

Barriers to training and employment

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Abstract

This evaluation has a number of aims which include identifying local parents'/carers' training and employment preferences and the barriers that they face in accessing these provisions. These findings will be used to meet parents'/carers' individual needs by helping to reduce these barriers. In turn, this may help to increase the number of local parents/carers who are training and obtaining employment. The evaluation shall also identify how Eight Village Sure Start delivers training for parents/carers and how effectively the programme is meeting its national and local objectives and targets. Local parents'/carers' levels of satisfaction with training services shall also be discussed by referring to evidence from the Eight Village parent/carer satisfaction survey.

To obtain this information, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed. An opportunistic sample of 84 parents/carers completed the questionnaire via the post or face-to-face with an interviewer. It is estimated that the sample frame consisted of 10% of the total Eight Village parent/carer population who are unemployed and whom had a child below the age of 4 years old. The majority (95%) of the sample were female. In total 38% of those sampled were single. The most common age range of those sampled was 26-33 years (42%) and 18-25 years (25%).

Findings describe parents/carers preferred types of training and employment. In order of preference, parents/carers would like to complete the following introductory and taster programmes: hair and beauty (38%), cooking (37%), first aid (36%), keep fit (32%), introduction to childcare (29%), introduction to decorating (29%) and sewing (24%). In order of preference, parents/carers showed an interest in the following higher level courses: introduction to childcare leading to an NVQ (26%), classroom assistant (24%), customer services (19%), HGV driving (19%), advanced information technology courses (18%), food hygiene/catering (17%) and access to higher education (17%). In order of preference, parents/carers showed an interest in obtaining the following types of employment: childcare (36%), shop-work (26%), office work (26%), teaching (20%), access to nursing (18%), customer services (14%), and catering (13%). On the whole, these preferences reflect the fact that the majority of those who completed the questionnaire were female.

Fewer taster/introductory programmes are provided locally in comparison to higher level courses. When considering that many parents/carers lack confidence and motivation, it is important that they are able to access a variety of taster/introductory programmes. Results from the Eight Village Sure Start parent/carer satisfaction survey show that the majority (62%) of parents/carers are satisfied to very satisfied with local education and training services.

Findings also show that parents/carers expressed high levels of interest in completing training and/or qualifications (90%), voluntary work (60%) and obtaining employment (76%). However, relatively few are currently doing so. Only 23% of parents/carers are currently training while none are currently working. Almost three quarters of those who responded have not had any paid/unpaid work during the last 3 years. This may be because such families face a number of barriers to accessing training and employment.

Local parents/carers experience high levels of disadvantage in obtaining employment. Census figures show that 40% of families with children aged 0-4 in Eight Village area are unemployed. These unemployment levels are almost twice the national average for this group.

All parents/carers who responded to the questionnaire faced at least one barrier to accessing training and employment. On average, parents/carers faced seven barriers to accessing training and employment. A major barrier that parents/carers faced was that they were looking after their children (85%) and needed help with childcare (60%). The other most commonly occurring barriers were lack of advice about training (13%), a fear that they would be worse off and lose their benefits (30%), written and spoken information is not in appropriate languages (32%), lack of confidence (31%), lack motivation (24%). Parents/carers also expressed that a major barrier to accessing training and employment was that they needed help in certain areas such as reading (35%), writing (37%), C.V. writing (35%), financial support to gain qualifications (30%), to learn interview techniques (23%), filling in application forms (20%) and buying equipment/clothing for work interviews (20%) and travel expenses (32%). Asylum seekers and refugees faced more barriers to accessing training and employment than any other group.

To increase parents/carers chances of getting out of the poverty trap, their training and employment needs/barriers should be dealt with on an individual basis. In particular, improving local day-care provision should be very beneficial. At a local level, effective partnership working needs to develop a strategy to address barriers and to meet local parents' employment and training needs. This joint-approach of identifying and catering for parents'/carers' needs will help to reduce barriers and increase their training and employment prospects. However, this target is made more difficult considering the make-up of the local population. The majority of parents/carers who have completed this questionnaire have given their consent for their responses to be used to address their needs and barriers.

Findings from the recent parent satisfaction survey show that compared to other local services, Eight Village Sure Start is accessed by more parents/carers (with a child below the age of 4 years) for advice about training, qualifications and employment. The majority (84%) of local of parents/carers were satisfied to very satisfied with the quality of local adult education and training services. Findings also suggest that local training and employment services need to increase their reach, as 53% of unemployed parents/carers (i.e. those sampled) have never accessed them within the last 12 months.

For Sure Start to provide evidence of the number of workless households, the relevant agencies need to put systems into place to capture this information. This would help to provide a systematic way of addressing certain populations' needs. Further, Sure Start and other agencies working in partnership need to improve their monitoring systems so that the numbers of local parents/carers who have completed training can be identified easily. Such information will help to assess the effectiveness and impact of local agencies by looking at outcomes in terms of getting local parents/carers into work and training.

The findings from the present evaluation must only be applied to the population which was sampled. The sample frame was biased as the majority of respondents were female. Forty per cent of the sample were asylum seekers and refugees.

Further evaluation is needed to identify male parents'/carers' training and employment aspirations and barriers that they face.

Introduction

The purpose of this evaluation is to identify the training and employment aspirations of unemployed parents/carers who have a child below the age of 4 years and live within the Eight Village Sure Start catchment area. In addition, the evaluation aims to identify the barriers that parents/carers face in accessing training and employment opportunities. Identifying training/employment needs and barriers will help to develop a strategy, with key local stakeholders working in partnership with Sure Start to find ways of reducing the number of children aged 0-3 living in a workless household within the Eight Village Sure Start area. The evaluation shall also identify how effectively Eight Village Sure Start is meeting the national and local objectives/targets.

Background information

The Eight Village Sure Start area is ethnically diverse, with 37 languages spoken. The population has a high incidence of lone parent families (34.2%) with a child aged 0-4 years (Census, 2001). Due to this diversity, needs for support, advice and service provision vary considerably.

The UK has the highest percentage in Europe of children living in poverty. Unemployment is a key determinant of poverty, and so has become a prime issue for Sure Start. A report from the National Evaluation of Sure Start (2003) shows that Sure Start local programme areas experience consistently worse deprivation than in England across a number of indicators, including educational achievement, unemployment and benefit dependence.

Unemployment

Figures for 2002 show that Heath Town was the council ward with the second highest level (7%) of JSA-registered unemployed within Wolverhampton. This is over twice the national figure (Census data, 2001). These figures may have been compounded as from 1999 to 2001 there was a large influx of Asylum Seekers who were housed in Heath Town and have gained refugee status. This influx has begun to impact on the unemployment register as refugees seek employment.

There are 761 families with children aged 0-4 years old within the Eight Village area (Census, 2001). In total, 40% of these households are unemployed (Census, 2001). This is very high considering that the national average level of unemployment for this subgroup stands at 23%.

Qualifications and training

Census data for the Heath Town ward illustrates that the population are more likely to be less qualified. In total, 50% of people from Heath Town ward have no qualifications, compared to 48% in Wolverhampton and 36% in Great Britain

(Census, 2001). Similar numbers (38%) of residents from Heath Town and Wolverhampton have lower level qualifications (Census, 2001). However, a greater number (44%) of people in Great Britain have such qualifications (Census, 2001). Heath Town residents are also less likely to have higher level qualifications (12%), compared to residents of Wolverhampton (14%) and Great Britain (20%) (Census, 2001). High levels of unemployment and low levels of qualifications in the Heath Town ward and Eight Village area may be adversely affected by the barriers that such families face.

