

An Evaluation of the Parent and Toddler Provision at Sure Start Noddle Hill

November 2004

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1. Introduction

Each Sure Start programme aims to meet five objectives that have been set out by Government Office and administered through the Sure Start Unit. The objectives are as follows:

- Improving the ability to learn
- Improving social and emotional development
- Improving health
- Strengthening families and communities
- Improving the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare

In working towards achieving some of these objectives, Sure Start Noddle Hill has created a full time Family Play and Link Worker post to develop the Parent and Toddler provision. As part of a wider programme of evaluation, Sure Start Noddle Hill was keen to explore the impact that such a role may have upon these objectives. An independent study was therefore commissioned in order to examine and report upon the contribution of the provision within Sure Start Noddle Hill.

This report commences with an overview of parent and Toddler Provision, and also focuses on the take-up of the provision and the potential benefits that it has brought to parents, children and the wider local Sure Start programme. The views of all stakeholders are presented and in particular the views of parents. Attention has also been paid towards the financial implications of the provision by determining to some extent the cost effectiveness of the provision. Finally, the report concludes with an overall summary of the provision and makes a number of recommendations that may be considered when addressing the future contribution of the development of Parent and Toddler groups to the Sure Start Noddle Hill programme.

2. Background to the Provision

The parent and toddler provision was established as a direct response to the findings of the initial consultation conducted in the early stages of development of the Sure Start Noddle Hill programme. The consultation with local families highlighted a lack of parent and toddler provision in the Sure Start Noddle Hill area.

The initial parent and toddler provision was established in order to support parents to set up and deliver parent and toddler groups in venues across the Sure Start area. In April 2004, the service was re-configured to ensure that it could effectively meet the five Sure Start Objectives, which are:

Improving Social and Emotional Development

Improving Health

Improving the Ability to Learn

To Strengthen Families and Communities

Availability, accessibility and affordability of childcare

As one of the main aims of the parent and toddler provision is to support parent and toddler groups across the Sure Start area. It is therefore important for us to consider what we mean by a parent and toddler group and provide a definition. As well as defining parent and toddler groups it is also important to consider how the parent and toddler provision supports parent and toddler groups across the area.

Parent and toddler groups situated in the Noddle hill area are informal, friendly gatherings where parents and carers can share the pleasures and the anxieties of bringing up a small child. Parent and toddler groups are set up in community centres, primary schools and church halls across the Sure Start Noddle Hill area and are usually run by volunteers, members of the local communities normally the parent/carers themselves, or by the Sure Start Family Play and Learn workers. Parent and toddler groups enable parents

and carers to come together to socialise with one another in a friendly atmosphere and chat over refreshments. Parents and carers also know that their children are safely enjoying themselves nearby, enjoying the opportunity to interact with children of a similar age and participate in a range of activities.

At most of the parent and toddler groups across the Sure Start area, children from 0-5 are welcome and parent/carers are responsible for their own children at all times. Therefore these groups do not need to be registered by OFSTED as they are not a childcare provider. The independent groups charge a small fee of 50p - £1.00 per family. This includes the cost of refreshments and contributes towards covering the cost of equipment and materials used in a session.

The two workers deliver the following parent and toddler groups across the Sure Start area:

- Little Stars
- Little Mischiefs

They support the following independent parent and toddler groups in the area:

- St Johns Parent and Toddler
- Biggin Hill Toddler Group
- South Bransholme Methodist Church Toddler Group
- Tiddly Winks Toddler Group

The provision aims to support these parent and toddler group by conducting the following tasks and activities:

- Advising parents on activities to include as part of a session, coupled with advice on materials and themes to use in activities.
- Providing practical support on activities, such as conducting a session alongside parents as a demonstration of best practice.

- Signposting local services to parents such as training/courses providers and Sure Start activities and sessions.
- Encourage parents to access local services
- Writing policies and procedures for groups to follow
- Assisting groups to access funding and meet funding criteria

The parent and toddler provision also provides a Sure Start travelling toy library, which is free to families living in the Sure Start Noddle Hill area. The toy library enables families to borrow quality toys for short periods of time. The provision delivers regular Toy Library sessions in the South Bransholme Health Centre and forms part of the baby clinic.

The provision also delivers regular Stay and Play sessions. These sessions enable parents and children to play together with toys provided by the workers. At the end of the sessions the families are able to borrow the toys for a week, so that the children are able to continue playing with the toys at home.

The parent and toddler provision aims to be flexible enough to provide local families with the following:

- Accurate information about local services provided for families
- Encouragement to attend local services, including Sure Start and PLA
- Escorting to local Sure start and PLA services/activities
- Encouragement to become involved in the local community

During the period of evaluation, the provision has also delivered a course of childcare training, which aims to provide Sure Start parents with an accredited childcare qualification. It is envisaged that this qualification will support parents into further education or employment.

3. Methodology

Consortium Solutions have employed a variety of research methods for this evaluation study. A general community based framework for evaluation¹ was used to guide the process which considers:

INPUTS – What resources have been made available?

PROCESSES – What has been done to achieve outputs?

OUTPUTS – Who accessed the service?

OUTCOMES – What happened as a result?

This framework has been applied by using the following:

- **Monitoring Data**

Monitoring data was used to identify both the inputs and outputs of the provision

- **Questionnaires**

The evaluators endeavoured to gauge the views of users of the provision. To maximise responses, questionnaires were used during one of the provision's sessions.

- **Direct Observation**

Evaluators attended three of the elements of the Sure Start Parent and Toddler provision.

- **Face to Face interviews**

The evaluators endeavoured to speak to all stakeholders by conducting face-to-face interviews, with the aim of identifying the following:

¹ Barr,A.and Hashagen,S.(2000) *ABCD, A Framework for Evaluating Community Development*. Community Development Foundation Publications, London.

- Overall perceptions of the Sure Start Parent and Toddler provision
- What impact the provision has had on users
- What impact the provision had on Sure Start Targets and Objectives
- What improvements, if any, could be made

This was achieved by attending groups supported by the Family Play and Learn workers and groups and courses delivered by the workers. The evaluators also held face-to-face interviews with the Sure Start Play and Learn Co-ordinator and conducted an additional interview with the responsible manager from the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

4. The Parent and Toddler Provision and Relevant Targets and Objectives

The idea for the parent and toddler provision is premised on the lack of parent and toddler groups situated in the Sure Start Noddle Hill area of Bransholme, along with the need to meet specific government objects and targets through Sure Start programmes. These objectives and targets are outlined below.

Objective 1. Improving social and emotional development

Target PSA 1 – Increase the proportion of babies and children aged 0-5 years with normal levels of personal, social and emotional development for their age.

Response: The parent and toddler provision as a whole provides parents with a range of stimulating activities that they can participate in with their children. This encourages parents to adopt similar activities at home and strengthens the parent child bond. In addition to this the provision has delivered a course, which enables parents to gain a childcare qualification as well as providing them with key parenting, child development, and childcare skills.

