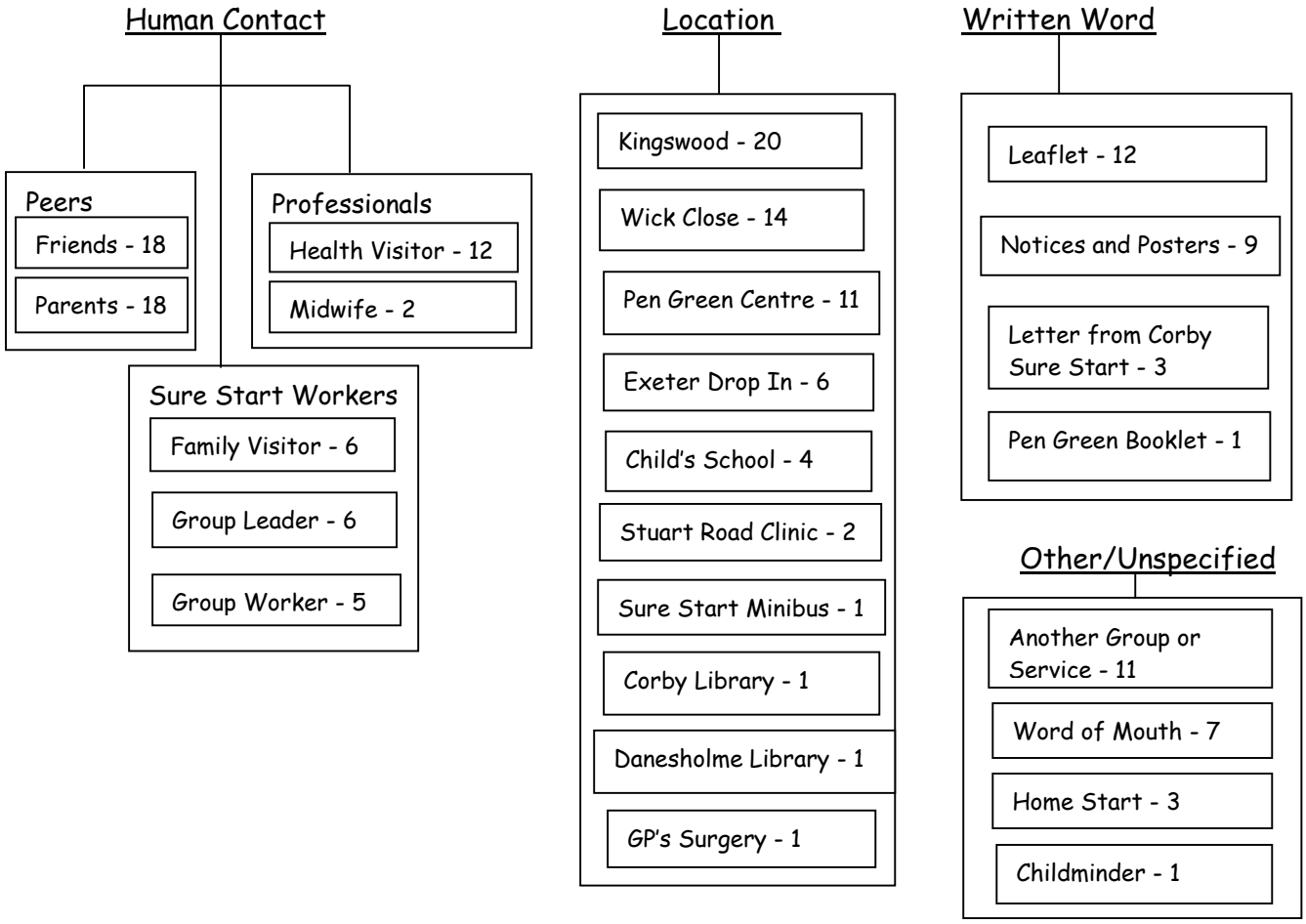
"Corby's like a big village; I was surprised how many people I knew in some way when I was phoning them up. But that's typical – there are so many connections between people in Corby! The overall experience was interesting and challenging. Knowing the community helped a great deal; living in the community and having a family helped. Sometimes the person would be reluctant, but when I told them what it was about and how what they told us helped Corby Sure Start to get better they were alright about it. The parents felt good that they were being asked how they felt about things. They felt safe talking to you in their own home. The parent-to-parent interviewing really worked because people could see I was just like them – they could see that I didn't have a 'hidden agenda' which they might have thought about a professional interviewer."

(further information on feedback from the interviewing team can be found in Appendix H. Research by Duffy and Williams which questions the efficacy of using local people as interviewers is critically examined in Appendix P)

Sources of Information about Corby Sure Start

One of the most interesting things which emerged from the data was the variety of ways in which parents came to know about Corby Sure Start's services. These ranged from the explicit ways in which the Programme planned to 'spread the word' through their own workers, publicity materials and fellow professionals to informal networks of families and friends. These sources of information have been grouped together and examined in terms of Human Contact, Location and the Written Word as shown in Figure B below. Further details of how parents found out about groups and services can be found alongside the specific information about each group or service later in Part Three of this report.

Figure B - Sources of Information about Corby Sure Start Groups and Services
(figures are percentages of the frequency of mentions from all of the reasons given by parents)



Human Contact

These figures show that peers, in the form of family members and friends, are the single most frequent channel of communication about Sure Start services in the Outreach locations. Peers' total of 36 mentions was twice as many as those given for Sure Start's own para-professionals (17) and two-and-a-half times as many as those given for the professional Health Visitors and Midwives (14). This is not to detract from the important roles played by professionals and para-professionals;

- Corby Sure start has a Service Level Agreement with Northamptonshire Health Care Trust's Health Visitors who inform new parents in the catchment area about Corby Sure Start. On their first visit to a new parent in the catchment area they tell hi or her about the Programme and its services and ask if s/he would like to be involved. If the parent is interested they complete a consent form which the Health Visitor then passes on to Corby Sure Start. One of the Family Visiting team will then contact the parent and arrange a home visit to discuss their needs and their child's needs. The Family Visitor then suggests groups and services which might be appropriate and supports the new parent in accessing them. The Corby Sure Start Midwife is seconded by the Kettering General Hospital Trust to work for the Programme for four days a week. Her fifth day is spent with her colleagues in the Community Midwifery Team. This allows her to maintain the profile of Corby Sure Start among her fellow professionals who can pass on referrals to her where this is appropriate

- Corby Sure Start's own workers keep parents informed about what is available in their own location and others, and give advice as to what services would be appropriate and enjoyable for the child and parent. They liaise with managers, professionals and each other to try and ensure that each family receives a service-package which meets their needs

Locations

The figures show that the three major places where Sure Start provides groups and services are effective in keeping parents informed about what is happening in their own location and elsewhere. The 6 mentions parents made about of the Exeter Drop In, specifically in this context, indicate that even a relatively small provision can have a significant effect in keeping parents informed about what is available elsewhere and encouraging them to access other groups and services. The much smaller figures for the 'minor' locations reflects the lower levels of parental attendance at these, compared to say Kingswood or Wick Close, rather than the nature of the provision per se.

The Written Word

The dominant forms here were Leaflets (12 mentions) and Notices and Posters (9 mentions). It is interesting that, while the Pen Green Centre as a location received 11 mentions as an information-source, the Pen Green Groupwork Booklet it produces was only mentioned by one parent. The booklet contains information about Sure Start and non-Sure Start provision at the Pen Green Centre as well as Sure Start groups and services across all of the other locations. The very low figure may be the result of parents not accessing the booklet if they use the Outreach provision predominantly or exclusively. This does not mean that the booklet is not available to them but that they are more interested in what they can go to at, say, Kingswood or Wick Close. The leaflets, notices and posters about what is happening at these locations will be more significant to them than what might be available at Pen Green in whatever written form it appears. This is entirely understandable; for some parents it is the Pen Green Centre which is the 'outreach' provision, not Kingswood, Wick Close or the Exeter Centre. Due to its size and greater levels of attendance it is possible that people located at the Pen Green Centre have a 'Pen Green-centric' view of the situation not shared at all by parents at the other end of the catchment area. For them it is Pen Green which is 'distant', not vice-versa. This may also be the view of staff whose work is predominantly or exclusively based at Kingswood and Wick Close.

PART THREE

THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The survey produced a great deal of information relating to the greater number of specific questions which the interviewing schedule contained.

Presentation of the Data – 'Own Pages' or 'Own Box' Treatment

As with the evaluation of 2003 (McKinnon, E., Fletcher, C and Whalley, M., 2003) all groups or services which received 5 or more responses from interviewees have a page of their own in the evaluation report which shows,

- the pattern of attendance
- the range of overall ratings given
- exemplar comments which reflect the range of overall ratings
- ratings given for the six Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service. These are represented in a table as, to a great extent, the 'numbers speak for themselves'. They are presented in a grid format; the range of ratings is in black and the actual ratings given are in red. Calculations of means and modes were considered but rejected on the grounds of being quite meaningless, and even misleading, even for services with many responses let alone those with only 2 or 3 parents giving ratings
- comments about what should be kept or changed about a service
- would the interviewee recommend the group or service to others
- any other comments

The data for those services which have received less than 5 ratings or comments will be summarised and commented on separately in their 'Own Boxes', but, due to the smaller numbers of responses, without as many exemplar comments. However, irrespective of how the data are presented, groups and services will be brought together in sections by their location in the Outreach provision. So, all groups and services running at 'Kingswood Neighbourhood Centre' and 'Wick Close Community House' will be in their own sections. A third section will show the results for the groups and services running at all of the other locations and will be called 'Other Locations'

Groups and Services run at the Kingswood Neighbourhood Centre

Groups and Services receiving the 'Own Pages' Treatment

- 0-4 Drop In 2 (Kingswood-42)
- 0-4 Drop In Kingswood (243)
- Aerobics Kingswood (280)
- After School Drop In (Kingswood-244)
- Bums, Legs & Tums (Kingswood-233)
- Cooking Time Kingswood (246)
- House Matters Kingswood (248)
- Kingswood Drop In Saturdays (226)
- Messy Play Kingswood (249)
- Parents' Drop In Kingswood (242)
- Tots Exercise Kingswood (235)

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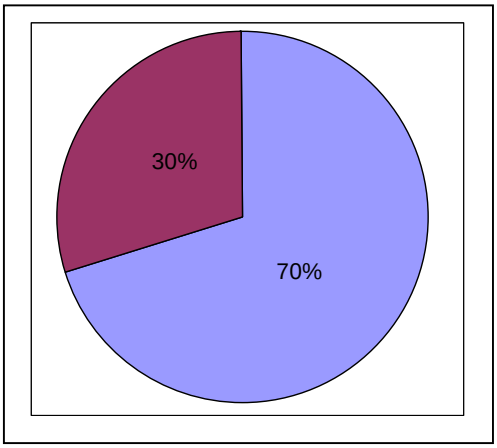
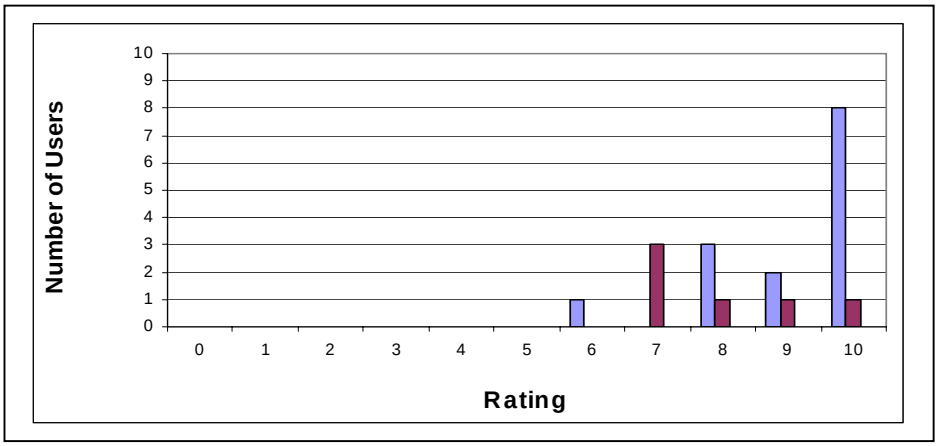
Use of Service for 0-4 Years Drop In 2 (Kingswood-42)





High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 80%

- *The worker who leads this group is great! It's marvellous. There's toys, also we like the musical morning - it's brilliant. Friday we do cookery - it's great (10)*
- *Excellent. I couldn't fault it at all (10)*
- *You can meet people instead of sitting at home and it lets the children socialise, preparing them for nursery and school. Children don't know how to mix (10)*
- *Wide range of textures and toys for my baby to look at. The staff treat my children like they're the most precious in the world. Pleased to see them (10)*
- *I was impressed with the layout and atmosphere. I go with a friend. It has become a home from home for me – we go three times a week. All the staff are helpful and have become our friends. The whole thing has been really uplifting (10)*
- *Excellent, met new friends and granddaughter met new friends (10)*
- *Very good, a godsend for me and my child. Built my confidence up (9)*
- *I use the Drop In at both Kingswood and Wick Close. I let my children choose which one to go to - they're old enough to have preferences and make choices. For me Kingswood is very convenient as there are no main roads to cross; the children can pedal bikes or push doll's prams to it (8)*
- *Very good for me and my grandson. 100% is pretty tough to give to anything though I don't know how I would improve it.*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) - 20%

- *Quite good but very cliquey and I am quite withdrawn (7)*
- *They organised trips. Children can play well as there are lots of things set up for them (7)*
- *It has done a lot of good for the people of the area and for me personally (7)*
- *It is a very much needed resource (7)*

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 10	8 3	7 4	6 2	5	4 2	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 10	8 4	7 4	6 2	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 8	8 5	7 6	6 2	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 9	8 6	7 4	6 1	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 7	8 4	7 6	6 3	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 8	8 5	7 5	6 1	5 2	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Both of the group workers are brilliant with kids. I like the Drop In format as I don't like to have to keep to a routine (10)*
- *Good as it is now – it keeps the children interested and captivated. The worker uses sign language during the class and the children notice and take part (9)*
- *Freedom of the children to go where they want and parents getting some time out (10)*
- *Having it as a Drop-in should be kept. It's good that the days and times are the same every week - people know where they are. Good that people are the same too as the kids get to know them.*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *Yes, it should be more advertised (10)*
- *Outdoor playing area isn't big enough. This is the only fault, especially when it's so busy (10)*
- *Not well advertised, but on the other hand if they did advertise it, it'd be too busy! (10)*
- *Could be made slightly longer – it takes time for the children to settle. About half an hour extra would be enough (9)*
- *More staff, as it means more rooms can be opened.(9)*
- *Fantastic service - could be advertised more (9)*
- *Fitted the needs of my grandson who was 2 years old, but the big hall isn't used enough; on an odd occasion it was opened and thoroughly enjoyed. There's lots of room for children to run about. The hall should be opened more frequently as the other rooms sometimes got a bit cramped, especially for older children (8)*
- *Weekend support (7)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

100% (20 out of 20) of the respondents said they would recommend the service to others

- *Definitely. Big definitely! (10)*
- *I recommend it to everyone (10)*
- *Yes, it's excellent (7)*

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *Age 0-4 is no good when your child is 5 and over. Support should be awarded after 0-4 (10)*
- *Mums are not getting involved. Get mums to get involved in activities, there's loads for kids to do. Get mums and children to do things together, for example singing songs. Mums are left to their own devices and there are cliques.*
- *Drop In excellent, staff are excellent and centre is excellent (10)*
- *It was great at the start, a 10, but when my child turned 5 I had no support so it turned to a zero (10)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

Frequency of Mentions by Parents	How I got to know about **0-4 Years Drop In 2 (Kingswood-42)**
7	From other groups and services run by Corby Sure Start
4	From a Corby Sure Start worker
2	From: their Health Visitor; leaflets; another parent; friends;

This service exemplified the various ways in which parents can get to know about a group or service at Corby Sure Start; clearly there were several sources of information, both inside and outside Corby Sure Start.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?
None of the 20 parents who responded answered this question.

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

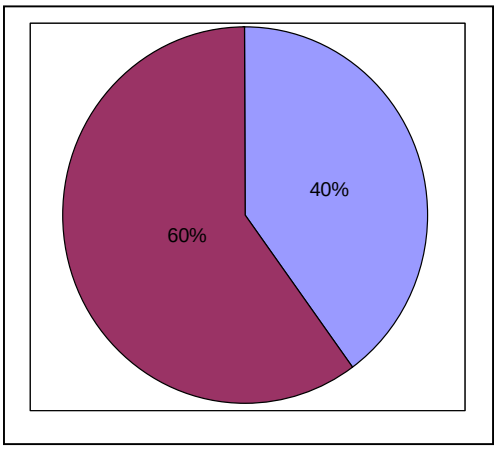
Out of 20 parents only 3 responded to this question. Their comments were;

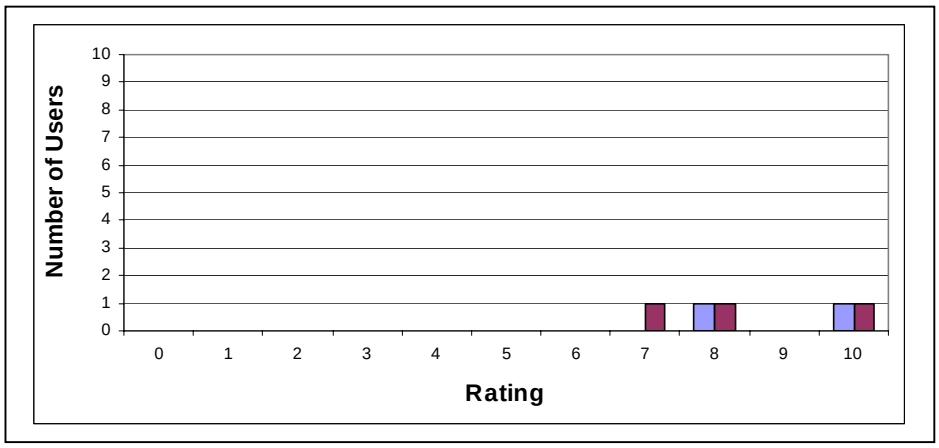
- *"Yes,it was fine but when my children turned five then Sure Start did not want to know" (10)*
- *"Certain people tried to take over and I had a fall-out with two other parents. I felt so uneasy when I walked in, it felt like people were talking about me; they probably weren't but that's the way I felt." (9)*
- *"The other worker's group moved to Pen Green so we went there" (7)*

Here we see three quite distinct reasons as to why these parents stopped using this service: one because of her child's age (although her unhappiness with the age-limited nature of Sure Start provision is clear); one due to a disagreement with other parents; one because the parent has chosen to 'follow' a worker to an equivalent group at another location.

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for 0-4 Drop In Kingswood (243)





High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 80%

- *It's fantastic watching the little ones (10)*
- *I found out about this group at the Exeter Drop In group and we went on a visit to the Kingswood Centre. My first impressions were very good. The Centre is much bigger than Exeter but I prefer one big room as my son has a tendency to rush off. It's easier for me to watch him at the Exeter group (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) - 20%

- *I found out about this group by word-of-mouth. I found that it is far too busy at times so I now go to the group at Wick instead (7)*

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under) - %

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 1	8	7 2	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Everything (10)*
- *Loads of space, toys, music. Very friendly (8)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *Nothing (10)*
- *Nothing (8)*
- *Not have so much messy stuff out all the time, like things for messy play and water play. You can remember to bring spare clothes if it's a Messy Play session, but you can't have spare clothes with you all the time – it isn't practical (8)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All four respondents said they would recommend this service to others.

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *The staff are brilliant with the kids (10*
- *I like to stay loyal to Exeter, especially with the number of members down. I really hope it doesn't close. I did like what they had at Kingswood but I prefer Exeter (8)*
- *The kids love it and it's not so cliquey as before but there's still some element of 'does your face fit, do your children's faces fit?' I understand why some children are favoured but when they're all together they should be treated the same, but kids don't understand. Also, some mums get a complete break from their kids and others don't (8)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

All four parents answered this question; two had come to know about this service through other groups at two of the other Outreach locations – the Exeter Drop In and Wick Close Community House. Of the other two parents, one had got to know about the service by word-of-mouth and the other by chance; "*I came in one day and it was on so I joined in.*" *(10)*

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

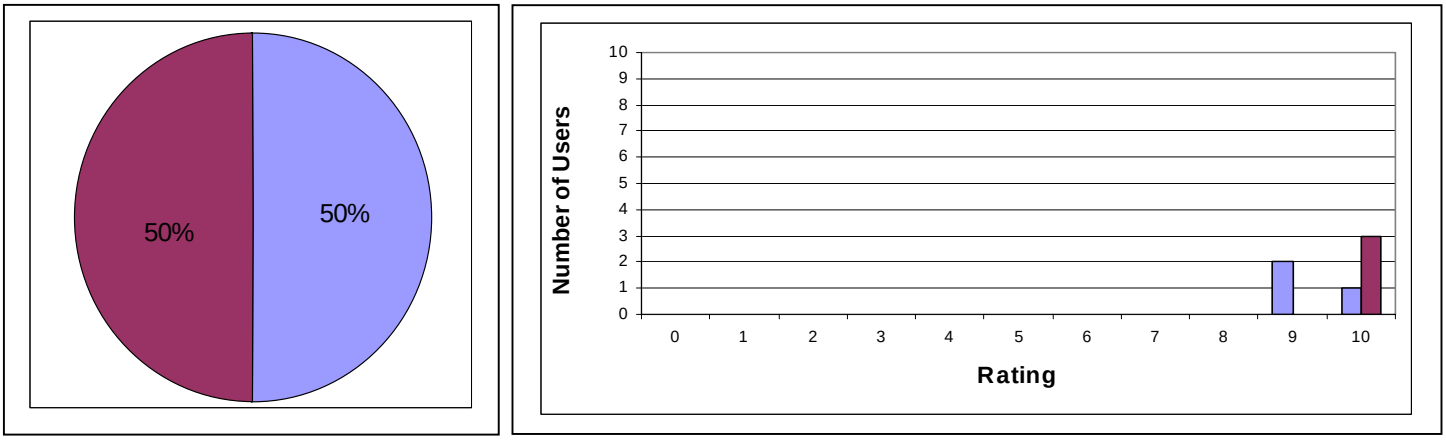
Two of the parents answered this question. One had decided to carry on with her attendance at the Exeter Drop In Group because its size gave her easier control of her son (see High Ratings Comments on page 25). The other had also decided to go to another group at Wick Close Community House.

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

None of the four parents answered this question.

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for Aerobics Kingswood (280)



High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 100%

- *It is very enjoyable, supportive and motivational because you're sharing experiences with other mums and talking about problems and so on (10)*
- *I lost weight and felt fitter. Just as important as those was that I had something to do that was for me and gave me some 'time-out' from my husband and children (10)*
- *It's a really brilliant group to be in (9)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 6	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 6	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 6	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 5	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 6	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 5	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *The friendliness of the worker and the other parents – I was nervous about going to this group because of my size but everyone was so friendly and welcoming (10)*
- *The closeness of the rest of the Sure Start workers who look after my son while I'm in aerobics – they're in the other rooms while we're in the hall. If it was any further away I wouldn't have gone to it, never mind carrying on with the group (10)*
- *The leader, she's brilliant! I was very self-conscious about my size but she and the others were very friendly; some were even bigger than me! The leader and the parents were really nice and made you feel welcome (10)*
- *The advice from the instructor – it was really helpful (10)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *More sessions at different times would be more flexible – I would have continued to go if other times were available (10)*
- *More facilities for babies and more places in the crèche (9)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All respondents (6 out of 6) said that they would recommend this service to others. Some commented,

- *Yes, definitely (10)*
- *Yes, definitely (10)*
- *Yes, it's a fantastic place (9)*

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *It was not too serious and I got lots of good advice (10)*
- *Brilliant for everyone – helpful, kind and always there to talk to (10)*
- *Having the option to be weighed, or not, is good. I lost two stones in a year which made me feel much better and healthier and it really helped to improve my self-esteem*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

All six parents answered this question: two had found out about this service from a friend; one from her sister; one from her childminder; one from a leaflet; one from a worker in another group at the Exeter Centre. Five different ways of finding out among six parents again indicates the diversity of ways in which information about Corby Sure Start is disseminated in the community.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Only one of the parents answered this question;

"I stopped for a time to have another baby, then there weren't enough crèche places for my oldest child." (9)

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

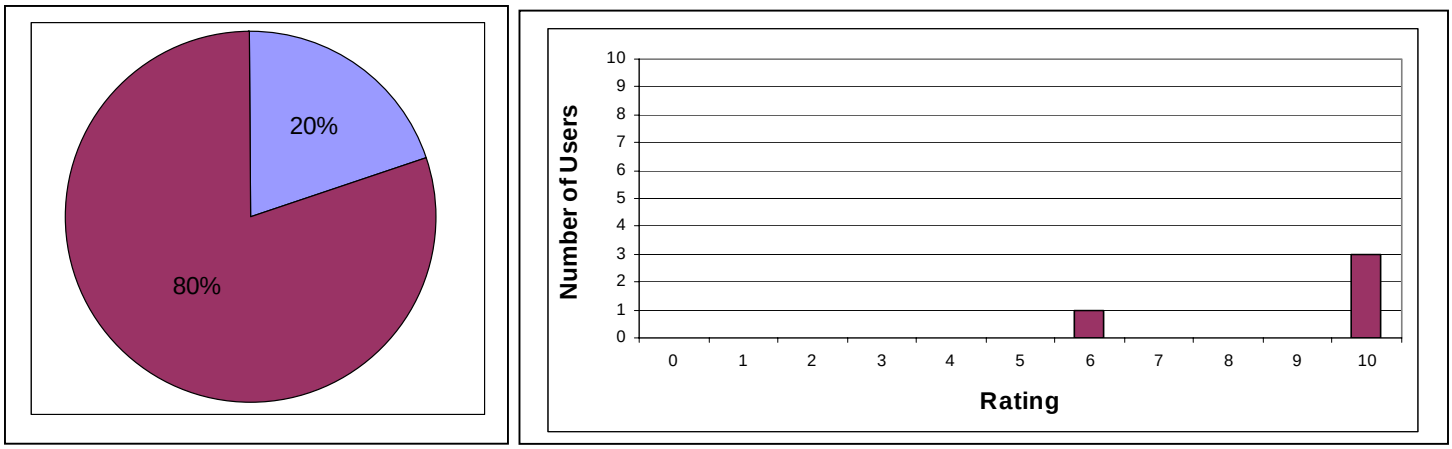
Three of the parents answered this question and their reasons were all distinct from each other.

- *I fell out with other parents in the group (10)*
- *My circumstances changed in my job so I couldn't go as regularly as I had been. My shift-pattern was changed (10)*
- *Too much with the baby and one child.(90*

One because of a personal disagreement with others in the group, one because of their changing work commitments and one because of other commitments which she perhaps felt that Corby Sure Start could have done more about – she says elsewhere in her answers that the group is *"well organised and reliable"* but there need to be *"more facilities for babies, more places in the crèche."* As a result of this she *"couldn't enjoy it and relax."*

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for After School Drop In (Kingswood-244)



High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 75%

- *It's been very useful for me to spend quality time with my children (10)*
- *It's usually quite rowdy but very enjoyable (10)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) – 25%

Only 1 respondent gave a rating in this range and her comments are quoted in full,

"I found out about this service by word-of-mouth and started to go but I stopped because it was too busy. I think that it needs to be changed because there are limited places. Yes, I would recommend it to other people but I've only given a rating of 6 because, when I went, it was too crowded." (6)

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 4	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 4	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 3	8	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 4	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 4	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 4	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *This whole service – it's great for families (10)*
- *Everything (10)*
- *The staff – they're really good (10)*
- *All of it (10)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

One respondent (quoted in the Medium Range Comments above) felt that the *"limited places"* needed to be changed.

All the other respondents (4 out of 5) said that nothing about this service needed to be changed.

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All respondents (5 out of 5) said that they would recommend this service to others.

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *Me and my children liked coming in after school and when they were on holiday (10)*
- *The group was very enjoyable (10)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

All five parents who responded answered this question providing five different sources of information; one had been given a leaflet with news about the group on it; one was using the Kingswood Centre for other things and went along; one had used the service a year before and had returned; one through word-of-mouth; one knew about it by being a Parent Representative

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Only one of the parents answered this question. Her reply to this question and subsequent ones are given in full in the Medium Ratings section on page ??

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Two of the five parents answered this question. One said,

"My child's age – she turned 5 - but I also don't feel as welcome as I did when my child was under 5." (10)

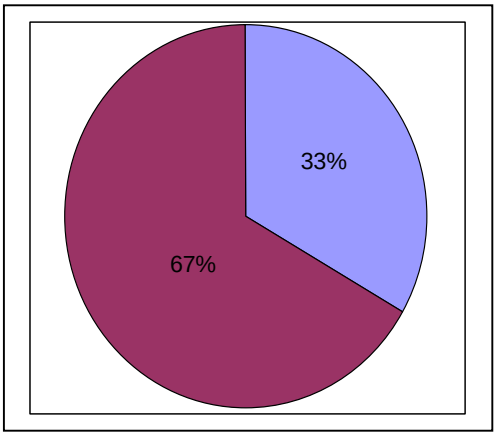
The other said,

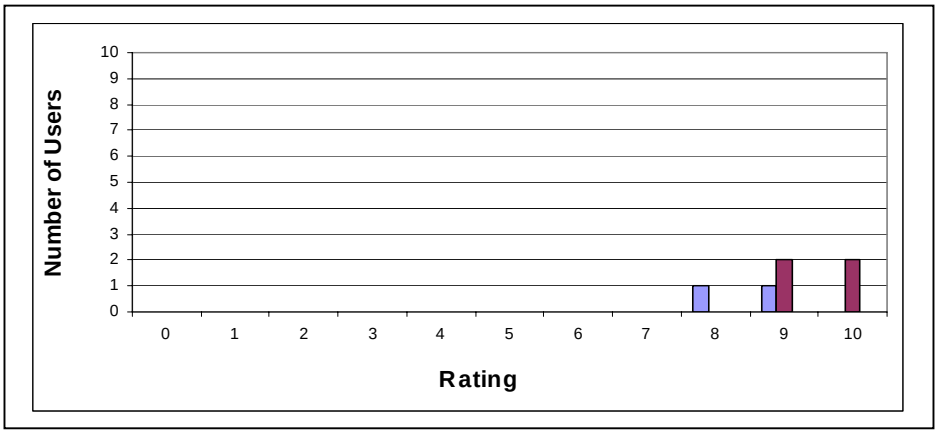
"I used to bring my children and they loved it, then it became too awkward because of the fall-out" (10)

Again, two very different reasons emerge. In one case it is the result of the age-related limitations on access to Sure Start services and the parent's belief that the attitudes of other parents, and perhaps Sure Start workers as well, had changed in line with her daughter's age. In the other case the parent stopped going with her children because of a disagreement with others – it is not clear whether this was with other parent or with Sure Start staff, or a combination of both.