Barriers to employment and training

For many people, education and training is the only way to break away from poverty, to receive the right training and gain the skills and qualifications that employers are looking for. However, before this can take place, often people in poverty face a number of barriers to accessing training and employment. These include childcare responsibilities and costs relating to transport, interviews, clothing and training (www.renewal.net).

Childcare

These may include responsibilities for caring for children or other family members. In general, this is mainly done by women. A sizeable proportion of them would take up work if the circumstances were right – their current caring responsibilities, however, prevent them doing so and discourage them from even looking. Problems faced include the cost of childcare, lack of suitable childcare locally, and shortage of jobs offering ‘family friendly’ working hours (e.g. part-time working, term time work).

Evans (2003) cites research carried out by the Hackney Primary Care Trust (2000) which supports this point about the cost of childcare. The study involved 120 families. The study found that 60% of socially disadvantaged mothers sampled had a household income of less than £200.00 per week. They were more likely to be working in very low-paid jobs and if anything, often saw a reduction in their household income because their benefits were cut. Findings indicated that paid employment does not provide an instant ticket out of poverty by increasing household income. “Future anti-poverty strategies and policies, if they are to be successful, will need to place far greater emphasis on tackling low pay, addressing the benefit structure, and reducing the costs of day-care for poor families”. (Evans, 2003). “Childcare tax credit needs to be improved to reflect the real costs of childcare and the additional costs faced by parents with two or more children. Without, affordable, quality childcare for all, parents will continue to struggle to get into and stay in work and their families will remain trapped in poverty”. (Evans, 2003).

The cost of travelling and clothing

The cost of public or private transport can be a major barrier in getting to work or an interview. This is compounded by low levels of car ownership or other personal transport. Cash is likely to be limited and levels of debt high. Research from the Social Exclusion Unit (2003) supports this point as 38% of jobseekers said that lack of personal transport or poor public transport is a key barrier to getting a job. They

also found that 18% of people living in low-income areas have not applied for a job in the last 12 months because of transport problems. Some will also not have the sort of clothing and equipment for work or clothing that would make a good impression or make them feel confident at an interview.

The cost of training or education courses

The Government's New Deal programmes make available and meet the cost of various forms of training and education. However, training and education course options are limited. The provision may not be appropriate for all those seeking work. Some forms of assistance with training and education are only available to those who are in employment. Research from the Social Exclusion Unit (2003) found that young people with childcare responsibilities are less likely to participate in further education than their childless counterparts. In total, 68% of young people with no children were participating in further education, compared to only 11% of young people with children.

Other barriers to accessing employment

Many other studies have documented high levels of disadvantage among the unemployed, especially among those who have been on welfare for relatively long periods. Moffit et al. (2002) and Zedlewski (2001) research in the U.S.A. looked at the barriers that current welfare recipients faced. They found that 35% had very poor mental or physical health, 42% had an education less than high school, 30% last worked three or more years ago, 19% had an infant under the age of one, and 8% had a child on Supplemental Security Income.

National policy

During recent years, a wide range of policies and initiatives have addressed the different barriers to work. These include welfare to work, taxation, European programmes and neighbourhood schemes. Further, changes in taxation and benefits policies have aimed to make it easier and more attractive to move back into work. They include Back to Work Bonus, Working Family Tax Credit, reductions in Income Tax and National Insurance contributions. Many other Government and European funded programmes are aimed at tackling some of the barriers discussed above and have been taken as part of broader initiatives aimed at combating worklessness.

How is Sure Start training delivered?

Sure Start Eight Village employs a Parent/Carer Support Co-ordinator whose role is to inform local parents/carers about local training courses, voluntary work and employment prospects. The primary aim is to increase the number of parents/carers who are enrolled onto accredited courses. In turn, it is hoped that this will increase the numbers of parents/carers who are working.

The Parent/Carer Co-ordinator works in partnership with a number of agencies to create a joined-up approach to delivering these services. Partnership agencies include Action Team for Jobs, Job Zone, Next Steps, Wolverhampton College and

Neighbourhood Management. Currently, service level agreements are being compared to see where there is overlap between agencies and so that a joint strategy can be drawn up to address local parents'/carers' training and employment needs and the barriers that they face in accessing these.

Eight Village Sure Start provide access to training in partnership with the College. When levels of interest are high enough, courses are organised by the Sure Start Co-ordinator (i.e. childcare, venue, etc.) with a visiting course tutor. Eight Village Sure Start is currently setting up a family learning project which will involve parents/carers and their children learning together. Working in partnership, Eight Village Sure Start has helped to deliver the following courses: D.I.Y. In The Home, covering basic electrics, plumbing, wood staining, varnishing and tiling, Cooking On A Budget, keep fit classes, self-defence, first aid, home safety workshops, basic counselling skills, introduction to child protection and stress management. All these courses are free to local parents and free childcare is also provided by the College.

Local milestones and National targets

In addition to using a semi-structured questionnaire to identify needs and barriers, the current evaluation will identify whether Eight Village Sure Start is meeting national targets and local milestones. Eight Village Sure Start has a number of national and local objectives and targets related to strengthening families and communities. The current evaluation is meeting the first listed local milestone. These include the following:

- **Local milestone 2003-2004**
Identify barriers to working with families, Action for Jobs and Next Steps, and agree a strategy for overcoming these barriers.
- **National target and Local milestone 2003-2005**
12% reduction in number of children aged 0-3 living in households where no-one is working through continued implementation of strategy.
- **National target**
All Sure Start programmes to develop a local target to ensure links between the local Sure Start partnership and Employment Service job centres.
- **Local target**
Programme to work with Action for Jobs and Next Steps to create employment opportunities for local parents.
- **Local milestone 2003-2004**
Childcare training available for up to 15 parents.
- **Local milestone 2004-2005**
Maintain childcare training opportunities.

Method

Design

A semi-structured self-completion questionnaire was developed with the purpose of identifying local parents'/carers' training needs and employment aspirations. The survey was also used to identify the barriers that parents/carers faced in accessing training and employment opportunities.

Sample

An opportunistic sample of 84 parents/carers completed the questionnaire. The sample consisted of parents/carers who were unemployed, who had a child below the age of 4 years old and lived within the Sure Start Eight Village area. In total, it is estimated that *10% (84 out of 801 parents/carers) of this population completed the questionnaire (**estimate from Census figures, 2001*). Parents were recruited in a number of ways. Questionnaires were completed face-to-face at a number of Sure Start sessions and also sent out via the post to 400 Sure Start parents/carers. Interpreters were also used so that non-English speakers could complete the questionnaire. In total, 13% of those sampled required an interpreter.

The majority of parents/carers who completed the questionnaire were Sure Start members (89%) and female (95%). In total, 38% of those sampled were single and 61% were married or living with a partner. The ranges of those sampled were 26-33 years (42%), followed by 18-25 years (25%), 34-41years (19%), under 17 years (13%) and 42-49 years (1%).

