Introduction

This report provides a summary of the main findings of a survey conducted at the Sure Start Gala held on 21st August 2004. The gala was organised and run by staff from Denaby Main and Conisbrough Sure Start.

The survey forms part of a wider community consultation, the aim of which is to determine local people’s perceptions of Sure Start; specifically, the extent to which they are aware of, and have utilised, the services and their views about these services.

Results

The survey was self-completed by 41 adults attending the Gala. The large majority of respondents (97 per cent) were female, the average age being 28 years. The average number of children per household was 1.46. All of the respondents had heard about Sure Start, most hearing about it either from a Sure Start leaflet or leaflet about a parent toddler group. A significant number of parents had heard about the agency from two main sources: friends and professionals. The latter comprise mainly teachers, health visitors and nursery staff.

The majority (63 per cent) of respondents have had contact with a Sure Start worker during the last 12 months. Only 11 (27 per cent) have had no contact with a Sure Start worker (see Chart 1.0)
A similar number of respondents (27 or 66 per cent) claimed to have actually used a Sure Start service (See Chart 2.0).

Sure Start interviewees demonstrate an insightful understanding of the role of the agency. When asked what kind of services they perceive Sure Start to offer, interviewees’ responses indicate a belief on the part of local people that Sure Start provides a wide range of services for the support of families. At the same time they believe that Sure Start has little to do with social services (see Chart 3.0).
Interviewees also believe that Sure Start offers a comprehensive range of services for families in the area and those services are available particularly for families with children of all ages (see Chart 4.0)

As noted above a minority of respondents do not utilise Sure Start services. Some of these parents offered a reason for not doing so:
‘[there are] not enough places in the school holidays.’

‘Elder daughter’s use them with their children.’

‘Children are older than pre-school.’

‘Didn’t know about any of them.’

‘Just had first child. Will be signing for baby massage and others shortly.’

‘I got a job when you started picking up my daughter from school. Then you stopped it and now thinking that I will have to finish work. I am very mad.’

‘I don’t live in the area.’

‘Work needs.’

‘Some of them are not available to me because I have a lot of children, e.g. baby massage did not provide child care for older children.’

Only two respondents indicated that they would like to see changes to existing services:

‘A reintroduction of after-school clubs and more choice for children 10 years and over.’

‘An after-school club.’

Discussion

Denaby Main & Conisbrough Sure Start has served the local community for several years. During this time the agency has offered a wide range of services and involved a large number of children, parents and families. The survey suggests that the majority of local people have heard about Sure Start, and that many parents with children have had contact with a Sure Start worker during the last 12 months. Given that the survey was conducted during a gala organised by Sure Start the sample may
have included a larger proportion of Sure Start users than the local population as a whole. Further surveys may be necessary to corroborate the findings. Nevertheless, the survey indicates that Denaby Main & Conisbrough Sure Start has become an integral part of the local community and that its services are highly regarded by those who utilise them.