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for Bums Legs & Tums (Kingswood-233)





High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 100%

- *It was a really good laugh and I lost weight! (10)*
- *It's good to mix with other people and get a bit of time for myself. Also knowing my children are being looked after nearby and are safe (10)*
- *It's excellent. I really enjoy the session, it helps with my personal fitness and I have made friends. It's also good for my child (15 months) who uses the crèche because they interact with other children and carers (9)*
- *Sore but enjoyable! (9)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 5	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 4	8 1	7	6	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 5	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 4	8 1	7	6	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 5	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 4	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0 1	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Everything especially the team leader (10)*
- *All of it, especially its reliability. Keep it going (9)*
- *The instructor (9)*
- *The relaxed atmosphere. I was able to take my babies into the class when they were very young so I could see them whilst doing the class (8)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *Have the sessions more times in the week (10)*
- *The venue – I didn't feel happy leaving my car in the area; the car park backed onto the field (8)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All the respondents (6 out of 6) said that they would recommend this service to others.

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *The worker is very good - an excellent teacher (9)*
- *It was a hindrance because I was too sore to look after my children! (9)*
- *When I was a user of this service I really enjoyed it and had lots of fun till I had a fall out with some of the other parents so it was easier for me to stay away (9)*
- *The teacher was really good and it was great value for money (8)*

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

Six parents responded to this question and there were five ways in which they had come to know about the service; two had been told by friends; one already used the Kingswood Centre; one was told by another parent; one had picked up a leaflet at the Pen Green Centre; one was a Parent Representative at the Kingswood Centre.

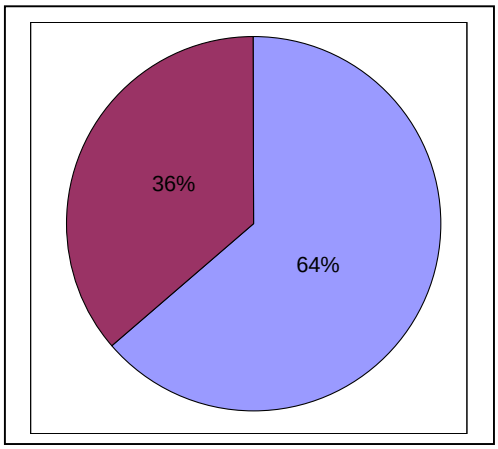
Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

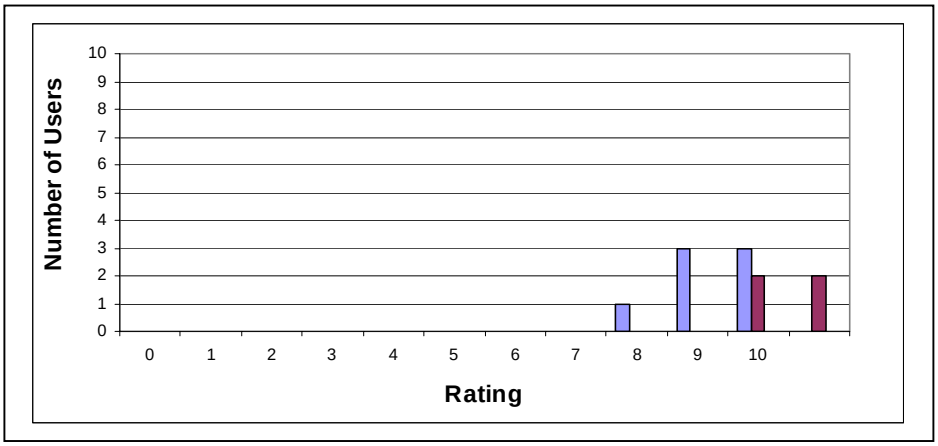
Two parents answered this question; one had stopped using the group after her new baby was born; the other had fallen out with some of the other parents.

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Only one of the parents answered this question and she *"stopped to do voluntary work." (9)*

Use of Service for Cooking Time Kingswood (246)





High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 100%

- *The lady who runs this group is very friendly (10)*
- *Brilliant! Watching my son eating cake mix is so funny - he usually ends up with one cake where everyone else has 5 or 6! (10)*
- *Children get to cook and get messy away from my kitchen at home (10)*
- *It's good spending a few minutes mixing up, to spend time with my children. Good to do something together and I have baked things at home for them as a result (10)*
- *I'm amazed at some of the things the children can make at the age they are at. When you see the expressions on their faces with the end product, they are delighted. (9)*
- *I enjoy the chance to cook with my granddaughter, she enjoys it so much. She says she makes sprinkle cakes which are lovely (9)*
- *My daughter loves cooking at home; this service has been very useful to her (9)*
- *It's great fun – the kids love it (9)*
- *When I used to bring my children I loved watching the children cooking – it was such a laugh (8)*
- *It was fun baking with the little ones (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) - %

No ratings or comments in this range.

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under) - %

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 8	8 3	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 7	8 4	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 8	8 2	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 10	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 9	8 2	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 9	8 2	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *All of it (9)*
- *The friendliness (10)*
- *Everything - the children get really involved (10)*
- *The time, the day and how they do it all (10)*
- *Everything – it interests the kids and if they're interested it's got to be good! (9)*
- *The simplicity of it – the children just want to come in and stir with no complications (8)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *Have some Cooking Time after school (9)*
- *Put it on at different times as I can only use it when the kids are on holiday (10)*
- *Make sure there's always soap and handwash in the toilets (10)*
- *To make it clear that the £1 for Cooking Time is voluntary and that you can make a donation with no pressure (9)*
- *Having some Cooking Time during the afternoon Drop Ins as well (9)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All respondents (11 out of 11) said that they would recommend this service to others.

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *It's really enjoyable for the children and the parents love it too (10)*
- *It's so enjoyable and the children are developing their social skills as they have to sit together to do it (9)*
- *Have more of them (9)*
- *I don't do a variety of cooking at home with the children whereas they do here (8)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

Frequency of Mentions by Parents	How I got to know about Cooking Time Kingswood (246)
4	From the notice board at the Kingswood Centre
3	From involvement with other groups at the Centre
2	From turning up when the group was on and joining in
1	From: a friend; being a Parent Representative

Another service which indicates that there are various sources of information about groups and services. However, clearly in the case of 8 out of the 11 parents (and arguably 10 out of 11) their attendance at the Centre for other things was key to them becoming aware of this service. The old truism that nobody ever looks at notice boards does not apply here.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?
None of the 11 parents interviewed answered this question.

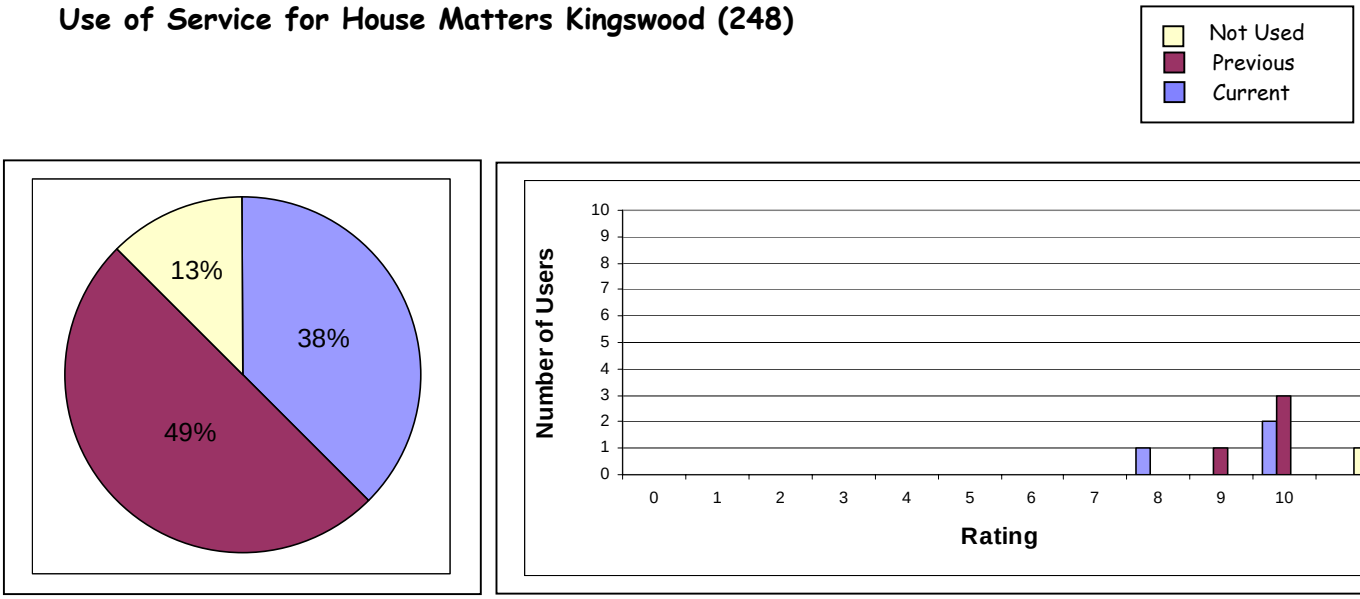
If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Only three of the parents answered this question; one stopped because her child started school; one because she *"fell out with other parents" (no rating given);* one had more complex reasons,

"Because I fell pregnant and my daughter started going to the nursery at Studfall School in the mornings. We use the services more when she is off during the school holidays" (9).

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for House Matters Kingswood (248)



High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 100%

- *A lot of issues got sorted out in a nice way and we got our voices heard. The group was needed so that parents could voice their concerns (10)*
- *It's very good – all the parents get a say in what's happening and what's going to happen (10)*
- *It's good to know what's going on at the Community Houses, such as trips etc. People's concerns, qualms and ideas can be talked about in the group meetings (10)*
- *We talked about the day-to-day running of the Centre and how to cope more with things. We found out what was happening at the Centre (10)*
- *It is helpful to know what is going on in the Centre – when there are trips on throughout the year and different things happening at the Kingswood Centre (9)*
- *I found out how things are run and what goes on here (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 6	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 6	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 7	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 6	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 6	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 5	8 2	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Parents being allowed to have point of view and that their opinions are appreciated (10)*
- *Giving everyone a chance to voice their opinions and listening to the other people's opinions (8)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

All the respondents (8 out of 8) said that nothing about this service needed to be changed.

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All respondents (8out of 8) said that they would recommend this service to others and two of them commented as follows,

- *Yes, but only if they use the Kingswood Centre (10)*
- *I would recommend that people attend the Centre first (10)*

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *The group was run by Parent Representatives which took a lot of pressure off of me as if there were any problems the Parent Reps took it to the staff and we didn't have to worry about it (10)*
- *It was fun at these meetings and not too serious (10)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

Seven of the eight parents who used this service responded to this question; the main way in which they had hard of the group was by going to other groups at the Kingswood Centre, with four parents in this category; two were Parent Representatives and one had been invited to come to the group by another mum who went to it.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Only one parent out of the eight answered this question saying,

"I'm too busy personally at the moment but I hope to return to the House Matters group soon" (no rating given)

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Two parents responded to this question. One stopped going because she fell out with other parents in the group. The other acknowledged the value of the group in her rating (10) and other comments,

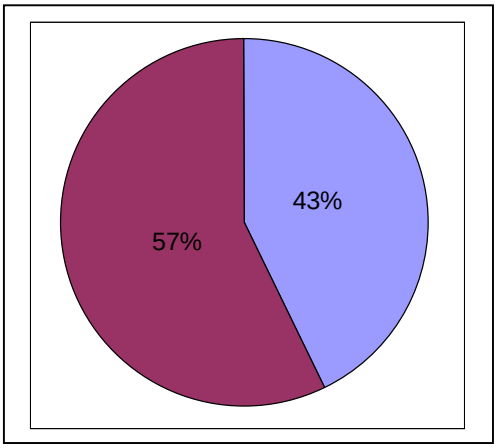
"A lot of issues got sorted out in a nice way and we got our voices heard. The group was needed so that parents could voice their concerns…the group was run by Parent Representatives which took a lot of pressure off of me as if there were any problems the Parent Reps took it to the staff and we didn't have to worry about it"

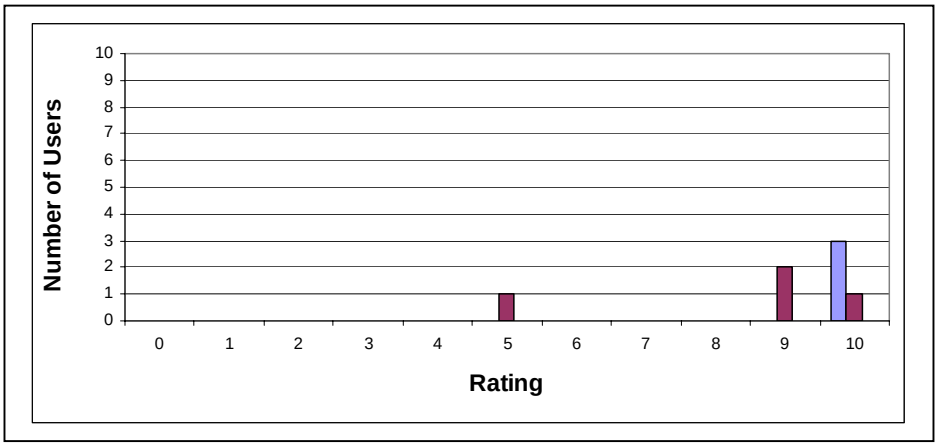
However, she also felt that

"I felt like it didn't matter what I said because my children were older, it catered for 0-4 years."

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for Kingswood Drop In Saturdays (226)





High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 86%

- *My experience of this service is different to my normal week. You get to see different staff and do different activities; it's really nice to have a change (10)*
- *Having nowhere to go on a Saturday, then coming here with my children and getting help is fantastic - It's a day out. It costs nothing and it's great fun for me and my children. (10)*
- *Its good to meet more people and get to talk to different people, both parents and workers (9)*
- *They do Alchemy Days - when all the services and agencies get together and do a day of activities etc. It's really good that the older ones get a chance to do something as well as the under 5s (10)*
- *I was worried about going; I thought it might be cliquey, but found out it wasn't. Even my husband thought it was friendly and family based (9)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) - 14%

Only one respondent gave a rating in this range and her comments are quoted in full;

- *I found out about the Saturday Drop In from a leaflet that I was given. I stopped using it as I felt very uncomfortable. All people at the session should be made to feel welcome. I think they should keep the sessions going, but no, I wouldn't recommend it. It is great for the people of Kingswood but not for me (5)*

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 3	8 2	7	6	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 3	8 2	7	6	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 3	8 2	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 3	8 2	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 3	8 2	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 3	8 2	7	6	5	4	3	2	1 1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *A big range of activities so that children can do different things (9)*
- *Still keep on doing it, especially the Alchemy Days, as you get to know what else is available for your children in Corby (10)*
- *The friendliness (9)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

6 out of the 7 respondents said that nothing should be changed. The exception (quoted above in the Medium Ratings Comments) felt that'

"All people at the session should be made to feel welcome." (5)

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

6 out of the 7 respondents said they would recommend this service to others (the exception is quoted above in the Medium Ratings Comments). Comments included

- *Yes – a great day (10)*
- *A great service (10)*
- *Yes, all childminders I know pass on information on the groups (9)*
- *Most definitely (9)*

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *There is nowhere to go on a Saturday other than up town so coming here is great - I can be with my children and it doesn't cost anything (10)*
- *It would so good if the centre was open on a Saturday and Sunday (10)*
- *As I am a childminder I go to weekday groups with the other children I care for, so it's nice for me to have something on a Saturday for just my family and me (9)*
- *Brilliant days. I started a course at Beanfield Community Centre on the strength of one of the Alchemy Days, my children were creched and everything (10)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

Six of the seven parents who used this service responded to this question with various ways that they had heard about the service. Two were Parent Representatives and knew about the event in this way; one had seen it advertised on the Kingswood Centre notice board; one had been given a leaflet; two had found out about it while attending another group.

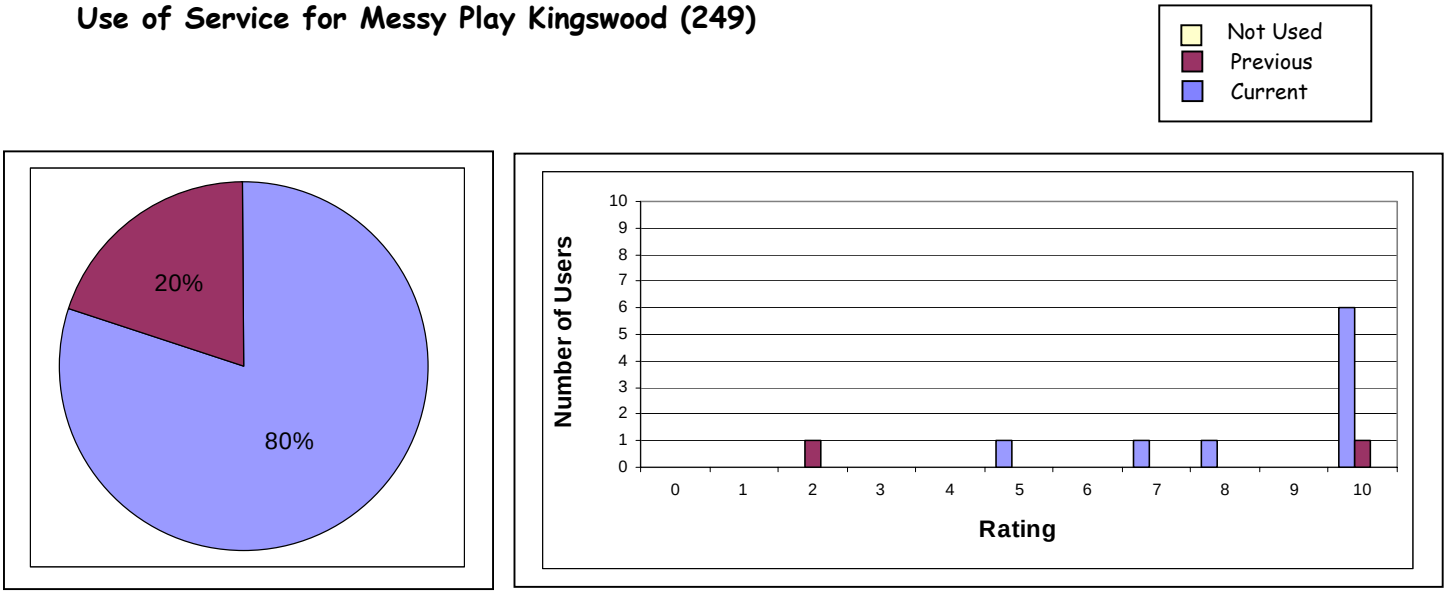
Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Only one parent answered this question and she said she stopped using it because she"felt very uncomfortable." (This parent's comments are given in full in the Medium Range Comments on page 43)

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

The comments made in response to this question reflected the nature of the service which takes place once a month – i.e. that it is a periodic event which occurs on *"occasional/ specific days." (10)* and are 'Fun Days' which whole families attend and are not aimed specifically at the under-5s.

Use of Service for Messy Play Kingswood (249)



High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 73%

- *It was good to be able to do these things as my children would not be allowed to do them at home because it was really messy (10)*
- *It's good that my son has the same children to play with and he loves playing with the playdough and outside in the sand (10)*
- *Letting the children get messy is good as there is more room to do it here than at home and there is a wider range of messy play (10)*
- *It's an excellent service and I'm able to join in with my children. As well as messy play there is a variety of other things to do – outdoor activities are also available and the children enjoy this too (10)*
- *Just fantastic, really, really fantastic (10)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) - 18%

Two of the respondents gave ratings in this range and their comments are quoted at length as they were qualitatively very different from those in the High Ratings range.

"I found out about the group from the notice-board. My granddaughter didn't like it, she didn't like being messed up. They should keep the different types of materials and substances used. What would I change? Nothing. I'd recommend it to others as they might like it but not everyone likes it – my granddaughter didn't like it at all" (7)

"I found out about the group from a leaflet and went along to it but I never felt really welcome. I think that the group and the Centre should be kept but it should be geared to the whole of the community not just the people of Kingswood. No, I wouldn't recommend it, I didn't really find it very enjoyable." (5)

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under) - 9%

One of the respondents gave this service a rating of only 2 and her comments are given in full in order that her story can be read.

"I went to this group because I was already using the Centre and then I stopped going - it wasn't what I thought it would be – there wasn't much messy play. What would I keep? Nothing. It wasn't in the right room, it should be in another room, a big room so that the kids can make a mess, they need more messy equipment. I was not impressed, it wasn't what I expected." (2)

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 5	8 1	7	6	5	4 3	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 6	8	7	6	5	4 2	3 1	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 7	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 6	8	7	6	5 1	4 1	3	2	1	0 1	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 7	8	7 1	6	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 6	8	7	6	5	4	3 1	2	1	0 1	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Watching your children playing and getting messy – I love it (10)*
- *The wide range of activities and giving children different experiences – it's not just paint and water but the freedom to so what they want (10)*
- *Everything should be kept, the service is excellent (10)*
- *The different types of materials and substances they use (7)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

5 of the respondents said that nothing about this service needed to be changed. Others commented,

- *Have some different toys for a change (10)*
- *There should be sessions just for adults! (10)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

6 of the 8 respondents who answered this question said they would recommend the service to others. The two exceptions were those whose comments were given in the Medium and Low Ratings sections above and who rated this service 5 and 2 respectively.

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *Keep it going! (10)*
- *I don't think that this group is advertised well enough. I only got to know about it because I became ill with depression and was supported by Home Start and they gave me a booklet which made me aware of all the available services (10)*
- *They do activities that I wouldn't do at home – I mean, who would do jelly and custard on their floor? (10)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

Nine of the eleven parents who used this service commented in response to this question indicating several ways in which they found out about the group.

Frequency of Mentions by Parents	How I got to know about Messy Play Kingswood (249)
3	From the notice board in the Kingswood Centre
2	From: being given a leaflet; going to other groups
1	From: a family member; a Parent Representative; the Home Start booklet

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

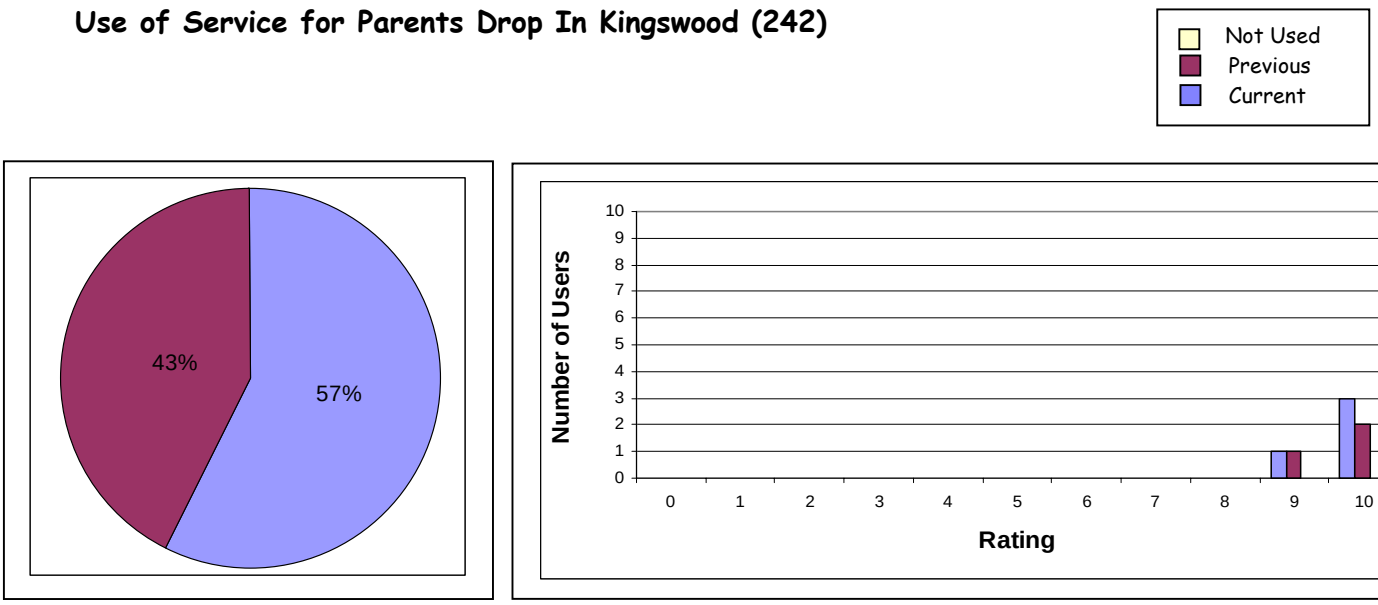
Three of the parents responded to this question and their reasons reflected their different perspectives. One *"never felt really welcome";* one found that the session was not what she expected; one brought a child who did not like to be in a mess. Their comments are quoted at length in the Medium and Low Range Comments boxes on page 46

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Only one parent commented in response to this question; she stopped using the service because her child went to school.

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for Parents Drop In Kingswood (242)



High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 100%

- *It's nice to have some time for a quiet chat with the kids. Even if its only 10 minutes (10)*
- *The workers were very friendly. They took the baby for me to give me more time to play with my other child (10)*
- *Because we like it, lots of children come, and they play with my grandson. The lady who runs it is very nice – she takes a real interest in the children and plays with them (10)*
- *It's helped me get out, helped me interact with other adults. Also my children play with other children and the workers spend time with my children (10)*
- *I go to it after school time once a week. I'm a childminder and take several children with me as well as my own. The workers are very accommodating, they have different age groups, there's always lots to do. All the children are catered for and we are always welcome and never turned away (9)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 6	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 6	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 5	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 6	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 6	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 6	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Helping with the younger children so you can play with the older children (10)*
- *Keep the nice people. The timing is good (10)*
- *The workers are flexible about ages, so if I turn up with children aged 5 or 6 they understand. Pen Green is very strict on ages especially in school holidays. Being a childminder, the holidays are my busiest time so it's a really helpful service for me (9)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *It needs a bigger area for playing (10)*

All the other respondents (6 out of 6) said that nothing about this service needed to be changed.

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All respondents (7out of 7) said that they would recommend this service to others.

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service?

- *Excellent and well run. The children enjoy it so much you can't get them out of it! (10)*
- *Leaflets about this group should be put into hospital packs and health visitors should tell mums earlier when they do the checks on the babies and children (10)*
- *My children were really happy to come and wee all had a laugh (9)*
- *It was good at first until my child turned five so I couldn't continue to use it - any problems I have with this service has nothing to do with the staff and parents, it's the government! (10)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

All seven of the parents who used this service answered this question and reflected six different ways of knowing about this group. Two had found out through attending other groups at the centre. One had been accompanied to the group by her Family Visitor and each of the other individuals had found out from leaflets, a friend, a family member and a Parent Representative respectively.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

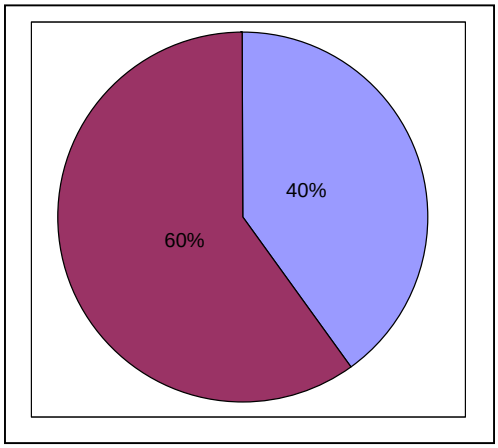
None of the parents answered this question.

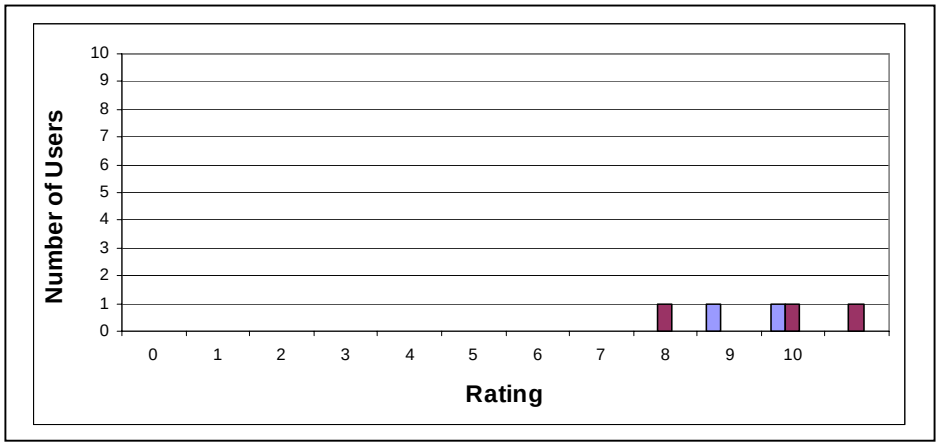
If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Three of the parents responded to this question. One's child had reached school age; one stopped going for a few months due to having another baby; one fell out with some of the other parents.