Table 11 below compares the ethnic breakdown of those parents/carers who took part in the questionnaire against the ethnic breakdown of the population living in the Eight Village area. These figures are shown in the form of percentages. The table shows that Africans were over-represented within the sample frame. Further, Indians were highly under-represented and Caribbeans were also under-represented. Due to the nature of postal questionnaires, this was hard to control. Further, 40% of those sampled were asylum seekers or refugees, of which 82% had work permits. In total, 88% of those sampled could understand spoken English and 78% could understand written English. In total, 50% of those sampled main spoken language was English, whereas 40% main language was another language

Table 11. Ethnic breakdown of sample against actual population figures

Ethnic Group	Survey sample	Actual population
White/British	54% (n45)	51%
Caribbean	6% (n5)	11%
Indian	1% (n1)	13%
African	14% (n12)	3%
White/Black Caribbean	7% (n6)	5%
White/Black African	4% (n3)	1%
Black Other	4% (n3)	1%
Asian	4% (n4)	3%
Pakistani	2% (n1)	2%
Other Mixed	0% (n0)	1%
Other	3% (n3)	7%

Procedure

Steering Group meetings with key stakeholders were used to develop the questionnaire. The questionnaire was piloted on 10 parents/carers. Both face-to-face interviews and postal methods were used to complete the questionnaire. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were briefed about the aims (see *questionnaire page 29*). Included with the questionnaire was a self-addressed envelope so that parent/carers could send the questionnaire back free of charge. Questionnaires were also handed out face-to-face by Sure Start staff and partner agencies. When needed, interpreters were used for non-English speakers. At the end of the questionnaire, parents were asked whether they would like to give their consent to be contacted in the future about their training and employment needs. To increase response rates, participants who completed the questionnaire were entered into a free prize draw consisting of gift vouchers. First prize was £50.00, 2nd £30.00 and 3rd £20.00.

Results and discussion

Results from the questionnaire are summarised in the graphs and tables below in the form of percentages and counts. Results look at parents'/carers' current training and employment situation and future aspirations, including what courses and types of work they would like to be involved in. Analysis of results will also look at barriers to training and employment and parents'/carers' levels of satisfaction with local training and education provision. Finally, other sources of data will be evaluated to see whether Eight Village Sure Start is meeting its local milestones and national targets.

Current training situation and levels of interest in training/employment

Table 1 below shows that 23% of parent/carers are currently completing some form of training. This table also shows that 90% are interested in completing training and/or qualifications. Therefore, this would suggest that the majority of parents/carers who are not training or completing qualifications would like to do so and that those who are training or completing qualifications would like to do more. Further, the majority (76%) of parent/carers are interested in obtaining employment. However, table 2 shows that 73% of parents/carers who completed the questionnaire have not had any paid/unpaid work during the last 3 years.

Table 3 shows that the majority of parents/carers would like to start training or employment within the next 2 years (89%). Only 42% would like to start training or employment in the next nine months. This may be due to many of these parents/carers having young children and not wanting any one else to care for them. During this time period, this will of course create barriers to accessing training and obtaining employment.

Table 1. Current training situation and levels of interest in training/employment

Current training situation	Percentage	Interested in training/qualifications	Percentage	Interested in employment	Percentage
Training	23% (19)	Yes	90% (76)	Yes	76% (64)
Not training	69% (58)	No	6% (5)	No	19% (16)
No response	8% (7)	No response	4% (3)	No Response	5% (4)

(Numbers in brackets refers to the number of parents/carers who gave this response)

**Table 2.
Percentage of parents/carers with paid/unpaid work experience during the last 3 years**

Worked in last 3 yrs	Percentage
Yes	26% (22)
No	73% (61)
No response	1% (1)

Table 3. Time period for when parents/carers would like to start training/employment

Time period	Percentage
0-6 months	37% (31)
7-12 months	5% (4)
1 year	23% (19)
2 years	14% (12)
3 years	5%(4)
4 years	1% (1)
5 years	7% (6)
No Response	8% (7)

Preferred training courses

Both graph 1 and table 4 below show that parents/carers have high levels of interest in most of the introductory and taster programmes that are locally available. In order of preference, parents/carers expressed high levels of interest in the following programmes: Hair and Beauty (38%), Cooking (37%), First Aid (36%), Keep Fit (32%), Introduction to Childcare and Introduction to Decorating (29%) and Sewing 24%. A smaller proportion of parents/carers were interested in Simple Electrics (10%). Parents/carers were also asked whether they would be interested in attending any other (i.e. not listed) short introductory or taster programmes; most notably, a small proportion expressed an interest in computers (4%).

Graph 1.

Percentage of parents/carers interested in introductory or taster programmes

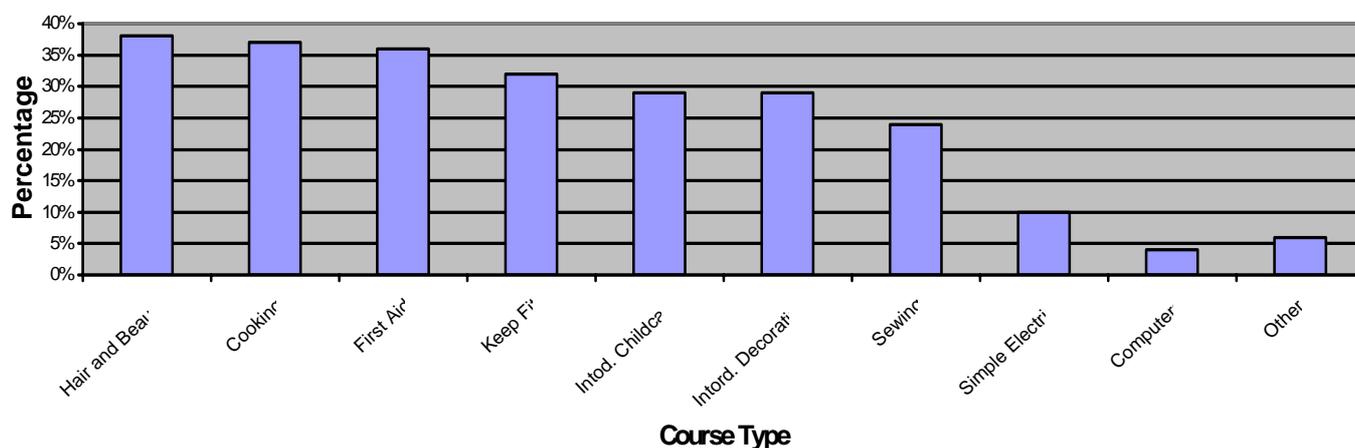


Table 4. Percentage of parents/carers interested in introductory/taster programmes

Type of introductory/taster programme	Percentage	Type of introductory/taster programme	Percentage
Hair and beauty	38% (32)	Introduction to decorating	29% (24)
Cooking	37% (31)	Sewing	24% (20)
First aid	36% (30)	Simple electrics	10% (8)
Keep fit	32% (27)	Computers	4% (3)
Introduction to childcare	29% (24)	Other	6% (5)

Table 5 and graph 2 show parents'/carers' levels of interest in courses and training programmes to help them towards their chosen career. In order of the most popular, these were: Introduction to Childcare leading to NVQ (26%), classroom assistant (24%), customer services (19%), HGV driving (19%), advanced I.T. (18%), Food hygiene/catering (17%) and access to higher education (17%).

Graph 2.