Objective Two - Improving Health

Target SDA11 – Information and guidance on breast-feeding, nutrition, hygiene and safety available to all families with young children in Sure Start local programme and children's centre areas.

Response: The parent and toddler provision provides Toy Library sessions within the local Health establishments in the Sure Start area, providing families with the opportunity to access local health services at the same time as accessing the Toy Library provision.

Objective 3 – Improving Learning

Target PSA3a - Increase the proportion of children having normal level of communication language and literacy at the end of foundation stage.

Response: The parent and toddler provision works collaboratively with other members of the Play and Learn Team to deliver joint services. This includes delivering projects that incorporate toy and book libraries together, providing families with a range of toys and books to take home. The provision also delivers regular story time sessions as part of activities thus promoting language and literacy skills.

Target PSA 3b – An increase in the proportion of young children with satisfactory speech and language development at the age of 2 years.

Response: The parent and toddler provision works collaboratively with other members of the Play and Learn Team to deliver joint services such as the take away imaginative play combined with the Sure Start literacy scheme, called the help project. These two projects deliver toy and book libraries together, providing families with a range literacy and learning materials.

Target SDA 8 – To increase the number of children who have their needs identified inline with early years action and early years action plus of the SEN code of practice and who have either a group or individual action plan in place.

Response: The sessions supported or delivered through the provision focuses on various aspects of play and learn by providing physical activities, art and craft activities, and story times to encourage children to learn through experience. Early engagement with such activities will support early identification of need.

Target SDA9 – Increase the use of libraries

Response: The parent and toddler provision offers a toy library although joint working across the Play and Learn team enables the provision to also offer a book library to families across the Sure Start area.

Objective 4 Strengthening Families and Communities

Target PSA 4 –12% reductions in the proportion of young children where no one is working.

Response: The provision aims to build parents confidence enough so that they will participate in various training/courses that could result in the parent moving into paid employment. In addition to this, the provision has delivered a course which enables parents to gain a childcare qualification and key skills.

The provision supports independently run parent and toddler groups across the sure start area. The support offered includes planning and delivery of activities within groups, advice on possible funding, advice concerning policies and procedures relating to health and safety, and advice regarding terms of reference for groups. This support work is a key factor in developing a sustainable parent and toddler provision across the area, which will undoubtedly strengthen families and the wider community.

Target SDA14 – An increase in the proportion of families with young children reporting personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of family support services.

Response: The parent and toddler provision is part of a wider family support service. As the provision develops the quality is monitored through regular evaluation and feedback from parents. This information is used to initiate improvements in the provision and should therefore lead to personal evidence of improvement in the quality of family support services.

Objective 5 – Improving the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare

Sure Start Noddle Hill is working towards continuity in the delivery of their childcare provision, especially in terms of the Crèche provision. All relevant qualified Sure Start workers are now able cover the crèche provision when needed, this includes the Family, Play and Learn workers.

5. Staffing of the Parent and Toddler Provision

The parent and toddler provision is currently staffed by two Family, Play and Learn workers who are employed by the Pre-School Learning Alliance. The Pre School Learning Alliance is a national educational charity, which provides help and support for parents with children under five and for pre-schools and toddler groups. The charity aims to support the active involvement of parents in their child's early education and to provide opportunities for parents and pre-school staff to participate in further education and training. The charity also offers a toy library to providers of childcare and a bulk buy service offering access to cheap art and craft materials.

The two workers currently job share the role and work 17 ½ hours each. They are line-managed by the Sure Start Play and Learn Co-ordinator and receive professional supervision from the Responsible Manager from Pre School Learning Alliance.

The main roles and responsibilities of the Family, Play and Learn workers include:

- Supporting parents and carers to fully access the Sure Start provision, responding to the needs of the children and their parents.
- Building parents confidence so that they can support their own and their children's development.
- Signposting parents, workers and volunteers to appropriate agencies and services.
- Developing parents to a level where they can effectively manage the community groups.
- Supporting parents to develop skills in Childcare and early education through training courses sessions.
- Supporting existing and developing new play provision, including parent and toddler and pre-school groups and also working with schools to develop home/school links in conjunction with staff

employed through the Early Years Development and Childcare partnership.

- Developing a range of activities in which parents and young children can participate, including physical activities, music and outdoor play.
- Developing and undertaking specific projects, especially work which will reach families that do not normally access services.
- Encouraging, developing and providing support and information for volunteers in conjunction with Sure Start volunteer programme.
- Promoting Sure Start programme as a whole and specific services and activities to parents, carers and other organisations. Empowering and enabling individuals and groups to take the lead in developing and running activities and initiatives.
- Recording accurate information in a sensitive and appropriate way for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation and assisting in monitoring the budget.
- To offer Bulk Buy/Toy Library Services for parents in groups to access consumable materials and equipment for play activities.
- To provide support for the programmes crèche provision, and act as supervisor as and when needed.

6. Monitoring

All Sure Start programme are required by the Sure Start unit to monitor the use of activities and sessions as well as evaluate Sure Start activity at a local level. In the case of Sure Start Noddle Hill, the monitoring of children and their families is initiated during Sure Start registration, when parents of 0-4 year olds are asked to complete a form requesting demographic information about the family. Completing the form then means that the family is registered to Sure Start and entitles them to use Sure Start services.

Sure Start regularly monitors the parents and children who attend the provision by the Family, Play and Learn workers completing registers and attendance sheets at each session or activity. These sheets detail the names of children attending and forwarded to the Sure Start administration team.

Provision attendance

This section of the report concentrates on the attendance of the session by parents and children at the provision's various sites. It became evident that the systems in place for monitoring attendance were not water tight and that a significant amount of data was missing. The tables below are therefore based on the registered attendance figures for the period April-04 - Sept-04 and allowances must be made for missed or lost registrations.

BIG TODDLE

One of the Family, Play and Learn workers developed this one-off cross-team event, which involved the worker establishing effective links with other Sure Start programmes and working with other members of the Sure Start Noddle Hill staff team.

Session or activity attended	Number of Parents	Number of Children
09/06/04	10	10

INDEPENDENT PARENT AND TODDLER GROUPS

The provision supports parent and toddler groups, which are operating in the Noddle Hill area of Bransholme. Attendance of these independent parent and toddler groups needs to be included in the provisions monitoring, as the groups received support from the parent and toddler provision on the dates indicated below. The table below indicates the number of Sure Start registered parents/carers and children, although non-registered parents/carers and children also attend these groups.

Session or activity attended	Number of Parents	Number of Children
06/05/04 Dales	4	4
13/05/04 Dales	2	3
20/05/04 Dales	4	4
17/06/04 Dales	2	2
27/05/04 Methodist	1	1
24/05/04 Methodist	1	1
21/09/04 Biggin Hill	4	3
28/09/04 Biggin Hill	1	1
30/09/04 South Bransholme	8	8
23/06/04 Kingswood	0	0

The data shows that during the measurement period of the evaluation the provision has supported 5 various independent Parent and Toddler groups and attended 10 individual sessions.

18 Sure Start registered families have been supported via the provision by attending at least one of the independent parent and toddler groups. These families can be broken down into 21 children and 19 parents. 9 parents and 9 children have attended an independent parent and toddler group at least twice.

STAY AND PLAY (South Library)

This is the regular Stay and Play session that forms part of the Parent and Toddler provision and is delivered by the Family, Play and Learn workers.

Session or activity attended	Number of Parents	Number of Children
26/04/04	1	2
10/05/04	2	3
17/05/04	1	1

The data shows 3 families have been supported by the provision and that 2 families have attended 2 of the 3 sessions.

TOY LIBRARYS

As part of the provision a toy library is offered to parents and children living in the Sure Start Noddle Hill area. The provision delivers toy libraries at Highlands Health Centre and South Bransholme Health Centre as part of the baby clinic and as well as at Lemon Tree, the main Sure Start building.

Session or activity attended	Number of Parents	Number of Children
01/06/04 (Highlands)	2	3
08/09/04 (Highlands)	4	1
16/09/04 (Highlands)	5	3
08/09/04 (South)	3	2

Bransholme)		
22/09/04 (South Bransholme)	2	2

During the evaluation period 19 children and 11 parents have attended at least 1 Toy Library session, from 11 Sure Start registered families.

TAKE AWAY IMAGINARY PLAY

This is the regular session that is delivered by the Family, Play and Learn workers as part of the parent and toddler provision and links with other members of the Play and Learn team. This session operates like the Stay and Play provision and offers toys and books that the families who access the session can borrow for short periods of time.

Session or activity attended	Number of Parents	Number of Children
06/04/04	1	1
20/04/04	1	1
18/05/04	1	2
22/06/04	1	1
09/09/04	1	
28/09/04	2	2

The data shows that 4 Sure Start families have benefited from the support of this session, comprising of 5 parents/carers and 5 children, 1 of these families attended at least 2 of the sessions, the remaining 4 families attended at least one of the 6 sessions during the evaluation period.

In addition to this the monitoring data relating to the toy library element of this session show that 8 toys were loaned to the families.

LITTLE MISCHEIFS

This is the regular Parent and Toddler group that are delivered by the Family, Play and Learn workers. The monitoring figures comprises of families who have been registered as Sure Start users. Non-registered families also use this session.

Session or activity attended	Number of Parents	Number of Children
01/04/04	3	4
22/04/04	3	4
27/05/04	0	0
03/06/04	3	4
10/06/04	1	1
23/09/04	7	6

The data shows that 11 Sure Start registered families have been supported via this regular session and that these families comprise of 12 Sure Start registered children and 13 Sure Start registered parents.

LITTLE STARS

This is the regular Parent and Toddler group that are delivered by the Family, Play and Learn workers as part of the Sure Start parent and toddler provision. The monitoring figures reflect the number of registered parents and children.

Session or activity attended	Number of Parents	Number of Children
23/09/04	4	8
30/09/04	4	4

The monitoring data confirms that 8 families have been supported via this session; 12 are children and 8 are parents. 4 families have attended at least one of the two sessions.

MULTI-CULTURAL DAY

This was a one-off event involving all Sure Start teams and includes input from the Family, Play and Learn workers, in terms of ideas and planning of the day and activities.

Date	Parents	Children
(29-09-04)	29	30

POND DIPPING

This was also a one-off Play and Learn event.

Date	Number of Parents	Number of Children
(25/05/04)	5	6

GETTING STARTED COURSE

During the period of evaluation the provision was in the process of delivering a 10-week training course giving Sure Start Noddle Hill parents the opportunity to gain a basic qualification in childcare. 3 of these training sessions were delivered during the evaluation period.

Date	Number of Parents
10/09/04	8
17/09/04	10
24/09/04	9

Summary of findings

Through analysis of the monitoring data it is possible to calculate that 79 parents and 80 children have accessed the Parent and Toddler provision during the evaluation period, and that these parents and children form part of 74 families.

Number of sessions attended	Children	Parents
One session	56	57
Two sessions	18	17
Three sessions	5	3
Four sessions	1	2
Total	80	79

In addition to this, 28 parents and 31 children from 28 families have accessed the regularly delivered sessions, namely Little Stars, Little Mischiefs and Play and Stay sessions and take away imaginary play. Analysis of data shows that 1 parent attended 3 of the regularly delivered session and that 6 parents and 6 children attended at least 2 of the regularly delivered sessions.

Analysis of Diary Monitoring

To better understand the role of the Family, Play and Learn workers within the Sure Start Parent and Toddler provision, the workers were requested to record information daily in diary logs, such as:

- What activities are undertaken on a daily basis, for example names of sessions or projects delivered, meetings attended and training accessed.
- Details of the activity undertaken for example advising, delivering or assisting another team to deliver a session or project, report writing or administration.

- The approximate time taken on each activity

As well as gaining a better understanding of the role of the workers, the log aimed to highlight how the provision crossed Sure Start teams and linked with partners and organisations across the Sure Start area.

To minimise duplication of work, it was decided that the workers would submit records that they keep for the PLA instead of completing the diary logs designed for the study.

Summary of Findings

The dairy monitoring logs covered the period of 01st April 2004 – 30th June 2004. It must be noted that tasks and times provided for analysis where approximates and are to be used as an indicator only.

Analysis of the dairy-monitoring log shows that the Family, Play and Learn workers spend a largest percentage of their time, approximately 38% actually delivering the provision in terms of sessions and activities within sessions, facilitating and developing the Toy Library, and assisting other Sure Start staff to deliver sessions and one off events.

Approximately 13% of their time is spent on managing resources. The monitoring data shows that this task involves the worker buying materials for activities, transporting materials around the Sure Start area, and collecting materials.

The data also shows that 12% of the workers time is spent in communication or project meetings, the aims of these types of meetings include the following:

- The project meetings are set up for the Parent and Toddler provision to have input into cross-team events or activities to work with partners and stakeholders to plan new projects and to evaluate projects

- Communication meetings are set up, to enable the Family, Play and Learn workers have clear routes of communication with members of the Sure Start management and staff as well as with their responsible manager and the staff of their employing agency.

Finding show that in addition to this, approximately 10% of the workers time is spent networking with organisations such as:

- Bransholme Library
- Highlands Health Centre
- St Johns Methodist Church
- PLA

10% of their time is spent planning and preparing for existing activities such as the Toy Library and the Stay and Play provision as well as developing new sessions and activities such as The Big Toddle. Another 10% is spent training, unfortunately no details were recorded in relation to training.

Approximately 5% of the workers time is spent on report writing, which includes the worker writing progress reports for both Sure Start and PLA management boards and 2% of the worker's time is spent on research for future activities ad sessions.

7. Perceptions of Stakeholders

In order to gain the views of people providing and using the provision, a series of face to face interviews were conducted with the following stakeholders:

- The Sure Start Play and Learn Co-ordinator
- The Family Play and Learn workers
- The responsible manager
- The parents carers and children who use the provision

Perceptions of the Family Play and Learn Workers

The Family Play and Learn Workers stated that their role within the provision is to urge parents to become involved in their local community and access local services. One of the workers went on to explain that this was done by offering various levels of support including befriending and encouraging parents to attend groups and services, which incorporates signposting and promoting relevant local services, including Sure Start, PLA, training/courses providers and local groups. The workers also accompany parents when attending groups, session or activities on their first time.

Another crucial element of their role is to support local parents groups; this is needs led and includes, providing encouragement and advice in terms of funding, planning of sessions, materials to use in sessions, and buying or borrowing of equipment. One of the workers stated that other roles included networking with various organisations situated in the local community to better understand what is available for parents and to identify possible ways of joint working. Examples cited included participating in organisations one-off events or to hire venues for parents groups and developing, promoting and facilitating the Sure Start Toy Library. The workers also added that in addition to facilitating the Toy Library they promote and facilitate the PLA Bulk Buy and Dressing up Box.

The workers outlined the following aims of the provision:

- To empower parents
- To instil confidence in local parents to enable them to access local services, participate in local activities and sessions and moving on to take control of their own groups, activities and sessions
- To develop sustainable groups governed by local parents.
- To provide a signposting to local services available for local parents

The two workers both feel that they are beginning to meet these aims and that the local community is beginning to understand Sure Start and what benefits can be gained from being involved. They explained that their role had changed within Sure Start as a result of job re-evaluation in April 2004 and that they had not yet had sufficient time to make a great impact on the aims of the provision. The workers have learnt that different groups need a different approach and have carried this through into their new role. The workers strongly feel that Individual's needs are different and the provision is beginning to meet those needs, but more time is needed to make stronger links with local families and the wider community.

The evaluator asked the Family Play and Learn Worker what groups they were supporting as part of the provision. The workers defined the groups as being groups governed by local parents of 0-4 year olds, situated in the Noddle Hill area of Bransholme, which are predominantly parent and toddler groups. Two groups are situated within Health Centres to enable parents to have easy access to Health services as well as participating in a Stay and Play provision. In addition to this, the workers explained that they facilitate their own parent and toddler sessions called Little Mischiefs and Little Stars that run once a week. Venues where groups are currently being delivered by parents are:

- Highlands Health Centre
- Bransholme Health Centre

- Biggin Avenue Primary School
- Lemon Tree
- Bransholme Community centre
- Kingswood School
- St Johns Church
- St Benedicks Church Hall
- Methodist Church

The workers joint work with the Sure Start Literacy worker to deliver a session at Lemon Tree called Take Away Imaginative Play as well as support the Sure Start Help project, which is a literacy scheme providing a travelling mini library that is delivered in conjunction with the Toy Library.

The evaluator focused the interview on how the workers supported the groups. The workers repeated that each group had individual needs that related to their stages of development; some groups are at the early stages of development and some groups are very well established. The workers noted the following as ways of supporting groups:

- **Advice on possible funding** sources as well as practical support regarding completing funding applications; this is provided for more developed groups when asked
- **Writing policies and procedures** for groups to follow, this can be provided to groups on request
- **Advice on safety issues**, this is given when groups are in early stages of development
- **Up to date information** on resources available from Sure Start and the PLA such as the Toy Library, Bulk Buy, coupled with referring parents to specialist organisations such as Kids for specific support
- **Ideas on the planning of session**, which involves the workers suggesting materials, themes and activities.

One of the workers stated that the PLA were currently developing a national standard which when operational will provide groups with a star rating to indicate the quality of groups being delivered by parents in the Sure Start area.

The workers also discussed the positive aspects of their role. These are:

- As a job share the hours are very flexible and suit both workers lifestyle
- Working across the Sure Start teams and drawing on other's professionalisms
- The work itself has been very positive, watching the parents and children come together and enjoy themselves as well as watching individual parents progress onto training/courses identified by the workers
- The work is motivating with a high degree of job satisfaction

The evaluator asked the workers if there was anything that worked not so well within the provision, both workers agreed that they had experienced some problems with the PLA's Bulk Buy Scheme. This centred on the time taken to disseminate orders to the scheme and orders being put together correctly before being picked up. These issues however have now been resolved, resulting in the scheme now operating smoothly. The workers have both experienced problems with communication routes between the PLA and Sure Start although once again both workers feel that this has now been resolved. They feel that it is sometimes difficult to have two line managers as they are covering the same in issues in supervision. The workers believe it may be more beneficial to continue to have regular supervision from the PLA and ad hoc supervision from Sure Start. Both workers also explained they have experienced difficulties in engaging parents and that this is an on-going challenge for them. Other on-going challenges include the fact that they sometimes have to turn parents away from the provision because the parents do not live within the Sure Start boundary. This always seems unfair

particularly when it is a boundary matter of which side of the street a parent lives on. The other on-going challenge faced by the workers is the short term funding arrangements for this type of provision. Both workers feel that this type of work warrants long term funding as it takes a great deal of time to build up relationships with the families and community.

The evaluator asked the workers how they worked with the local primary schools. One of the workers stated that the local primary school each have an Early Links worker who works with the parents whose children attend the school or nursery and the primary schools also operate their own Toy Library. However the workers use two of the primary schools as venues for their groups, distribute Sure Start leaflets through the school, as well as look for possible opportunities for joint working.

The evaluator asked the Family Play and Learn workers how they encourage parents to become involved in the community, i.e. planning or running of groups or accessing local services. One of the workers explained that in her experience, when you ask parent to become involved they feel they do not have the abilities. Therefore parents require persistent verbal encouragement and patience to allow them to develop at their own pace. Some parents will ask for support and will want to develop themselves and the workers will signpost parents to others organisations including PLA and Sure Start if they cannot support them themselves. Through interacting with parents the workers feel that you build up a relationship with them and as a result learn the best way to support them.

The evaluator asked the Family Play and Learn workers what they felt the parents and children gain from the provision. Workers described the benefits gained by parents to be centred around the following:

- **Social interaction** – There is an opportunity for parents who attend the parent and toddler provision to socialise with one another building friendships and relationships.

- **Emotional support** – There is an opportunity for parents through the social interaction in the groups to gain emotional support from other parents, as well as the opportunity to gain in confidence.
- **Interaction with children** – Parents have the opportunity to interact with their children and take away ideas for play activities that can be repeated at home.
- **Information and advice** – Parents gain the opportunity to use the knowledge of the workers to access local services such as training/courses providers, health services and local groups. Parents who govern local groups gain the opportunity of securing funding advice, assistance with formulating policies and procedures as well ideas around planning sessions.

Workers described the benefits gained by children to be centred on the following:

- **Social interaction** – the children gain the opportunity to interact in play with on another building relationships and friends with the children parents around them.
- **Emotional Development** – The children gain the opportunity to interact in stimulating play with their parents, strengthening the parent child bond.
- **Early Learning** – Children through structured play have the opportunity to make a start on Early Learning goals.

The evaluator asked the Family Play and Learning workers if they collected information on the quality of the service and how this information was recorded and used. The workers stated that they used evaluation sheets and cut out teddy bear shapes for the parents to write comments on as a way of parents being able to feed back to them about the quality of sessions. This information is then collated and used to inform the development of the groups. One of the workers detailed that a quality play and learn provision is one that can incorporate all the Early Learning Goals.

Perceptions of the Sure Start Play and Learn Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator line manages the two workers and conducts regular supervision on a six weekly basis. The Co-ordinator explained that they were probably the third co-ordinator or line manager that the workers had had during their time at Sure Start Noddle Hill.

The evaluator asked if being employed through the PLA but working for Sure Start caused any particular issues for themselves or the workers. The co-ordinator stated that the workers often worked away from the main Sure Start building and receive regular supervision from the PLA. The Co-ordinator has sometimes felt that communication routes could be better between all stakeholders, to prevent the workers delivering the project in isolation of Sure Start.

The Co-ordinator discussed how they had supported the workers through their transition in post following the job re-evaluation and introduction of new job descriptions. The Co-ordinator explained that the workers roles had changed slightly to allow them to play a bigger role within Sure Start, for example assisting in crèche sessions or one-off events and to have a greater impact on parents themselves by providing gateways out of isolation and onto local services, Sure Start, training/courses and employment. The Co-ordinator stated that they supported the workers at this time by negotiating with their responsible manager to allow the workers to assist in the running of the crèche and re-arranged venues to better support the workers to support the parents.

The evaluator moved on to ask the Co-ordinator what they felt the main aims of the provision are. The co-ordinator detailed that the following as the provisions main aims:

- Promote the Toy Library and Bulk Buy schemes
- Support Parent and Toddler groups within the area

- Encourage parents to gain a childcare qualification
- To give out appropriate information regarding local services available in the area for families

The Co-ordinator felt that the workers were meeting the aims of the provision more effectively and efficiently since their roles had been evaluated.

The Co-ordinator detailed the following ways of how the workers are supporting local parent and toddler groups:

- Advising parents on the following:
 - Possible activities that could be incorporated as part of a session.
 - Themes and materials to use in those activities
- Practical demonstration as models of good practice to be followed by parents
- Signposting training/courses providers to parents who are considering careers in childcare

The evaluator asked how the workers support or joint work across the other Sure Start teams. The Co-ordinator felt that the workers imputed into other teams by assisting in the running of the Sure Start crèche as well as assisting one-off events. One of the workers had organised an event across all the Sure Start in Hull called the Big Toddle. The workers also work with other agencies to secure possible venues for parent and toddler groups to be delivered from.

The Co-ordinator feels that the Toy Library isn't performing well within the provision, as the take up of the library is perceived to be slow. Although the Co-ordinator meant this as no reflection on the workers efforts as much of the workers time has been put into the development and facilitation of toy library.

The Co-ordinator feels as though the need for a toy library is simply not there in this area as there is a toy library within every primary school in the area for parents to make use of. The Co-ordinator stated that the job share post could possibly work better, as currently there is no cross over time were the workers have the opportunity to catch up with one another there reduce duplication of work. The Co-ordinator feels the post would be better as a full time post for one person, which the Co-ordinator would improve communication between the provision and Sure start and reduce any possibilities for duplication of work loads.

The evaluator asked the Co-ordinator how the quality of the provision is monitored. The Co-ordinator feels that through regular supervision and frequent communication, any issues that arise can be dealt with in an effective and efficient manner before quality is affected. The Co-ordinator explained that comment slips are provided as part of the provision and verbal feedback was happily received by the Co-ordinator from parents and organisations on the quality of the provision. The Co-ordinator added that Sure Start also has a complaints procedure in place to deal with complaints that may arise.

The Co-ordinator felt that the main benefits gained by parents are:

- **Social** – As parents gain the opportunity to socialise with other parents of small children.
- **Emotional** – Parents through socialising with other parents gain the opportunity to make friendships and relationships which can result parents emotionally supporting one another through difficult times.
- **Increased confidence** – By attending the provision parents are encouraged to assist in the development of their own groups. The provision is flexible enough to allow parents to progress at their own pace or until they feel confident enough to do so.

The Co-ordinator provided the following as possible benefits to be gained by children who attend the provision:

- **A start on early learning goals** – through stimulating activities children develop new skills and build existing ones.
- **Social and emotional support** – Children also gain the opportunity to socialise with children their own age as well as interact through play with their parents.

The Co-ordinator explained that the workers arrange one-off events to publicise the provision, for example the Big Toddle, coupled with publicising through existing Sure Start activities and sessions.

The evaluator completed the interview by asking the Co-ordinator if they had any issues or concerns relating to the provision. The Co-ordinator reiterated comments made earlier about the toy library, the possible duplication of work within the provision as the workers do not work together and the consolidation of line management; the Co-ordinator feels that the workers currently receive more supervision and line management than what is required.

The perceptions of the responsible manager (PLA)

A semi-structured interview was held with the Family Play and Learn workers' responsible manager to gather their views of the provision. The interview lasted approximately one hour and was held at Pre School Learning Alliance's main offices.

The evaluator started the interview by asking the manager what their role was within the provision. The manager responded by providing the following as a description of their role within the parent and toddler provision:

- To provide the workers with professional supervision, usually on a quarterly basis.
- To professionally develop the workers by conducting their annual appraisals, which reviews past work and set plans and goals for the

future, monitor the workers training needs, identifying and providing relevant training and building on strengths and providing the relevant training to overcome weaknesses.

- Set loose targets, which relate to the Sure Start milestones set out in the Service Level Agreement, between Sure Start Noddle Hill and Pre-School Learning Alliance.
- To maintain and develop effective communication routes between Sure Start Noddle Hill and the Pre School Learning Alliance.

The manager also detailed that the Pre School Learning Alliance needed to charge a fee to cover core costs of the organisation, which includes:

- Administration relating to the provision
- Payroll relating to the provision
- Line Management of the workers
- Professional Supervision of the workers

The manager outlined what they felt the aims of the provision are. To encourage and support parents to become more independent was cited by the manager as the main aim of the provision and that this involves the workers:

- Encouraging parents to access childcare training and then into employment into childcare
- Encouraging and supporting parents to develop and deliver their own parent and toddler groups
- Leading by example and offering support to parents in being the first educator to their children
- Educating parents in the *Birth to Three Matters*

The manager explained that the provision is in the second quarter of delivery and therefore had made good progress towards achieving these aims.

The evaluator moved on to ask the manager how the workers link with other organisations across the Sure Start area. The manager stated that the workers attended regular PLA meetings where they had the opportunity to meet up with their professional counterparts from other Sure Start programmes. The workers then have time to generate and share new ideas, share experiences and pass on best practice. The manager then described how one of the workers has attended relevant conferences which have enabled them to network with similar organisations and share experiences of best practice.

The interview moved to focus on how the workers support, joint- work and have input into other Sure Start teams. The manager explained that the workers have planned and delivered a one-off event such as the Sure Start Big Toddle. The workers also occasionally assist in the delivery of the Sure Start Noddle Hill crèche and that it is set in the Sure Start milestones to develop training that will support members of the Sure Start Noddle Hill to operate the Toy Library.