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for Tots Exercise Kingswood (235)





High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 100%

- *I am very pleased with it because the children got a lot out of it (10)*
- *My children really enjoyed it (10)*
- *It brought my grandchild out of herself, she didn't cling on as much and it gave her more confidence (9)*
- *It's great dancing with children, and all the mums getting involved as well. My son says that every time he goes to sleep he thinks about that, he loved it. There's free juice and biscuits for kids. My son was very shy but developed confidence as it went on (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8 3	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8 3	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 1	8 4	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8 3	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 3	8 2	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 3	8 2	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Fun and lively approach the leader brings to it (10)*
- *The music – it's really good (9)*
- *The leader's enthusiasm. And she never forced children or parents to do anything. Plus you can go to Drop In afterwards (8)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *Perhaps put it on at a different time to Drop In (10)*
- *Run the group on more days (9)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All respondents (6 out of 6) said that they would recommend this service to others. One commented that she,

- *"did get a few of my friends to go." (8)*

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *It's run very well. Juice and biscuits are provided for the children (10)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

All six of the parents who used this service responded to this question. Two had been informed by family members; one by a friend; one by a Sure Start worker; one via a leaflet; one saw a notice on the Centre notice board

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Two parents answered this question and both their answers relate to the timing of the group. One said it was on the *"wrong day" (9)* (presumably due to her other commitments) the other said

"The time was not right as my child was at the nursery." (10)

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Two parents responded to this question showing that they stopped using the group for very different reasons. One said,

"I started work. It was an excellent group." (8)

The other explained,

"I moved location and got out of the habit of going. I did try to go but my children didn't want to leave Drop In and Pen Green." (no overall rating given)

Other Groups and Services run at the Kingswood Neighbourhood Centre

Ratings, Getting Started, Other Comments and PADS (by Group or Service)

Be Good to Yourselves (Kingswood-190)

- This service had 4 parent responses; 2 gave a rating of 10, 1 of 7 and the fourth gave no overall rating

- One knew of the service by word of mouth, one by using other groups at the centre and the third used the equivalent group at Wick Close and *"decided to transfer to Kingswood as there's more space and there was a bigger group – it's better to do it all together."*

- Comments were positive;

  "My child was at the crèche, I knew they were safe and that relaxed me." (10)

  "They let us choose what we'd like to do…the crèche facilities are really good. My child is very happy there while I attend the group – my mind is at rest as to where she is, next door." (10)

  "I was part of a big group and was making friends…it had a friendly atmosphere." (10)

  "I got some well-needed space and relaxation." (7)

- All three parents said that they would recommend this service to others

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

- There were 2 parent responses; both of them gave a rating of 10
- One was told about this service by another parent, the other used the Centre and heard about it there
- Comments were positive;

  "I liked it – it helped me to keep fit again. The instructor was really good. I stopped going because I had a fall-out with some of the parents, but I'd like to go again as I enjoyed it a lot" (10)

  "Really enjoyed it – got me fit, then I had to stop going because I got a knee injury." (10)

- Both parents said that they would recommend this service to others.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

- There were 2 parent responses; 1 gave a rating of 10, the other gave 8
- 1 found out about the service as her child was already at the nursery and the other was told about it by a worker at the Exeter Centre Drop In
- Comments were positive

  "A worker at the Exeter Centre informed me about this, and it was in the booklet along with stuff about Aerobics. The worker accompanied me to Kingswood to look around, and see if I was happy, help me to meet the others etc. I loved it – I knew my child was being looked after and cared for close by while I did my aerobics. The fact that it was all in the same centre, with the nursery and aerobics next to each other, was a clincher. If it had been any further away I wouldn't have done it. It was a really friendly place – I was a bit nervous about going – but the other people in the group were very welcoming. Having sessions at different times would be more flexible – I would have continued to go if this was available. I started working and my partner has gone back to college. My mum isn't too well and need a lot of help so real life got in the way and didn't allow me the time to go"(8)

  "It was good for my child because when she went to nursery she was enjoying the dinner table. It helped me and my child." (10)

- One parent said she would *"Absolutely"* recommend this service to others, the other said *"I can't recommend this service as the school deals with it." (8)*

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

- *There were two parent responses; both gave ratings of 10*
- *One had used the group at Wick Close and went to Kingswood to try it out, the other already use the Kingswood Centre*
- *Comments were positive;*

  "Very good, something that all women should use every week. There is only one group per week; it would be nice to have a group at the end of the week as well. I really liked the confidentiality of the group" (10)

  "The crèche is really good. My child is well looked after while I go to the group. It's very helpful knowing she is just next door" (10)

- Both parents said that they would recommend this service to others.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

- There were four parent responses; three gave a rating of 10, the fourth did not give an overall rating

- One found out about the service through a Parent Representative, one from other parents and the third by using the Centre regularly

- Comments were positive about the service but parents were disappointed that it came to an end

  "I'm glad that I was introduced to Badminton as everyone there all had a laugh. I used this service fortnightly then it stopped. When a certain Parent Rep was involved in Badminton it was great as she got everyone playing. It made me fit and was great fun, and something to look forward to. Unfortunately, I fell out with some of the other parents. I liked it but no longer runs – I had a lot of fun; I wished it was still running." (10)

  "Other parents told me about it. They said it was good, a really good laugh. It was good to mix with other parents without the children around. But the numbers dropped and the sessions were cancelled and stopped. We would like it back. Bring it back!" (10)

  "I started using this service and found out about badminton. It was wonderful. The time was good for me and my child was safe in the crèche. The group stopped due to lack of demand. If there were enough people it would be nice to see it back. I really enjoyed it." (10)

- Three of the four parents said that they would recommend this service, one pointing out that she *"would if it was still running."*

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 3	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 3	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 3	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 3	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 3	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 3	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

Baby Massage (Kingswood-245)

- *There were three parent responses; one gave a rating of 10 and two gave a rating of 9*
- *In all three cases parents had found out about the service from their Health Visitor*
- *Comments were positive;*

  "I went for about 3 or 4 months. It was brilliant, really good - nothing I could fault. The ladies that ran it were brilliant. We all had a cup of tea afterwards, it was great." (10)

  "The ladies who run it make the atmosphere good - nice and welcoming, especially for me as a first time mum. It was good for me to get out of the house and be interacting with other mums and sharing my problems." (9)

  "I think it's very good."(9)

- All three parents said that they would recommend this service to others, one saying *"Yes, definitely" and another saying "I have done!"*

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8 1	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8 1	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

After School Games Club (Kingswood-281)

- *There were three parent responses; one gave a rating of 10, one gave a rating of 9 and the third did not give any overall rating*
- *One had been told about the service by her aunt, the other by a Sure Start worker*
- *Comments were positive, with some qualification about the service ending;*

  "My two children went and loved it and when my third child was old enough she went as well. It's a pity this service stopped as children enjoyed it. My kids had a great time." (9)

- Only one parent commented to say that she would recommend this service to others
- When asked the reason as to why she stopped using this service one parent replied, *"It finished"* and asked what should be kept, her comment was *"It's gone!" (10)*

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

- *There were two parent responses; both gave ratings of 10*
- *Both parents found out about the services from the group leader at Kingswood*
- *Comments were positive;*

  "It really boosted my self esteem. The leader has made me realise my worth as a human being. I've got to go on trips that I wouldn't have been able to. It's a brilliant service. The leader is just wonderful! The staff are brilliant with the children and it is brilliant for parent's self esteem." (10)

  "I was new to the area and it put me in touch with people of my own age in Corby. I've made some friends through this. Without this service being available I would still be at home with my children and out of touch with other adults. I really like the way it is so informal. It gives you a break from your children so you're able to chat to others. Without this I'd still be stuck at home not knowing anybody. It's so nice to have a break from the children - to relax and enjoy some adult company." (10)

- Both parents said that they would recommend this service to others, one saying *"Yes. I have done to lots of people" (10)*

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 1	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 1	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

Groups and Services run at the Wick Close Community House

Groups and services receiving the 'Own Pages' treatment are;

- 0-4 Years Drop In (Wick Close-39)
- Baby Massage 3 (Wick Close-14)
- Messy Play 3 (Wick Close-157)

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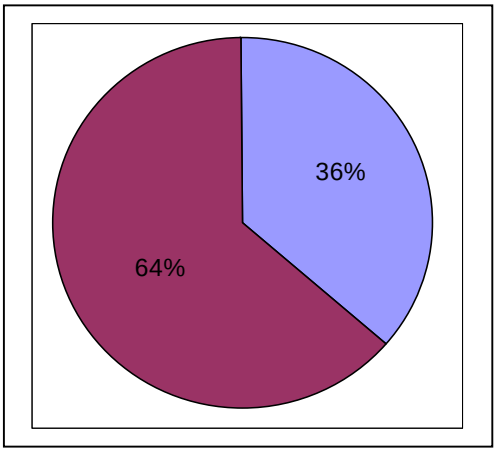
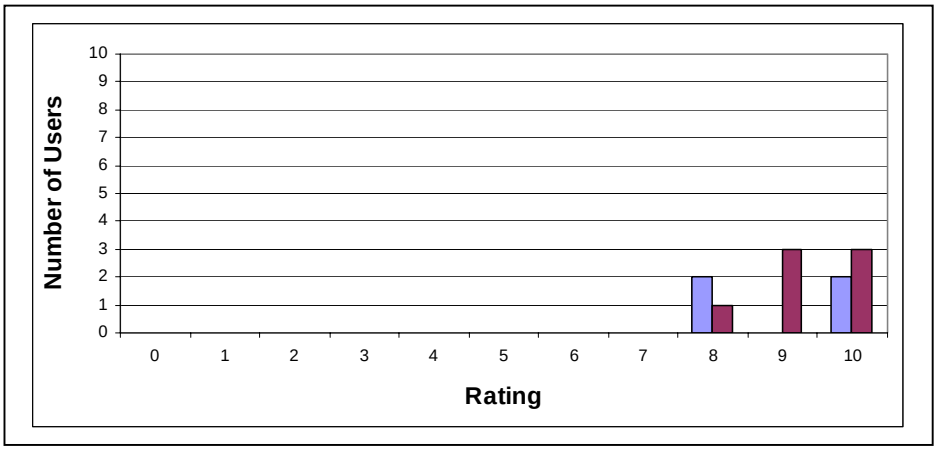
Use of Service for 0-4 Years Drop In 1 (Wick Close-39)





High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 100%

- *The leader is brilliant with the children and the other crèche workers. Can really get down on their level. Kids get good opportunities to do things, they're not just crèched. (10)*
- *You can talk about problems - the leader can sense if there's something wrong and will have a supportive chat with you. For example, after my child's birth she spotted that I needed a hand and helped me out (10)*
- *Very good. Caters for all different ages. Something for all ages, they've got it sussed brilliantly (8)*
- *Very good and friendly. It wasn't cliquey because the staff made sure they introduced you and joined you in conversation (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 5	8 3	7 2	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 5	8 4	7	6 2	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 7	8 2	7 2	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 8	8 2	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 8	8 2	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 6	8 2	7 1	6 1	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Where they take the kids for a couple of hours – it gave my little girl more confidence knowing I was coming back (10)*
- *Well organised (10)*
- *The way it is now is fantastic. I don't think it could be better. The staff are very friendly (8)*
- *All fine - we really enjoyed it. The staff are very informal and friendly made you feel welcome (8)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *It should be bigger (10)*
- *There's nothing for the parent but lots for the kids. We need counselling for women, support for postnatal depression (10)*
- *There should be more for the parents. A counselling service, someone just to talk to (9)*
- *Need to provide seating for baby in high chair, low chair is not safe (8)*
- *It didn't always start on time and sometimes not many turned up (8)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

10 out of the 11 respondents said they would recommend this service.
The exception said "*I wouldn't recommend it because they interfere too much*" She had attended the group and then stopped because it changed and there was *"too much interfering"* She felt that *"They brought the community together but it's too much now"* She suggested that the service should *"please go back to the way it was before, not so regimented"* However, on a more positive note she felt that it *"gave the children something to do"* and *"gave me more confidence"*

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service?

- *Happy the way things were managed. The staff played with the kids. Hope it continues for a long time for the future generations (10)*
- *We need more resources in this area. Some people have no transport and are left isolated in their homes (9)*
- *It's brilliant – the staff are brilliant. They're not bolshy at Wick, they're more gentle, more caring. We laugh and joke a lot more (10)*
- *Fine, don't change it, it is good as it is (8)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

Nine of the eleven parents who used his group answered this question. Four knew of the service because they used the Wick Close Community House and its other groups. Of the remaining five: one had been told about it by a friend; one by their Health Visitor; one via the Home Start service; one had seen it in the Pen Green booklet; one had been told about it by her next-door-neighbour shortly after she moved in to her new home.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Three parents answered this question giving different reasons, one straightforward, the other two more complex. In the first case the parent had stopped going because her son had gone to school. However, one parent said

"I didn't feel like I fitted in." (10)

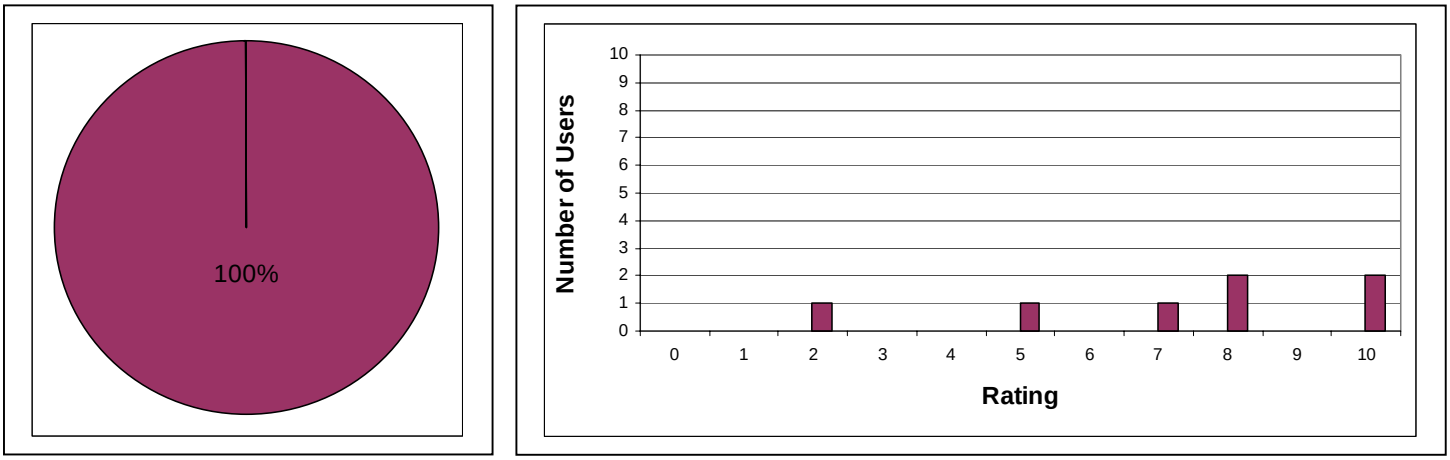
the other that

"It has changed, the staff are too interfering and the house is too small."

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Two parents responded to this question, again with different reasons for not continuing with the group. One said that she stopped going *"because the group finished." (9).* This is puzzling as the service ran on a daily basis and has never 'finished'. The other parent said that she *"didn't feel comfortable. There's not enough for all the family." (9)*

Use of Service for Baby Massage 3 (Wick Close-14)



High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 57%

- *Meeting other parents was great, and bonding with my baby was excellent. My child interacted with the other children. It got me back out and involved with others (10)*
- *Lovely bonding with my baby and singing songs to my baby - it was really relaxing. I liked the idea of free massage oil. I really benefited from whole experience (10)*
- *It was great. The whole service is fantastic. I felt relaxed with my baby and it was nice to meet other mothers (10)*
- *It was good to have close contact with my baby. It was good to bond and relax (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) - 29%

- *I went back to work but it was great to have something to do with my baby as it's not "activity based", most groups are. It also gets you there early (7)*

- *I was the only person using the service. I didn't like the house – it's small and claustrophobic. I didn't feel comfortable. I wanted interaction with other mums and babies. Pen Green was more spacious (5)*

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under) - 14%

This interviewee's comments have been quoted at length because she gave the service a particularly low rating of 2 out of 10 – she says,

"It was fantastic at one time but then there was too much interfering and lots of changes in staffing. They spent more time having meetings. It needs to go back to the way it was. It's like going to the social! The staff are trying too hard to please. You feel as though you've been judged"

She said she wouldn't recommend the service…"*because you don't want to build up people's hope (the service) has to change, (so that) people (are) relaxed with people"*

She added that she had *"recommended it to one young woman, then she got her children took off her".*

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8 1	7 2	6 1	5	4	3	2 1	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 3	8	7 3	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 3	8 2	7 2	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 3	8 1	7 1	6 1	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 5	8	7 2	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 4	8 1	7 1	6	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *It was split into two groups. One group for smaller babies and another for slightly older ones. This is a good way to run the group (10)*
- *I like the idea of father baby massage. Service should be kept going, it is an important service for baby and mother to bond (8)*
- *It is the only thing available for babies so it would be very disappointing if it ceased (7)*
- *Reliability for mothers in the area. Good quality staff (5)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *More space. Have an open day or advertise so that more people use it (5)*
- *It is a small window time-wise and sometimes we couldn't get there as the baby fell asleep and we would be late, maybe it could be longer or have a drop-in format so it is not such a rigid time (7)*
- *Times to suit parents with other children (8)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

5 of the 7 respondents said they would recommend the service;

- *Yes, to anyone who has a baby (8)*
- *Yes. A good social interaction with others. You know the group is always available (8)*
- *Definitely ((7)*

2 said that they would not recommend the service;

- *No, not based on my own experiences (5)*
- *No because you don't want to build up people's hopes (2)*

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service?

- *The class is brilliant, it would be nice to have other things for babies and great if they did it for mums and dads at weekends; on Saturdays it is aimed at just dads, which makes me well jealous! (5)*
- *It got me out, meeting other people. I'd have been really depressed if I'd had to stay in the house all day, I'd have been lonely and alone. I became a mother late in life, I was nearly 40 and I was so used to working When I was at home alone with my baby I found it very difficult and I took a while to adapt to it. Without all the help from Sure Start I don't know what I would have done (10)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

All seven of the parents who used this service answered this question. Two had found out about it through word of mouth and of the other five parents: one had used the service at the Pen Green Centre; one had been told about it by her Health Visitor; one by her Family Visitor; one by a friend; one had bee given a leaflet at the Pen Green Centre.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Three parents responded to this question. For one the reason was straightforward and she felt positive about what she had experienced,

"I went back to work but it was great to have something to do with my baby as it's not "activity based", most groups are. It also gets you there early" (7)

The other two parents were not as happy with what they had experienced

"I was the only person using the service. I didn't like the house – it's small and claustrophobic. I didn't feel comfortable. I wanted interaction with other mums and babies. Pen Green was more spacious" (5)

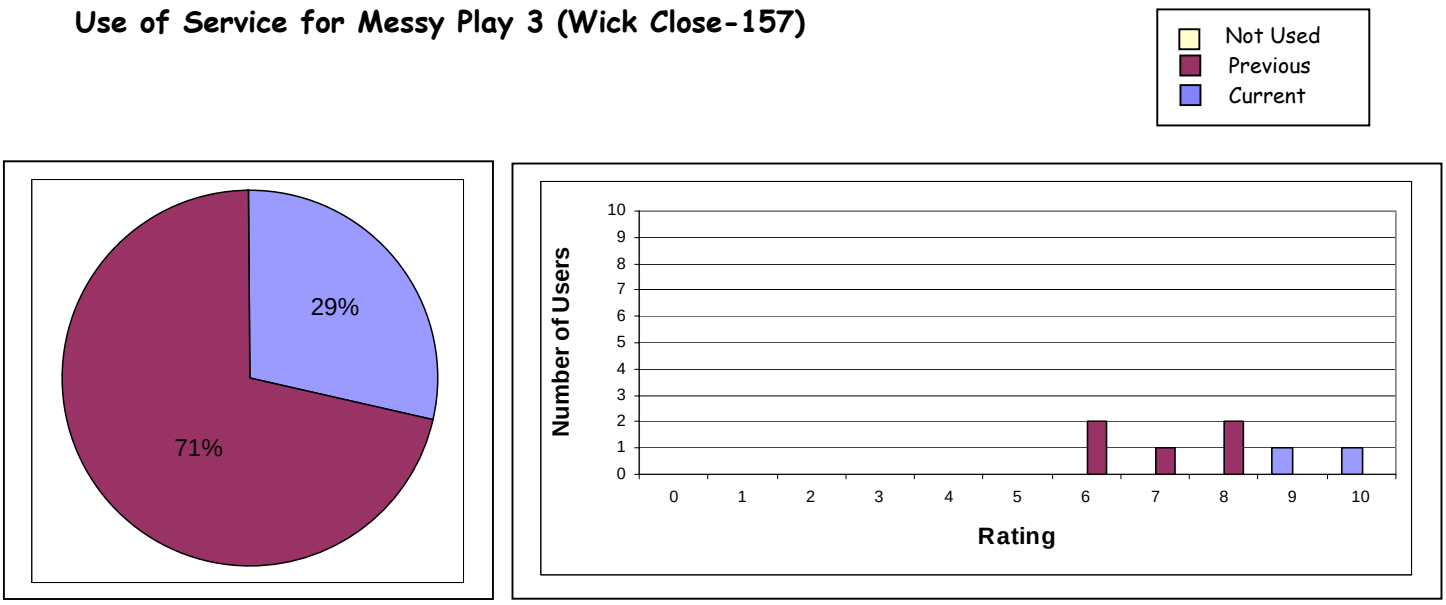
"It was fantastic at one time but then there was too much interfering and lots of changes in staffing. They spent more time having meetings.(2)

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Four parents responded to this question. Two stopped using the group when their babies became too old to attend; one stopped because the time of the group clashed with other family commitments; one stopped because her working hours changed.

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for Messy Play 3 (Wick Close-157)



High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 57%

- *Children get all messy - that's the idea so I don't say 'Don't do that!' It doesn't matter how messy they get and it's not in my house! (10)*
- *Good. Good activities. My son really enjoyed it and the activities are good not boring. The workers were directing them and doing stuff with them (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) - 43%

- *Don't feel comfortable with the staff (7)*
- *My child really enjoyed it (7)*
- *Not accommodating for older children. There are two different age groups 0-2 and 2-4 years, at the same time, in different areas. I don't think the group is appropriate for different age groups in the family (6)*

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 3	8 3	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8 2	7 1	6 1	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 4	8 1	7	6 2	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 3	8	7 1	6 2	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 3	8 3	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8 1	7	6	5 4	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Didn't have to pay for snacks and cups of tea (9)*
- *Wide variety of activities always something different (8)*
- *The messy play - the kids loved it (7)*
- *The timing of the group. The activities are fun (6)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *Sometimes it got a bit hectic as there's not enough room if there's more than 5 or 6 children (8)*
- *The activities are quite young (6)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All 5 respondents said that they would recommend this service to others.

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *Thought it was really good (9)*
- *The staff made an effort and are very enthusiastic. They organised them, got aprons on them and washed them (8)*
- *The information about the services should be sent around the houses so people know what's on (7)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

Seven parents answered this question. Four knew of the service as they were regular visitors to Wick Close; two had been told about it at other groups they attended; one by word-of-mouth.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Two parents responded to this question. One said she "didn't feel comfortable with the staff." (7). The other parent said that the service was ,

"Not accommodating for older children. There are two different age groups 0-2 and 2-4 years, at the same time, in different areas. I don't think the group is appropriate for different age groups in the family" (6)

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

None of the seven parents who used this group responded to this question.

Other Groups and Services run at the Wick Close Community House

Ratings, Getting Started, Other Comments

Parents Drop In – Wick Close (43)

- This service had four parent responses; two gave a rating of 8, the other two did not give an overall rating
- two said they had been involved with the group from its inception
- two commented that the service had deteriorated;

  "It was good at first…it has changed. Not much to do" (no rating given)

  "It's not as good as it was at the beginning…the staff shouldn't interfere too much…I hope it continues to help and support other families in the area" (8)

- Only one of the four parents responded to being asked if they would recommend this service to others, she said that she would

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 1	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 1	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 1	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 1	8 2	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 1	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

Parents and Carer's Time (Wick Close-80)

- This service had three parent responses; two gave a rating of 10, the third gave 6
- One said she had found out about the service from a respite carer and 1 knew about it through word of mouth
- Comments were positive;

  "This is a really good service for parents…keep it going as long as the money allows." (10)

  "The workers have been brilliant, they have made the kids feel special. I don't know how I'm going to manage on a Friday without it." (10)

- All three parents said that they would recommend this service to others, one commenting *"Yes. If I've been asked I've encouraged them to use it" (10)*

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

House Matters (Wick Close-119)

- This service had three parent responses; two gave a rating of 10, one gave 5
- One was involved with the group as she was a Parent Representative, one knew of it via using Wick Close Community House and the other *"just turned up."*
- Comments were positive;

  "It's good to know what is going on…people's concerns and ideas can be talked about" (10)

  "The Parent Reps are brilliant, they really make a difference and are passionate about what they do…should integrate Pen Green, Kingswood and Wick together…staff at Pen Green don't know what Parent Reps do." (10)

- All three parents said that they would recommend this service to others

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 2	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 2	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

After School Time (Wick Close-116)

- This service had one parent response who gave an overall rating of 9
- She got to know about the service via someone *"came to my door and told us about this group for my children between 5 and 8 years."*
- She commented;

  "...it was brilliant, my kids got bored after school and they got to make a lot of things." "Everything" should be kept and her only concern was that *"sometimes the House would shut at short notice due to low levels of staff."* She said she would be *"very disappointed if it closed."*

- Asked if she would recommend this service to others she replied, *"Yes, definitely. We do"*

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

Looking Good Feeling Better (Wick Close-182)

- This service had 1 parent response who did not give any overall rating
- She got to know about the service by going to other groups at Wick Close
- She made no other comments

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

Drop In Surgery (Wick Close-198)

- There were three parent responses; one gave a rating of 10, one gave 8 and the third gave 6

- Two got to know about the service from workers at Wick Close, the other was told about it by a friend

- Comments were positive;

  "A fantastic service - it put my mind at rest about the worries I was having about one of my children…I've recommended it to other mums…my only criticism is there should be more sessions." (10)

  "I went to him just for advice, on the strength of a worker at Wick suggesting it. He told me that I should see a speech therapist about my child. I saw him once and then made an appointment to see the speech therapist. It's a good idea that he is there as a first point of contact. He was a bit out of his field, he gave me the wrong advice…he has a really nice manner about him It could be good for a lot of people who have a worry they can go along informally, if they are not sure." (8)

  "It is a really good thing for parents – they could just drop in on a Wednesday; it would be better if it could be opened on other days too." (6)

- All three parents said that they would recommend this service to others

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 1	8 1	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 1	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2 1	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 1	8 1	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 1	8	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 1	8 1	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 1	8	7	6	5	4	3 1	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

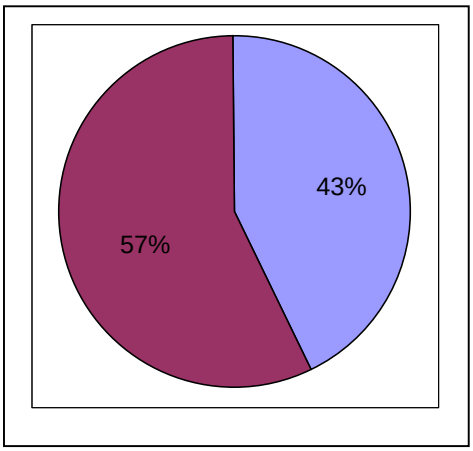
Other Groups and Services run at 'Other Locations'

Ratings, Getting Started, Other Comments

Groups and services receiving the 'Own Pages' treatment are

- Bookstart-Story Time- Rhymetime (17)
- Exeter Drop In (165)
- Growing Together 3 (Stuart Road 142)

Use of Service for Bookstart/Story Time/Rhymetime (17)



High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 83%

- *I enjoyed this time with my child as I helped her to read quicker (10)*
- *It's brilliant, really good. Social skills and sharing for the children. The people who run it are great and it's great for me too (10)*
- *Nice and friendly group and it lets the children have access to books (9)*
- *I'm very happy with it, how it is run and it's nice to have a cuppa together. It's very friendly and the children love it. It gives the children a chance to have a good run around (8)*
- *It's great if you have a well behaved child but mine runs around. The lady who runs it is great, really mad and the children have nice snacks. They really like it and it is better now they have put boards up to stop them running around the library (8)*
- *Very good activities and my kids really enjoyed it. One really good session was one when an author was there and they had puppets. My son really enjoyed it and it was interesting for him (8)*
- *My granddaughter has now joined the library and we use it frequently (8)*
- *It is a good group. The first time I went with my friend I was amazed at the variety of toys (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) - 17%

- *Good. Useful for children learning to read and a good introduction to books (7)*
- *More weekend story telling - this would be nice for kids and parents at weekends (7)*

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 5	8 5	7 1	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 4	8 6	7 1	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 5	8 3	7 2	6 1	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 4	8 4	7 4	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 5	8 4	7 1	6 2	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 4	8 4	7 2	6 2	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Morning - timing just right (10)*
- *I think reading to the children holds their attention because of the way the leader reads. It's good for their social skills as well as they're sitting down and listening (9)*
- *The leader! (9)*
- *Great for children to have a chance to play with toys they don't have at home (8)*
- *Getting visitors and authors made it interesting (8)*
- *Getting children involved by singing "Hello, how are you?" and taking things out of a bag, like a spider and then singing a song about that. It's a really nice little group. You couldn't possibly pick a better person to run it.*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *Have it more regularly at the Kingswood Centre (9)*
- *Nightmare to get to Corby library with children. Can be scary if you're on your own and the lifts are not very good (8)*
- *It would be good to have more time slots (7)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All 12 respondents who answered this question said that they would recommend the service.

- *Yes, definitely (9)*
- *Yes, children love books (7)*

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service?