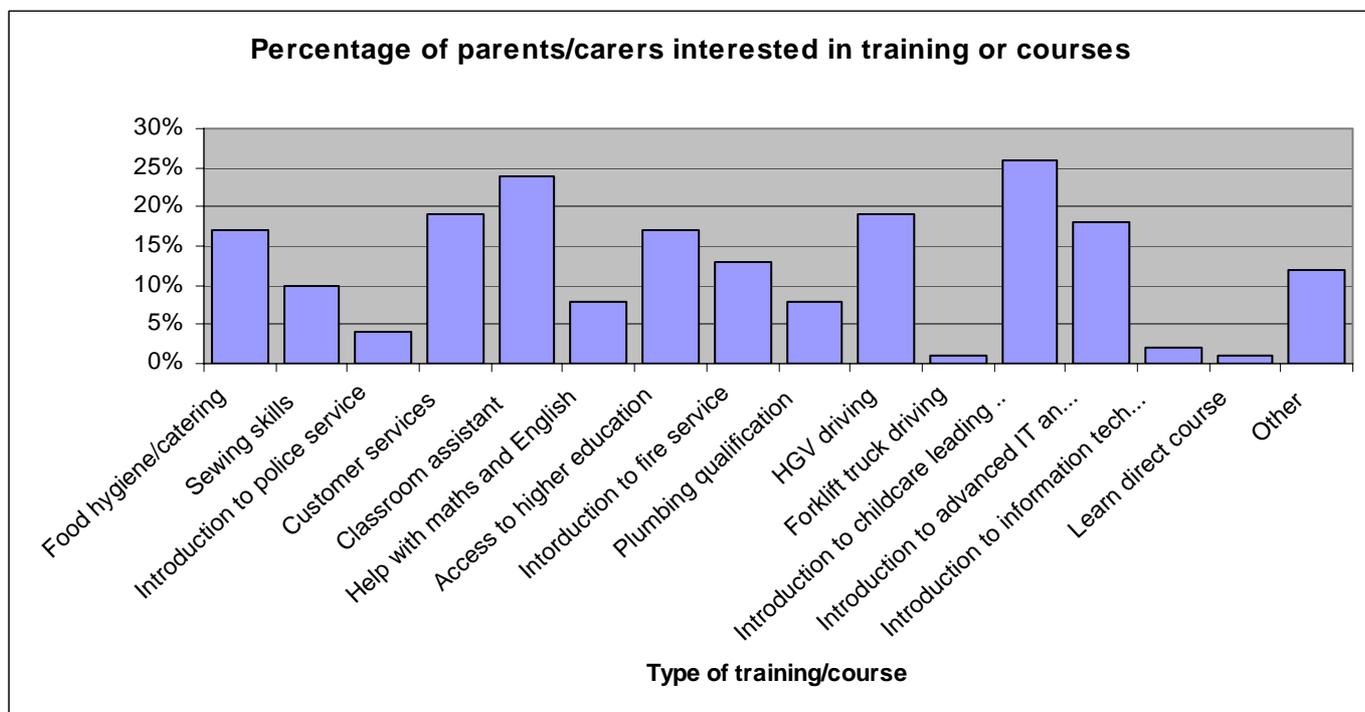


Table 5. Percentage of parents carers interested in training/courses

Type of training/course	Percentage	Type of training/course	Percentage
Introduction to childcare leading to NVQ	26% (22)	Sewing skills	10% (8)
Classroom assistant	24% (20)	Help with maths and English	8% (7)
Customer services	19% (16)	Plumbing qualification	8% (7)
HGV driving	19% (16)	Introduction to police service	4% (3)
Advanced information technology courses	18% (15)	Introduction to information technology	2% (2)
Food hygiene/catering	17% (14)	Forklift truck driving	1% (1)
Access to higher education	17% (14)	Learn direct course	1% (1)
Introduction to fire service	13% (11)	Other	12% (10)

Table 6 below shows that parents/carers do not have a strong preference for either weekday or weekend training. The table also shows that more parents/carers would prefer to train during school hours (37%). However, there is no overall preference whether this should be in school term time or school holidays. Parents/carers seem to have no preference for training in the morning (21%) or afternoon (18%). However, none of those who responded to this question wanted to take part in training during the evening.

Table 6. Parents'/carers' preferred times and days for training

Preferred days for training	Percentage	Preferred time for training	Percentage	Preferred time for training	Percentage
Weekday	21% (18)	School Term	17% (14)	Mornings	21% (18)
Weekend	15% (13)	During school hours	37% (31)	Afternoon	18% (15)
		School holiday	12% (10)	Evening	0% (0)

Table 7 and graph 3 below show that parents/carers have a preference for certain types of employment, which include childcare (36%), shop work and office work (26%), teaching (20%), access to nursing (18%), customer services (14%) and catering (13%).

Table 7. Parents'/carers' work type preferences

Type of work	Percentage	Type of work	Percentage
Childcare	36% (30)	Gardening	5% (4)
Shop work	26% (22)	Factory/warehouse work	5% (4)
Office work	26% (22)	Plumbing	3.6% (3)
Teaching	20% (17)	Domestic	3.6% (3)
Access to nursing	18% (15)	HGV driving	1% (1)
Customer services	14% (14)	Computers	1% (1)
Catering	13% (11)	Mechanics	1% (1)
Clothes making	7% (6)	Fire-fighting	1% (1)
Decorating	7% (7)	Woodwork/carpentry	1% (1)
Police	6% (5)	Building	0% (0)
Electrician	6% (5)	Other (please specify)	2% (2)

Graph 3.

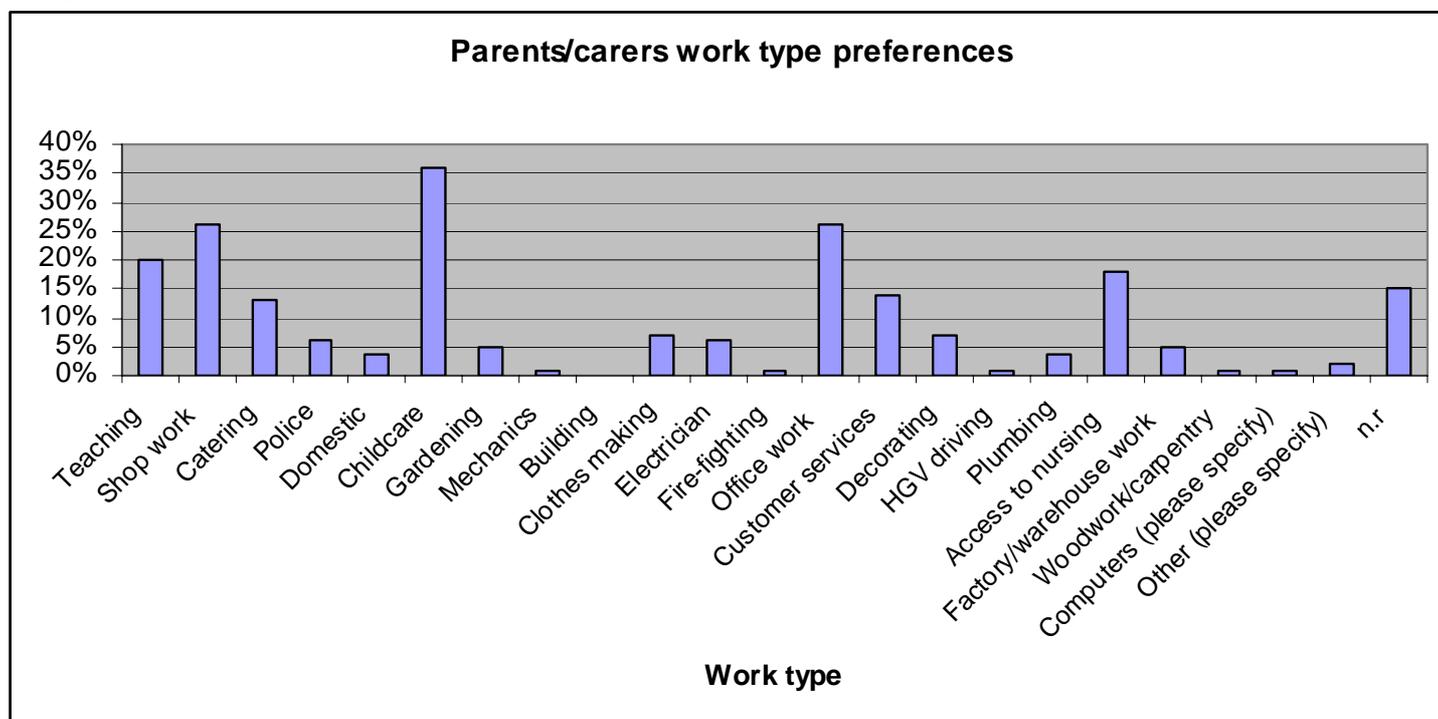


Table 8 below shows that a high proportion (60%) of parents/carers are interested in obtaining voluntary work to improve their employment prospects.