The manager explained that sessions within the Bransholme Library had not worked so well, as available time within the library was not enough to set up the session and low attendance figures. As a result the sessions are being moved to a more appropriate venue.

The responsible manager stated that the following were all deemed to be positives of the parent and toddler provision:

- Little Mischiefs session delivered at Bransholme Community centre
- Positive relationship between the workers and the parents
- Training element within the parent and toddler provision
- Establishing groups within the Sure Start Noddle Hill area

The evaluator asked the responsible manager how quality of the provision is monitored. The manager explained that daily work logs are kept as part of the

provision which detail hours worked against activity, for example workers enter the date on the log and under that date detail their activities such as attending a meeting or planned and delivered a session. In addition activity logs are used to monitor the use of the provision as well and one off, unannounced inspections are organised by the PLA to monitor quality. The PLA are also developing a national standard for parent and toddler groups, which are going to adopt a star rating system that will hopefully when approved, give parent and toddler groups direction and something to aim for. Paper cut outs of teddy bears was cited as a way in which parents are able to feedback to workers and the PLA, these paper teddys are left at points across the provision and are anonymous allowing parents to be honest with their feedback.

The manager felt that the main benefits for parents are:

- Opportunity to socialise
- Opportunity to alleviate isolation
- Gain new skills, such as how to engage with their children new and different ways through play.
- Gain independence and confidence

The manager explained that children gained benefits such as:

- Opportunity to socialise with other children of similar age and their parents
- Gain confidence when interacting with adults and children
- Learning opportunities through play activities

The evaluator enquired about how the workers encourage parents to participate in the provision and how they inform new parent and toddler groups about the provision. The manager stated that most funders who give small start up grants to parent and toddler groups will give out PLA information or will signpost groups to the PLA and this is usually the first point

of contact for the PLA with new groups. The responsible manager explained that the PLA would not be able to support the Noddle Hill parent and toddler groups at the level that they do without the SLA agreement with Sure Start Noddle Hill.

In terms of how the Family, Play and Learn workers encourage parents to attend the provision, they advertise through Sure Start, attend Sure Start one off events as well as just talking to parents as they see them travelling across the area.

Overall the manager stated much satisfaction with the provision at the moment, although did feel that the workers sometimes needed to focus inwardly and step back allowing the parents to take more control of the sessions.

Perceptions of parents and carers

The evaluators held a series of visits to sessions in order to gauge the views of parents and carers who have accessed the provision. The sessions visited included a Sure Start parent and toddler session, one of the 10 week training sessions, and an independent parent and toddler session, which is regularly supported by the provision. Parents were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews or complete questionnaires during the session. 11 parents participated from the regular parent and toddler sessions, 5 parents participated from the training sessions and 1 leader participated from the independent parent and toddler group.

Regular Sure Start parent and toddler session

10 of the participants stated that they attended the provision once a week and 1 stated that this was their first time accessing the provision.

Participants were asked what they liked about the parent and toddler provision. 5 participants explained that they liked the range of different

structured activities that the children could take part in. 4 participants stated that they liked the staff who run the sessions and 3 parents stated that they liked the mix of parents and children who regularly attend the session. Participants also cited the following likes regarding the parent and toddler session:

- The chance to mix with other parents
- Lots for the children to do
- Loads of room for the children to play
- Children get the chance to mix with other children

Parents talked about the support given by the Sure Start workers and stated that it was very effective:

- They set up and plan the sessions
- Tell the children stories
- Provide the activities and equipment
- They made me feel at ease and where informal
- They made me feel welcome

Parents talked about the changes they had noticed in their children since they had started attending the parent and toddler provision. 3 participants explained that they had noticed their children sharing things better with other children, 2 participants had noticed that their children made friends easier and 2 stated that their child had become more sociable with both children and adults. The remaining participants gave the following as changes that they had noticed in their children since starting attending the provision:

- My child started walking at the group
- My child is much calmer he groups keeps him going
- My child just really looks forward to coming he gets really excited

One participant explained that they were surprised how their normally shy child had really got stuck into all the activities.

Parents also considered changes in their children based on a pre-determined list. 8 parents were able to comment, the other parents did not feel that they had attend the provision long enough to notice any changes. The following table indicates the level of change noticed, ranging from much worse to greatly improved.

	Much worse	Worse	Neither	Improved	Greatly improved
Physical fitness			1	6	1
Mental ability			1	7	
Happiness			1	2	5
Sharing with others				4	4
Communication skills			1	2	5
Social skills			1	4	3
Creativity			1	1	6

In terms of their children's physical fitness, one parent stated that they had noticed that their child's physical fitness had greatly improved, 6 had stated they had noticed their child's physical fitness had improved and one participant stated their child's physical fitness had neither improved nor become worse.

In regards to changes in mental ability 7 participants had noticed that their children's mental ability had improved and the other participant had noticed that their child's mental ability had neither improved nor become worse.

In terms of children's happiness, 5 participants felt that their children's happiness had greatly improved, 2 participants stated that their children's

happiness had improved especially after a session and 1 participant stated that there was no change in the level of their child's happiness.

In terms of sharing with others, results show that 4 participants had noticed a great improvement in their children's ability to share with others and 4 other participants stated that they had noticed an improvement in their children's ability to share with others.

With regards to changes in participant's children's communication skills, the data shows that 5 participants feel that they have noticed their children's communication skills had greatly improved, 2 participants had noticed their children's communication skills had improved and 1 had noticed no change.

The results show that 3 participants had noticed a great improvement in their children's social skills, 4 participants had noticed an improvement in their children's social skills and 1 had neither noticed a positive nor negative change in their children social skills.

In terms of children's creativity, results show that 6 participants had noticed a great improvement in their children's creativity, 1 participant had noticed an improvement and 1 had not noticed any change.

Parents talked about what they had gained from attending the provision. Examples included:

- Meeting people, other parents
- Adult Conversation
- Like to watch the kids enjoying themselves
- Chance to chill out and relax for a couple of hours
- Chance to get out of the house

Parents also mentioned the following benefits for their children:

- Independence
- Get ready for nursery
- He gets an opportunity to do lots of the messy things
- Learns how to share with others
- Learns how to mix with others
- Moving about then walking

One of the parents had become involved with the running of the parent and toddler sessions after being encouraged and supported by the Sure Start workers. The other 8 parents stated that they were not involved in the running of a session; having their hands full not attending long and plans to go back to work were all cited as reasons why. Parents did state that they may be encouraged to become involved in the running of sessions if they were asked and supported by Sure Start.

The evaluator asked participants how they are able to feedback on the quality of a session. The majority of parents stated that they were given the opportunity to feedback verbally on the quality of a session. One parent explained that one week they had asked for more baby toys to be included in the session and the following week the workers brought baby toys. One parent did not feel they had been given the opportunity to feedback on the quality of a session.

Parents provided a wide range of comments to illustrate their perceptions of the provision including the following:

“if the Sure Start workers didn’t support this group then it would not exist, there is very little on this estate, this is one of the good things you can rely on”.

“There lots of different things for the children to do each week”

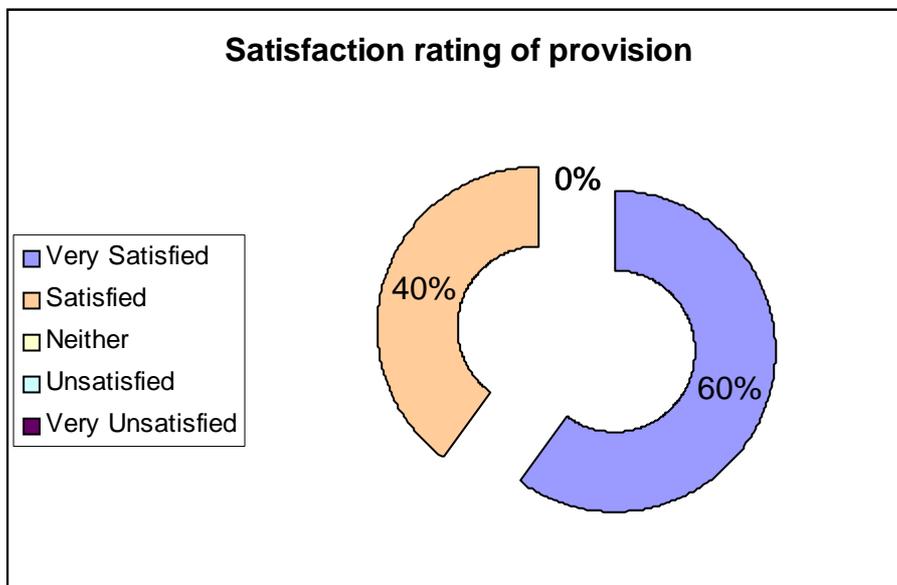
“The group is well organised and structured”

“There is always a ready supply of age relevant toys”

“You get the chance to chill out a bit”.

All of the participants stated that so far they had experienced no challenges as part of this session, although 1 participant did explain that challenges had been experienced when the group was held in the Dales Fitness Centre in terms of access into the building; the Sure Start workers had overcome this by changing the venue to somewhere more accessible.

To conclude the interview the evaluator asked the participants to rate their satisfaction of the parent and toddler provision. 6 participants indicated that they were very satisfied with the provision and 4 participants indicated that they were satisfied with the provision. No levels of dissatisfaction were recorded.



Independent Parent and Toddler Sessions (Kingswood)

An interview was held with the leader of an independent parent and toddler group that receives support from the Sure Start Parent and Toddler provision.

The leader explained that one of the Family, Play and Learn workers visited the group at least once a month to offer support. The leader cited the following points as things that they really like about the provision:

- They bring their own materials
- Provides the group with extra adults to watch the children
- Provides a more structured varied and flexible range of activities that we could not normally do such as painting and the messy things.
- Gives us the time to spend with the parents, which we do not normally have

The leader was asked if they had noticed any changes in their parent and toddler group since it has been receiving support via the Sure Start parent and toddler provision. The Leader stated that the Sure Start provision has enabled the group and parents to access quality materials at a reasonable price through their Bulk Buy scheme and generated lots of new ideas for activities to do within the group and for the parents to take home.

The group leader felt parents gain opportunities to interact more with one another, as there are more adults to watch and interact with the children. In terms of gains for the children, the leader explained the children have the opportunity to access more varied and stimulating activities as well as the opportunity to access some wonderful Sure Start equipment.

The leader was asked what could be put into place to encourage parents to run or take over the group. The leader explained that the group currently was not short of leaders and that the parents who regularly attend the group are more than willing to help set up and put away the equipment.

The leader was then asked how parents are able to feed back on the quality of the Sure Start provision. They responded by stating that parents feedback verbally to the workers on many issues not just quality. The Sure Start Family, Play and Learn workers spend time with the leaders accessing what the group needs, what works well and what does not work so well. The leader went on to say that they are able to contact the worker any time by ringing The Lemon Tree and leaving a message and that so far this method of communication worked well.

The evaluator asked the leader what support had been given to their parent and toddler group by the Sure Stat provision. The leader listed the following as ways their group had been supported:

- Supply the group with quality materials via the bulk buy
- Provide additional leaders for the group
- Facilitate structured activities
- Provide the group with ideas that can be reproduced at home

The leader also talked the challenges relating to the parent and toddler provision. The leader explained that the main challenge with any of the Sure Start activities and sessions was the issue of parents receiving support depending on the postcode they lived in and that this sometimes caused some upset amongst parents in her group. The leader went on to say that her group was split between parents living in the Sure start area and parent not living in the Sure start area.

Parents attending the 'Getting Started course'

Questionnaire were completed by parents attending the 'Getting Started course', which during the period of evaluation was delivered by one of the Family, Play and Learn workers, at Sure start Lemon Tree. 5 parents completed questionnaires.

The results of the questionnaire show that:

- All of the respondents were on the 8th week of a 10 week course
- All but 1 of the respondents stated that they had heard about the course via the Family, Play and Learn workers, the other heard about the course via other Sure start staff.

As the table below shows, respondents feel that the course is developing many skills and feel skills in childcare, child development, reading, communication and parenting are being most developed on the course.

Skills	Frequency
Childcare	5
Child development	4
Arts and crafts	3
Reading	4
Writing	3
Listening	3
Communication	4
Parenting	4
General confidence	3

Respondents reported that they feel fairly or very confident in all of the skills they feel the course is developing. This is shown in the table below

	I do not feel confident	I feel fairly confident	I feel very confident
Childcare		3	2
Child development		3	2
Arts and crafts		2	3
Reading		3	2
Writing		2	2
Speaking		2	2
Listening		1	3
Communication		2	2
Parenting		1	3
General Confidence		2	2

All of the respondents indicated that they found the course tutor very easy to understand. 2 participants indicated that they had received no one-to-one support from the tutor as it was not needed. One indicated that they had received some one-to-one support and 2 indicated that they had received lots. The respondents also reported that they had found the course materials very useful and that they liked the practical and group teaching activities.

With regard to the level of the course, 4 respondents felt that the course was about right and 1 felt that the course was too easy. All the respondents reported that the course was interesting.

All of the respondents stated that the course was making a difference to their lives. The following provides a list of ways cited by respondents of how the course has or is making a difference:

- Giving a me something to look forward to and something to enjoy
- Possibility a change in career
- Making me understand my own child
- Learning new skills
- The course has made a difference in what toys and activities we do together and buy.

Respondent also reported that the course was having an impact on their children’s lives. 4 respondents felt that the course was making a difference to their children’s lives and 2 of these respondents felt that their child really benefited from being in the nursery, interacting with other children whilst they were accessing the course. Only one respondent did not feel their child was experiencing a difference as a result of the course.

None of the respondents felt that the course could be improved in any way.

The table below shows the type of thing respondents are planning to do upon completing the course. The majority of the course participants would like, or have plans, to go onto level 2 childcare course.

Plan	Frequency
Move on to level 2 childcare	4
Move on to GCSEs	
Move onto other qualifications	1
Move onto a training course	
Try to find a job	1
No plans yet	

All of the respondent’s indicated that they felt the course had influenced their future plans. 1 stated that it has just made her think about there future more and 2 stated that they now want to work with children under 6.

Parent Case Study

One of the Family, Play and Learn workers collected the views of one parent for the purposes of this evaluation.

The parent told the worker that she used to spend her time going to her mum's house and shopping and didn't really access any services before she accessed Sure Start. The parent explained that she first came into contact with Sure Start when she was given a leaflet about Sure Start Noddle Hill.

The parent then visited Sure Start Noddle Hill, meeting with a Sure Start worker who informed the parent about the available activities and sessions. The parent accessed several sessions before accessing the Getting Started Course provided by the parent and toddler provision.

The parent explained that she now accesses many different sessions and activities such as cooking on a budget, parent and toddler groups and Jabado and that as a result she has made lots of new friends living in the same area. Since joining Sure Start, the parent has also noticed that her daughter shares and socialises with other children better.

8. Additional Investigation Regarding the Toy Library Provision

During face-to-face interviews to gain perceptions of the Sure Start workers, it was highlighted that local primary schools, currently deliver toy libraries within the nurseries, raising the question of the need for Sure Start to deliver a toy library provision across the Noddle Hill Sure Start area. Each school has an Early Years Link worker who works with parents to establish groups and encourage participation of parents within primary schools.

The evaluator contacted several of the local primary schools to ascertain if the school nursery delivered a toy library as part of their service. The evaluator also checked whether the toy library was well used and if the toy library is accessible to parents and children under three years.

Highlands primary school had no knowledge of the school delivering a toy library as part of their nursery. Another primary school, Biggin Hill only delivers a toy library as part of the learning process, for example if a child was finding playing with a particular toy difficult, the teacher will send that toy home with the child. They did explain that a toy library was available within the nursery but was stopped some time ago due to the time needed to facilitate it and the lack of attendance and use.

Broadace primary school, however has a thriving toy library which is regularly used, although the quality of the toys has become poor due to the frequency of their use and there is currently no funding available to replace worn toys.

Cleve primary has no toy library provision as part of the school or nursery and Dales primary also stated that they no longer have a toy library operating as part of the nursery or school.

Local primary schools situated within the Sure Start area do not have an adequate, quality toy library provision operating within them, which is open to

families living within their local community and have children under the age of three. This highlights a gap in services provided for Sure Start families and illustrates a need for the Sure Start toy library to be continued as well as to be developed, linking in more effectively with local primary schools.

9. Cost of Parent and Toddler Provision

Some analysis of the cost relating to the provision was undertaken with the aim of determining how much the provision costs the programme per individual parent and child and also in terms of number of contacts. All financial data relating to the provision was provided by the Sure Start Noddle Hill local programme and relates to the same period of analysed monitoring data, April 04 – Sep 04. These costs are as outlined below:

	Cost
Materials – bought for delivery of provision	£19.97
Crèche - places provided as part of the provision, relating to the getting started course	£242.70
Salaries - of parent and toddler provisions workers - job share of 35 hours on a scale of 3-4. based on a period of 6 months	£9832.50
Staff expenses – based over a 6 month time period	£350.00
Management and administration – based over a 6 month time period	£1225.00
Hospitality – Cost relating to providing refreshments for provision attendees.	£42.35
Room Hire - Costs relating to hiring room to deliver provision.	£218.00
TOTAL	£11930.52

Given that there was a total of 225 contacts with Sure Start registered parents during the period of evaluation, **the cost per contact per registered parent or child is £53.02.**

It is important to consider a number of other factors that may have a bearing on cost related decisions. These include:

- Other people can be classed as beneficiaries of the Sure Start Parent and Toddler provision although they are not included in the calculations above, such as non-Sure Start users attending the groups.
- Any cost based decision must attach a value to the benefits that parents and children have gained. Many of these benefits may not become apparent for quite some time yet. For example a parent who has attended training may secure paid employment
- There are no similar schemes available against which to make a cost comparison and there is insufficient data available in order to calculate a unit cost for the Stay and Play provision.

10. Summary of the Strengths of the Parent and Toddler Provision

- The provision is community based and needs led
- The provision focuses activities on various aspects of play and learn by providing a range of stimulating activities within sessions
- The provision encourages children to learn through experience
- Provision builds the confidence of families living in the Sure Start area and encourages families to become more involved in their local community
- The provision supports and encourages families to access local services
- The provision encourages parents to gain childcare qualifications
- The provision delivers childcare courses
- The provision provides a worthwhile social opportunity for local Sure Start families
- The provision supports and empowers local parent and toddler groups, developing a sustainable parent and toddler provision within the Sure Start area.
- Families gain benefits from attending the provision that have a positive impact
- Provision provides a point of contact for local Sure Start families in terms of information and advice

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Parent and Toddler provision at Sure Start Noddle Hill is still in the early stages of development and therefore this evaluation study provides a baseline from which to monitor future progress. What is evident to date is that the provision has the ability to contribute to a wide range of Sure Start targets and objectives and has made a good initial progress towards achieving them. The strengths of the service lie in the links that have been forged with the local community and the potential of the provision to contribute to a wider programme of community development in the Noddle Hill area.

The provision is viewed positively by all stakeholders and staff working within the provision demonstrating that the partnership between the PLA and Sure Start is effective. This partnership has seen support for parents and toddlers rolled out to six groups across the Sure Start area. In addition, the provision has offered training to parents to enable them to achieve qualifications and in effect this adds great value to the provision. Parents report high levels of satisfaction with the service and have indicated that the provision is having a positive impact on both themselves and their children. Independent groups report that the support they have received from the provision has increased their capacity to deliver a quality service to parents and the PLA feel that their own capacity to deliver would be restricted without the partnership arrangement with Sure Start.

The provision will face a number of challenges as it continues with its development. In order to develop a more cost-effective provision the numbers of registered Sure Start beneficiaries will need to increase. The provision therefore needs to continue to increase the levels of marketing and publicity. In terms of being more cost-effective the provision may wish to consider streamlining the job share role and reducing the duplication of time spent on supervision. Where possible, the programme could consider conducting joint-supervision with the PLA, thus enhancing communication and partnership

working. Monitoring of the provision could also be developed jointly in order to capture data for future evaluation purposes.

As an additional feature of the evaluation, further investigation was undertaken regarding the toy library. At present the take-up of the toy library appears to be quite low. Evaluators feel that there are cultural reasons as to why parents may not engage with such a service. However, one of the local primary schools, Broadacre Primary, feels that their toy library is an effective service which is well used and they are now at the point where their toy library requires funding and support to replace worn toys. A recommendation of this evaluation is that Sure Start Noddle Hill support the Broadacre Toy Library and arrange for access to be broadened to allow more parents to use the service. The provision must also investigate possible ways to engage parents with this type of service.