- *The worker was really good, very calming and the best person to do it (10)*
- *The workers make the group, they are great with the children (10)*
- *It leads to continued use of the library and encourages reading by the Bookstart Book Crawl activity (9)*
- *Problem with access at Corby Library. Some people don't like lifts and a double buggy is a problem (9)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

All twelve of the parents who used this service answered this question and their sources of information are summarised below.

Frequency of Mentions by Parents	How I got to know about Bookstart/Story Time/Rhymetime (17)
3	From: notice boards at the Kingswood Centre, Pen Green and Danesholme Library; told by a friend
2	From going to the Kingswood Centre
1	From: a Health Visitor; a letter from the Group Leader; told about it at her child's hearing test; attending another group at Pen Green

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Four parents responded to this question and four different reasons emerged. One was a childminder and her work commitments meant *"it was too awkward to attend." (10).* One went back to work. One found that *"no time was convenient" (7)* for her. One said that she used the group for 4 or 5 months but,

"My child wasn't sleeping – it was hard to get there at 9.30 in the morning." (8)

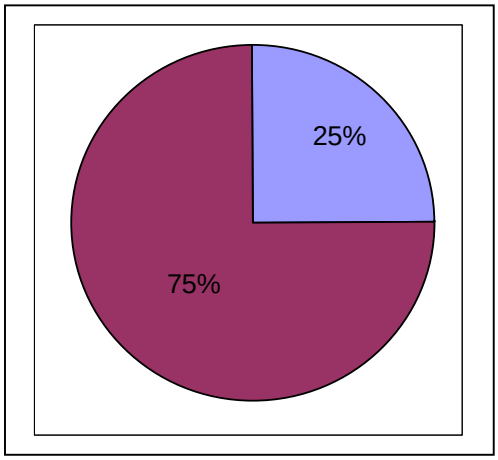
Clearly for some parents the timing of the group is an issue.

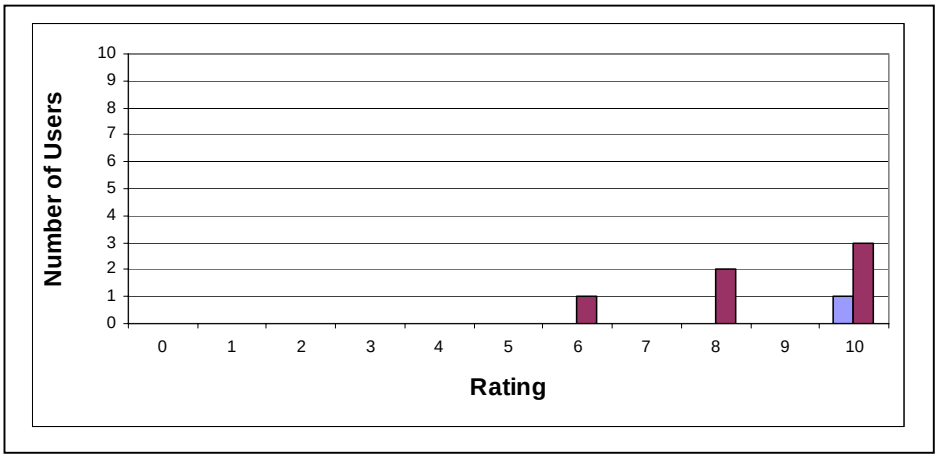
If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

Two parents answered this question. In one case her child went to school and in the other the group, which is seasonal, finished for the summer.

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for Exeter Drop In (165)





High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 86%

- *Loved it, been going about a year. My child loves it. Recently the numbers have dropped. (10)*
- *Really like it. The workers are really brilliant - really good - no one lets the children run riot. I went to the Toy Library in Danesholme, but it was awful – the parents didn't care, the children fought and it was too scary for my child. I wouldn't go back. I also went to Kingswood once and it was nice, but I like Exeter best- I've been going to Exeter for about 5 months now (10)*
- *It was very friendly, we all mucked in making cuppas and the children loved to play. It was good to just get out of the house, see my son playing and have a chat over a coffee or two (10)*
- *It had a nice relaxed atmosphere – I expected formality and regimentation but it was very informal. I was welcomed in and given a hot drink. My child was able to play freely. The small hall was used effectively and there were plenty of things for children to do. My son was mixing with other children, developing his social skills. I saw a difference in him – for example, he used to fight with his cousin, who is 3 months younger than him, but both went to Exeter Drop In and are now inseparable. Now he is not shy about playing with other children. He's happy around other children, not as clingy as he was (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7) - 14%

Only one of the respondents gave a rating in this range and her comments are quoted at length;
"I used to attend Exeter and Kingswood. Exeter didn't have enough facilities and toys available - it got to the point where the children were fighting over what was available which wasn't pleasant. It's ideal if you are in the catchment area as it is a good opportunity to mix with other parents and children and the staff were very nice and helpful, but it should be in a bigger hall. There should be more facilities available for children, more toys for them to play with. The layout was inappropriate, babies had a square to play in and seats were in an L-shape. It was overcrowded. No, I wouldn't recommend it because of the layout and size of hall and the lack of facilities and toys. I then moved on and attended Kingswood (6)

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 3	8 3	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 5	8 2	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 4	8 1	7 3	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 4	8 3	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 6	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 5	8 1	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *The workers are always there to help you. Loads of things there to play with. The trips are great too(10)*
- *There was different play each week which was great (10)*
- *When it was full my son had a lot of fun with children of different ages. Great to see different age groups mingling (8)*
- *The location is really suitable for residents of the estate. The informality compared to other nurseries is a plus (8)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *It needs to be in a bigger room (10)*
- *Nothing, everyone is happy. Does a good job (8)*
- *The limited size of hall limits what can be done (8)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

7 of the 8 respondents said they would recommend the service to others, one said she wouldn't,

"because of the layout and size of hall and the lack of facilities and toys" (6)

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *Real shame numbers have dropped (10)*
- *Friendly and welcoming staff (10)*
- *My son really enjoyed it and I get a lot out of watching my son have fun. My son really enjoyed it and I get a lot out of watching my son have fun. (8)*
- *Good for us to see our son playing and enjoying himself - using play facilities not available at home (e.g. sand and water). Good for me to have the opportunity for adult company, share experiences, a cup of tea and a chat (8)*
- *I was made to feel welcome as soon as I walked in and got introduced (10)*
- *My boy loved it and the leader was a great help, she helped me to get a nursery place for my boy (10)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

All eight of the parents who used this group answered this question. Three had been told about it by their Health Visitor; two had been told by a friend; of the other three parents one had seen the group advertised on a poster in her GP's surgery, one had been accompanied to the group by her Family Visitor and one had heard by word-of-mouth.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Four of the eight parents answered this question. One had stopped going because her child started at school. One had changed jobs and placed her child in the nursery, however she commented

"but before that the numbers had gone right down as quite a few of the others started going to Kingswood." (10)

Another said,

"A lot stopped going, the group got smaller and it was less fun for my son." (8)

Another commented,

"I used to attend Exeter and Kingswood. Exeter didn't have enough facilities and toys available. It got to the point where the children were fighting over what was available which wasn't pleasant." (6)

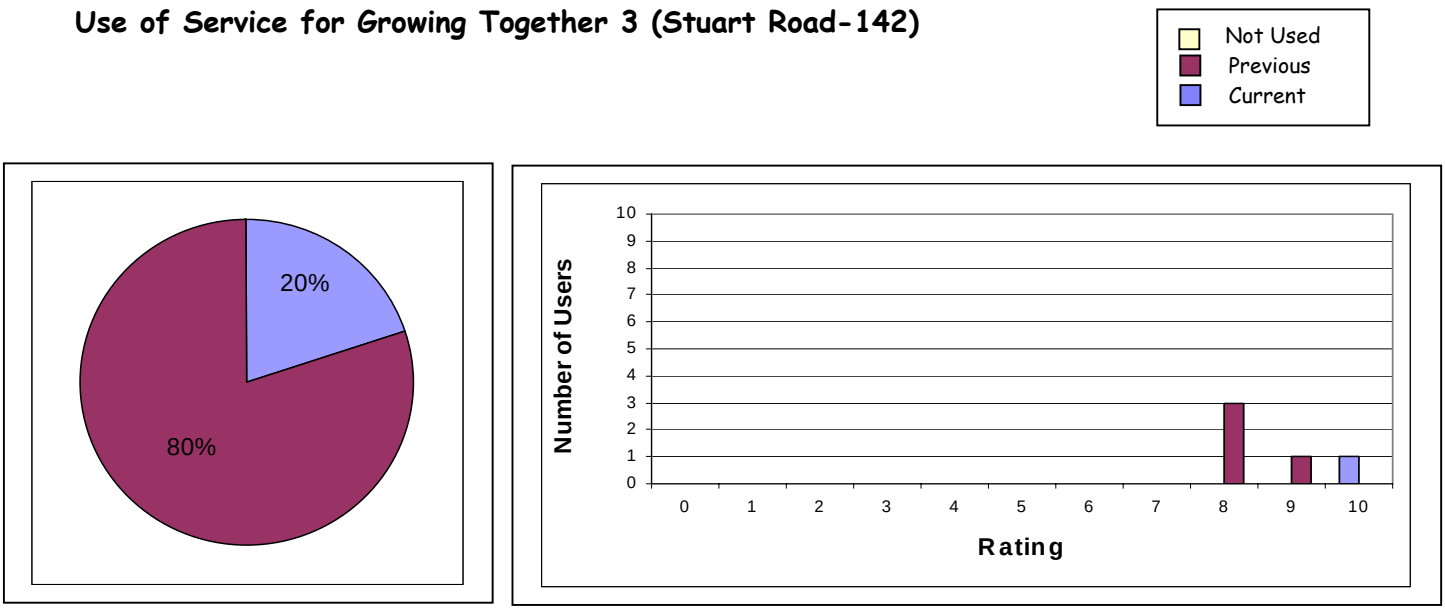
For these parents there were major issues about the falling numbers of parents and children attending the group and the amount of toys and activities for the children.

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

None of the parents responded to this question

JAN-DEC 2003

Use of Service for Growing Together 3 (Stuart Road-142)



High Ratings Comments (8-10) - 100%

- *It has been excellent. I suffered from depression after having my child. The workers are very supportive and help with the children, offering lots of help and support. They're there for me when I need them (10)*
- *I've given it 10 because of all the support that is available from the group (10)*
- *When I went there was one lady who ran the group at the time, she was very friendly and understanding (8)*

Medium Ratings Comments (5-7)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Low Ratings Comments (4 and under)

No ratings or comments in this range.

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 3	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 3	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 3	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 3	8 1	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 4	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 2	8 1	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

What should definitely be kept about the service?

- *Size of the group on Mondays. Keeping it a small group would be best and should be kept (10)*
- *Health visitor being at the group and giving advice (8)*

What should definitely be changed about the service?

- *Service is not advertised enough. Service is excellent and should be advertised highlighting this (10)*
- *The only problem is that children have to leave when they are 3 years old (10)*
- *It's held in a small room - could have been bigger (8)*
- *The space was not very big, the room should be bigger. Prams were kept in the same room (8)*
- *It needs to be in a bigger room (8)*

Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

All 5 of the respondents said that they would recommend this service to others.

Is there anything else you would like to say about this service

- *The service is very reliable (9)*
- *My child started attending the Pen Green Centre as there were more facilities for children of her age there (8)*

Getting Started and Reasons for Stopping

Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

All five of the parents who used this service answered this question and there were five sources of information about the service. The five parents had heard through a Midwife, a Health Visitor, a friend, the Pen Green booklet and by word-of-mouth.

Can I ask you why you stopped using it?

Two parents responded to this question; in both cases they stopped going because their child became too old to attend the group (i.e. over three). Also, in one case the family also moved away from Corby.

If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?

One parent answered this question saying,

"My child started attending the group at the Pen Green Centre as there were more facilities for children of her age." (8)

Other Groups and Services run at the Other Locations

Ratings, Getting Started, Other Comments

Lloyds Drop In (Scout Hut-196)

- There were four parent responses; one gave a rating of 10, one gave 9 and two gave 8

- One found out about the service from a friend, one from her Family Visitor, one from the Home Start booklet, the fourth did not specify a source of information. Three parents said they would recommend the service to others, the fourth did not make a comment

- Comments were mixed;

  "It was a good service as there were so many things to do. I stopped using the service because it was too hectic. There were not enough staff available. It started to get too busy, I was unable to leave baby in baby corner while my other child was off playing, this became too much. This service is not advertised enough. I only got to know about it because I was put in touch with the service by Home Start after I suffered from depression." (10)

  "My children interacted with other children. It gave them an idea of what a nursery was like with a parent being there. I had to stop going because of my work commitments as my shifts changed. My husband did try taking them but couldn't interact in a female environment. This service should be kept because it offers a variety of activities that children wouldn't normally do at home. It offers children a variety of things to do in a safe environment." (9)

  "As it was the first service I went to it was very useful, I'd never been to one before. It boosted my confidence and my son's as well. It was very good. It started to get a bit monotonous. The doors were not secure; I had to keep getting up to stop my son getting out. The attitude of group was a problem – let the children play, while we mums sit and chat - but that's not for me, I like to get involved. The worker did try very hard to get everyone involved. (8)

  "It was very friendly. It puts me off if a place is too cliquey but this wasn't like that, every effort was made to include me. My son grew out of it but I still enjoyed going, until it finished. We both enjoyed the Thomas the Tank Engine trip and the one to Wicksteed. The staff were so friendly; they still stop to talk to me now. The only problem was that the toys that came out were limited." (8)

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 1	8	7 2	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 1	8	7 1	6 2	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 1	8 2	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 1	8 1	7 2	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 3	8	7	6 2	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

- There were three parent responses for this service; two gave a rating of 9 and the other gave 6

- One was made aware of the service by their midwife, one by their Family Visitor and the third was told about it by friends

- One stopped using the service because she finished breastfeeding, one due to altered work commitments and the third because there were only three other mums there who were still breastfeeding; she felt that "more mums who are still feeding" were needed

- Other comments were positive;

  "It's a very useful service and benefits first and second-time mums greatly. Second-time mums were there to offer support to new mums as they had the experience. Advice, help and support were always there and available. It's so good to be supported. It's good for your sanity – it's good to know you are not the only one, that you're not alone." (9)

  "It gave me all the support I needed up until I had finished breastfeeding. If you needed to talk there was someone else there to look after your baby while you talked to the professionals. Good that it is run by a midwife or health visitor." (9)

- All three parents said that they would recommend this service to others

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 3	8	7 1	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 3	8 1	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 4	8	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 4	8	7	6	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 3	8 1	7	6 1	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 3	8 1	7	6	5	4 1	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

- There were two parent responses; one gave a rating of 8, the other gave 6
- One was referred to the clinic for her child to have a standard assessment, the other received notification to attend the clinic by a letter in the mail
- Comments were positive;

  "I was called to come and have a hearing test done on my daughter - a standard assessment. I used the drop in clinic only when I was concerned about my daughter's hearing. It was very helpful and put my mind at rest about my daughter's hearing being OK." (8)

  "The service was very good, but for me the Town Centre was a bit out of the way to get to, maybe it would be better at Pen Green. Also the times of appointments were hard to keep to. It's a good and friendly place. It wasn't 100% because of the things I would change but it is still a good service." (6)

- Both parents said that they would recommend this service to others

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9	8 1	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9	8 1	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9	8 1	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2 1	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2 1	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9	8 1	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

- *There were three parent responses; one gave a rating of 9, one gave a rating of 8, the third did not give any overall rating*

- *Two parents had found out about the group at their child's school, the third had been to a PICL group at the Pen Green Centre*

- *Comments were positive, with some qualifications;*

  "I found it really helpful as my son wouldn't say what he had done at school and it was a way for me to find out. The video footage is great – it's really nice to see what my son is doing at school. Some weeks your child isn't mentioned or there is nothing to show; it would help if you knew this because these afternoons are not useful. But it is still good to meet new parents and for them to see how their kids are developing." (9)

  "It was very interesting for me to see how my child was doing at school. After a while I didn't feel that I needed to go to the group anymore and, in any case, the time became inconvenient as I started work. Having the video clips of my child has been great, but it would have been good to have him videoed more regularly. More time slots for the group would have made things more flexible too, but it is a very good group." (8)

- The two parents who responded said that they would recommend the service to others

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 1	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 1	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9	8 1	7	6	5 1	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9 1	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 1	8	7 1	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9 1	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

- *There were two parent responses; one gave a rating of 10, the other gave 9*
- *Both parents saw the group advertised on the school notice board*
- *Comments were positive;*

  "it's excellent, really good. We have the right amount of time, and it's getting parents involved. It's quite a small group, but it would be nicer if more parents got involved in their child's learning. You get to learn everything about your own child; you get to know your child a bit better. The leader is brilliant. Think I've said it all. You learn about yourself as well as about your child. (10)

  "I've found it very educational. I feel that I've learnt a lot. I wouldn't know what I know now if I hadn't attended the group. The group is very well run. I'd like to get more involved but I don't know how to go about it. I feel a bit embarrassed about asking as I don't think I know enough yet. The group needs more advertising – there's only five people attending. (9)

- Both parents said that they would recommend this service to others and that they had been doing so

Particular Aspects of Delivery of Service

1	Useful?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9 1	8 1	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9	8 2	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9 2	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

PART FOUR

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The analysis of parents' comments about the Outreach provision of Corby Sure Start in 2003 identified four main patterns of response;

1. General satisfaction with the quality of groups and services and an expressed desire for more provision of this kind
2. Wanting services delivered in different ways
3. Identifying unmet needs
4. The expression of negative experiences of one kind or another, across a range of services and to different degrees

Sometimes comments from parents encapsulate two, three and sometimes all four of these patterns. One parent's involvement with the Corby Sure Start Outreach provision is used as a case study to show the complexity of her feelings about her Sure Start 'career'. Her comments reflect her mixed feelings about her experiences, ranging from being very pleased with what she has been involved with, to disappointment that much of it has to come to an end. She tells us explicitly and implicitly about the lack of provision for her children as they get older and who she feels is to blame, while the subtext is about what she feels she is losing in terms of her involvement with the Programme and how valuable it has been to her. This parent's views exemplify an important thread which runs through many of the other parents' comments; how often they reveal and identify a range of unmet needs, expressed both explicitly and implicitly.

The number of parents who say that something could be better, that their experience was poor or that they would like something else provided is relatively small. However, these may be the parents who feel strong enough in themselves, or strongly enough about a service, to say the unflattering things and make the critical points. In the majority of cases they rate the services highly, so they can not simply be dismissed as being habitual moaners or merely finding fault; they could be the tip of an iceberg of dissatisfaction. If so, their comments need to be treated seriously as they relate to the provision of services

and practices within them. They highlight issues regarding resourcing, staff deployment and practice and these need to be considered and addressed. These parents need to be seen as 'critical friends'; those who tell us honestly the things that we would sometimes rather not hear but need to listen to.

The Power of Networking

Evidence presented earlier in this report indicated how important word-of-mouth is in spreading-the-word about Corby Sure Start and its services (page 31). Briefly, peers, in the form of family members and friends, outnumber Corby Sure Start's own workers and associated professionals by more than two to one as sources of information about the Programme.

Clearly, families and friends tell each other about the groups and services they have gone to or have been told about by someone else. This ensures that the parent's and children's experiences are shared as far and wide as day-to-day contacts, phone calls and texts allow. If the experience has been a positive one this may contribute to greater attendance at these services. However, one unintended consequence of this highly effective networking is that increased numbers in groups and services may have a detrimental effect on the quality of the experience which parents had been recommending to others in the first place.

Another downside of the 'family-and-friends' network is that negative experiences will also be shared with others. This is particularly significant if it is a 'one-off' incident; a single negative experience may deter a parent from further attendance at that group or service and possibly put them off going to others at the same location and elsewhere; it may lead to them not accessing Corby Sure Start at all. In addition, they are very likely to tell their family and friends about it who may also be put off accessing things which might be beneficial to them and their children.

In terms of what follows, we only have the parents' comments and feelings about their experiences to go on without the counterbalancing accounts from workers. Corroboration of one parent's experience can be sought in the comments made by other parents using the service; this is provided to some extent in the previous section dealing with individual

groups and services. If the majority comment positively then we can assume that for most parents the experience has been a good one. People will continue to attend groups, share their good feelings with others, and others will be encouraged to go along as well. However, if most comments are not so good, or are negative in tone, then there may be issues which the Programme needs to address. People may stop attending and others may be discouraged from starting. However, as stated above, those comments which are 'out-of-line' with the majority, whether positive or negative, cannot be ignored.

Definitions and Consequences

In these contexts parents' perceptions of the situation are very powerful in shaping how their whole experience is defined. Some sociologists and social psychologists would suggest that our own perceptions are the only mechanisms we have for defining what we believe to be 'reality' (see Thomas, 1923, Goffman 1959 and 1961, Garfinkel 1967 and Berger and Luckmann 1967). To paraphrase WI Thomas , one of the progenitors of this approach,

If people define situations as real then they have real consequences

In one sense, whether the actual circumstances were as the parent's comments suggest is not important. Their feelings, and the comments reflecting their experiences, are **based on the situation as they defined it**, so, to all intents and purposes, **it is their reality.** If a parent felt they were unwelcome in a group, or that a worker was interfering too much then it does not matter if this actually was the case; as far as the parent is concerned,

- this **is** what happened
- this **is** how they felt about it
- this **is** what they decided to do about it

The implications in terms of continued use of services for the parent and their child are significant.

The major patterns in the comments are looked at and commented on below.

Main Patterns of Parental Response

1. Satisfied but Wanting More

In this pattern parents gave high ratings and positive comments regarding groups and services. The pattern also consisted of wanting more of particular things;

1. More group and service sessions provided over a wider series of time slots
2. in more places and locations
3. taking place in more rooms and bigger spaces
4. with more workers to run them
5. and more toys and equipment for themselves and their children to use

The specific comments and the ratings given are presented in the tables below. As can be seen, all the ratings are in the High Range (8-10) and the Medium Range (5-7), with the majority in the High Range.

Table 6 - More Sessions and More Session Time(s)

Name of Group or Service	Parent's Comments and Rating
0-4 Years Drop In 2, Kingswood	○ *Could be made slightly longer – it takes time for the children to settle. About half an hour extra would be enough (9)*
Aerobics Kingswood	○ *More sessions at different times would be more flexible – I would have continued to go if other times were available (10)*
Bums, Legs & Tums Kingswood	○ *Have the sessions more times in the week (10)*
Messy Play Kingswood	○ *There should be sessions just for adults! (10)*
Tots Exercise Kingswood	○ *Perhaps put it on at a different time to Drop In (10)* ○ *Run the group on more days (9)*
Be Good to Yourselves Kingswood	○ *Very good, something that all women should use every week. There is only one group per week; it would be nice to have a group at the end of the week as well. I really liked the confidentiality of the group (10)*
Baby Massage 3 Wick Close	○ *It is a small window time-wise and sometimes we couldn't get there as the baby fell asleep and we would be late, maybe it could be longer or have a drop-in format so it is not such a rigid time (7)*
Drop In Surgery Wick Close	○ *A fantastic service - it put my mind at rest about the worries I was having about one of my children…I've recommended it to other mums…my only criticism is there should be more sessions (10)*
Bookstart/Story Time/Rhymetime	○ *More weekend story telling - this would be nice for kids and parents at weekends (7)* ○ *Have it more regularly at the Kingswood Centre (9)* ○ *It would be good to have more time slots (7)*
Parents Involved in their Children's Learning Rockingham Road	○ *More time slots for the group would have made things more flexible too, but it is a very good group." (8)*

Key Themes

- Groups offered over more times and days would provide greater flexibility for parents
- Different groups which currently 'clash' with each other would become accessible for parents interested in both of them
- Groups to be run after school and in the 'twilight' period
- Session times extended – even half an hour could make a big difference
- 'Visiting' groups and services to run more regularly across the locations

Table 7 - More Rooms, Spaces, Places, Toys and Staff

Name of Group or Service	Parent's Comment and Rating
0-4 Years Drop In 2 Kingswood	○ *Outdoor playing area isn't big enough. This is the only fault, especially when it's so busy (10)* ○ *More staff, as it means more rooms can be opened.(9)* ○ *Fitted the needs of my grandson who was 2 years old, but the big hall isn't used enough; on an odd occasion it was opened and thoroughly enjoyed. There's lots of room for children to run about. The hall should be opened more frequently as the other rooms sometimes got a bit cramped, especially for older children (8)*
Aerobics Kingswood	○ *More facilities for babies and more places in the crèche (9)*
Messy Play Kingswood	○ *Have some different toys for a change (10)*
Parents Drop In Kingswood	○ *It needs a bigger area for playing (10)*
Baby Massage 3, Wick Close	○ *More space. Have an open day or advertise so that more people use it (5)*
Exeter Drop In	○ *It needs to be in a bigger room (10)* ○ *The limited size of hall limits what can be done (8)*
Growing Together 3, Stuart Road	○ *It's held in a small room - could have been bigger (8)* ○ *The space was not very big, the room should be bigger. Prams were kept in the same room (8)* ○ *It needs to be in a bigger room (8)* ○ *My child started attending the group at the Pen Green Centre as there were more facilities for children of her age (8)*
Lloyd's Drop In Scout Hut	○ *It was very friendly. It puts me off if a place is too cliquey but this wasn't like that, every effort was made to include me. My son grew out of it but I still enjoyed going, until it finished. We both enjoyed the Thomas the Tank Engine trip and the one to Wicksteed. The staff were so friendly; they still stop to talk to me now. The only problem was that the toys that came out were limited (8)*

Key Themes

- Space – children would benefit greatly from having more room for play ad activities
- Staff – more workers would facilitate activities and allow currently unused available space to be used
- Resources – a greater variety of toys, apparatus and facilities needed

2.Wanting Services Delivered in Different Ways

Table 8 - Wanting Services Delivered in Different Ways

Name of Group or Service	Parent's Comment and Rating
Kingswood Drop In Saturdays	○ *It would be good if the centre was open on a Saturday and Sunday (10)*
0-4 Years Drop In 2 Kingswood	○ *What about some weekend support? (7)*
Baby Massage 3 Wick Close	○ *Times to suit parents with other children (8)*
Cooking Time Kingswood	○ *Have some Cooking Time after school (9)* ○ *Put it on at different times as I can only use it when the kids are on holiday (10)*
Messy Play 3, Wick Close	○ *The activities are quite 'young'; we need something for children who are a bit older*

Key Themes

- More groups and services running at the weekends
- More groups and services running after school, and twilight and evening sessions
- More consideration of children's needs across the age range and appropriate provision for them

3. Identifying Unmet Needs

Table 9 - Identifying Unmet Needs

Name of Group or Service	Parent's Comment and Rating
0-4 Years Drop In, Wick Close	○ *There's nothing for the parent but lots for the kids. We need counselling for women, support for postnatal depression (10)* ○ *There should be more for the parents. A counselling service, someone just to talk to (9)*
0-4 Years Drop In 2 Kingswood	○ *Age 0-4 is no good when your child is 5 and over. Support should be awarded after 0-4 (10)* ○ *It was great at the start, a 10, but when my child turned 5 I had no support so it turned to a zero (10)*
Parents and Carers Time, Wick Close	○ *Some families from outside the catchment area could be accommodated on the odd occasion; there is a need for this*
Growing Together 3, Stuart Road	○ *The only problem is that children have to leave when they are 3 years old (10)*

Key Themes

- More general support for parents
- Counselling services for parents
- Specific support for mothers with Post-Natal Depression
- Provision needed for school-age children and their parents
- Access to some services for parents outside the catchment area (perhaps this parent has a friend or relative in mind)
- Supporting parents in signposting them to appropriate groups and services when age-defined provision is no longer available

4. Negative Experiences

Parents Expressing their Dissatisfaction with Services

There are several ways in which parents' comments reflecting their dissatisfaction and unhappiness with their experiences of services can be viewed;

1. Their expressions of dissatisfaction could be indicative of them having unmet needs. Their comments could be the surface representation of their deeper feelings that things they expected **for themselves** from going to the groups have not occurred; for example, as well as benefiting their child they may have hoped that going to groups would meet their social needs by them having more opportunities for greater contact with other adults, making friends and developing some supportive relationships.

2. Their comments could be the result of a combination of negative experiences which, individually, may have had little effect as 'triggers' of dissatisfaction. However, cumulatively they result in the parent reaching a **'tipping point'** where a small but significant grouping of experiences colours how they feel about specific groups and perhaps other aspect of Corby Sure Start's provision as well.

3. Their remarks could be evidence of some significant underlying **personal concerns, tensions and anxieties** which act like a 'magnifying glass': something which would be unimportant in a different context is thrown into sharp relief in a particular group; an innocuous remark, inadvertently said by someone, has a deeper impact on the parent than anyone realises. This could result from the parent's own experiences of, for example, childbirth, Post-Natal Depression, poor parenting, neglect, abuse, domestic violence and so on. It may be the case that their experience was lying dormant and a comment made within the group 'opens it up' for them in an unexpected and difficult way

Approaches 1 and 2, relating to the parent's unmet needs and the accumulation of 'triggers' of dissatisfaction are viable ways for us to examine what parents say in the evaluation interviews. On the other hand, approach 3 would not be as appropriate because,

- It would require a large amount of in-depth knowledge about individual parents and their particular circumstances
- Much, if not all, of this information is confidential and not available to us as evaluators
- we would lack the knowledge and expertise required to make judgements as to how any personal factors had shaped their comments

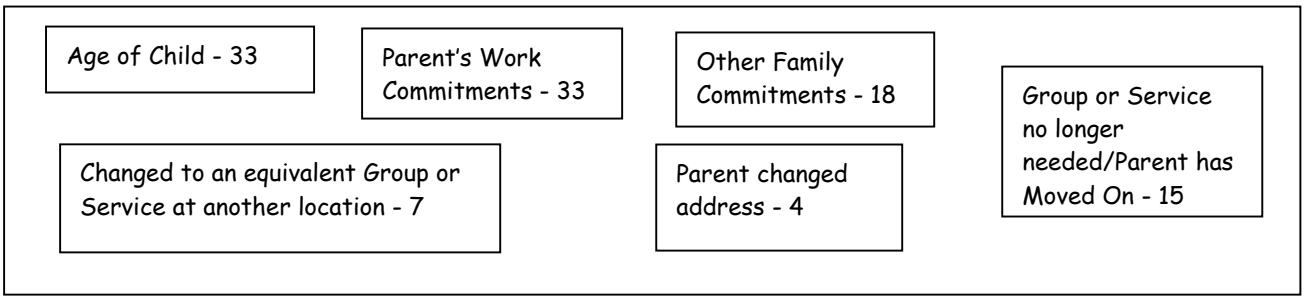
Here, our role as evaluators would be to refer any relevant information to the appropriate staff in the Corby Sure Start programme for them to follow-up.