Table 8. Percentage of parents/carers interested in voluntary work

Voluntary work	Percentage
Yes	60% (50)
No	28% (24)
No response	12% (10)

Barriers to accessing training and employment

Results show that as a group, family commitments, individual needs, information and advice and 'I need help with' create the most notable barriers to accessing training or employment. Health overall was not seen as a major barrier (see table 9 and graph 4).

The majority (85%) of those sampled suggested that a major barrier to accessing training and employment was due to the fact that they were looking after their children. Parents/carers expressed that they looked after their children due to a number of reasons which included lack of childcare (35%), lack of suitable childcare (13%), lack of affordable childcare (26%), and that they don't want anyone else to care for their children (23%). The fact that 23% of parents/carers do not want anyone else to look after their child is a major barrier to overcome so that they can access training or employment. Problems in childcare may be occurring as local families who are often isolated may lack informal networks of support (i.e. family/friends) and lack knowledge of formal networks of support (i.e. private childcare). This is supported by the number of parents/carers who need help with childcare (60%). It must be remembered that those sampled were unemployed mothers with at least one child between the ages of 0-4. Even though family roles and responsibilities are changing, mothers still tend to hold the main childcare responsibilities.

Parents/carers expressed that lack of information and advice were a barrier to accessing training and employment. Parents/carers expressed that these barriers were due to lack of advice about work (13%), benefits (11%), training (19%), fear they would be worse off and lose their benefits (30%), and written and spoken information not provided in their written tongue (32%). Another barrier to accessing training and employment are parents'/carers' individual needs. In total, 14% of parents said that they lacked self-esteem, 7% lacked assertiveness, 31% lacked confidence and 24% lacked motivation.

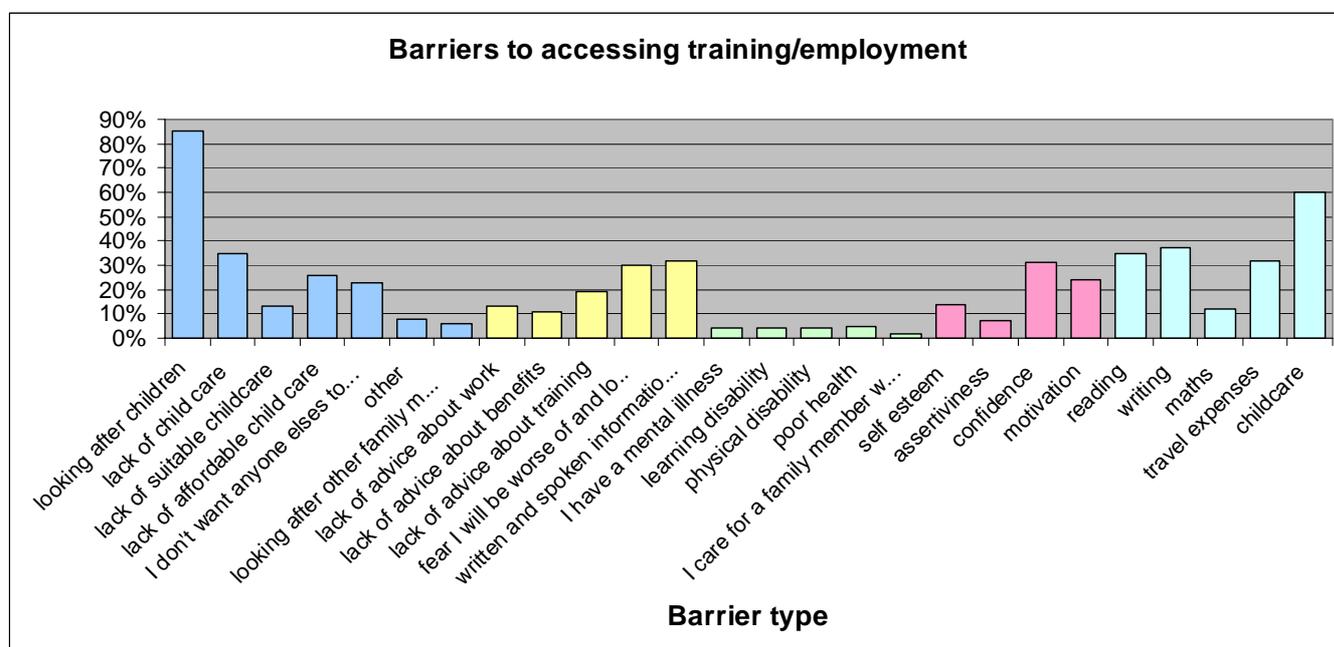
Parents/carers also expressed that a major barrier to accessing training and employment was that they needed help with reading (35%), writing (37%), maths (12%), travel expenses (32%), and childcare (60%). All these barriers need to be addressed on an individual basis to help parents to access training and to increase their employment prospects.

Further, table 2 (page 11) showed that 73% of parents/carers who completed the questionnaire have not had any paid/unpaid work during the last 3 years. Many previous studies have shown that this is a major barrier in obtaining employment. Table 3 (page 12) also showed that the majority of parents/carers would like to start training or employment within the next 2 years (89%). During this time period, this will create barriers to accessing training and obtaining employment.

Table 9. Barriers to training and employment

Barriers to accessing training and employment	Percentage	Barriers to accessing training and employment	Percentage
Family Commitments		Health	
Looking after children	85% (71)	I have a mental illness	4% (3)
Is this due to		learning disability	4% (3)
lack of child care	35% (29)	physical disability	4% (3)
lack of suitable childcare	13% (11)	Poor health	5% (4)
lack of affordable child care	26% (22)	Care for a family member with one of the above health issues	2% (2)
I don't want anyone else to care for my children	23% (19)	Individual need	
Other	8% (7)	self esteem	14% (12)
Looking after other family members	6% (5)	Assertiveness	7% (6)
		Confidence	31% (26)
		Motivation	24% (20)
		self esteem	14% (12)
Information and advice		I need help with	
lack of advice about work	13% (11)	Reading	35% (29)
lack of advice about benefits	11% (9)	Writing	37% (31)
lack of advice about training	19% (16)	Maths	12% (10)
fear I will be worse of and lose my benefits	30% (25)	Travel expenses	32% (27)
Written/spoken information is not Provided in my mother tongue	32% (27)	Childcare	60% (50)

Graph 4.



In addition to these barriers, table 10 below identifies a number of other barriers that parents/carers face in obtaining employment. In order of preferred type of help required, the table shows that 35% need help with C.V. writing, 30% need help with financial support to gain qualifications, learning interview techniques 23%, filling in application forms and buying equipment/clothing for work interviews 20%.

Table 10. Percentage of parents/carers who require help to gain employment

Help required	Percentage
learn interview techniques	23% (19)
c.v. writing	35% (29)
Filling in application forms	20% (17)
Financial support to gain qualifications	30% (25)
Buying equipment/clothing for work interviews	20% (17)
Other	1% (1)

Group differences and barriers to training and employment

In total, 100% of parents/carers faced one or more barriers to accessing training and obtaining employment. Table 11 below shows that the majority (62%) of parents/carers faced between four and nine barriers. On average, parents/carers faced seven barriers to accessing training and obtaining employment. Findings suggest that parents/carers need significant individual support to reduce these barriers to increase their training and employment prospects.

Table 11. The number of barriers to training and employment faced by parents/carers

Number of barriers	Percentage of parents/carers
1-3	16.7% (14)
4-6	28.6% (24)
7-9	33.3% (28)
10-12	17.9% (15)
13-15	3.6% (3)

It is possible that certain groups of the population that were sampled may experience more disadvantage and barriers to training and employment than others. Analysis of the data showed that there was no difference between ethnic group and number of barriers faced. It would be expected from the results so far that single parents would face more barriers to accessing training and employment due to problems in childcare. However, on average both single families and married/partner couples face seven barriers to accessing training and employment. Further, table B in the appendices (see page 28) shows that married couples and those living with partners were likely to face more barriers. In total, 61% of married couples and those living with partners faced seven or more barriers, compared to 47% of single parents. Further, 53% of single parents faced one to six barriers compared to 39% of married/partner families. The next table provides an explanation for this result.

This result may be explained by looking at the sample that was obtained. In total, 40% of those sampled were asylum seekers and refugees. The majority (88%) of asylum seekers/refugees are married or living with a partner compared to 63% of non-asylum seekers/refugees. It would be expected that asylum seekers and refugees would face more barriers to training and employment. Table 12 supports this claim as 49% of non-asylum seekers/refugees faced below seven barriers, compared to only 32% of asylum seekers/refugees. Further, asylum seekers and refugees were more likely to face seven and more barriers with 68% doing so compared to 51% of non-asylum seekers. Therefore, asylum seekers and refugees are face more barriers to training and employment than non-asylum seekers. As the

majority of asylum seekers were married, this would have boosted the amount of barriers faced by all married/partner families sampled. In turn, single parent/carer families were made to look like they faced fewer barriers.

Table 12. Comparing the number of barriers to training/employment faced by asylum seeker/refugee and non-asylum seeker/refugee parents and carers

Number of barriers	Percentage of asylum seekers/refugees	Percentage of non-asylum seekers/refugees
1-3	24.7 (5)	16.3 (7)
4-6	17.6 (6)	32.6 (14)
7-9	38.2 (13)	32.6 (14)
10-12	23.5 (8)	16.3 (7)
13-15	5.9 (2)	2.3 (1)

The provision of training in the Eight Village area

Table A (see appendices, page 27) shows the provision of local taster/introductory programmes, higher level training courses and employment in terms of parents'/carers' preferences. The table aims to see whether appropriate types of courses are being provided at both levels and whether these mirror parents'/carers' employment aspirations.

Many parent/carers have a preference for introductory/taster programmes in hair and beauty (38%), first aid (36%), keep fit (32%), introduction to decorating (29%) and simple electrics (10%). However, training is not provided for these programmes at a higher level. Despite this, none of the parents/carers wanted to seek employment in hair and beauty, first aid or keep fit. This may be because these were not options, although an open question was provided. These findings would suggest that courses should be provided to bridge the gap between taster programmes and employment. Findings also suggest that it may be beneficial to provide higher level training courses in decorating and electrics, as 29% and 10% of parents/carers respectively wanted to complete taster/introductory programmes in these areas.

Fewer taster/introductory taster programmes are provided locally, in comparison to higherlevel courses. When considering the earlier findings that 14% of parents lacked self-esteem, 7% lacked assertiveness, 31% lacked confidence and 24% lacked motivation, it is important to provide more taster/introductory programmes as they may be more likely to access these. This may in turn increase their confidence leading greater uptake of higher level courses and employment.

When looking at the types of work that parents/carers would like to obtain, most are catered for in some form of training. Some of these types of employment are difficult to provide any training for (e.g. shop work, 26%, and factory warehouse work, 5%). However, it may be beneficial to provide introductory/taster programmes in nursing (18%) and gardening (5%). The table also illustrates that many parents/carers are interested in some form of training but not always to seek employment within this area. Most notably, parent/carers want to learn skills in cooking, sewing and decorating, which are useful skills to learn for the home environment.

Satisfaction levels with local education and training services

Previous findings from the Eight Village Parent/Carer Satisfaction Survey (2004) obtained information on local parents'/carers' use of and levels of satisfaction with local services. The sample consisted of 20% (154 parents/carers) of local parents/carers who have a child below the age of 5 years old and live within the Eight Village catchment area.

The survey found of those who responded (143 out of 154 parents/carers), 53% had never accessed local advice services on training, qualifications and employment in the last 12 months. In total, 14% (20) had accessed these services once only in the last 12 months. However, 21% (30) were regular users and had accessed these services once a month or more over the last 12 months. These figures suggest that local training and employment services need to increase their reach as 53% of unemployed parents/carers are not using these services.

Following this, parents/carers were asked who provided this support. Table 13 below summarises the main services that parents/carers had accessed. It seems that Eight Village Sure Start is providing the most advice to local parents/carers with a child below the age of 4 years old. Most of the parents/carers who completed the survey were volunteers from the local population and were recruited on the street and at schools. However, 60 out of 154 of the parents who completed a questionnaire were selected from the Sure Start database. This may suggest that there is a bias and that the result above is misleading. However, when looking at the data for the 94 parents/carers who were not contacted through the Sure Start database, still 23% used Sure Start services for this information.

Table 13 Percentage of parents/carers who use local advice services on training, qualifications and employment.

Service provider	Percentage of parents/carers
Sure Start	26% (22)
The Job Centre	17% (15)
Local colleges	16% (14)
Next Steps	5% (4)
New Deal Gateway	5% (4)
Early Years (Jennie Lee Centre)	5% (4)
General leaflets/newspapers	5% (4)

Table 14 below shows local parents'/carers' levels of satisfaction with local adult education and training services. In total, 41 parents (27%) of parents/carers did not respond to this question and may reflect that not all local parents/carers access these services. Of the parents/carers who responded to this question (113 out of 154), the majority (84%) were satisfied to very satisfied with these services.

Table 14.
Parents/carers levels of satisfaction with local education and training provisions

Level of satisfaction	Adult education and training
Very satisfied	23%
Satisfied	61%
Dissatisfied	14%
Very dissatisfied	2%

Reducing the number of workless households

Eight Village Sure Start is set the target of reducing the number of workless households by 12% (from 2003-2005) with children aged 0-3 years. Figures show that from 2001-2003, 11% of the Heath Town population were unemployed. Heath Town residents are more than twice as likely to be unemployed than Wolverhampton residents (see table 15 below).

Figures from the Census (2000) show that 32% of the Wolverhampton population who claim Job Seekers Allowance have child dependents. Data from the Census (2001) shows that 40% of households consisting of parents/carers with a child aged 0-4 are workless. However, figures are not available for later years. This unemployment rate for local parents and carers is eight times the national rate. This would suggest that parents/carers living in the Eight Village area suffer higher levels of disadvantage in obtaining employment.

Table 15. Unemployment rates of the Heath Town population

Year	Percentage of Heath Town population unemployed	Percentage of Wolverhampton population who are unemployed
2001	11%	4.8%
2002	11.1%	4.5%
2003	11%	4.6%

Figures from Wolverhampton City Council (2004). Unemployment for the purpose of these tables is defined as people on job seeker's allowance who are actively seeking work.

How effectively is Eight Village Sure Start meeting the national objectives/targets and local milestones?

Identify and address the barriers to employment

The evaluation has helped to identify with Action for Jobs and Next Steps families' barriers to working. This evidence needs to be used to agree a strategy for overcoming these barriers.

Reduce the numbers of workless households

It is difficult to assess how effectively Eight Village Sure Start is meeting the National Target and Local Milestone (2004-2005) of a 12% reduction in number of children aged 0-3 living in households where no-one is working. However, it is difficult to assess how effectively Eight Village Sure Start is meeting this target as the relevant agencies do not currently collect this data.