Reasons for Not Continuing to Use Corby Sure Start Groups and Services

One revealing aspect of the interviewing was the range of reasons people gave for not continuing to use groups and services. Question B(1) on the schedule asked, 'Did you continue to use this Service?'; if the parent answered 'No', they were then asked for the reasons why they stopped using it. The reasons have been grouped together and examined in terms of **Practical Reasons** (predominantly related to the parent), **Social Reasons** and **Quality of Service** as shown below.

(a) Life Circumstances

(figures are percentages of the frequency of mentions from all of the reasons given by parents)



This group of reasons relates specifically to the parent, their child or children and/or their particular circumstances. Certain groups are age-related; for example, Infant Massage has babies up to their first birthday and Growing Together caters for children from birth to three. Once the child has reached the upper age limit they will be invited to move on to another group which is more appropriate for their growing child. This was the case in several of the comments which showed that the parent no longer felt that they

needed to attend and had moved on to another group. One parent had to stop going to a group and the reason she gave was that "real life intervened". This would apply to reasons such as having other family commitments, working and changing address as explanations for not attending a group anymore; for example, it could be the case that the service has ring-fenced funding only available to those living in the catchment area. If a service is not what a parent expected then they may be signposted to another one which is more appropriate for them and their child. There were two comments from parents who had changed to another group at another location; one had decided to follow a particular group worker who was going to co-lead a group at the other location and the other opted to bring her child to the Pen Green Centre specifically because "there were more facilities for children of her age".

(b) Social Reasons

(figures are percentages of the frequency of mentions from all of the reasons given by parents)

Fell out with other parents in the Group/at the Service - 33	Parent felt uncomfortable or unhappy in the Group/at the Service - 18

33 per cent of the comments giving reasons for ceasing to attend groups and services were those relating to having had fall-outs and disagreements with other parents. This represents nine comments explicitly stating that attendance stopped for this reason. This is a very high proportion of the comments and points to some serious deficiencies in the way groups and services were being run. Surely, questions need to be asked of staff as to how these situations came about and what they could, and should, have done to prevent things going so far?

Case Study 1 – Symptoms of Withdrawal

However, the picture changes when we discover that

- all nine comments were made by the same parent about her experiences in nine different groups
- with one exception, where she did not give a rating, five services were given a rating of 10 and the other three were rated 9

Obviously, with this parent's comments about her experiences we only have one side of the story which, in any case, will be multi-faceted. From her comments alone we cannot really know the actual circumstances which led to her rows with others and her decision to stop going to the groups. We would need some accounts from other parents and workers in order to put together a picture of what happened and make any judgements about who was 'right' and who was 'wrong'. This parent made several other comments which indicate her regrets at leaving the groups and her desire – perhaps need – to start attending again;

- "I would like to start this service again as I enjoyed it" (Kingswood Adult Funky Aerobics; rating given - 10)
- "I would like to try and go back to this service" (Aerobics – Kingswood; rating given – 10

She even reflects on the actions of others, her reactions to these and the possibility that her own perceptions may have contributed to her decision to stop going,

- "Certain people tried to take over and I fell out with two other parents. I felt uneasy when I walked in to the group; it felt like people were talking about me. They probably weren't but that's the way I felt" (Kingswood 0-4 Years Drop In; rating given – 9)

This parent's case presents us with several possibilities,

- It may be the case that this parent was difficult and argumentative
- It could be that she was easily provoked and short-tempered
- In a situation where, like herself, many parents attend several groups at the Kingswood Centre, she may have encountered the same people she fell out with originally leading to further arguments
- She may have felt that she had been labelled as argumentative and was 'acting out' how others expected her to be

The permutations are not endless but the four speculations above represent some of them. However, irrespective of what the reasons and circumstances were for this parent's disagreements with others, her situation raises some important questions;

- Is there a policy or set of protocols for dealing with arguments between parents? If so, is it applied? If not, should a policy be developed and implemented?
- Did any staff notice that disagreements were happening and, if so, did they take any action to defuse the situation; if they didn't, why not?
- Were these incidents discussed by staff in their debriefing time or raised more formally at meetings? If so, was any action taken?
- Was this parent offered any support regarding her own feelings and behaviour; some counselling, some one-to-one work support, some advice about how to control her own reactions if provoked, perhaps an anger management course?
- If support was offered, did she take it up? If she did take it up, did it work out? If it didn't work out, what were the reasons why?
- If she was offered support and refused it, did she give reasons why? Was it offered more that once?
- If staff didn't notice the disagreements then why not? If they didn't notice them are there good reasons why?
- Did anyone pick up that this parent stopped attending eight groups and all ostensibly for the same reason? A pattern of behaviour followed by withdrawal was evident here; were there understandable reasons why it may not have been noticed?

If we are rejecting the approach of 'blame the parent' as being simplistic, then we must also reject an approach of 'blame the workers'. There may be a number of reasons why all or some of the suggestions raised above did not happen.

- Do all of the workers involved in running the eight groups have frequent contact with each other? Do they have the time to discuss individual cases in ways which might lead to action plans being formed?

- If workers have concerns about parents' behaviour leading to withdrawal from groups, where do they take them? What responsibilities do workers, and other staff in Corby Sure Start, have in circumstances like these?
- Were this parent's disagreements with others as clear and obvious to others, including workers, as her own comments imply? Can workers be expected to pick up what might be very subtle nuances in parents' relationships?
- Does the system for recording attendances and entering them into the Programme's database pick up on patterns of abrupt non-attendance and a parent no longer going to several groups in a tight sequence or simultaneously?

Clearly, much more evidence would be required to even begin to answer all the questions which this parent's comments raise, not only in her case but also in more general terms. However, this case has highlighted some significant issues which Corby Sure Start needs to address.

Case Study 2 – Feeling Uncomfortable and Unwelcome

Here we will deal with those comments which parents made relating to feeling uncomfortable or unhappy in a group or service as reasons for no longer attending. These represented 18 per cent of the comments overall. The specific comments are given here in full with other relevant points and commentary.

(A) "My child's age – she turned 5 - but I also don't feel as welcome as I did when my child was under 5." (After School Drop In, Kingswood; rating given was 10)

Here the parent is unhappy about what she feels to be a change in attitude by staff as a result of her child reaching school age. She also commented that the service was "useful for me to spend quality time with my children" and that "it is great for families". This would help to explain her giving the service a rating of 10.

(B) "I was the only person using the service. I didn't like the house – it's small and claustrophobic. I didn't feel comfortable. I wanted interaction with other mums and babies. Pen Green was more spacious" (Baby Massage 3, Wick Close; rating given was 5)

This parent is expressing her unhappiness about several things. She was the only mother at the group when she wanted contact with other mothers and babies and she found the house to be too small. Consequently, she changed to one of the Baby Massage groups at the Pen Green Centre because it had more room and, although she does not say so, she would have had the company of other mums and babies there. Her rating of 5 indicates her feelings about her experience.

(C) "I didn't feel like I fitted in." (0-4 Years Drop In, Wick Close; rating given was 10)

This parent's other comments echo her feelings as expressed above. She was new to the area and went to the group because "I didn't feel comfortable, I felt lost". She stopped going because she "didn't feel like I fitted in". She felt that the group was useful as it was somewhere for her to "take the kids for a couple of hours" and it "gave my little girl more confidence knowing I was coming back". When asked why she had given the service a rating of 10 she replied "it offers a lot of services. I haven't taken advantage of it" because "I'm dealing with a lot of personal things in my life". She also said "there's nothing for parents but lots for kids. There should be counselling for women and support for post-natal depression".

These comments put this parent's reason for not continuing to go to the group into a significant context; she feels isolated and alienated. At a time when she really needs some companionship and support she feels that these are not to be found in the context of this group. This parent could be an example of what was discussed above; a parent whose negative experience may have put her off Corby Sure Start and its services at precisely the time when she may have needed them most.

(D) "I found out about the group from a leaflet and went along to it but I never felt really welcome. I think that the group and the Centre should be kept but it should be geared to the whole of the community not just the people of Kingswood. No, I wouldn't recommend it; I didn't really find it very enjoyable." (Messy Play Kingswood; rating given was 5)

(E) "I found out about the Saturday Drop In from a leaflet that I was given. I stopped going as I felt very uncomfortable. All people at the session should be made to feel

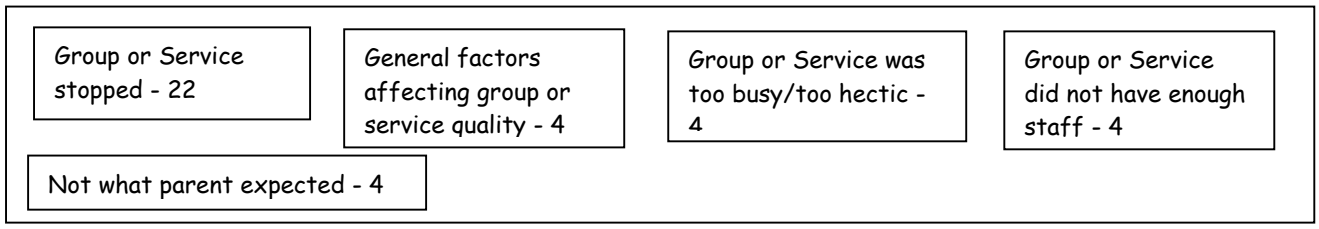
welcome. I think they should keep the sessions going, but no, I wouldn't recommend it. It is great for the people of Kingswood but not for me" (Kingswood Drop In on Saturdays; rating given was 5)

Comments (D) and (E) were made by the same parent. This parent "never felt really welcome" at the Messy Play group and "very uncomfortable" at the Saturday Drop In saying that "all people at the session should be made to feel welcome". She seems to feel that she is an 'outsider' as she explicitly states that Messy Play group should cater for the "whole of the community not just the people of Kingswood" and that the Saturday Drop In is "great for the people of Kingswood but not for me". Both services are given a rating of 5 indicating that this was a negative experience for her. It may be that she lives outside the catchment area and possibly the whole community of which it forms a part; her comments imply this. More importantly, this could be another example of a parent who may be put off other Corby Sure Start groups and services which may have been more suitable and enjoyable for her and her child.

As with the parent looked at in Case Study 1, it would be simplistic to suggest that the comments quoted and discussed above are merely the whingeing of a few disgruntled parents who are too difficult to please. A more substantial analysis is required if anything is to be learned from what parents reveal in evaluation interviews.

(c) Quality of Provision

(figures are percentages of the frequency of mentions from all of the reasons given by parents)



Group or Service Stopped

Comments here, representing 22% of those made about issues related to three services which had stopped running;

- After School Time (Wick Close)
- After School Games (Kingswood)
- Badminton KCC (Kingswood)

The comments made by parents about the ending of these services speak volumes about how important the services had become to them and how let down they felt by their withdrawal.

Table 10 – Group or Service Stopped

Name of Group or Service	Parent's Comment and Rating
After School Time (Wick Close)	o *Someone came to the door and told me about this group for my children who are 8 and 5 years of age. It was brilliant; the kids used to get bored after school but at the group they got to make lots of things. Sometimes the house would shut at short notice due to low levels of staff but we're very disappointed that it closed." (9)*
After School Games (Kingswood)	o *My two older children went and loved it, and when my third child was old enough she went as well. My kids had a great time – then it just stopped." (9)* o *It finished; it's gone! (10)*
Badminton KCC (Kingswood)	o *"I'm glad that I was introduced to Badminton as everyone there all had a laugh. I used this service fortnightly then it stopped. When a certain Parent Rep was involved in Badminton it was great as she got everyone playing. It made me fit and was great fun, and something to look forward to. Unfortunately, I fell out with some of the other parents. I liked it but no longer runs – I had a lot of fun; I wish it was still running." (10)* o *"Other parents told me about it. They said it was good, a really good laugh. It was good to mix with other parents without the children around. But the numbers dropped and the sessions were cancelled and stopped. We would like it back. Bring it back!" (10)* o *"I started using this service and found out about badminton. It was wonderful. The time was good for me and my child was safe in the crèche. The group stopped due to lack of demand. If there were enough people it would be nice to see it back. I really enjoyed it." (10)*

The managers of the Corby Sure Start programme have to make decisions about the use of staff and resources and whether they could be more effective if used in other ways.

This is an important aspect of how a programme grows and develops. Parents will understand the reasoning behind such decisions when taken, even if it means the loss of a group or service which they value personally. However, the reasons as to why a group is withdrawn are important;

- Is it because of a lack of staff? If so, could staff responsibilities be rearranged so that the group could continue running?
- Is it because of lack of parental interest? If numbers are dropping, are there reasons why? Could these issues be addressed so encouraging greater attendance?
- Is it because of the timing of the session? Could this be changed to a more suitable time?

Just as important is how the reasoning about the closure of a service is communicated to parents. It is not clear from these parents' comments whether the withdrawal of these services was discussed with them and that they knew this was going to happen. If it was discussed with them were any of the points made above considered? Was there any flexibility or was the ending of the service presented as a fait accompli? The way in which decisions like this are communicated to parents is very important in terms of the parents' perceptions of how the programme values their particular needs. As discussed earlier, people's perceptions define their sense of what is real, and they act according to those beliefs.

General Factors Affecting the Quality of Group or Service

Table 11 - General Factors Affecting the Quality of Group or Service

Name of Group or Service	Parent's Comment and Rating
Exeter Drop In	○ *I used to attend Exeter and Kingswood. Exeter didn't have enough facilities and toys available - it got to the point where the children were fighting over what was available which wasn't pleasant…the staff were very nice and helpful, but it should be in a bigger hall. There should be more facilities available for children, more toys for them to play with. The layout was inappropriate, babies had a square to play in and seats were in an L-shape. It was overcrowded. No, I wouldn't recommend it because of the layout and size of hall and the lack of facilities and toys. I then moved on and attended Kingswood (6)* ○ *the numbers had gone right down as quite a few of the others started going to Kingswood. (10)* ○ *A lot stopped going, the group got smaller and it was less fun for my son.(8)*
Parents' Drop In – Wick Close	○ *It was good at first but now it's changed; there's not much to do (no rating given)*
Bookstart/Story Time/Rhymetime	○ *Nightmare to get to Corby library with children. Can be scary if you're on your own and the lifts are not very good (8)* ○ *There's a big problem with access at Corby Library. Some people don't like lifts and a double buggy is a problem. (9)*
Lloyds Drop In	○ *As it was the first service I went to it was very useful, I'd never been to one before. It boosted my confidence and my son's as well. It was very good. It started to get a bit monotonous. The doors were not secure; I had to keep getting up to stop my son getting out. The attitude of group was a problem – let the children play, while we mums sit and chat - but that's not for me, I like to get involved. The worker did try very hard to get everyone involved. (8)*
Growing Together 3	○ *It's held in a small room - could have been bigger (8)* ○ *The space was not very big, the room should be bigger. Prams were kept in the same room (8)* ○ *It needs to be in a bigger room (8)*

Key Themes

- Inappropriate room and resources
- Which enjoyable activities had been stopped and why?
- Difficult and uninviting access to venue for group
- Security of children
- Parental involvement
- Same issue identified by several parents

The comments above, relating to the Exeter Drop In group, highlight a specific process; the makings of a downward spiral in the quality of the experience for the parent and the child. As parents perceive the quality as deteriorating, whatever the reasons, they may stop going to the group; this in turn may reduce the quality of the experience for those who remain; they may then start to withdraw, and so on. Sooner or later the viability of the group or service will come into question and it may be taken out of the Programme's offer.

Group or Service was Too Busy or Hectic

Table 12 - Group or Service was Too Busy or Hectic

Name of Group or Service	Parent's Comment and Rating
After School Drop In, Kingswood	○ *I found out about this service by word-of-mouth and started to go but I stopped because it was too busy. I think that it needs to be changed because there are limited places. Yes, I would recommend it to other people but I've only given a rating of 6 because, when I went, it was too crowded.(6)*
Lloyds Drop In	○ *It was a good service as there were so many things to do. I stopped using the service because it was too hectic. There were not enough staff available. It started to get too busy, I was unable to leave baby in baby corner while my other child was off playing, this became too much. This service is not advertised enough. I only got to know about it because I was put in touch with the service by Home Start after I suffered from depression (10)*
Messy Play 3, Wick Close	○ *It sometimes got a bit hectic as there's not enough room it there's more than 5 or 6 children*
Drop In Kingswood	○ *I found out about this group by word-of-mouth. I found that it is far too busy at times so I now go to the group at Wick instead (7)*

Key Themes

- Group is too busy, hectic or crowded
- Not enough staff to run it satisfactorily
- The space not big enough to comfortably accommodate the number of children using it
- Change to an alternative group, if available; perhaps withdraw if his is not the case

Issues Relating to Staff

Table 13 - Issues Relating to Staff

Name of Group or Service	Parent's Comment and Rating
0-4 Years Drop In 1, Wick Close	○ *It was good at first but then it changed, now there's too much interfering. I didn't feel comfortable, there's not enough for all the family. It was friendly and a good time for mothers. It gave my children something to do and it gave me more confidence. They brought the community together but it's too much now. I wouldn't recommend it because they interfere too much. Please, go back to the way it was before when it wasn't so regimented (9)*
Baby Massage 3 Wick Close	○ *It was fantastic at one time but then there was too much interfering and lots of changes in staffing. They spent more time having meetings. It needs to go back to the way it was. It's like going to the social! The staff are trying too hard to please. You feel as though you've been judged (2)*
Messy Play 3, Wick Close	○ *My child enjoyed it but I didn't feel comfortable with the staff (7)*
Parents' Drop In – Wick Close	○ *It's not as good as it was at the beginning. The staff shouldn't interfere too much (8)*
Toy Library, Danesholme	○ *We went to the toy Library at Danesholme and it was awful. The parents didn't care, the children fought. It was too scary for my child and I wouldn't go back (no rating given)*

Key Themes

- Staff who 'interfere' too much
- Parent who feels uncomfortable with the staff
- Role of the workers in a group or service regarding the level of involvement of parents
- It is noteworthy that four of the five comments relate to one location.

It is important to say here that four of these comments come from two parents; the exception is the last one regarding the Toy Library. If staff make legitimate suggestions about parenting techniques are these perceived by parents as interference? Are staff sensitive to how parents feel about what staff are doing? It is entirely possible that staff may, quite inadvertently, make a parent feel uncomfortable. If this is the case, what can staff do to avoid this? Is this identifying a need for some further training?

Cliques in Groups

Table 14 - Cliques in Groups

Name of Group or Service	Parent's Comment and Rating
0-4 Years Drop In 2, Kingswood	○ *Quite good but very cliquey and I am quite withdrawn. Mums are left to their own devices and there are cliques (7)*
0-4 Drop In Kingswood	○ *The kids love it and it's not so cliquey as before but there's still some element of 'does your face fit, do your children's faces fit?' I understand why some children are favoured but when they're all together they should be treated the same, but kids don't understand. Also, some mums get a complete break from their kids and others don't (8)*
Lloyd's Drop In	○ *It was very friendly. It puts me off if a place is too cliquey but this wasn't like that, every effort was made to include me.*
0-4 Years Drop In 2, Kingswood	○ *Very good and friendly. It wasn't cliquey because the staff made sure they introduced you and joined you in conversation (8)*
Kingswood Drop In, Saturdays	○ *I was worried about going; I thought it might be cliquey, but found out it wasn't. Even my husband thought it was friendly and family based (9)*

In terms of these comments, in which cliques are explicitly mentioned by parents, the balance would seem to be that generally groups are not riddled with cliques to the detriment of parents' experiences. However, those parents who feel that a group or service is 'cliquey' deserve to have their views taken seriously.

- In one case the parent states that the group is "not so cliquey as before" while feeling that her children do not get the same quality of experience as others and that some mothers are more favourably treated to the detriment of other parents attending. This parent's perceptions may, in this instance, be an accurate account of what was happening but, if this was the case, there may have been good reasons as to why which the parent is not aware of. If a parent is receiving more support from workers than others there may be genuine reasons for this, and perhaps they cannot be shared with other parents, or at least not by the staff. If a parent is receiving 'extra' support, it may be advisable that, with the parent's permission, others could be informed about the reasons. This might prevent the development of resentments and ill-feeling.
- In the first comment the parent says that "Mums are left to their own devices and there are cliques"; again, accepting that her view is accurate, is it the case that she is being left to her own devices as someone who is "quite withdrawn"?

- Are staff aware of the existence of cliques? Are there any protocols as to how to deal with them? In any case , should they be 'dealt with' ? If workers were to try to 'deal with' them what would be the reactions of parents? Would the workers be seen as 'interfering' too much? Would the outcomes of such action make matters worse as opposed to letting people work things out for themselves? Are 'cliques' an inevitable result of normal human interaction in any setting?

One Parent's Sure Start 'Career'

This is a story about a parent who was very involved in the Corby Sure Start Programme in 2003. She attended 13 groups and services in that year and, as her comments will show, she felt that she got a great deal out of the Programme, both for her children and for herself. She also felt that she had been able to contribute to the quality of the groups which she attended; she chose to stop going to one group for the very positive reason that she wanted to do some voluntary work in the community.

Each of the services this family used is featured below showing the rating given and the parent's comments. Some analysis and commentary follow.

0-4 Years Drop In 2 Kingswood	Rating Given - 10
It was fine but when my children turned 5 then Sure Start did not want to know. Provision for age 0-4 is no good if your child is over 5. It was great at the start, a ten, but when my child turned 5 I had no support so it turned to a zero.	

Badminton KCC	Rating Given - 10
Wonderful. It was time for myself and I knew my child was safe. The group stopped due to lack of demand. If there were enough people it would be nice to see it back. A ten - I enjoyed it.	

Kingswood Nursery Extended Sessions	Rating Given - 10
It was good for my child because when she went to nursery she was enjoying being on the dinner table. We stopped going because my child went to school. A ten - It helped me and my child.	

Kingswood Drop In Saturdays	Rating Given - 10
My experience of this service is different to my normal week. You get to see different staff and do different activities; it's nice for a change. The whole service should be kept. There is nowhere to go on a Saturday other than up town so coming here is great and I can be with my children and it doesn't cost anything. A ten - it's a great service.	

Bums, Legs and Tums	Rating Given - 9
Sore but enjoyable. I stopped going to do volunteer work. This service should be kept going for other people. It was a hindrance because I was too sore to look after my children!	

Parents Drop In Kingswood	Rating Given - 10
It was good at first until my child turned five. The age groups need to be changed so that older children have something. Ten at first then a zero at the end when my child turned 5. Any problems I have with this service have nothing to do with the staff and parents, it's the government.	

0-4 Drop In Kingswood	Rating Given - 10
Lovely at the start. Stopped going as my child turned 5. All of it needs to be kept; my children loved it. Age of children is the problem. Again a ten to start with then a zero at the end.	

After School Drop In, Kingswood	Rating Given - 10
It was useful for me to spend quality time with my children. We stopped going because of my child's age, but I also don't feel as welcome as I did when my child was under 5. This service is great for families. A ten at the start but a zero at the end. Same reason as before, the problems I have with this service have nothing to do with the staff and parents, it's the government!	

Cooking Time Kingswood	Rating Given - 10
Great fun, the kids loved it. The main reason for stopping was my child went to school. All of it should be kept. What about having some Cooking Time for after school? A ten - I attended the group and helped out a lot.	

Be Good to Yourselves	Rating Given - 10
My child was at the crèche, I knew she was safe and cared for so that relaxed me. A ten - I was a big part of the group and was making friends, there was a friendly atmosphere.	

House Matters Kingswood	Rating Given -10
A lot of issues got sorted out in a nice way and we got our voice heard, but I felt like it didn't matter what I said because my children were older, it catered for 0-4 years. The group is needed for parents to voice their concerns. The group was run by parent reps which took a lot of pressure off of me as if there were any problems the parent reps took it to the staff and we didn't have to worry about it. A ten.	

Messy Play Kingswood	Rating Given - 10
It was good to do the things that my children would not be allowed to do at home because it was really messy. We stopped going because my child went to school. Messy play is fantastic for children to be allowed to do things from home. A ten - It's fantastic.	

Bookstart Story Time	Rating Given - 10
I enjoyed this time with my child as I helped her to read quicker. We stopped going because my child reached school age. The worker was really good, very calming and the best person to do it. A ten.	

Commentary on and Analysis of this Parent's Experiences

This mother gave 12 of the services she used a rating of 10 and the other one a rating of 9. All the services would have been unhesitatingly recommended to other parents. This parent can in no way be seen as someone who is inclined to moan or find fault. Her comments show how involved she was in these groups and how highly she valued them, for example

- *There is nowhere to go on a Saturday other than up town so coming here is great and I can be with my children and it doesn't cost anything (Kingswood Drop In Saturdays)*
- *Wonderful. It was time for myself and I knew my child was safe (Badminton KCC)*
- *Sore but enjoyable…I was too sore to look after my children! (Bums, Legs and Tums)*
- *My child was at the crèche; I knew she was safe and cared for so that relaxed me…I was making friends, there was a friendly atmosphere (Be Good to Yourselves)*

A consistent theme in the comments is how she felt about those groups she stopped attending because her children passed the age-thresholds; these two quotes exemplify her feelings;

- *It was fine but when my children turned 5 then Sure Start did not want to know. Provision for age 0-4 is no good if your child is over 5. It was great at the start, a ten, but when my child turned 5 I had no support so it turned to a zero (0-4 Years Drop In 2, Kingswood)*
- *It was useful for me to spend quality time with my children. We stopped going because of my child's age, but I also don't feel as welcome as I did when my child was under 5. This service is great for families. A ten at the start but a zero at the end. Same reason as before, the problems I have with this service have nothing to do with the staff and parents, it's the government! (After School Drop In, Kingswood)*

This mother displays an obvious sense of resentment that there is a lack of non-school provision for children after they reach school age. This mother is aware that this is the result of a national policy, that Corby Sure Start's 'hands are tied' and she feels that they are not to blame for this; for her "it's the government!" and their policies which are at fault. Here is an identification of an unmet need and it would be naïve to think that, in articulating it so well, she is a 'lone voice'; she is giving voice to a concern for very many parents of school-age children. The government's new policy of developing 'extended

schools' may go some way to meeting some of the needs of parents and their children in this regard. However, it is hard to see how they could become a 'substitute' for something like Corby Sure Start, and provide the quality of experiences which this mother and her children have had during their involvement with it.

This mother's story is probably typical of many other parents who have been involved with Corby Sure Start. She's had her ups and downs, some very good times and some disappointments as well. She has seen her children playing with others in the group sessions, developing cognitively, socially and emotionally; she has had the opportunity to meet other parents in the same situation as herself, make friends with them and become part of her community. What is most touching about what this mother has to say is the clear sense that she feels she has 'lost' things which had become very important in her life, things that had become dear to her. It is impossible to put a price on the value of these things for this mother and her family but it is clearly a high one.

FIVE FOLLOW-UP IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

As the interviewers carried out their interviewing appointments one of the questions they asked of parents was, 'Would you be willing to take part in a follow-up interview?' Several parents agreed and five of them were re-interviewed in order to get 'their story' of how they used Corby Sure Start groups and services and what differences this had made for them and their families. These more in-depth interviews follow in this section.

With the agreement of the parents who were interviewed all names have been changed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality

In-Depth Interview 1

Family

Karen is 25 and **Gez** is 40. They have two children, a son, **Charlie** who is 6:6 and a daughter, **Kerry** who is 3:6. Karen's parents live in Dorset and she has one sister. Gez has three brothers and one sister. They are both in regular contact with their families by phone but visits are not frequent, perhaps two or three times a year and usually because of a family occasion, for example they travelled to Dorset in February for Gez's parents' Golden Wedding. Another family get-together involved going to one of Gez's brothers as he was having a 'christening' of his restored vintage Volkswagen Beetle. Gez works full-time for a local firm, driving a lorry delivering and picking-up skips. Karen works part-time as a cleaner for two hours in the evenings, more for the break it gives her than the money it pays.

Pen Green

Charlie went to the **Pen Green Nursery** when he was 10 months old. Karen has been attending a group recently, Parents **Involved in their Children's Learning (PICL)** group at Rockingham Road Primary School which Charlie attends. Karen has been attending the group for two years and has completed the first part of the course and been awarded a certificate for her portfolio on Understanding Children's Development. She is currently completing her portfolio for the second part on Theories of Child Development. Karen was able to go to the group in the first year as Charlie was in the Reception class at Rockingham Road School and Kerry was in the **Crèche** at Pen Green. In the second year Charlie was in Year 1 while Kerry had a place at **Educare** (now Samuel Lloyd Nursery). Kerry went to the nursery twice a week from 9.00 till 1.00. Karen felt that Kerry needed to go to something like that as, often, on their return to the house from taking Charlie to school, Kerry would go back to sleep. Karen said,

"I wanted Kerry to do something which would occupy her and calm her down a bit! It was good for her to mix with other children and she's made some little friends there."

Karen, Gez and their children moved to Corby from Kettering in April of 2001. Initially Karen didn't know anyone in the area or anything about what was available for her and her family locally. Karen's **Health Visitor** told her about the **Pen Green Centre** and **Corby Sure Start.** Sure Start gave her some smoke alarms and she borrowed and stair-gate from them.

Kerry is now attending the **Pen Green Nursery**. Karen said,

"Charlie seemed to get in to the Pen Green Nursery quite quickly but it wasn't the same with Kerry. Some of my neighbours' kids got into Pen Green much younger than Kerry did – I don't understand how these things are worked out."

Karen feels that things have been very different for the family since they moved from Kettering to Corby. They were only in Kettering for a short time and neither Karen and Gez nor Charlie and Kerry had the time to establish any friendships. Karen said,

"Charlie was quite quiet in his Reception year at Rockingham Road, but he's coming out of himself more in Year 1."

Regarding the **PICL course** at the school Karen said

"It's really helped me to understand Kerry's needs better and that it would be good for her to go to **Educare**, mix with other children and adults and get to use lots more toys and do more activities than I can give her at home – we've got plenty of things for the kids to play with, as you can see, but no home can have what she got at Educare or has now at Pen Green."

In addition to the **PICL group** Karen has been to the **Hearing Test Clinic** at Stuart Road. Karen said,

"I got a letter in the post to take Kerry for a standard check up and she failed it as she had a cold at the time. We went back for another test and she passed that one. The Town Centre is a bit out-of-the-way for me so keeping to the times of the appointments

was a bit hard, but the clinic itself is OK; it's a friendly place. What about having a Hearing Test Clinic at Pen Green? That'd be more convenient for everyone around here, wouldn't it?"

Karen wanted to add some points about the **PICL course** which she was still attending. She said,

"It's a good group, the other mums are nice and the leader is very good. It's been good for me to do something for myself and for Kerry to go to the crèche and Educare. When I used to ask Charlie what he'd done at school that day he wouldn't say very much, so being able to see him on the videos that the teacher has done of him has been great. I can see what he's been doing and see the connections between what he does and what he is interested in at school and at home – the PICL course has helped me to understand Charlie and Kerry better."

In-Depth Interview 2

Family

Margaret is 23 years old and **Noel** is 27. They have one son, **Damien** who is 1:10 years old. Margaret and Noel are not married but have a stable relationship, having been partners for 4 years. They have lived in their house for two years and lived in a flat for the previous two years Noel is in full-time work as a manager in a local specialised manufacturing plant owned by a London based family. .

Margaret has 3 brothers and 1 sister who all live in Corby. Her sister Catherine has a daughter called Judith who is 4 months older than Damien and they live quite nearby. Damien will be two years old in October 2004. Margaret's mum and dad also live quite close to both of their daughters in the same estate.

Margaret and Damien, and Catherine and Judith, go to several Pen Green groups together;

- Growing Together on Friday mornings
- Drop In on Wednesdays
- Breast-feeding Group, until their children were a year old
- Baby Massage
- Totscercise on Wednesdays

Margaret has a part-time cleaning job in the evenings, so when Danny comes in from work, Margaret goes out to hers. Margaret's brother is in the Royal Navy so she doesn't see him very often but she sees her mum and dad at the weekends and every Sunday for dinner. Sunday dinner at her parents' house is something of a family tradition and she sees her two younger brothers on these occasions as they are 12 and 14 years old and live at home.

Margaret doesn't approve of people who work full time and have other people looking after their children. She feels that it is alright to work part-time as she does. In her case she does it more to "have a break from being in the house all the time" rather than because they need the money. Margaret thinks it is also important to give Danny and Damien "their own time together" - this is when Danny gives Damien his tea and a bath and

then puts him to bed. Danny has been to the Dad's Group on Sunday mornings at the Pen Green Centre.

Margaret had Damien in hospital by a Caesarean birth. She had major problems in breast-feeding him and the Group Leader of the **Breast Feeding** groups supported her and gave her very good advice. She found out about the Breast Feeding groups, running on Mondays and Wednesdays, while she was still in hospital. It was Margaret's friend's big sister who told her about the Pen Green Centre and that it was a really good place to go. Not long after Margaret started to go to the group her sister Catherine started to go as well. Margaret says that the group was a "very personal group" in terms what it was about and she was anxious at first – she thought "Oh, please don't wake him up as I'll have to feed him." However, she soon got over her tentativeness especially about her initial difficulties in breast-feeding Damien problems. Margaret says she also found it good to go to the group because "I really wanted to get out of the house."

Margaret also went to **Baby Massage.** She says,

"I came out of the hospital on the Tuesday and went to Baby Massage on the Thursday but Damien slept so I only watched what the instructor and the other mums were doing." Margaret found the group to be very structured and there wasn't much time or opportunity for talking – "it seemed much more about doing" Margaret greatly preferred the Breast Feeding group because it was much more social

Another service that Margaret went to with Damien was **Messy Play.** At one of the sessions Margaret remembers that there was a load of spaghetti and wet cornflour mixed up together; Damien really liked how it felt and left his hand in it for so long that the mixture set hard round his hand. Damien also really enjoyed playing with shaving foam – "He loved the feel of it and liked to put it in his mouth." However, by the time Damien was 5 months old he could sit up, and by 1 year he was walking, so he got bored with the Messy Play because it was too static.

Currently, Margaret and Damien go to **Growing Together.** Damien gets on really well with great with the Group Co-leader as he is familiar with her from the Breast Feeding group.

Margaret knows several of the workers via her involvement with the Breast Feeding group – in addition to the Group Co-leader she also knows the two co-leaders of the Breast Feeding group who come to Growing Together, and so does Damien. Margaret fells that the Growing Together group is much better for older children because there are so many things for them to do and materials to play with, such as toys, sand + water. She feels that maybe there should be somewhere more suitable for small babies as there are sometimes risks with so many toddlers running around. Also, the toy tram tracks are put on top of the so that the toddlers have to climb up onto the tables to play with trains etc. Margaret feels that this is a safety issue and questions if it is sensible to encourage small children to climb up on furniture etc.

Margaret said,
"there's a few problems with lots of the groups over safety; like hot drinks – where do you put them? What if they get knocked over and a child gets burned or scalded?

Margaret has used the **Wednesday Drop In** at Pen Green and said,

"It would be a good idea to have somewhere where you could go to buy a drink a tea or coffee or get a bag of crisps. The session lasts from 9.00 till 12.30; that's a long time to go without a drink. I know you can go to the **Family Room** but me and Catherine went once and we didn't feel welcome - it's a bit cliquey; even the staff were like that. The person running the group makes a big difference, especially the first time you go, you know, are they interested in you? In the **Family Room** me and Catherine weren't even acknowledged. It's so different to the **Breastfeeding Group** – the Group Leader there really makes you feel welcome and they organise trips and every child has a little party when they're one year old. Nobody has anything bad to say about the Breastfeeding Group."

Margaret said that Damien has only recently started actually playing with toys; for a long time he took them apart and put them together again. Margaret said,

"At the moment he really enjoys playing with playdough – he likes how it feels in his hands and how he can make lot so shapes with it."

Another group that Margaret took Damien to was **Totsercise** in the gym at Pen Green. Margaret said,

"At first Damien was a bit shy but now he's much more into it and involved – he likes to go in the middle of that circle of kids and do his own thing. It's a really good group – Leanne who runs it's a bit mad but I suppose you have to be to do something like that."

Margaret has also been to **Bookstart**, she said,

""The woman who runs it, gave out some leaflets about it on the Friday at Pen Green and me and Catherine went to it on the following Tuesday up at Corby Library. It was a bit open at first and Damien wanted to run about, so it was a bit awkward at first. In later sessions the Group Leader or the library staff had put up some barriers which was OK but sometimes Damien still got through! I like going to this group but I find that it's on at an awkward time – it would be better for me if it was on from 9.00 to 10.00 in the morning and some of my friends from the other groups say that too; if it was on then more of us would be able to go. Damien likes the songs and all that but it'd be better if they told more stories as well."

Margaret said that Damien still gets up in the night for a drink and a nappy-change and usually has a nap in the afternoon,

"Before I had to take him out for a walk then he'd go to sleep and then I'd have to be really quiet so as not to wake him! But now he goes down OK in the afternoon."

Margaret asked about the Water Play/Therapy room at Pen Green,

"Why isn't it open yet? What's taking so long? Damien would love it in there – he really likes playing with all the water stuff in the Discovery Area."

In-Depth Interview 3

Family

Katey, and her husband **Bert,** are both 35. They have been married for 4 years and have two sons, **Andrew** who is 2:3 and **Bill** is 6 months old. Bert is employed full-time as an engineer by a local firm. All of their respective extended families live in Corby; Bert has four brothers, three of whom are married with their own children, his other brother and his long-term partner are getting married this year. Between them Katey and Bert have 13 nephews and nieces. Both Katey's and Bert's mothers and fathers still live in Corby. Katey's parents have lived in the town for 36 years. Both Katey and Bert enjoy regular contact with members of their extended families.

Katey and Bert have decided that Katey should stay at home with their boys for as long as possible, and at least until their youngest goes to school full-time. Katey worked on a part-time basis at the crèche at the Pen Green Centre until she fell pregnant with her first child.

Katey has been involved with many groups and services within the Corby Sure Start programme. Katey's first experience of the Sure Start provision was with **Baby Massage**. Katey went with Andrew when he was 11 months old. Her **Health Visitor** had suggested she go to Baby Massage earlier but Katey had clinical depression and did not feel comfortable and confident enough to go initially. When she did eventually go to the group she says Andrew enjoyed it but she felt the he was "too old". However, Katey's decision to go to the group paid major dividends for her personally. She made several good friends among other mothers at the group and they still meet socially on a weekly basis; they arrange to go to some one's home, everyone brings along something different to eat and they all enjoy each other's company and watching their children playing together. One of these friends from the Baby Massage Group is Andrew's Godmother.

As Andrew passed the age beyond which he could got to Baby Massage Katey moved on to the **Breast Feeding Group** which ran on Wednesdays. Katey already knew the Group Leader as she had been her midwife when she had Bill. Katey's involvement with this group

was also largely social; she came along to it with several of her new friends from Baby Massage. The Group Leader provides a further bond among them all as she is Godmother to Bill and to 6 other children of mothers in the friendship group! Katey doesn't go to the group any longer and is sad about this but her friendships are no longer dependent on this – as described above the relationships among the group of friends are strong and they see each other regularly.

Katey now attends the **Growing Together Group** on Friday mornings, whenever she can. She places a high value on this group, saying that "the staff are brilliant - they take an interest in you as a person which is really nice. It's a fantastic group." Katey anticipates that it will be "devastating" that she and Andrew will have to stop going when Andrew turns three at the end of September. Katey has a place for Andrew at a local nursery which means that she will not be able to go to the group on Fridays. However, she is looking into the possibility of getting Andrew a place at another nursery which will mean that she will be able to go to Growing Together with Bill – Katey feels that,

"Andrew got so much out of the Growing Together group it would be sad if Bill couldn't have the same"

Katey says that everyone in the group with children leaving at the same time all feel the same as she does – sorry that their involvement with the group, and possibly each other, is coming to an end.

Katey also went to **Totscercise** on Wednesday mornings. She says that they did some really good things in this group, for example, they made lots of really good Halloween Party stuff. Katey feels that the group was very good and she went until Bill was born. Unfortunately, after his birth she found it "too much to get two little ones ready and get there for a 9.30 start, as she had to walk there. In addition to these difficulties, Katey was also trying to breast feed Bill. Katey pointed out that the people who lead and run the groups make a huge difference to how well you enjoy it or not. Katey said that when this was the case, "I didn't feel welcome."

Katey sometimes also went to the **Messy Play Group.** Andrew was coming up to his first birthday so she took him along. Katey says, "Andrew really enjoyed making a mess!" He did his first painting when he was just over a year old; his proud parents laminated and it hangs in their kitchen. Katey says it was really good for Andrew to have lots of different children to mix and play with, and that "The people running group were very nice."

Katey attended the **Music Group** at the Kingswood Neighbourhood Centre and still goes with Andrew and Bill,

"A couple of my friends go to this group and I've been up to use it with them a few times now. Sometimes my friend Kirsty picks us up or I get my Dad to drop us off. It's fantastic – really good. The Group Leader keeps the children interested, even captivated sometimes. Andrew sings all the songs he's learned when he gets home, it's lovely. The group is really well run; the Group Leader splits us all up into two groups of about 8 to 10 children, and their mums. She knows everybody's names, it's really nice. I thought it would all be about singing and nursery rhymes and there is that, but it's also about beats and timing in music. She doesn't use traditional instruments but everyday things which children can enjoy like an empty plastic water bottle. The mums have said it's so good they'd pay for it! It's a fantastic service and they should advertise it more so more mums know about it. And Group Leader is showing the children sign language and they're picking it up! I think the session would be better if it was a little bit longer, maybe only by 10 or 15 minutes – it takes about a quarter of an hour to get all the children settled and then, 15 minutes later, it's over. I've heard that it's changing from Kingswood to Pen Green and on a different day, which might mean we can't go which would be a shame."

She also goes to the **Drop In** on Wednesdays and feels that it is a very good thing, but it would be so much better if she and the other mums could get a hot drink; Katey says that "it's great but sometimes you could really so with a cup of tea – even if they got a vending machine in, that would be fine. Sometimes I take the boys and find (the Group Leader of the group she used to attend) and we have a cuppa and a good chat."

In-Depth Interview 4

Family

Anne is married to Pete and they have two daughters, Laura who is 4 and a half and Jasmine who is 2 and a half. Anne's parents live in a small village just outside Corby. She has a younger brother who lives at home with their parents. Anne and her family have daily contact with her parents as they happily take care of the children and call in every day. They paid a visit while the writer was there interviewing Anne. Pete's parents live in a village near Peterborough and he has 2 brothers, one of whom lives in Corby the other in a village in the Welland Valley. Anne frequently sees one of her sisters-in –law at several Sue Start groups (Drop in, Messy Play) and a local playgroup. Anne works as a childminder and Pete works full time for large local food manufacturer.

Sure Start Involvement

Anne and her family have used a number of Sure Start groups and services at the Pen Green Centre and in the Outreach locations.

Initially Anne was introduced to Sure Start by her Health Visitor who suggested that she take Laura to **Baby Massage** at Pen Green as she had colic when she was 6 weeks old. Anne says,

"I went once but I didn't like it so I didn't go back, it was too cliquey. Anyway, I was a new mum and not very confident – I felt that everyone was looking at me; I didn't fee comfortable."

The next group Anne used at Pen Green was **Messy Play**; Anne said,

"Laura loved that. I stopped going for a little while when Jasmine arrived and I was learning to cope with two children not one which was difficult at first. After a couple of

weeks I'd kind of got the hang of it and we went back and Laura had a really good time there."

When Jasmine was 9 months old Anne started childminding and took her two daughters and all of the other children to Messy Play which they enjoyed a lot.

When she was 2:9 years old Laura got a place at the Pen Green Nursery and so Anne could spend a bit more time with Jasmine. Anne took Laura, Jasmine and the children in her care to the **Drop In** at Pen Green on Wednesdays from time to time. She said,

"It's one the best things at Pen Green, there's so many facilities and things for children to do"

Anne was very conscious of Laura being at the Pen Green Nursery four days a week so, on some Wednesdays, she took the children elsewhere to so other things. Anne said that sometimes Drop In could get really busy, she said,

If I'd only had my own two to think about it would've been fine, but as I had another two children with me that I was looking after it was much more difficult so I used to go away with them for a little while and the come back later when things had died down a bit."

Another group which Anne went to at Pen Green was **PICL – Parents Involved in their Children's Learning.** This group had a big impact on Anne;

"I loved it, it was really fantastic. Laura used to feel so important when me and her Dad watched the video they'd made of her in the nursery. It also made me feel that I was important to them as a parent and that Laura was important to them too. It was a real partnership – we planned things together with the nursery and it was really good that they took on board what I had to say about Laura and what she did. It really made me think about the links between Laura's play at home and her interests in the nursery. It was also really helpful for my childminding work to learn about schemas and involvement and things like that - I could apply it all to the children I looked after as well as Laura and Jasmine."

Anne also used the **Family Room** at Pen Green from time to time when Laura was new to the nursery and was settling in,

"I used to go along to the Family Room sometimes when Laura was settling in and I needed to be nearby in case she needed me or the nursery staff had to find me. It was somewhere for me to go with Jasmine. It was a bit cliquey but I wasn't bothered about it; the people who go there every day are bound to get to know each other better than someone like me who only came in a few times."

Anne found out about the Sure Start groups and services in other places because she was a friend of someone who ran a group at one of them who suggested that she come along. Anne took Laura, Jasmine and the two children in her care to **Tots Exercise** at the Kingswood Centre. She said,

"I was really pleased with it - the children really got a lot out of it and it was good fun for me too. I got out of the habit of going because it clashed with the Drop In session at Pen Green and the children wanted to go to that instead. It's a shame that it couldn't be on at a different time."

Anne found out about two other groups running at the Kingswood Centre from Tots Exercise – **Kingswood Drop In Saturdays** and **Parents' Drop In.**

"The first time I went to the Saturday Drop In I was a bit worried - it's in a different part of the town and I didn't know anybody; I thought it might be a bit cliquey but it wasn't and I was pleasantly surprised by how friendly everybody was. Even Pete found it to be really good and family-friendly. There were lots of things for the kids to do and some for parents too. It was really nice for me to be able to go to something on a Saturday which was just for me and my family – when I'm childminding in the week I go to weekly groups with the children I look after, so it was good to do something with just my own two. Pete does a nightshift on Fridays so it was easy for him to come along – he went a few times with Laura to the Dad's Group on Sunday mornings at Pen Green but we decided to make Sundays a family day and just do things all together. "

Anne went to **Parents' Drop In** on Wednesdays after picking up some children from school at 3.30 and stayed till about 5.00.

"It was really good, the staff were very accommodating. There were lots of different age groups there and they were all catered for. We were always made welcome and never turned away - they're very flexible about ages there. Pen Green are very strict on ages especially in the school holidays which are my busiest times being a childminder. I understand why Pen Green has these rules but it really restricts the possibilities for me – you're between the Devil and the deep blue sea when you've got some children under 5 and some who are over 5."

Other groups which Anne went to were **Story Time** at the Danesholme Library and **Rhymetime** at Corby Library,

"A friend told me about these groups and now the group leader mails us when there is something on. We've used **Rhymetime** a few times now but when it's on the children are usually asleep. It's a really friendly group and lets the children get access to lots of books. The woman who runs these groups is great, a lovely person. She remembers all the children's names, and mine, even though we don't go all the time. It would be good if there were more sessions and at lots of different times, some in the mornings and some in the afternoons. Another thing is the access to Corby Library – some people don't like lifts and if you 're using a double-buggy it's a real problem."

Anne also felt that, while there were now lots of things for children under 5, and lots of them thanks to Sure Start, but, she said,

"There's a definite gap for children aged 5-10 years old – there's very little for parents and carers with children this old except **After School Clubs** and **Holiday Clubs**. I really like all the things at Pen Green and at Kingswood but it would be good to have some things in the Town Centre area, which is central for most people."

In-Depth Interview 5

Family

Jackie is 34 and her partner, Brendan, is 36. Their daughter, Charlotte, is 6 years 9 months old. Jackie's parents both still live in Corby and she has two sisters both of whom have two children each. Brendan is a long-distance lorry driver for TNT and he works constant nightshifts. Jackie sees her Mum and Dad often but is not especially close to her two sisters.,

"We sometimes have a laugh and a drink together, but I see more of their kids than them. Sometimes I see them all at my Mum's"

Jackie said,

"For a long time I didn't even know that Sure Start existed then a friend told me about it – she had used some Sure Start groups and they'd lent her a stair-gate and said it was a good thing, so I got to know about it from her. I heard one of the other mums at the school say, 'What? Can people like us use Sure Start?' I don't know if she meant she was too good for it or that she wasn't good enough. Anyway, I told her that it was open to everyone and that she should find out a bit more about it. It would be better if Sue Start advertised itself a bit more so that more people knew about it. I found out about the PICL group at the school – Sure Start could use the school to let people know about what it does and market itself "

Jackie has been attending the **Parents Involved in their Children's Learning** group at Exeter Primary School,

"I saw a poster about the group on the school notice board. It said there was going to be an introductory meeting in the school library about this new course which would be run at the school. I really only went along out of curiosity but I'm glad I did because it's made me think differently about my daughter, Charlotte. Now I understand her better, how she behaves, how she plays, what she draws and paints. I think I can understand that there

may be a meaning in what she's doing – you know, what she's doing and why she's doing it. Like, she'll put sellotape all around a picture she's made. And she likes to go in the shopping trolley at the supermarket; this is because she has an envelopment schema. Now I keep all the pictures she does at home and from school – I didn't used to. I've found the PICL group a really good experience; it's broadened my horizons. I've got a better understanding of Charlotte and not just the way she is now; I can now see better what she was like when she was younger. I wish I'd known then what I know now. As well as that I think I've now got a better understanding of myself and it has been really good to be able to do something that's for myself, that's just for me. I feel much more confident about myself now than I used to. I'd like to see if there's anything else I could do after the PICL course ends. In the first year we did a portfolio of work on schemas, well being, involvement and teaching strategies; this year we've done personal and emotional well being. Personally, and with the benefit of hindsight, I think it would have been better if we'd done things the other way round. Anyway, I still enjoyed it and I wouldn't know what I know now if I hadn't. It's also good that Charlotte can have the portfolio I made about her in the first year as a record of an important part of her childhood."

PART FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Four patterns of response emerged from the analysis of the data, especially through a close reading of all the comments made by parents about Corby Sure Start's Outreach groups and services.

The largest number of respondents was 'Satisfied but Wanting More'. Their experiences of Corby Sure Start services had been positive and they expressed a desire for more of the same. Corby Sure Start Programme's response to this group will be significant and will prompt them to consider several important factors,

- In its final year should the Programme carry on providing the same services in the same ways?
- At this stage in its evolution should the Programme attempt to develop new services using the same models of delivery?
- Would it be appropriate to redeploy some of the resources from existing successful services in order to bring others them up to the same standards?
- To what extent has Corby Sure Start penetrated existing public services in terms of them embedding new practices and working in different ways?

Two of the remaining patterns, 'Wanting Services Delivered in Different Ways' and 'Identifying Unmet Needs', involved fewer parents' comments to be sure. However, they brought into sharp relief a situation where some parents felt they had needs which were not being addressed or, if they were, the provision was not adequate. Those 'Wanting Services Delivered in Different Ways' focussed on wanting the same services provided at times which would be more convenient in terms of their other family and work commitments; after-school-times, twilight sessions, evenings and weekends. The ratings and comments for those services currently operating in this way suggest that this would be popular with a larger number of parents than those who specifically suggested it (see: After School Drop In, Kingswood; Kingswood Drop In, Saturdays; After School Time, Wick Close). The comments making up 'Identifying Unmet Needs' pointed up several issues such as the age-thresholds for some services and the lack of provision for school-age children and their parents.

In addition to these factors, two parents articulated the desire for more counselling for parents; one of these specifically mentioned counselling for mothers with post-natal depression. One of the original Public Service Agreement targets set for the Sure Start Unit was the identification, and appropriate support of, mothers with PND. This was required as a better understanding of the incidence and effects of PND was necessary so that it could be tackled more effectively as a significant mental health issue. In 2000 there was a reduction in the number of PSA targets in general. The target relating to Post Natal Depression was proving difficult to meet as,

- There was a need for cultural sensitivity to the perception of PND, and how to deal with it, across the variety of communities in Britain
- This factor, among others, had important implications for the identification of PND making it very difficult to measure reliably at a national level

Consequently, the PSA target was translated into a Service Delivery target, devolved to local programmes, as they would be able to identify and support mothers with PND while taking all relevant local factors into account. As a policy decision, this is one which Corby Sure Start can claim to have taken fully on board.

The Programme entered into a Service Level Agreement with Heartlands Primary Care Trust in Northamptonshire to run the Post Natal Depression support service. Using a set of professionally recognised measures, women were identified as potentially suffering from Post Natal Depression. These women were offered weekly support visits by a health visitor and the Programme's registered mental health nurse. In addition they were offered practical support in attending groups and services. The effects of the service are summarised in Table 15

Table 15 – Identification and Care of Women with Post Natal Depression

Year	% post natal women identified as suffering PND	% of these women receiving appropriate care
2000-1	19	56
2001-2	16	97
2002-3	13.5	100

(Corby Sure Start Annual Report, 2003)

The parent who has commented specifically on this matter constitutes only 1.5% of those surveyed for this evaluation (1 of 66). The significance of her comment is in how it is interpreted; as the only parent in the survey who made this specific point is she testimony as to the success of the service, or does she represent mothers who have 'fallen through the net' which the service provides?

The fourth pattern, 'Negative Experiences', involved more parents' comments than those in patterns 2 and 3 but fewer than in pattern 1. These comments came from parents whose engagement with the Programme had been tinged by some poor and disappointing experiences. They included such things as feeling unwelcome in groups, poor access to venues, a lack of staff or a service ending. In a small number of cases (6) the parent's disappointment resulted from their unfulfilled expectations as to what they thought the group or service would do for them in terms of their own needs. As suggested earlier, these parents' feelings of alienation could have resulted from a single negative experience or the accumulation of several smaller incidents which 'tipped' the parent into feeling let down by the service.

Earlier in the report we argued that a 'no blame' approach should be applied to parents in terms of the feelings they express in their comments. We also said that the same criteria apply to the workers and that they be given 'the benefit of the doubt' as to what they may, or may not, have done. The three case studies, utilising particular parents and their articulation of their experiences, are intended to generate more focussed thinking and discussion about these issues. However, having said all this, it behoves the Corby Sure Start team to **look closely at what parents have actually said about their negative experiences,** as well as our interpretations of what they reveal and the questions which they raise about the provision of services and practices within them. Decisions may follow about the nature of provision, whether practice requires changing and, if so, how. This may lead to the identification of additional training for staff. The small number of parents who have described a poor experience, or talked about an unmet need, may be Corby Sure Start's most important 'critical friends'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Parents' comments articulating their feelings about poor or negative experiences must be taken seriously as these represent their perceptions of what they feel actually happened; as argued in the report, 'if people define situations as real then they have real consequences'. The consequences have implications for parents and families who use the Programme and for workers and managers in terms of service provision and practice. The comments which parents have made about individual services in the section on 'Negative Experiences' will need to be discussed by those workers and managers directly responsible for providing them, so they can evaluate their practices in the light of what parents have said.
- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the importance of full and accurate completion of Initial Contact Forms and records of parents' and children's attendances at groups and services. There are several reasons for this.
  - These systems generate all the personal information about families and their usage of the Programme's services held on the database. The accuracy and reliability of this information is vital because the database forms the backbone of information used by managers, administrators, group leaders and workers in the day-to-day running of the programme and in strategic planning for new services. Information held on the database is also used by researchers and evaluators for their work. Workers running groups and services want to spend as much time as possible working with parents and children and it is accepted that the filling in of forms is not a high priority for parents. However, ways and means to support workers in the completion of these administrative tasks must be developed so that the integrity of the information on the database is secured. What is currently not known about parents and families could be just as crucial as what is known in terms of planning provision for them, collectively and individually.
  - The 'knowns' and 'unknowns' in the database result from the criteria used when it was set up. The Corby Sure Start Programme database was constructed to collect the specific data required to show if the Programme was meeting certain targets, so the Programme needed to know certain things about parents and families and not others. Consequently, some questions are not asked of parents; for example, they are not asked if they are in receipt of any benefits

such as Jobseekers' Allowance or Housing Benefit. Some questions are asked of parents but not always answered; for example, are they a lone parent or do they have a partner. In any case, all of the answers to these questions, where given, are subject to change in the short and medium term; for example, a relationship may begin or come to an end, someone may find or lose a job. Consequently, information given at one point in time can be out of date quite quickly. It is ironic that this information is used to inform the very indices of deprivation used to identify the wards which make up Sure Start Programme catchment areas.

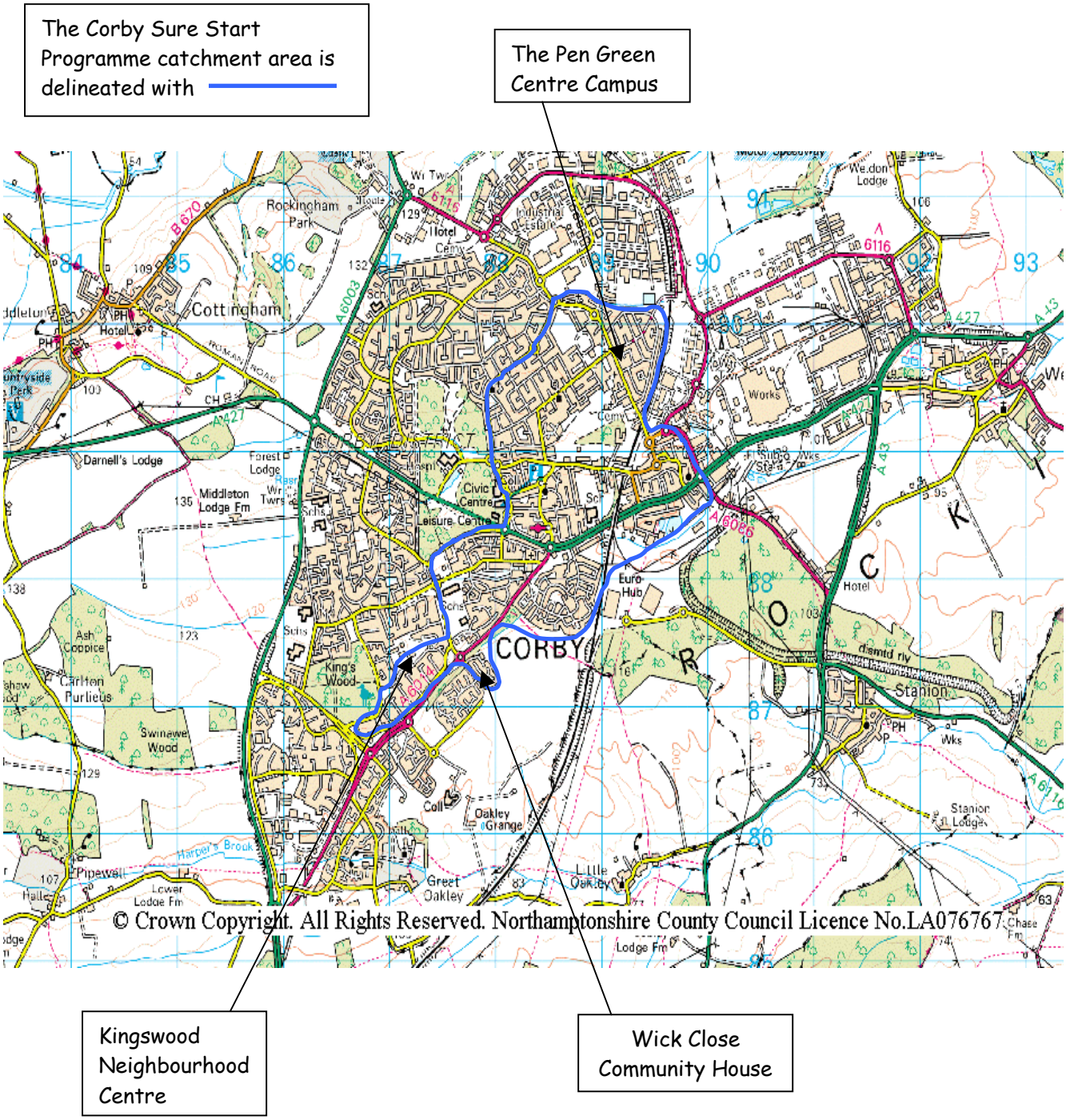
- The information held on the database can be very useful to staff. One example is where they can request that the data administrator provide them with an audit trail of a family's involvement with Corby Sure Start. This shows them who had the initial contact with the family, who carried out the first home visit, who completed the Initial Contact Form and which groups and services the family have used. Workers can then liaise with each other and develop a knowledge-base about the family helping them to provide better support and advice. Another example is where staff can request a database search, using a variety of criteria, which can identify children and families who need to access a service. An instance of this is where, by using the dates of birth on the database, a worker can identify those children who will have their second birthday in any six month period and be eligible for a Speech and Language assessment.

❖ Corby Sure Start could investigate the possibility of altering the operation of the database so that it 'flags up' issues of possible concern. For example, if a parent stops attending several groups simultaneously or in quick succession, appropriate workers from the team could be called upon to see if the reasons for the withdrawal are benign or if this is a parent or family who requires support. Team members could advise as to how contact with the parent could be re-established and what types of support could be offered to the family. Similarly, decline in attendance at a group or service could be monitored and discussed as part of the ongoing review of the Groupwork Programme, since it could be that in specific cases Group Leaders are not yet effectively meeting the needs of families.

- Follow-up work needs to be undertaken with those parents whose names were removed from the list of potential interviewees on the advice of Corby Sure Start. Staff would need to be consulted again and sensitivity will be required in contacting any of these parents. There are potential gains in terms of finding out what these parents' views are as to the quality of provision; they could provide highly informative feedback to Corby Sure Start about how well families are supported at time of greater need. The work would necessarily be small-scale but could be greater in depth than the rest of the evaluation, perhaps using a case-study approach. In any event, these parents and families should have the same opportunities as others to comment on the Corby Sure Start Programme.
- This evaluation has focussed explicitly on the Outreach work of Corby Sure Start. However, this begs the question as to what is meant by 'outreach'. This is the terminology used within Corby Sure Start for all of the work which takes place in a variety of locations away from the Pen Green Centre campus. This provides evaluators with a simple differentiation of groups and services to be examined but it may not correspond to how Corby Sure Start is perceived by the parents and families who use it, or by the Programme's own staff. There may be a 'Pen Green-centric' view of the Programme for some which is not shared by others; e.g., for a mother who attends several groups at the Kingswood Centre, it is this location which forms the 'core' of the Programme and the Pen Green Centre is at the 'periphery'. This may be unimportant if parents are happy with the groups and services they are able to access at, say, the Kingswood Centre and/or Wick Close Community House. Additionally, Transport is provided to take parents and children to groups and services at other locations. What may be of significance here is the possibility that parents' own *perceptions* limit their usage of services. If a parent's perceptions lead them to attend one location exclusively, and staff feel they or their children could benefit by accessing services at another place, fine judgements may need to be made about if and how these perceptions could be most effectively challenged. Corby Sure Start staff need to discuss this with parents and Parent Representatives in User Groups, and other appropriate contexts, to gauge parents' reactions.
- And, what about the workers? Could the same perceptions be found among the staff who work predominantly or exclusively at one of the 'outreach' locations? If

staff are part of the 'outreach' work could they feel that they, and the services they run, are peripheral within the Corby Sure Start Programme? Alternatively, could they feel that their 'outreach' location forms a central focus for many parents and their families in that community? If this is the case, do they feel a strong sense of identification with their location? Does this enhance their feelings of team-membership and their commitment to maintaining the quality of the groups and services which run there? As illustrated in Figure C, staff working at Outreach locations may be 'at the edge' of the Programme in a geographical sense.

Figure C – The Corby Sure Start Programme's Catchment Area and the Three Main Locations Providing Groups and Services

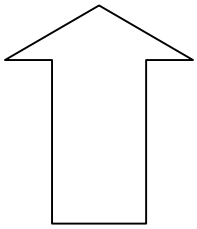


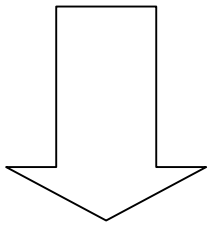
However, their potential isolation is counterbalanced by several connected factors. As illustrated in Figure D, these factors mean that, in the context of the Corby Sure Start Programme, outreach staff are able to come closer to the centre and potential divisions are avoided. Those who work in the Outreach provision are simultaneously 'in reach' of each other across the three main locations. The processes outlined in Figure D could be discussed in team meetings and inform exercises and activities in team-building work.

Figure D - Processes which Minimise Individual and Collective Isolation

Contact and Representation

Workers meet regularly, both formally and informally, within their locations and at the Pen Green Centre. On Thursdays the workers come to Pen Green and have meetings in their work teams, e.g. all Childcare workers together. The following week these meetings take place in the morning and the afternoon is given over to a Business Meeting attended by all staff in the team. These practices, along with the programme of group and individual training, help to promote the same philosophy about service provision and standards across all of the locations.





Multiple roles

Workers occupy specific positions in the organisation which require them to perform certain actions in their job-role. This role may be sub-divided into several others. In addition to their professional roles must be added more personal roles associated with work as well as the range of roles which people play on a day-to-day basis. For example,

- they may manage the work of other people
- they may conduct supervision with some colleagues and be supervised by another in turn
- they may liaise with people from other agencies to meet their objectives
- they may be called upon to emotionally support a colleague who has a work-related issue and whose feelings need to be 'contained'
- they may work with parents and/or children on a daily basis
- they may have friendships with colleagues and meet them socially outside work
- they may have partners and children allowing them to empathise with parents who use the centre and colleagues in the same situation

Staff have frequent interaction with each other - face-to-face, on the phone and by email - within their own base-location and between the main locations of the Programme.

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Appendix A – Corby Sure Start Evaluations 1999-2003

Corby Sure Start Evaluation 1999

In anticipation of the setting up of Corby Sure Start in 1999, a series of meetings were held so that the development group for the project could discuss their plan, local targets and proposed interventions with parents in the community. The planning group was made up of both parents and professionals. To ensure that the needs and wants of the local community received close attention during this initial phase the planning group decided that

- the development group would always be chaired by a parent
- at least one third of the group would comprise parents from the Sure Start catchment area

It was clear that parent representatives and parents who attended the meetings to develop the plan wanted their voices to be heard. In the words of the report,

"..parents were very vocal in expressing their views and concerns." (Tait et al; 1999; p 1)

As a result of these discussions the development group felt that a key use of the funds provided by the starter grant for the project was to conduct a Parent Led Needs Assessment (PLNA). A survey of the needs of families conducted by other parents would ensure that there was a congruence between the priorities identified by the development group and those of people in the local community. Consequently, a team of 13 'parent interviewers' was recruited and trained as,

"It was felt that parents as interviewers would be more likely to engage in an honest, open and critical dialogue with other parents." (Tait et al; 1999; p 1)

It was decided that families with children under the age of one would be the 'target group' for interviewing as their experiences would have been the most recent and most relevant

to the aims and objectives of the Sure Start Project in Corby. Thus, the 1999 PLNA had four key aims in line with local and national objectives;

1. To produce evidence as to how effective ante- and post-natal services had been.
2. To identify those needs of families which had not been met.
3. To develop insights into the contributions made by Health, Social Services, Education and the voluntary sector to the reduction of stress and vulnerability of families with infants.
4. To ensure that the interventions planned by Corby Sure Start, as developed by parents and professionals, were appropriate and matched local needs.

Some of the key needs identified for expectant mothers and new mothers and their families, were a mixture of forms of personal support and those of a practical nature. Parents identified emotional support as a key factor, access to transport and health services along with information on child development, and the provision of childcare facilities such as crèches. Crucially, these would allow parents some 'free time' from their children – time when they could do something for themselves, or 'just have a break' (Tait et al; 1999; p 21).

Corby Sure Start Evaluation 2001

The second survey, conducted in 2001, focussed on how parents evaluated services in the light of patterns of parental employment and the accessibility of early years childcare (Tait et al; 2001) This study followed the established model in 1999 and 'parent interviewers' were once again recruited, including several parents who had carried out interviewing in the initial study. It was decided to contact as many of the original cohort of interviewees as possible, as their children would by then have been about two years of age. The reasons for this decision were,

- The second survey would allow comparisons to be made
- The levels of support from local services experienced by these families could be ascertained
- An accurate assessment of how many had come into contact with the Sure Start programme could be made

- Focussing on parents with children aged 18 months to 2 years would allow some assessment of the needs of parents who were trying to return to work, and whether specific new initiatives set up by Sure Start to support this were being successful or not
- The success of specific government policies intended to encourage mothers back into the workplace, such as family credit and working parents tax credit, could be examined
- The amount of support and childcare provided by the parents' extended family could be investigated and assessed in terms of parents making a return to the workforce.

It was not possible to fulfil the original intention and replicate the 1999 study and so re-interview all the participants. This was due to reasons such as,

- People no longer at the same address
- People who could not be contacted
- Those who declined to take part in the second survey

However, 31 of the original 57 families who took part in the first evaluation were successfully re-interviewed. This allowed analysis of how things had developed for them now that their children were 2 to 3 years of age. This group were seen to be a distinctive sub-set of the original participants in terms of stability and consistency of residence, relationships and employment (Research, Development and Training Base 2001; p5). This group was designated as Cohort 1 and their data was analysed separately from that of Cohort 2, a group of parents who were being interviewed about their usage and experiences of services for the first time.

The main findings of this 2001 report were that

- There was a variety of family types evident in the survey
- Generally, family life and employment had to be carefully 'juggled'
- Family support and agency support in terms of childcare had to be carefully coordinated to enable mothers to return to work

- The mixed patterns of shiftwork in Corby helped to promote mothers returning to work as long as there was great flexibility in childcare arrangements
- There was some expressed preference for childcare to be undertaken by relatives within the home for children under 3 years of age

Corby Sure Start Evaluation 2003

This evaluation was divided into three discrete strands.

- A Parent's Satisfaction Survey, similar to those conducted for the previous two evaluations, which provided a largely summative perspective on the Programme
- Focus Group sessions were carried out Sure Start workers, which provided a largely illuminative perspective
- A survey of Sure Start Management Board members provided a largely formative perspective.

The Parent-to-Parent User Satisfaction Survey By allowed direct evaluations of services by service-users via a number rating regarding the quality of the service they have experienced, plus comments about the services and how they felt improvement could be made. This allowed the differentiation of three different ranges of ratings – 8-10, 5-7 and 4 or less. These ranges were then associated with,

- a high quality of service and how this could be maintained
- an acceptable quality of service and how it could be improved
- an unacceptable level quality of service and how this could be reduced or eliminated?'

These categories formed the basis of how each group or service was evaluated. The evaluation also found that some services were particularly significant because of their functions of, 'signposting' parents towards other groups and services and/or 'gatekeeping',

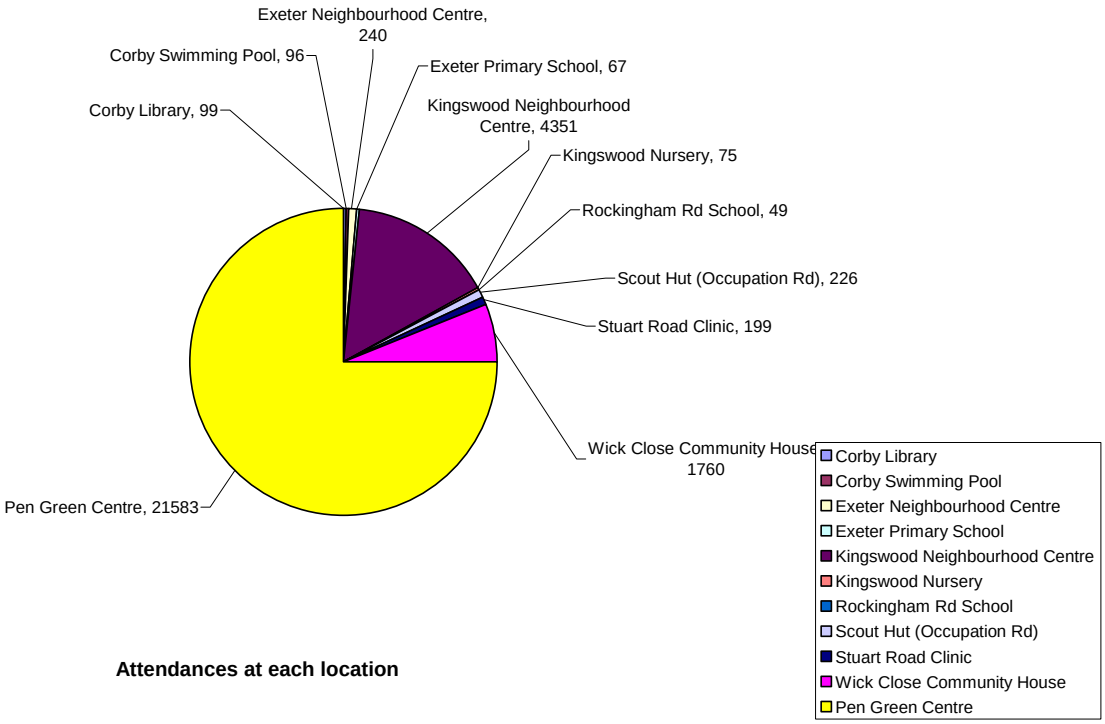
in the sense that they were instrumental in allowing or promoting access to other groups or services. Family Visiting and Transport were two highly rated services which were chosen to exemplify these processes.

The Focus Group work with Corby Sure Start workers showed that there was a strong esprit-de-corps in the programme and workers displayed a deep commitment to the programme and its aims in terms of supporting parents and families in the community. Often workers, at all levels and across the programme, worked well beyond their remits in terms of job descriptions. However, there was no sense of resentment about this as staff deeply felt that this was 'their' programme, they had created it and would do all they could to meet the needs of the families they supported.

Both the staff and members of the Management Board felt that the programme was very well managed, that workers were well supported and given ample opportunity for training and self-development. Board members felt that all concerned had clear understanding of the structures and systems in the programme, people's roles in the organisation and its aims and objectives.

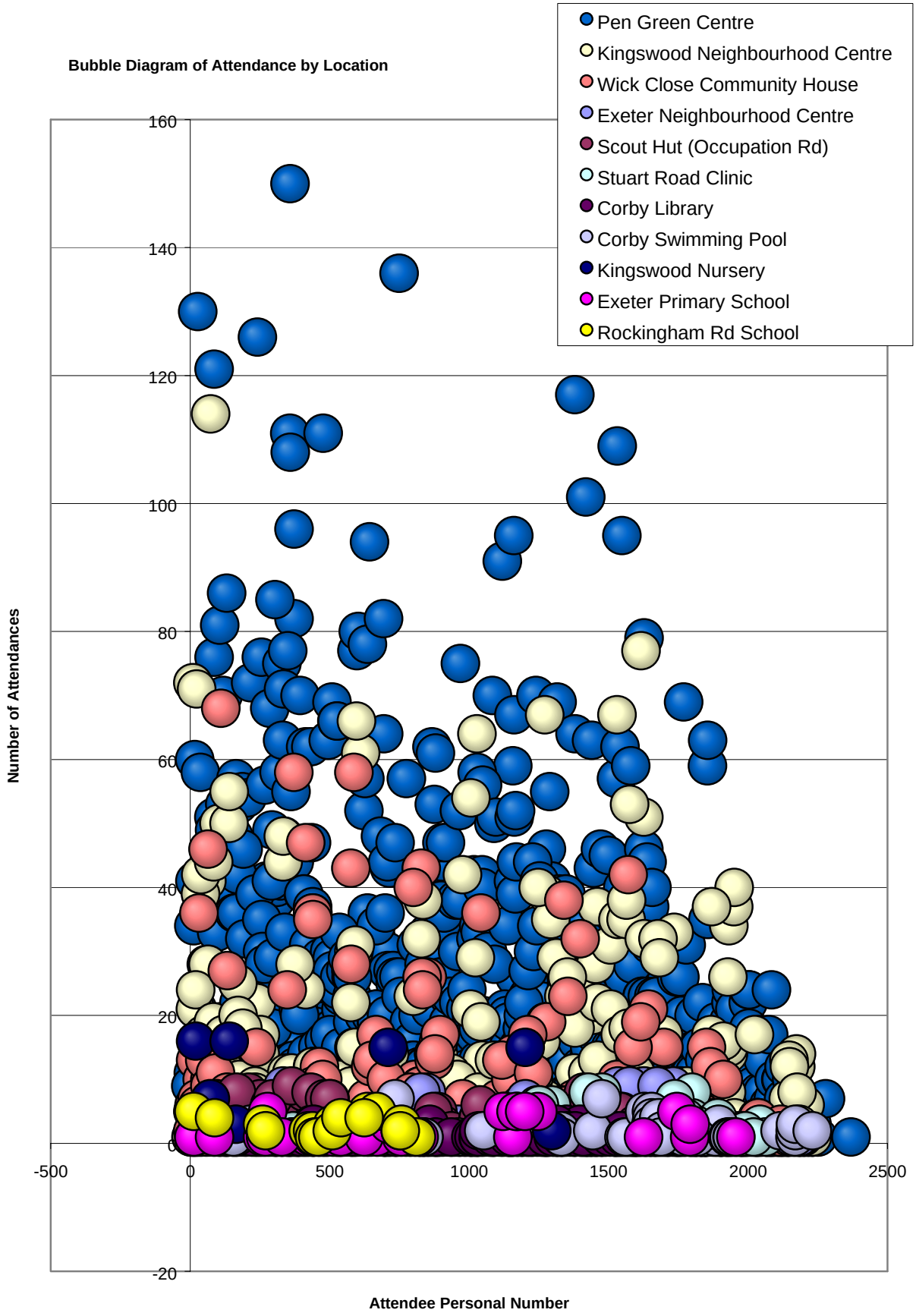
Both board members and workers acknowledged the progress that had been made in terms of inter-agency cooperation and collaborative work but that there were some problems and difficulties in this area that needed to be addressed.

Appendix B - Frequency of Attendances at the Pen Green Centre and Outreach Provision by Location for 2003 – as a Pie Chart

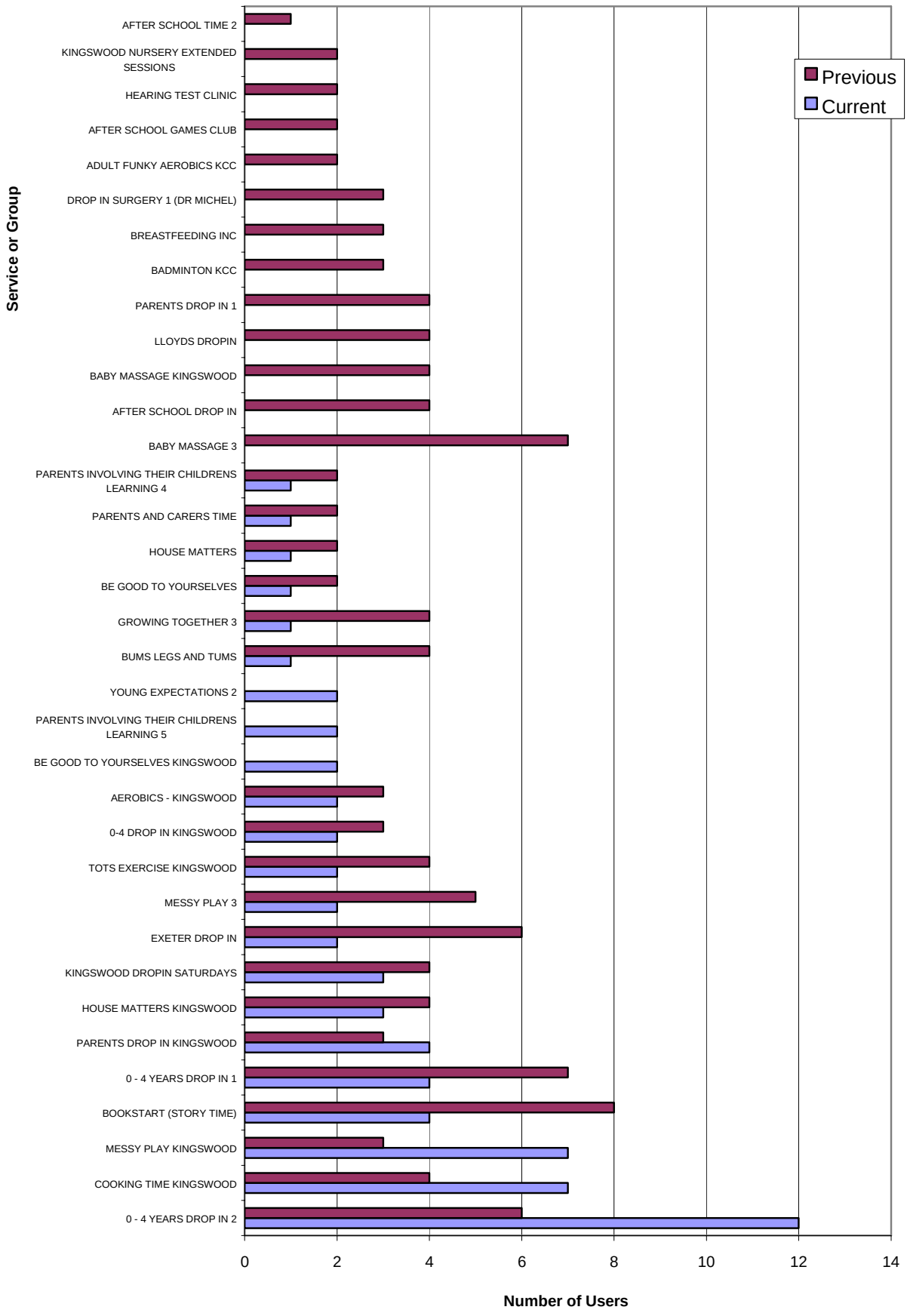


Attendances at each location

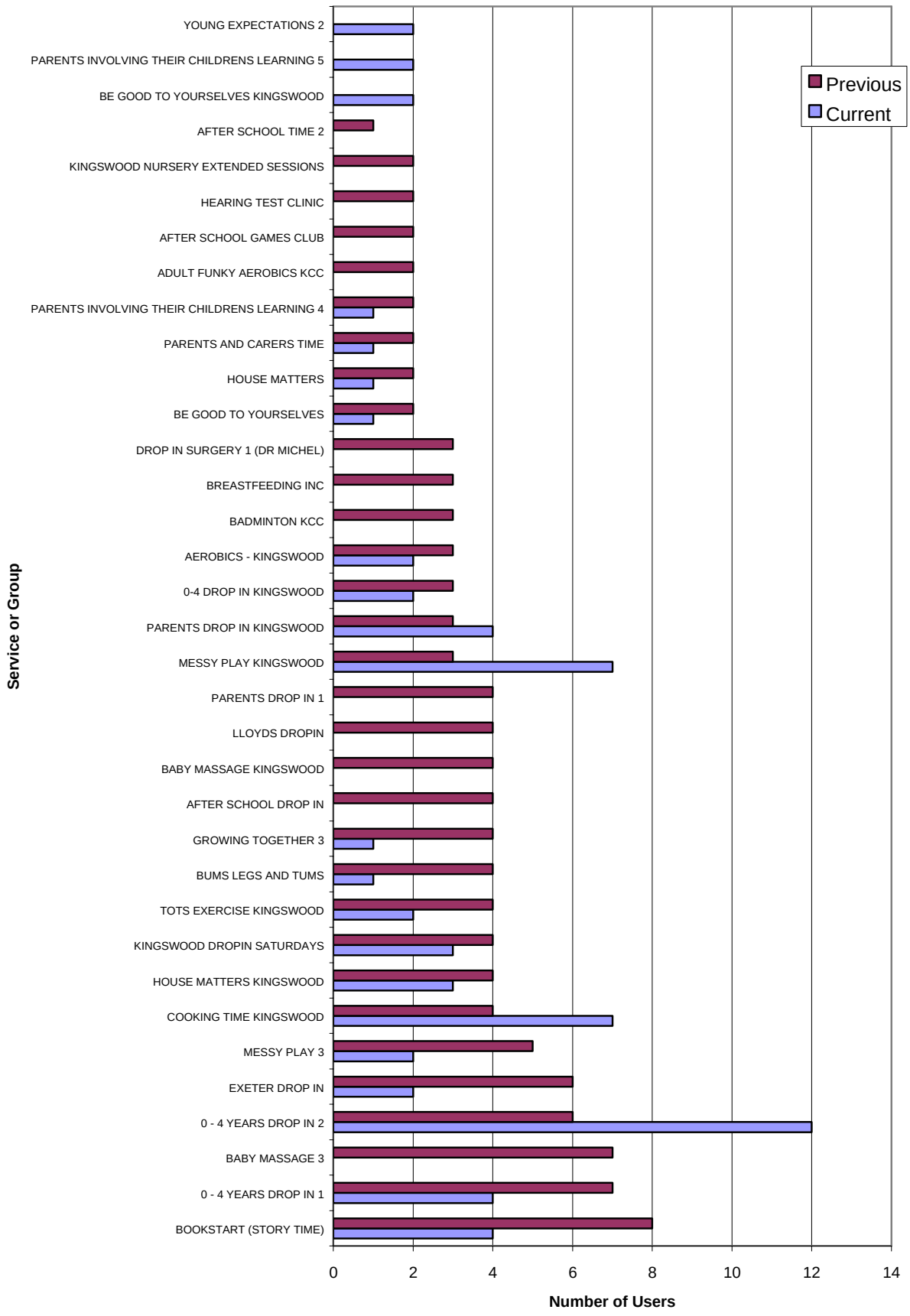
Appendix C - Frequency of Attendances at the Pen Green Centre and Outreach Provision by Location for 2003 – as a Bubble Diagram



Appendix D - Use of Outreach Services in 2003; in order of Current Usage



Appendix E - Use of Outreach Services in 2003; in order of Previous Usage



Appendix F – Interview Schedule for Parent to Parent 2003

SURE START EVALUATION 2003
INTERVIEW FOR USERS OF SERVICES; PARENT-LED NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Name of Service or Group:	

Use of Service: Current=C; Previous=P; Not Used=N (circle letter)	C	P	N

Rating based on the value of the service/group for you/your child/family (circle number given)									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Reasons for Rating: e.g. What differences has this service/group made to you/your child/your family?

Room for Improvement: e.g. How could this service/group be made better for you/your child/your family?

Appendix G – Interview Schedule for OPUSS 2004

OUTREACH PROVISION USER SATISFACTION SURVEY: SURE START EVALUATION 2004

Group/Service Name/Code		No.	Location/Day/Time			
			Leader/Worker			

Use of Service:	Current=C; Previous=P; Not Used=N (circle letter)	C	P	N

A – Could you tell me how you started to use this service?

B - (1) Did you continue to use this service?

No		Yes	

(2) If you answered 'No' can I ask you why you stopped using it?	
(3) If you answered 'Yes', and continue to use it, can I ask you what your experience of the service has been?	
(4) If you answered 'Yes', continued to use the service for a time and then stopped, can I ask you why?	

C – Was the service,

1	Useful?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Useless?
2	Helpful?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	A hindrance?
3	Well-managed?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Badly managed
4	Making a difference?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Doing nothing?
5	Reliable?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Unreliable?
6	Just what you wanted?	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	Not what you wanted?

D – What should definitely be kept about the service?

E – What should definitely be changed about the service?

F – Would you recommend this service to someone else based on its value for you and your family?

G – (1) Would you like to give an overall rating for the service?

Low - 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 - High

(2) What made you choose that rating?

H – Is there anything else you would like to say about this service?

Appendix H – Interviewers' Debriefing Meeting

During the fieldwork period regular support sessions were held for the interviewing team. These meetings provided an opportunity for interviewers to share experiences with each other and for the Project Coordinator to keep up with how things were going out in the field. After the fieldwork was completed a meeting was held so that interviewers and the Project Coordinator could get together and look back over the training and how the interviewing had gone and see what lessons could be learned. The meeting was a hybrid between a focus group and a group interview. Discussion took place over about an hour and twenty minutes and everyone (including the Project Coordinator) was asked to complete a short questionnaire about the whole experience. Below is a collection of summary points and comments which reflect the flavour of the discussion.

- Comments were made about the problem of Sure Start registers and the information on them – the importance of keeping good, accurate records about who is attending groups etc. - especially ensuring that the Group/Service, number and location are all completed so that these details and the names etc of parents there can be entered accurately into the Corby Sure Start database
- Several people commented on the confusion that parents have about what is provided by Pen Green and Sure Start, what Outreach means etc. A discussion took place during which several people suggested that parents don't worry (and why should they?) as to which organisation provides the groups or services they use – they are concerned with the service's quality and availability not who runs it
- One interviewer who had worked on the evaluation interviewing in 2003 said that contacting parents was alright but that it was more difficult to arrange interviews than last year – two other interviewers agreed with her. Both of these interviewers had done interviews in 2003 (and one of whom had been involved in interviewing in all four evaluations)
- One interviewer pointed out that many of the people she contacted, who declined to take part, did so on the grounds that "I don't use these services anymore"
- One interviewer felt that some of the difficulties were to do with parents who had started work and that, as in 2003, people were suspicious of Sure Start, some of them equating it with Social Services. Another interviewer agreed and talked about the reluctance of one woman to have her criticisms of Sure Start recorded as she

feared identification in spite of the interviewer's assurances about anonymity and confidentiality

- One interviewer, who had taken part in 2004 for the first time, talked about how monotonous it was to keep hearing about "how much everyone loved the Sure Start groups and services, and how they felt they had been helped – it all became a bit monotonous"
- One interviewer found that some of the parents she interviewed talked about some groups being cliquey, that others didn't want to go back to some groups because of some of the other parents and/or their unruly kids. Several other interviewers had heard much the same thing. Another interviewer said that different people had different standards and the behaviour of some people would inevitably challenge your own personal and professional values
- One interviewer said that some of the people she interviewed have expectations that "walk a fine line between being supported and wanting lots of things done for them". Another said that there will always be a small number of people, or groups of people for whom things aren't working and that maybe these should be followed up in more depth
- Another interviewer said that there were sometimes feelings about services which were poles apart; some parents were not satisfied while others felt "like it was Christmas". She also talked about the value of the parent-to-parent interviewing approach; people sensed that there was no hidden agenda which she felt would be suspected if the parent was being dealt with by a professional interviewer.
- One interviewer talked about the assumptions that people made about you – she was asked several times what she did at Pen Green and had to point out that she actually worked elsewhere
- One interviewer said that "Corby's like a big village". She was surprised by how many of the people she contacted that she knew. She also found that being from Corby and knowing the local culture was a big advantage in understanding the things that parents had to say about Sure Start and being able to pursue interesting things and find out more from them. She also said that the responses she had from people showed that they feel good about being asked how they feel about things and they feel safe saying what they think in their own homes; everyone else concurred with

this and that the parents clearly felt that their views were valued and one said that it was surprising just how much people will tell you about their lives

- One interviewer said she found that people's reluctance to be interviewed, and say very much when they were, could be overcome by emphasising how the feedback gained from the evaluation interviewing would benefit the community and especially other Sure Start users
- Various comments were made about the interview schedule used this year, all of them pointing out its flaws and weaknesses as an instrument in the interviewing situation
    - "By the time that you got around asking 'Why did you give it that rating?' they'd say 'I've just told you!' – this caused a bit of resentment"
    - The interview schedule format was "too restrictive" for both the interviewees and the interviewers
    - The "ticky things got in the way of parents talking" about their experiences
    - The schedule got in the way of "getting the story from people"
    - "Last year we got all the same information but with only three questions"
    - "Last year the schedule allowed the conversation to flow naturally without all the interruptions which this year's schedule had built into it"

Appendix J – Corby Sure Start Evaluation 2004 Letter to Interviewees

Today's Date 2004

«FirstName» «LastName»
«Address1»
«City»
«State»
«Postal Code»

Dear «FirstName»

Re: The Corby Sure Start Project

As you know, Sure Start is a Government initiative to improve services for young children and their families. The Corby Sure Start Partnership would like to hear about your experiences of the services they provide in order to evaluate and improve them.

A parent from Pen Green Research will telephone you in the next few weeks asking to arrange a good time for them to visit and interview you about your experiences of Sure Start services. They will have identification from the Pen Green Research Base, and they will have police clearance. The interview will take about 45 minutes and your identity and answers to the questions will be completely confidential and data protected. We intend to send a report to all parents who participate in the research.

Whatever you can tell us about the services you have used, and how worthwhile, or otherwise, you have found them to be, will be invaluable in helping the staff at Sure Start to improve the services, making them better for you and your children, and other families in Corby.

I have enclosed an information sheet giving further details about the evaluation, explaining who we are, why we carry it out, what it involves and what your rights are – I hope that you will find this helpful.

If you have any questions about the evaluation please contact me, at the above address.

Many thanks,

Eddie McKinnon
Senior Researcher

Appendix K – Corby Sure Start Evaluation 2004 Information Sheet

CORBY SURE START EVALUATION 2004 – INFORMATION SHEET

The Evaluation

This year the evaluation of Corby Sure Start will focus on those groups and services which make up Sure Start's 'outreach' work – the groups and services which take place away from the Pen Green site in one of the other venues which Sure Start uses. These are,

- Wick Close Community House
- Kingswood Neighbourhood Centre
- Kingswood Nursery
- Stuart Road Clinic
- Corby Library
- Exeter Neighbourhood Centre
- Rockingham Road Primary School
- Exeter Primary School
- The Scout Hut, Occupation Road

If you take part in any of the groups and services run at any of these venues then your views and experiences are important to us.

Who we are

The team who carry out the evaluation interviews are people recruited from the local community who have been trained to conduct these interviews at the Pen Green Research, Training and Development Base. The Pen Green Research Base is an independent organisation involved in research, evaluation and training across the Pen Green Centre and beyond. Every year Corby Sure Start commission us to carry out several pieces of evaluation work for them, including the Annual Evaluation. Consequently you can be completely assured that your identity and anything you say in an interview, will be kept confidential at all times - we are not a part of Corby Sure Start.

Why evaluate?

The Annual Evaluation of Corby Sure Start produces a report which is then given to the programme staff. The report includes

- the ratings parents have given to the groups and services which have been evaluated
- a selection of comments which parents have made about them

Please be assured that it is not possible for anyone in Corby Sure Start to connect a rating or comment in the report to a parent who has been interviewed – this information is stored separately by Pen Green Research Base and Corby Sure Start does not have access to it. Corby Sure Start then uses the findings in the report to help them make decisions about how the groups and services are run. They look very carefully at the ratings and the comments which parents have made about the groups and services so that they can act upon them and improve what they are doing – they want to know how they can make things better for you and your children.

Your rights

It is important to us that you understand your rights regarding our evaluation work.

1. You are under no obligation to take part

- When you are called by an interviewer you can tell them that you do not want to take part
- If you consent to be interviewed and then change your mind for any reason you can let us know and you will not be visited
- If you agree to be interviewed and your interviewer arrives and you want to withdraw at that point you can choose to do so
- If you have started an interview and wish to withdraw at any point you can choose to do so
- Your interviewer may ask if you would be willing to take part in a further, more in-depth interview – you are not committed in any way to doing this even if you have completed an initial interview

2. Your anonymity and confidentiality

- Your identity will be safeguarded at all times
- We may use a rating or comment you have given about a group or service in the report but these cannot be traced back to you by Corby Sure Start – the source of the rating or comment is secure

3. Your access to Corby Sure Start groups and services

- Your use of Corby Sure Start groups and services is not connected to this evaluation
- No group or service you currently use or may wish to use in the future will be denied to you on the basis of your involvement, or otherwise, in this evaluation
- If you agree to be interviewed then the points above come into play – nothing you say in the interview can be connected to you by Corby Sure Start
- If you decline to be interviewed then no one in Corby Sure Start will know

Our hopes

We hope that all of the points made above assure you about the nature of the evaluation work and your rights regarding it. We also hope that you will want to take part. Corby Sure Start wants to improve the quality of its groups and services – they can only do this if they know what parents really think. If parents feel that they can be open and honest about these matters then they will tell us what they actually feel. We hope that the points made above will reassure you that, when interviewed, your identity and comments will be kept confidential and you can be totally frank about what you think without fear of any disadvantage for you and your family.

Appendix L – Corby Sure Start Evaluation 2004 Interviewing – Status of Interviews

Interviewees contacted and interviews completed

A - Number of potential Interviewees Listed from the Database for 2003	B - Number sent initial letter re OPUSS (No/% of A)	C - – Number sent an initial letter but not contacted (No/% of B)	D - Number contacted by an interviewer? No/% of B)	E - Number of Interviews arranged? (No/% of D)	F - Number of Interviews completed? (No/% of E)	G – Number of interviews completed usable in evaluation (No/% of F)	H – Number of interviews completed of those listed (No/% of A)
380	374/380 = 98%	139/374 = 37%	151/374 = 40%	88/151 = 58%	78/88 = 87%	66/78 = 84%	66/380 = 17%

Interviews arranged but not completed - reasons

Number of Interviews arranged but not competed (E-F)	Not in or appointment not kept	Personal circumstances
10	9	1

Interviewees contacted but declining to take part - reasons

J – Number Contacted by an interviewer (No/% of B)	K - Only attended services at Pen Green not OPUSS (No/% of J)	L - Personal circumstances or problems (No/% of J)	M – No longer a user of Services (No/% of J)	N - Too busy or not Interested (No/% of J)	P - Never been a user of any Services (No/% of J)	Q - No one of that name at this address (No/% of J)	R - No longer at this Address (No/% of J)	S - No reason given (No/% of J)
63/374 = 17%	9/63 = 14%	6/63 = 9%	8/63 = 12%	7/63 = 11%	10/63 = 16%	5/63 = 8%	6/63 = 9%	6/63 = 9%

Interviewees not contacted – reasons

T - No/% of those listed who could not be contacted (No/% of B)	U - Phone number no longer used (No/% of T)	V - Called several times but never answered (No/% of T)	W - Left message/s but not returned (No/% of T)	X - Mobile phone switched off (No/% of T)	Y - Not contacted for unspecified reasons (No/% of T)	Z - Letter returned by the Post Office (No/% of T)
139/374 = 37%	48/139 = 34%	33/139 = 24%	16/139 = 11%	5/139 = 3%	31/139 = 22%	6/139 = 4%

APPENDIX M - INTERVIEWEE DETAILS – ?TH WAVE

Interviewer's Name: …….

Interviewer Number: …….

Interviewee's Name	Code	Age	Address	Contact Number	Contacted? (Yes/No)	Interview arranged? (Day/date/time)	Interview Completed? (Yes/No)	Follow- up in-depth interview? (Yes/No)	Comments/ Notes

Interviewee's Name	Code	Age	Address	Contact Number	Contacted? (Yes or No)	Interview arranged? (Day/date/time)	Interview Completed? (Yes or No)	Follow- up in-depth interview? (Yes/No)	Comments/ Notes

Use the boxes in the rows to keep track of the 'status' of your interviews. When you have completed an interview please call me at Pen Green on 443435 (or call/text me on 07963 411735) giving your Interviewer Number and the Code Number of the Interviewee; please leave a message if you don't get me personally. I can then fill in the details on a duplicate of this sheet and so keep track of how things are going. Equally, if you can't make contact, or the interviewee doesn't keep an appointment, please let me know in the same way. Remember to ask your interviewee if they would be prepared to take part in a follow-up in-depth interview in which we would ask people to tell us their own specific 'story' about their involvement and experience of Corby Sure Start and whether or not it has made a difference to them.

I want to emphasise here that **this is not my way of monitoring how you are doing** – it is a better way of tracking the progress of the interviewing fieldwork than the one I used last year. Then I asked people to return the forms with the schedules when interviews had been done; this caused delays which meant that I didn't know about hitches and problems until it was too late for me to do something which could have helped and supported interviewers. However, please don't discard these forms – return them to me when you have done whatever you can with the names you have been given.

When you have completed an interview, and after you have left the house/venue, please write;

- your Interviewer Number and
- the Interviewee's Code Number

in the top right hand corner of the Interview Schedule front cover – please do not use any names, even your own. Everybody's anonymity is important!

I want to thank you once again for taking part in the evaluation interviewing - Eddie

Appendix N – Developing the Practice of Parent-Researcher

Some excerpts from the Learner Support Guide.

Introduction

Welcome to the course in 'Developing the Practice of Parent-Researcher' at the Pen Green Research, Development and Training Base. We want the course to be one which you will find exciting, interesting and stimulating. The course has been devised on the basis that everyone who takes part has something to contribute. We believe that you have lots of experiences and abilities which you can draw upon to 'cover the ground' of the course and meet the requirements of the assessed work. Because of this we have deliberately steered away from having a course which is based on traditional teaching methods and textbooks about research. The materials we will use in the class are designed to capitalise on your own knowledge, abilities and experiences and the sessions will involve plenty of discussion which we want you to take part in. On the course you will not be 'taught' in the traditional sense; instead, tutors will lead and support discussion drawing upon those experiences which are common to all of us and which form the backbone of good interviewing and research skills. We will work in pairs and in small groups and everyone's views and opinions will be of equal weight – we do not believe that tutors have a monopoly of wisdom!

There are no formal qualifications required to join the course but the use of the term 'Parent-Researcher' is not accidental. Parent-Researchers are people who can use their own experiences of parenthood to develop a feeling of trust between themselves and the parent they are interviewing – they are able to share common experiences and establish a good rapport. Experience of using this approach at Pen Green has shown that it produces information of greater depth and with a rich texture. This is why we believe that learners on the course will, ideally, be parents themselves. However, if you are not a parent we do not want you to be put off joining the course; if you can demonstrate an understanding of why we have this preference and you can clearly empathise with the demands and pressures experienced by modern-day parents then the course would be suitable for you, and you for it – parenthood is an 'ideal status' not an entry requirement.

Aims of the Course

The aims of the course are:

1. to improve the quality of involvement in research projects by providing opportunities for the development of appropriate skills
2. to introduce learners to a range of issues and skills relevant to their participation in research projects
3. to provide an individual programme relevant to the needs and interests of each learner

When you have completed the course we feel you will be equipped to:

- understand the nature and place of interviews in social and community-based research
- understand the importance of ethical issues in social and community-based research
- conduct interviews and produce worthwhile data
- understand the nature of that data and be able to record and present it in appropriate formats
- understand the complexity and depth of the research conducted by the Pen Green Research Base, its purposes and the ways it is used

The course will be delivered via a combination of:

- classroom-based sessions
- small group seminars/support sessions
- directed study time
- one-to-one tutorials

Support for Learners

In order to support you as you go through the course units and assessments we have several people who can be called upon to provide you with advice and guidance. These people have extensive knowledge of conducting interviews and involvement in research. These Peer Mentors are available for any learner who wants to make contact with them in order to have queries answered or to get some help with an assessment. They can also give you reassurance that you are not the only one who doesn't 'get' something and that, when looked at in another way, things can become more easily understood. The Peer Mentors will be present in class sessions to give all of us the benefit of their experiences and can be contacted by phone as indicated below. They will also be present at Drop-In Support Sessions which we will arrange with you once the course has got under way.

Achievement and Progression

The Pen Green Centre's philosophy is to enable all members of the local community to engage in personal and professional development by supporting their access to education and training provided at the Centre and by encouraging them to move on to other levels of courses and qualifications. We hope that as a result of this course you will be able to make wider variety of choices than would otherwise have been the case; for example, that it would be possible for you to,

- take part in research and evaluation work conducted across the Pen Green Centre
- seek other paid employment in the areas of social and community-based research and market research
- participate in voluntary sector research and evaluation projects
- feel confident in examining and pursuing other training and education possibilities involving research projects
- take the opportunity to become involved in the Home Start Programme based at the Pen Green Centre and its OCN-accredited training.
- share your interest in research projects with your own children, your children's teachers and other professionals in contact with them as carers

Appendix P - Research into the Use of Local People as Interviewers – A Critique

Advice and guidance about using local people in evaluation interviewing is available and there has been some research into how useful, or otherwise, it is to do so. The Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions published a paper in 2000 on 'Gathering Baseline Information' as part of their New Deal for Communities literature (DETR, 2000). A list of advantages and disadvantages of using local residents as interviewers was provided in this document. The advantages given were,

- Increasing employment opportunities for local people through training
- Building the capacity of people to go on and do other things n the community and develop personally
- Residents may possibly open up or be more honest when answering questions from a local resident than an unknown interviewer

The disadvantages suggested were,

- No guarantee that the training and employment can be applied to local work opportunities
- Benefits problems related to the casual basis of the work provided
- Selecting residents for training can be difficult and lead to disappointment
- The survey process itself will take longer and quality checks will have to be more frequently
- Training will need to come from people who are both technical experts and good at working with inexperienced residents
- Care must be taken over ethical issues– in some places people do not want their neighbours asking them questions about personal and sensitive matters such as their income, health and so on

  (DETR, 2000. page 11)

These points are referred to by Bobby Duffy and Rachel Williams in 'Employing Local Residents as Interviewers – the pros and cons in practice' (Duffy and Williams, 2003; page 2). They argue that there are,

"..clear negative impacts on the response rates achieved, and some suggestion that local interviewers may be more likely to use local knowledge to help residents interpret questions, and therefore introduce inconsistencies into structured surveys." (ibid ; page 1)

Duffy and Williams looked at,

"..a range of recent projects…comparing the outcomes achieved by recently trained interviewers and those by experienced interviewers working on the same project." (ibid; page 7)

and they use results from three studies, in Hartlepool, Lambeth and Plymouth. These examples show clearly that,

"..resident interviewers achieve response rates that are significantly lower than our regular interviewers." (ibid; page 7)

They found that, in the case of the Hartlepool study this applied to both higher refusal rates and no contact rates, while in Lambeth it only applied to no contact rates (in the text they omit to mention the better performance of MORI interviewers in Response Rate in both locations)

	Hartlepool		Lambeth	
	Residents	MORI interviewers	Residents	MORI interviewers
Response Rate	50%	62%	51%	64%
Refusal Rate	22%	14%	12%	14%
No Contact Rate	21%	14%	20%	12%

Finding this to be a cause for concern they identify the key issue as being whether,

"..this poorer result is because local resident interviewers are just less experienced or whether it is because they are local to the area, and so behave differently." (ibid; page 10)

They accept that their review cannot answer this question definitively but say that there are, "..some suggestions that local resident interviewers are less inclined to chase

responses." (ibid; page 10) and they go on to quote the words of one of the local resident interviewers as evidence of this,

"I didn't like going back to houses when people were in and weren't answering the door – I wouldn't like to be seen as a pesterer – I know what it's like when there's surveys going on." (ibid; page 10)

As an example of the deficiencies of local resident interviewers we think that this is a questionable one for Duffy and Williams to have chosen for several reasons;

- the resident interviewer is displaying some sensitivity to the reluctance of people to open their door to someone they don't know – for example, they may believe that the person knocking is trying to sell them something they don't want
- because they live in the area, the local resident interviewer may know of a reason why people may behave in this way – for example, it may be an area of high crime where people have a fear of opening their doors to a stranger or the local paper may have been carrying stories about con-men preying on elderly and vulnerable people and the local police may have advised residents to exercise caution if someone they don't know knocks on their door
- the occupant in the house may have cultural reasons for not answering the door; for example, it may be unacceptable to speak to a member of the opposite sex without another family member being present
- Duffy and Williams seem to be suggesting that, an interviewer other than one who was a local resident, would be more persistent and knock until they got an answer; the assumption seems to be that a productive interview would result – we think that this is a highly tenuous assumption and that the would-be interviewer would be more likely to get short shrift from the occupant

The 'Gathering Baseline Information' document referred to by Duffy and Williams itself makes reference to those carrying out residents surveys avoiding, "'survey fatigue', where certain residents have been involved previously and would be reluctant to participate any more." (DETR, 2000). The local resident interviewer quoted by Duffy and Williams makes explicit reference to not wanting to be seen as "a pesterer" because "I know what it's like when there's surveys going on", suggesting that local people may have been surveyed to a

point beyond which they do not want to take part. This aspect of the local resident interviewer's comment seems to have passed Duffy and Williams by.

Duffy and Williams go on to look at the arguments about whether interviewees would be more open and honest with an interviewer from outside the area where they live as opposed to someone who lives locally and faces similar circumstances and issues. Furthermore, this is important "particularly on sensitive information". Duffy and Williams say that there is mixed evidence on this. The question chosen to illustrate this point is, 'Could you tell me which band your household's total annual gross income from all the sources falls in?'

	Lambeth		Plymouth	
	Residents	MORI interviewers	Residents	MORI interviewers
Any answer	71%	71%	84%	74%
Refused	10%	19%	3%	11%
Don't know	19%	10%	13%	15%

The evidence shows "no impact on reporting of income levels in Lambeth" (both Residents and MORI interviewers get some kind of answer in 71% of cases; incidentally, the level of 'Refused' favours the Resident interviewers who have a rate of 10% against the MORI interviewers' 19%), and "a slightly positive impact on the same question in Plymouth." (Residents achieve 84% in getting any answer, while the MORI interviewers get 74%; again the levels of 'Refused' favours the Residents with only 3% while the rate for the MORI interviewers is 11% (MORI, 2003; pages 10-12). Where is the supposed inferiority of local resident interviewers here? The title of this section in Duffy and Williams' paper about 'Employing Local Residents as Interviewers' asks 'Does it Improve Data Quality?' In the case of Lambeth their own evidence seems to indicate an honourable draw and in Plymouth an emphatic 'Yes'.

Duffy and Williams then move on to the issues of consistency and impartiality quoting a resident interviewer saying,

"I think people were more likely to take part because I was local. I could relate what we were asking to local things and use local examples - we asked about parks and I know all

the local parks because I live here and could describe what the question meant." (ibid; page 13)

Duffy and Williams suggest that these could be "..the comments of relatively inexperienced interviewers", but more importantly it will be,

"..more difficult for interviewers who have so much additional knowledge and strong feelings about an area not to let these influence how they ask the questions." (ibid; page 13)

Duffy and Williams are concerned that, as the questions may be asked in a different way and local resident interviewers are not capable of being sufficiently impartial, there will inevitably be significant inconsistencies in the data. However, in many interviewing situations the content produced by these 'inconsistencies' is exactly what the researchers are looking for. This kind of material can only emerge from the interviewing situation if the interviewer is able to draw on their local knowledge and understanding to use appropriate and productive prompts and follow-up questions. Clearly, how much leeway an interviewer has in the interview situation will depend on such things as the specific nature of the research and where on the continuum of 'highly structured-to-unstructured' the interview schedule lies, how much time is allotted per interview and so on. However, in terms of securing interviews, this local resident believes they were successful precisely because they were local. Furthermore, they felt that they produced a better quality of information in the interviews because they were able to relate the questions to local circumstances and situations.

Consistency and impartiality are important aspects of research and obviously have their place. However, it could be counter-productive to deify them above all other factors in social research, if the potential to reveal important information in the possession of the interviewee is jeopardised and that information is 'lost' in terms of not being gathered at all.

Appendix Q - Parents Interviewed who had only used Services at Pen Green.
The interviewers' notes have been reproduced; any comments made by the parents are in italics.

Parent	Record of Interview
A	Really disappointed with Sure Start. Too much help for single mums; her child was not allowed child into the nursery at Pen Green but next door's was allowed. Would not come to centre or Sure Start because *'everyone looks down their nose at you'.* She felt she had had a really bad response from the Centre. No services used.
B	This lady has just one child who is two years old but she also cares for her husband's two girls (6 and 8 years) at the weekends. She says she sometimes struggles to entertain the two girls on these visits so I recommended that she could try the 'Saturday Drop In' facility at Kingswood. She does not use any services at Wick or Kingswood, but attends Pen Green for 'Messy Play' on Mondays and 'Yoga' on Fridays when her child has a crèche place.
C	This mum has been on a Bitesize computer course at 'Wider Opportunities'; *'I was disappointed as there were only about 7 or 8 people there. It was very interesting and made us all hungry for another course. The person who runs the course was great, he made it all very hands on and the facilities were excellent. We all definitely want to go on to a bigger course'* Would be willing to do an in-depth interview and I think would be a great candidate for interview. Has a lot to say about groups and wants to continue to go to other groups. She found the breast feeding group so important. *'I found out about the 'Breast Feeding Group' from my midwife. I had some problems and she suggested support. The group leader came out to see me and told me about the group. I used it from when my daughter was two months until she was 10 months when my daughter stopped breast feeding. The group should definitely keep going. It was a godsend to me. It gets you mixing with other mums and talking about relative things, and you get fussed over and have a cuppa. A really nice group to go to, lots of feedback for any concerns, all at different stages. It was a nice atmosphere, very friendly and welcoming. The midwife, health visitor, child worker were all there and nothing was too much trouble. Information was found for you and I made friends. I used to look forward to the group. Nice social thing. Went on to 'Growing Togethe'r as my child worker was there and it was a familiar face. You lose confidence when you stop working so it's nice to go to a group where you know someone. I used to go feeling good and set myself little goals like get there on time etc.*
D	This mum went to 'Baby Massage' and said she *'loved it'.* Her husband joined the 'Fathers' Group' on Saturdays. She went to 'Breast Feeding' at Pen Green and said, *'I really enjoyed that. It was very friendly, and I was helped through some problems; it really helped to talk to someone'.* Also went to 'Early Daze' which was a very mixed group. Thought Pen Green was great. Great just meeting other parents. Wants information on 'Dads' Group' on Sundays. Interested in weekend groups. Any chance of baby gymnastics at weekends?
E	This mum only uses Pen Green. She has two daughters, 3 years and 19 weeks. Has

	been to 'Dancing', 'Totsercise', 'Painting', 'Drop In', 'Growing Together'. Went back to work in November in the mornings. 'Dancing' is only on in the mornings so won't be able to go to these; asked *'can you make it afternoons?* She has had 'Breast Feeding' support and uses the 'Soft Room' sometimes. I recommended Kingswood, and she said she would she will try some of the groups. Interested in seeing what's on on Friday mornings.
F	This mum started going to 'Bump & Grind' at Pen Green and the 'Aquanatal' sessions at Corby Swimming Pool. She really enjoyed all this as she could carry it on longer than 'Bump & Grind', and it made a big difference; *'I also went to 'Baby Massage' at Pen Green – it was brilliant, very busy. I went with both of my children - 11years old and 15 months. The 'Breast Feeding Group' at Pen Green was fantastic; it was so good to have someone to talk to. Great to have someone at the other end of the line. Tinies was also great, as the children could do all sorts of things, there were different things every week. I did go to Growing Together but I didn't like it, didn't feel welcome there. It put me off going to Pen Green for a while'* This lady loves the centre and has seen many changes over the years. Unfortunately she doesn't come too much now as she works. Would come if there were other groups on at the weekends or early evenings. Her son is in the 'Baby Nest', she has a 19 year old girl, an 11 year old girl and a 15 month old son.
G	This mum has been to 'Confident Parents - Confident Children' which is about family life - just been to 2 meetings but really enjoyed it. Mostly goes to Pen Green. Has 'Family Visitors' and uses 'Transport'. Has been on trips to Wicksteed Park which she and her daughter thoroughly enjoyed. Has not been to groups outside of the Pen Green Centre but said her confidence has grown and also her child's; she said there have been so many changes in their lives. She is doing GCSE English and is going to try the exam, she is also going on a CLAIT course and the Crèche Workers course. She went to university in her own country and is qualified to work with children. She wants to find employment and is going to ask in Pen Green Sure Start. She is very lonely and her whole social life is at the Centre. She has also booked to go on other trips in the summer.
H	This mum has been to Pen Green, attending 'Growing Together' in Little Jimmy's on a Friday morning. She has also been to 'Drop In' and the 'Music and Movement' group on Wednesdays. Has also used 'Messy Play' and 'Baby Massage' but only used the services at the Pen Green Centre; not any at Kingswood or Wick
J	*'I have 3 children aged 6months, 2 years and 6 years; they are all girls. I used the 'Breast Feeding' classes at Pen Green but haven't used any other facilities. Finding the time is difficult with 3 children. I will try and use other facilities at Pen Green in the future. The staff at the Pen Green Centre were very friendly and helpful. I made new friends at the centre and we have kept in touch. I think the Pen Green Centre has excellent facilities for families. My Health Visitor told me about it. Really good. The staff very friendly. Some staff you saw all the time. You feel relaxed and comfortable. I've made new friends. I haven't used any other facilities at Pen Green but I would like to; having 3 children it's findings the time.*
K	*'I've been to the Pen Green Centre for the 'Breast Feeding' course, 'Baby Massage,*

	and 'Messy Play'. I also recommended Wednesday Drop-In to my friends. It can be a bit cliquey. I'd like to do course – maybe volunteer to help out with something. I was picked up by the Sure Start bus; it really helped in the winter when I had just had the baby and the bus driver was lovely. I recommended it to all my friends; it helps young mothers to meet other mothers and get out of the house. It gives them confidence and helps them to do courses for themselves. I feel good about getting out of the house. I really miss the Centre when it is closed for 2 weeks in the summer but I understand the staff need a well deserved break'
L	*'I was introduced to the Pen Green Centre by a Home Start helper. It's excellent but I'm pushed for time as I'm working. Having a Home Start helper continued when I had a premature baby. The Home Start helpers are excellent. It would be really good if there was more parking space at the Centre and a play area for older children. In some areas the adults are chatting and not watching the children. I didn't know what the Centre was all about - I thought it was for families out working and they had to pay for their child care.*
M	*I haven't used any of the outreach services. I went to 'Messy Play' at the Pen Green Centre last year. It was on a Friday morning. I heard about it via a friend. The group was excellent - out of this world!'*

Appendix R - Types of Evaluation and Your Programme's Development

There are three basic types of evaluation activity – looking at how something is put into place (Formative), looking at the way that it works in practice (Process) and looking at the effect that it has (Outcome). You may need a different mix of these types of evaluation as your programme develops. It may be useful to think about the progress of the programme in five phases. Each phase requires particular combinations of these three types of evaluation.

PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMME	TYPE OF EVALUATION
1. Before the services are provided - evaluation looks at needs assessment – which services are needed, and for whom.	Formative
2. In the early stages of the programme – evaluation looks at accountability – are the services, and the whole programme being provided in the way we planned?	Formative and Process
3. After up and running for some time (e.g. 1 year) evaluation ooks at clarification – can it be improved?	Process
4. Up and running, has been modified after early evaluation, evaluation looks at progress to objectives - are we meeting targets?	Process and Outcome
5. Well established – evaluation looks at service/system impact – have things changed?	Outcome

(Henderson et al; 2002, page 5)

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