Partnership working

Another target states that all Sure Start programmes need to develop a local target to ensure links between the local Sure Start partnership and Employment Service jobcentres. Further, a local target states that the programme is to work with Action for Jobs and Next Steps to create employment opportunities for local parents. This target is currently being addressed through steering group meetings. Further, Eight Village Sure Start advertises available posts at Job Centre Plus.

The provision of childcare training

A local milestone that was set for the programme in 2003-2004 was to make childcare training available for up to 15 parents, and in 2004-2005 to maintain childcare training opportunities. It is not currently possible to evaluate how effectively the programme is meeting these targets as data is unavailable.

Summary of findings

Findings from the present evaluation shall be summarised below. However, the results from the Eight Village Parent/Carer Satisfaction Survey shall first be discussed.

Compared to other services, Eight Village Sure Start is accessed by more parents/carers for advice about training, qualifications and employment. This only applies to parents/carers who have a child below the age of 4 years old. The majority (84%) of local of parents/carers were satisfied to very satisfied with the quality of local adult education and training services. Findings also suggest that local training and employment services need to increase their reach, as 53% of unemployed parents/carers (i.e. those sampled) have never accessed them within the last 12 months.

In order of preference, parents/carers would like to complete the following introductory and taster programmes: hair and beauty, cooking, first aid, keep fit, introduction to childcare, introduction to decorating and sewing. Further, parents/carers in order of preference showed an interest in the following higher level courses: Introduction to Childcare leading to an NVQ, classroom assistant, customer services, HGV driving, advanced Information Technology courses, food hygiene/catering and access to higher education. In order of preference, parents/carers showed an interest in obtaining the following types of employment: childcare, shop-work, office work, teaching, access to nursing, customer services and catering.

Fewer taster/introductory taster programmes are provided locally in comparison to higher level courses. Many parents/carers lack confidence and motivation and may only attend access training courses if they are provided at a taster or introductory level. This may serve to increase their confidence and motivation and in turn lead them to taking higher level courses and seeking employment. Action needs to be taken to bridge the gap between lower and higher level courses.

Parents/carers from Eight Village area with a child below that age of 4 experience higher levels of unemployment compared to the local Heath Town population as a whole. These parents/carers experience high levels of disadvantage in obtaining employment. Until recently, the Eight Village Sure Start area has had few child day care facilities. However, with the introduction of day care nurseries set up by Sure Start, more of these parents may be able to obtain employment. Eight Village Sure Start has been set the target of a 6% and 12% reduction by 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 respectively in the number of children age 0-3 living in households where no-one is working through implementation of strategy. Considering that the majority of parents/carers said that they would like to seek employment, this target may be achievable. However, this target is made more difficult considering the make-up of the population we work with and the number of barriers faced.

For Sure Start to provide evidence of the number of workless households, the relevant agencies need to put systems into place to capture this information. This would help to provide a systematic way of addressing certain population and needs.

The majority of parents/carers would like to start training and employment but are not currently doing so. This may be because on average parents/carers faced seven

barriers to accessing training and employment. There was no difference between ethnic group and number of barriers faced in accessing training and employment. Further, both single and married/partner parents and carers faced the same amount of barriers. However, asylum seeker and refugee parents/carers faced more barriers than non-asylum seeker/refugee parents and carers. This group is one of the most disadvantaged and also are more likely to face more barriers.

The main barriers that need to be addressed for parents/carers to access employment and training are: lack of childcare, lack of affordable childcare, they don't want anyone else to care for their children, lack of advice about training, fear they will be worse off and lose their benefits, written and spoken information is not provided in their written/spoken tongue, lack of confidence and lack of motivation. Parents/carers also expressed that a major barrier to accessing training and employment was that they needed help with reading, writing, travel expenses, and childcare. Further, parents/carers face a number of other barriers as they expressed that they needed help with C.V. writing, financial support to gain qualifications, learning interview techniques, filling in application forms and buying equipment/clothing for work interviews. Other barriers that these parents/carers face are that less than half would like to start employment in the next nine months. This may be due to that many of these parents/carers have young children and do not want any one else to care for them. The child's first two years will create barriers to accessing training and obtaining employment and in turn will make the task of achieving Sure Start's employment targets more difficult. Further, the majority of parent/carers have not worked during the last 3 years. This is a major barrier to accessing employment and will need to be addressed through training and voluntary work.

A major barrier that such families face seems to be childcare. Problems in childcare may be occurring as local families who are often isolated may lack informal networks of support (i.e. family/friends) and lack knowledge of formal networks of support (i.e. childcare).

Many parents/carers stressed that a major barrier to accessing training and employment was that they feared they would lose their benefits. This view is supported by recent research (see Evans, 2003 introduction) who reports that research has shown that many parents/carers taking low paid work actually end up worse off, even with child tax credit payments. This is a barrier that only can be tackled at a national policy level.

It is important that action is taken to address parents'/carers' barriers by providing them with individual support. This approach of catering for parents'/carers' needs will help to reduce these barriers and increase their training and employment prospects. Some individuals will need training or education in order to make them more employable before they can get a job or work placement.

Improving training/employment prospects and reducing barriers will only be achieved through effective partnership working. An effective strategy is needed that involves employers, businesses and training providers. Sound partnership working is needed to identify and tackle barriers to work and target those hardest to help. From some of the barriers that parents face, it seems that many are not seeking or obtaining the relevant advice. Many stated that travel expenses were a barrier, when in many situations these can actually be provided. Further, evaluation is needed to see how effective this partnership working is.

The majority of parents/carers sampled gave consent for their data to be used. Action should be taken to identify parents'/carers' training and employment aspirations and barriers, so as to increase their employment prospects. In particular, many parent/carers wanted to get involved in voluntary work. Considering that the majority of parents/carers had not worked for 3 years, this would be a good route to take. As those questioned had children below the age of 4 years old, voluntary work is a good way of gaining work experience and increasing employment prospects without the commitment of a full-time employment. However, such work may incur childcare complications.

It is important to remember that the findings from this evaluation should only be generalised to the population which was sampled. In particular, only a few males completed the questionnaire. Further, evaluation needs to look at the male parents'/carers' training and employment aspirations and barriers that they face.

Conclusion

Low income is a major determinant of poverty. Parents/carers who live in the Eight Village area are much more likely to be unemployed than the local and Wolverhampton population as a whole. Parents/carers expressed high levels of interest in taking up training, qualifications and employment. However, relatively few are currently doing so. This may be because such families face a number of barriers to accessing training and employment. A partnership approach needs to help develop a strategy to deal with parents/carers individual needs and barriers. Such an approach will help to increase employment levels.

Achieving Sure Start's target of reducing the number of workless households is made more difficult considering the make-up of the local population. The current questionnaire showed that 26% of asylum seekers and refugees did not have work permits. Over 37 languages are spoken within the area, and many parents/carers can't speak or write in English. Further, parents/carers with young children are more likely to be unemployed. Many parents/carers have no childcare and informal networks of support. All these factors and many other barriers make it difficult for this target to be achieved.

Both Sure Start and partner agencies need to improve their monitoring systems so that the numbers of local parent/carers who are training and employed/unemployed can be obtained. Such information will help to assess the effectiveness of local agencies and outcomes in terms of getting local parents/carers into work and training.

These findings must only be applied to the population which was sampled. The sample frame was biased as the majority of respondents were female. Further evaluation needs to look at the male parents'/carers' training and employment aspirations and barriers that they face.

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Appendices

Table A Parents'/carers' preferences for taster/introductory programmes, training courses and employment

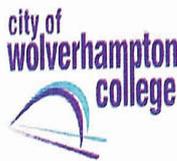
Introductory/taster programmes	Percentage	Type of training/course	Percentage	Type of work	Percentage
Hair and Beauty	38% (32)	No		No	
Cooking	37% (31)	Food hygiene/catering	17% (14)	Catering	13% (11)
First aid	36% (30)	No		No	
Keep fit	32% (27)	No		No	
Introduction to childcare	29% (24)	Introduction to childcare leading to NVQ	26% (22)	Childcare	36% (30)
Introduction to decorating	29% (24)	No		Decorating	7% (7)
Sewing	24% (20)	Sewing skills	10% (8)	Clothes making	7% (6)
Simple electrics	10% (8)	No		Electrician	6% (5)
Computers	4% (3)	Advanced information technology (18%)courses and introduction to info tech (2%)	18% (15)	Office work 26% (22) Computers	1% (1)
NO		Classroom assistant	24% (20)	Teaching	20% (17)
No		Customer services	19% (16)	Office work26% (22) Customer services	14% (14)
No		HGV driving	19% (16)	HGV driving	1% (1)
No		Access to higher education	17% (14)	No	
No		Introduction to fire service	13% (11)	Fire-fighting	1% (1)
No		Help with maths and English	8% (7)	No	
No		Plumbing qualification	8% (7)	Plumbing	3.6% (3)
No		Introduction to police service	4% (3)	Police	6% (5)
No		Help with maths and English	8% (7)	No	
No		Forklift truck driving	1% (1)	No	
No		Learn direct course	1% (1)	No	
No		No		Shop work (add to customer services?)	26% (22)
No		No		Factory/warehouse work	5% (4)
No		No		Access to nursing	18% (15)
No		No		Domestic	3.6% (3)
No		No		Woodwork/carpentry	1% (1)
No		No		Building	0% (0)
No		No		Mechanics	1% (1)
No		No		Gardening	5% (4)

Table B number of barriers faced to accessing training/employment by marital status

Number of barriers	Number of single parents/carers who faced barrier	Percentage of single parents/carers who faced barrier	Number of married/partner parents/carers who faced barrier	Percentage of married/partner parents/carers who faced barrier
1-3	5	15.6%	9	17.6%
4-6	12	37.5%	11	21.6%
7-9	8	25%	20	39.2%
10-12	5	15.6%	10	19.6%
13-15	2	6.3%	1	2%



Part of the Department for Work and Pensions



Steps to Training / Employment Questionnaire

Note to the interviewer:

This questionnaire is only to be completed by unemployed parents and carers who have a child below the age of 4 years old that lives with them, residing in the areas of Spring Park, New Park Village, Park Village, Nordley, Heath Park, Hickman, Heath Town and Wednesfield Village.

Information for the parent:

We want to find out how we can support local parents/carers to achieve their training and employment needs. Once these questionnaires are completed and reviewed, we will aim to reduce the difficulties local parents may be experiencing in accessing training programmes and work. Information from this questionnaire will be kept anonymous, unless you otherwise agree for it to be used to support your training/employment needs. However, you will not be identified in any written report. You do not have to complete this questionnaire or complete all questions and may have it destroyed if you wish. For completing the questionnaire you will be entered into a free prize draw for high street gift vouchers that can be spent at 75 top retailers. First prize will be £50.00 2nd £30.00 and 3rd £20.00 in vouchers.

Personal Information:

1. What is your postcode?.....

2. Are you: Male Female

3. Do you have any children? Yes No

4. Which of the following age bands do you fall into?

Under 17 18 – 25 26 – 33 34 – 41

42 – 49 50 – 57 58 – 65 66+

5. Are you:

Married/Living with a partner Single

Other.....

6. Which of the following ethnic groups best describes you?

White-British 1 Irish 2 Other white 3 African 4

White/Black African 5 Caribbean 6 White/Black Caribbean 7

Black other 8 Indian 9 Bangladeshi 10 Pakistani 11

White/Asian 12 Any Other Asian 13 Chinese 14
Any other mixed 15 Other ethnic group(specify).....16

7a. Are you a refugee or asylum seeker? Yes No

7b. Have you got a work permit? (*to be completed by refugees and asylum seekers*)

Yes No

8a. What is your main spoken and written language?.....

8b. Do you understand spoken English? Yes No

8c. Do you understand written English? Yes No

Training and Employment

9. Have you had any paid/unpaid work experience during the last 3 years?

Yes No

10a. What is your current training situation?

Training (full/part time) Not training

10b Are you interested in training/gaining qualifications? Yes No

11. Are you interested in obtaining employment? Yes No

12. When do you feel you will want to start training/working?

0 – 6 months 1 year 3 years 5 years
7 – 12 months 2 years 4 years

Barriers to Training and Employment

13. Have any of the following reasons stopped you from seeking training or work? (*tick as many boxes that apply*)

Family Commitments:

Looking after my child(ren)

Is this due to:

Lack of childcare Lack of suitable childcare

Lack of affordable childcare

I don't want anyone else to care for my child(ren)

Other (*Please specify*)

.....
Looking after other family members

Information and advice:

- Lack of advice about work
- Lack of advice about and benefits
- Lack of advice about training
- Fear I will be worse off & lose my benefits
- Written and spoken information is not provided in my mother tongue

Health:

Do you.....

- Have a mental illness
- Have a learning disability
- Have a physical disability
- Have poor health
- Care for a family member with one of the above health issues

Individual need:

I need more support to improve my:

- Self-esteem
- Assertiveness
- Confidence
- Motivation

I need help with:

- Reading
- Writing
- Maths
- Travel expenses
- Childcare

14. Do you need help with any of the following to increase your chances of gaining work? (tick as many boxes that apply)

- Interview techniques
- C.V. writing
- Filling in application forms
- Financial support to gain qualifications
- Buying equipment/clothing for work or interviews
- Other (please specify)

.....

15. Is there any other help that you require to access training & work opportunities?

.....

.....

.....

Training needs

16. Would you be interested in attending short introductory or taster programmes such as the following? (please tick as many boxes that apply).

- Introduction to decorating
- Simple electrics
- First Aid
- Cooking
- Sewing
- Keep-fit
- Hair & Beauty
- Introduction to childcare
- Other(s) (please specify)

17. Would you be interested in obtaining voluntary work to improve your employment prospects?

- Yes
- No

18. Would any of the following training or courses be of interest to you to help you towards your chosen profession/career?

- Food hygiene/catering Sewing skills
 Introduction to the police service Customer services
 Classroom assistant Help with English and Maths
 Access to higher education Introduction to the fire service
 Plumbing qualification HGV training
 Forklift truck training Introduction to childcare leading to NVQ
 Introduction to information technology Advanced information technology
 Learn Direct course (please specify).....
 Other (please specify).....

19. When would be the best time for you to attend training?

- Week day Weekend School term
 During school hours School holiday
 Mornings Afternoon Evening
 Time of day.....

Employment

20. Would you be interested in any of the following types of work? (please tick as many boxes that apply)

- Teaching Shop Work Catering Police
 Domestic Childcare Gardening Mechanics
 Building Clothes making Electrician
 Fire-fighting Office Work Customer services
 Decorating HGV driving Plumbing
 Access to nursing Factory/warehouse work
 Woodwork/Carpentry

Computers (please specify).....
 Other (please specify)

21. Would you like to make any further comments?

.....

22. Are you interested in attending a meeting with other local parents to discuss issues relating to employment and training opportunities? (Information from this meeting will be used to support local parents' training and employment needs).

Yes

No

23. Would like this questionnaire to be used to identify support/advice that you require?

Yes

No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire