Laptop Library Service

The purpose of this report is to assess the short-term impact of the Laptop Library service with a view to informing service development in Children’s Centres.

Overview

- The service is operated by Librarians with Laptop computers working within SureStart sessions, as designated by Programme Managers. Their role is to
  - encourage Parents to read books with their children
  - encourage Parents and children to start using their local Library as a quality learning environment
  - read to groups at sessions
  - give information on other Library Services
- The service helps programmes work towards the specific SureStart target of “increasing the use of libraries by Parents with young children” (Improving Children’s Ability to Learn).
- There are Laptop Library services at 5 of the 8 local SureStart programmes in Sandwell.
- Laptop Librarians are employed for varying hours under Service Level Agreements between individual local SureStart programmes and local Libraries. Recruitment difficulties has meant that services have from time to time been suspended at some of the programmes.
- Laptop Librarians have taken on board the distribution of BookStart packs.
• There has been a sharp increase in library registration where the service has been introduced, followed by a steady stream of users.

• Many of the services operate in areas where the location of local Libraries is outside the programme patch.

• Programme Managers and Laptop Librarians view the service as positive because it encourages the use of books and reading.

• From the results of a random Parent Questionnaire the service does not appear to have affected the behaviour of Parents in encouraging them to use their local Library.

• It would help if there was more consistency in monitoring between programmes.
Conclusions & recommendations

- **Parents are using the service because it is accessible.**
  Laptop Libraries visit venues where Parents and children already attend and which have the appropriate facilities.
  If we want to encourage Parents to take their children or for SureStart sessions to be held in the local Library, consideration needs to be given as to whether Libraries have the facilities to cater for large groups of 0-4 yr olds.

- **Evidence suggests that Parents will not visit the local Library of their own accord** due to the Location and Parents set ways. Therefore any future service at Children's Centres, if it is to have a significant impact, needs to come to the users as it currently does with the Laptop service.

- **The Laptop Library operates as an integrated service** at play sessions and other activity sessions. So parents are using it as one of a range of other activities that take place in the sessions. Which raises the question, if it disappeared would they miss it?

- **The Mobile Library Service** which is run by the Council could be utilised given the:
  - concerns of Laptop Librarians that they have difficulty carrying stock around and with every possibility that the service will grow (consequently more stock will need to be carried) with SureStart services showing a greater number of attendees at sessions.
  - difficulties in recruiting for part-time Laptop Librarian posts with funding until March 2006 and requiring the essential use of a car.

Currently children as well as adults use the mobile library buses as the buses visit school sites. It is thought that some, but not many, under 5’s use the mobile library service. Their buses offer books suitable for under 5s and, given that they allow wheelchair access are accessible for pushchairs. Currently the Mobile Library service has not been targeted at under 5’s/ play sessions.

There needs to be greater consideration and exploration of how this could work. (e.g. Could the service cover all the sessions at the various sites? Cost implications? Would Parents have as strong a personal relationship with it as they do with the Laptop Librarians. Currently ,
Laptop Librarians befriend Parents during sessions and thereby encourage Parents to use the service.

- **Parents with children under 1 access the service the least.** Specific consideration needs to be given at targeting them. For example Cradley Heath and Rowley Regis Librarians have given presentations to increase Parents awareness of what books are particularly suitable for specific age groups.

- **Bookstart could be used as a more effective marketing tool by SureStart and Libraries.** BookStart 2 distribution is well below 50%, which does not bode well for BookStart3, which is due out soon. Although BookStart is a separate government initiative there is no reason why SureStart, which is specifically aimed at 0 - 4 years old and holds their contact details, should not participate even more in its distribution and formulate a strategy around distributing BookStart and at the same time creating an awareness of Library use amongst families.

- **Good practise amongst the Laptop Librarians needs to be shared.** With many of the Librarians having started at different times, different services are at different stages in their developmental lifecycle and a lot of "reinventing the wheel" could be avoided by Librarians meeting up every few months and also shadowing colleagues at other programmes. The library service intends to include this as an action in its 2005/06 action plan. Laptop Librarians not employed by SLIS would also be encouraged to attend.

- **More Innovative schemes should be employed to get Parents more involved and get them to take children to the Library,** for example
  - at SureStart Rotherham Rawmarsh children registered are sent a birthday card that entitles them to receive a free book. If they go to the library with the book they are given a second free book.
  - At Friar Park, Parents were taken to a Bookstore to select the books that the programme then brought for the service.
What is the Laptop Library service

It is a proactive service that takes the library to the community rather than requiring the community to come to the library, likely to be particularly beneficial to families who do not live near a library.

What is the aim of the service?

- To increase the percentage of under 4’s who are active library members (SureStart target)
- To encourage parents to read to their children & for children to value books and reading with the ultimate aim of improving literacy and educational achievement
- To promote use of other Library Services
- To encourage parents to use the library for themselves
- To promote lifelong library use

Sharing books with children is seen as a good way of assisting their language development and helps them develop grammar, to communicate and helps later literacy skills\(^1\).

Furthermore, the rate of language development at 30 months is related to the proportion of mother’s speech to the child during shared activities such as joint book-reading, play or sharing household chores\(^2\).

The EPPE Project (The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project) specifically states that the Home Learning Environment makes a real difference to a young child’s development stating specific examples as reading to children, playing with letters and numbers, and visiting the Library.

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\(^1\) www.literacytrust.org.uk
\(^2\) www.literacytrust.org.uk
How does the Laptop Library Service work

Of the 8 SureStarts in the Sandwell Borough 5 have a Laptop Library service. They are

• Smethwick Cape Hill & Windmill Lane
• Cradley Heath
• Friar Park
• Rowley Regis
• Uplands

Tipton SureStart has just recruited a Laptop Librarian who is due to start very soon, whilst Rood End, Oldbury & Dartmouth Central and Burnt Tree SureStarts have no laptop library service.

Rood End, Oldbury and Dartmouth operate Play and Stay sessions in Oldbury and Langley Libraries and are due to start them in Central Library. There is no formal joint working between Burnt Tree and SLIS so far, but contacts have recently been made to address this.

The Laptop Library essentially works the same way across all the SureStarts.

The librarian visits various SureStart sessions and sets up a display of items on loan and allows Parents to borrow items. The items may include books, DVDs, picture books, talking books, parent specific books (e.g. food nutrition, postnatal yoga) and in some cases toys.

The service is promoted through the use of posters and flyers, whilst during sessions the Librarians befriend parents and encourage them to use the service.

How the service operates

The librarian registers what has been borrowed on a Laptop computer using a Barcode scanner. On returning to the base library the computer is connected to the main Library system which downloads what has been borrowed / returned and details of newly registered members.

With the technology available to the Librarians, new registrants can be issued with a Library card immediately and are able to borrow items straight away.

If Parents forget their card they are still allowed to borrow items and their details are logged on a book that is then used to update the main Library system at the local Library.
There is no charge for borrowing items as the Librarians are not allowed to carry money and therefore items that are otherwise chargeable if they were borrowed from the Library are not chargeable if borrowed from the Laptop Librarian.

2 of the Laptop Librarians have stated that this can act as a disincentive for Parents to use the local Library to access such items.

Librarians also conduct story sessions to get children and Parents interested in books. During sessions with the help of Early Years Workers the Librarians will sit the children and Parents in a circle and engage them in a story.

**Cradley Heath** also do a bulk loan to approximately 8 community groups who then keep the items in a 'Book Area' during their sessions or in turn lend out the books.

At Cradley Heath the service is also delivered at Baby Clinic and Breastfeeding group. The Librarian also takes a focus each period. For example focusing on BookStart in the first term and getting users down to the Library during the second term.

**At Rowley Regis** the Librarian is in the process of setting up the service at Health Centres in order to capture children undergoing their periodic development check and making them aware of Bookstart and children's libraries.

Rowley Regis also have sessions at the nursery that allows parents to borrow books for their children as they collect them at the end of the day. These sessions only last 10-15 minutes and have seen mixed results with many Parents just keen to get their kids home.

**At SureStart Cape Hill** DVD's are particularly popular with Parents at a session largely attended by members of the Asylum Seeker / Refugee community. This community accesses the service at St Philips, which is at one isolated extreme of the SureStart Cape Hill patch. Much of the Asylum Seeker / Refugee community lives nearby and the Librarian has stated that they are very enthused by the service and eager to borrow Bollywood films. The Librarian also informs these users about information on ESOL classes and Adult classes held at the Library.

The resources that can be offered through a laptop library service are obviously more restricted than the resources on offer at a library building or mobile library.
No of Sessions

The Librarians attend normal play and activity sessions with the Laptop Library service.

Currently across the programmes they attend as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>No of Sessions</th>
<th>Hrs Librarian employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cape Hill</td>
<td>6 sessions</td>
<td>25 hrs (includes 5 hrs for admin e.g. cleaning toys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friar Park</td>
<td>Attends sessions once every 2 weeks</td>
<td>10 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowley</td>
<td>4 sessions and 3 nurseries on a rota basis with each session visited once every 2 weeks</td>
<td>20 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uplands</td>
<td>3 sessions plus Baby group and Asian Women's Group</td>
<td>22 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are some differences in how the Librarians use their time due to some programmes for example offering a Toy Library. This requires Librarians to spend time cleaning the toys. Some Librarians will also deliver and pickup large toys from user's homes.

Furthermore, in the interests of Health & Safety some Librarians are using a manual booking system rather then having computer leads trailing the play area. Consequently this means that they spend a little more time on admin inputting from the manual log onto the Library's main system.
How long the Laptop Service has been running

Capehill & Windmill
Previous occupant left on 31st Jan 2004 and therefore the service was suspended. It resumed on 6th Sept 2005 - gap due to 2 failed recruitment drives.

Cradley Heath
April 2004

Friar Park
Feb 2004

Rowley
Nov 2004 previous holder finished in Feb 2004. No service between Feb 2004 and Oct 2004

Uplands
April 2004
Bookstart

Bookstart is the government’s national books for babies programme. It encourages Parents and carers to share books with children from a very early age.

Parents receive the first Bookstart pack at their baby’s 7-9 month developmental check. Whereas a voucher is given during a later developmental check to parents so that they may collect the Bookstart 2 pack from the library.

Central Library Services own research on this suggests that although they have are able to distribute BookStart 1 to most eligible children, which is given by the Health Worker at the developmental check, BookStart 2 is only taken up by less then half of eligible children.

**Town Analysis of BookStart Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>No of children eligible for Pack 1</th>
<th>% receiving Bookstart Pack 1</th>
<th>No of children eligible for Pack 2</th>
<th>% receiving Bookstart Pack 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Bromwich</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesbury</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldbury</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smethwick</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>114%</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowley</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>107%</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipton</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Library Services

Eligible children calculated from Census 2001. Average number of births in each town during 1999-2001 has been used to calculate this figure.

Figures for Smethwick and Rowley of 114% and 107% are due to more packs being distributed then the No. of children originally thought eligible.

Although these figures are based upon a town analysis we can assume that the picture is very similar in SureStart areas.
All the Laptop Librarians take on Bookstart distribution to some extent as part of their role.

At Capehill & Windmill a voucher is issued to a qualifying child to take to the library and collect their BookStart 2 pack.

At Cradley Heath a list of 2 years old is produced off the programme database and they are then invited to the Toy Library, held at the local Library, to be issued with BookStart 2 packs.

The Librarian at Friar Park is also the under 5’s BookStart coordinator at Wednesbury Library and so takes a keen interest in ensuring that the 1st pack is given by SureStart workers and the programme issues a voucher for the second BookStart pack.

Whereas at Rowley Regis and Uplands a Bookstart 2 pack is given when the Librarian notices a child’s age is between 18 months and 2yr old (age is checked from the monitoring sheet or on questioning the Parents).

How Library use is encouraged by the Laptop Librarian
The Librarians encourage users of the service to visit the library by:

• Telling them that there is an even greater selection of items on offer at the library.

• Encourage them to drop off borrowed items at the library.

• They also leave out a folder containing information on various library activities.

• Sessions have also been held at the local library.

The Librarians also encourage them in how to handle books with children and to read to their child at bedtime.
How the Partnership is working

The concern of the Library Management Team is that many of the Laptop Library Services have been set up on an individual ad-hoc manner.

However, evidence suggests that although there is no central administration or control of the Laptop service, they have all been set-up with Service Level Agreements with local Libraries.

Service Level Agreements

All the SureStarts have or are working towards a Service Level Agreement with the nearest Library on or near their patch.

The Laptop Librarians are employed by Sandwell Council’s Library Services and are supervised by the local Library Manager with whom the programme has a Service Level Agreement.

SureStart programmes take on the cost of employing the Laptop worker and in some cases purchasing a stock of books to be used by the service.

Tipton SureStart is unique in that the programme paid monies towards the redevelopment of the library.

Recruitment difficulties have effected the provision of the service. Programmes at Cape Hill & Windmill Lane and Rowley Regis have both been unable to recruit first time around but have stated that once the service is up and running and established it has been welcomed by users.

Library Managers are also of the opinion that it is difficult to retain staff. This is an issue made more difficult by the fact that the contracts of Laptop Librarian, as with all SureStart staff, are only until March 2006.

The Library Management Team would like to see more Parents accessing the local Libraries and would like to determine whether the Laptop Library service is the most effective way of achieving this outcome.

Key Point

Is the ultimate aim to get Parents and Children to go to their local Library or to use the Library in whatever form?

There needs to be clarification with regards this point.
**Who is using the service**

The following tables of data are a tabulated version of data collected from the Librarians.

- Note that December is a short month with reduced services by the SureStart programmes, which has meant that the Laptop service was affected. This is also the case with programmes over the summer holiday period.

  Furthermore, training of Librarians has also meant some months figures are affected.

- Account must also be taken of the varying number of sessions. This is due to the different number of hours worked by the Librarians at the different programmes.

- Only total figures were available from Uplands.

- New Members is New Library Registrations.

- There are some differences in how each service is monitored. These are explained below.
### Use of Laptop Library at SureStart Capehill & Windmill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Requests</th>
<th>New members</th>
<th>Issues per session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Smethwick Library

### Use of Laptop Library at SureStart Cradley Heath

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Enquiries</th>
<th>New members</th>
<th>Issues per session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cradley Heath Laptop Library

### Use of Laptop Library at SureStart Rowley from Nov 04 to Dec 04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Requests</th>
<th>New members</th>
<th>Issues per session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 05</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Laptop Librarian

### Use of Laptop Library at SureStart Uplands from April 04 to Dec 04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Requests</th>
<th>New members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Laptop Librarian
In each of the programmes introduction of the Laptop service has seen an initial wave of new registrations in the first month of being setup.

If we use the data to derive a figure for the number of issues per session it is noticeable that the service maintains a constant stream of users. It is not possible to pass judgement on this issues per session figure as there is no comparable benchmark or target to judge against.

Furthermore, not all users will necessarily borrow an item they may simply browse. In analysing the data available from Cradley Heath a measure that can be used to see whether the service is used more then once is the number of Enquiries. (Enquires meaning when a user has approached the Librarian to talk about the service or accessed the service but not necessarily borrowed an item.)

The number of enquires made at Cradley Heath is 567.

If this is analysed further it could be that of the 75 new members at Cradley Heath each could potentially have accessed the service over 7 times (567 enquiries divided by 75 new members) from April to November.

Unfortunately, a similar comparison with regards Enquiries with other programmes cannot be made as they do not monitor this particular factor.

However, with the growth of local programmes and the subsequent growing number of attendees at SureStart sessions we can assume that over time more and more Parents are coming into contact with the service.

Taking the figures in their totality it can be stated that over the period April 2004 to January 2005, a minimum of 332 new members (Parents and children) have joined the library through the Laptop Library service at Cape Hill, Cradley Heath, Rowley Regis and Uplands SureStarts.

Additional Information required

It would be useful to compare this figure (332 new members) with how local Libraries have done over the same period in registering children under 4 and their Parents.
Location, Location, Location & the “Pram-Pushing Factor”¹

Given that Parents have to take young children in pushchairs in order to get to the local library an examination of accessibility is essential.

(See Appendix for Map of Libraries in relation to SureStart Programme Boundaries)

Of the 20 libraries in the Borough only 3 are based in SureStart areas. These are:

- Glebefields Library on the Tipton patch
- Oldbury Library in the Rood End patch
- Cradley Heath Library on the Cradley Heath SureStart patch

Tipton SureStart is unique in that the programme is actually built next to the Library and they share the same entrance. Furthermore, the SureStart programme made a financial contribution to the Capital Redevelopment of the Library. The Programme Managers understanding is that this set-up alone has seen a significant increase in the membership and use of the library by SureStart parents.

In the case of Cape Hill & Windmill Lane the closest library is on the High Street in Smethwick but this is a distance and a locality that many Parents will not travel in order to access the Library.

The same is also true for Friar Park where the closest Library is Wednesbury, but the population is very localised in its mobility and where consultation with local Parents by the programme stated that one of the first things Parents wanted on their patch was a Library.

Cradley Heath Library in on patch but the Laptop Librarian, who also works within the library, stated that there is not enough room to have a large number of children entering the library (taking into account the room needed for parking pushchairs).

Blackheath Library is the closest to SureStart Rowley Regis and is regarded as being in a part of the area where very few people venture. The overwhelming

¹ The phrase “Pram-pushing factor” is adapted from “within pram-pushing distance” from SureStart Longton South Busybodies Evaluation.
anecdotal evidence is that many do not even know where it is because it is not in a recognisable part of Blackheath.

**Uplands** SureStart’s nearest library is Thimblemill, which is just outside their patch.

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**Key Point**

Considering that mobility is an issue due to the clientele and that very often the Communities within the SureStart area are very localised in their outlook and generally not willing to travel any distance the need for an accessible service is undoubtedly vital.
Is it working?

In order to find out whether the service was effective the perspectives and opinions of the stakeholders were taken into consideration.

Laptop Librarians perceptions

In one to one conversations with Librarians the following broad points came out.

- It is a growing service in many of the SureStarts and Parents are beginning to build a rapport with the Librarians. The fact that they are now requesting items is evidence of their growing confidence in the service. In cases where the service has been suspended due to staff vacancies the Librarians believe that the service will grow once Parents see it on a regular basis.

- Parents feel it is a more accessible service being based in and during SureStart sessions.

- Librarians who also do a second job in the Library have stated that they have seen Laptop Library users at the local Library.

- All the Librarians questioned said that they believed it was a good service as it encouraged Parents to use books with their children and that often users would not trek to the local Library if the Laptop Library service did not exist.

- The only negative from the Librarians was the hassle in carrying the items around.
Programme Managers thoughts

The thoughts of programme managers are given below:

• Recruitment difficulties at some programmes have affected service and the length of time taken to recruit. Often it as taken more then one attempt to recruit.

• It takes time for a new Librarian to build a rapport but once the service is regularly running it is perceived by managers as being successful.

• Managers are happy to provide a service that allows children to access books and gets families interested in books.

• The service allows access to culturally diverse books and media.

• Managers believe that many Parents would not otherwise venture to the local Library because of the distance involved and Parents localised attitude to accessing services.
Parent Questionnaire (see Appendix)

In order to ascertain the behaviour of Users of the service, a simple questionnaire was distributed randomly by the Laptop Librarians across the various sessions in which the service is provided. (see Appendix for a copy of the Questionnaire).

62 questionnaires were returned. (Cradley 19, Friar Park 14, Rowley 12 and Uplands 17).

Of those that responded the age of their children was as follows.

The majority of the respondents who use the service have children aged over 2 years old.

This appears to add weight to the perception that many parents with much younger children do not consider using Library services in any form until the child is older.

However, the low number of respondents with children under 1 could be because the service is not available at sessions where Parents with children under 1 attend or that they are not significantly engaged by the Laptop service.
When asked **How Often Do You Use The Laptop Library service?** The responses were as follows:

The responses for this question need to be interpreted in light of the fact that in some of the sessions attended by Parents the Laptop service is only available in alternate weeks. However, usage appears to be around the 2 or more weeks point.

Further questioning could have asked if Parents were happy with the frequency of the service. However the purpose of this questionnaire was not user satisfaction but to analyse user behaviour.
When the service is used the items borrowed by the respondents are

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: respondents could tick more than one box

Videos appear almost as popular as books. This could be down to the fact that there is no charge for otherwise chargeable items such as videos borrowed from the Laptop service.

At Friar Park the response was that only Books are borrowed but at the Cradley Heath, Rowley Regis and Uplands videos and books are almost on par in terms of borrowing.
When asked Why they used the Laptop Library service? The respondents were given a list of 3 choices from which they could tick all that applied. The responses were as follows.

The majority of responses were that the service is used because it’s accessible during sessions, which suggests that it is seen very much as an integrated service within the sessions.
When questioned Did you use the local Library BEFORE you started to use the Laptop Library service? the response was as follows

YES  60%
NO   40%

When further asked Did you use the local Library AFTER you started to use the Laptop Library service? the response was as follows

YES  60%
NO   40%

Therefore amongst this random group of respondents there has been no change in getting Users to actually go to their local Library.

Even on closer examination of this question within each programme the responses show only a very slight difference. In fact the only slight movement from using the Laptop service and then using the local Library is balanced out by individuals who have actually stopped using the local Library and instead rely on the Laptop service.
When questioned *Why they don't use the local Library or rarely use it?*, with respondents able to tick all the boxes that applied, the responses were as follows.

Of all the questions posed this drew the least responses. But of those who responded the majority stated that they would use the local Library when their child was older and/or that the local Library was too far.

It is interesting that only 2 responses were ticked for the option "No child facilities", which could suggest that Parents are aware of this so it is not a factor or that this will not matter so much if they are only going when the child is older.

Taking the findings of the questionnaire as a whole, the responses suggest that
• Parents would only consider using the local Library once the child is older.

• The location of Libraries is an issue.

• Parents with children under 1 yr old are not accessing the Laptop Library service.

• Videos are almost as popular as books. Some of these videos are aimed at Children but some are, as in the case of Cape Hill & Windmill, feature films e.g. Bollywood films particularly popular with the Asylum Seeker/Refugee community. This raises the question of whether videos fall within the intended outcome of the service and the remit of the wider SureStart target of improving literacy.
**Cost implications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Other Costs</th>
<th>Hours worked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cape Hill</td>
<td>£10,000 to cover salary costs</td>
<td>£2000 for equipment (laptop &amp; software etc)</td>
<td>25 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£3000 for resources (books, videos etc)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cradley</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td></td>
<td>15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowley</td>
<td>£12,669</td>
<td>Made £1000 contribution to books in 2002/03</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Though the Manager believes the local Library picks up some of the cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friar Park</td>
<td>Programme picks up all the costs (no figures available)</td>
<td>Paid £3000 to buy books in first year of service</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uplands</td>
<td>£16,635 (no break down of costs available)</td>
<td></td>
<td>22 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to constraints on time it was not possible to undertake a detailed examination of the Cost implications of running the service.

The end of year budget statements will provide a clearer picture of the costs this year. Library Managers anticipate that a full year of all Laptop Libraries operating fully would cost approx. £55,000 in staffing alone.

However, it does seem as if programmes have some differences in their financial arrangements with local Libraries. The most apparent is the contribution by some of the programmes towards buying a stock of books for the service.

**Additional information required**

It would be of benefit to know what the cost, if any, to Sandwell Library and Information Service is of running the service. This would allow a more thorough examination of the cost implications and possibly a benefit analysis and comparison with alternative services.
Having examined the

- perceptions of the Laptop Librarians and Programme Managers
- the responses of the Parent Questionnaire and
- undertaken an analysis of the figures (see Who is Using the Service section),

there is no doubt that the service is having an impact. This is particularly evident from the number of new registrations to the Library and the steady stream of users of the service.

However, without access to comparable figures it is difficult to assess how big an impact the service is having.

**Additional Information required**

A comparison of under 4 yr old Library members between two 6 month periods, one when a SureStart Laptop service existed and one when it did not would be a good indicator.

Furthermore, to take the Registration Number of those registered by the Laptop service and check against the main Library Services database the usage patterns of these users, would be the best indicator of whether users where accessing their local Library.

Unfortunately, this information was not accessible at the time of writing this report.
It should be noted that due to the Laptop service being run across 5 parts of the borough, from 5 different local libraries and by 5 different Librarians who all started the service at different times the ability to get comparable statistics has meant that interpretations have been drawn from the data and information available.

The Methodology employed to conduct this evaluation was to

- Interview Laptop Librarians.
- Harness the views of Programme Managers using face-to-face interviews or simple questionnaires.
- The views of Senior Library Managers were gained in 2 discussions at the start of the evaluation.
- A random Parent Questionnaire was conducted to learn about User behaviour in relation to the service.
- Data was collected from the Laptop Librarians with regards usage of the service.
Programme Name …………………………………………………

Questionnaire for Parents regarding the Laptop Library

To help us evaluate the Laptop Library service, it would be a great help if you could answer the following questions.

Age of Child ………………….

1) How often do you use the Laptop Library service

At least Once a week

Every 2 or 3 weeks

Every 4 or more weeks

2) What items do you borrow from the Laptop Library?
(tick all that apply)

Toys

CD’s

Books

Videos

Audio tapes

DVD’s

3) Why do you use the Laptop Library service?
(tick all that apply)

Easy to get to

It’s available during sessions

Lots of items to Borrow
4) Did you use the Local Library BEFORE you started to use the Laptop library service.

Yes ☐ which library ..............................................................

No ☐

5) Did you use the Local Library AFTER you started to use the Laptop Library

Yes ☐ which library ..............................................................

No ☐

6) If you do not use the Local Library or rarely use it, why is that (tick as many boxes that apply)

No interest ☐ Will use when child is older ☐

Never occurred to me ☐ Too far ☐

No child facilities ☐
(e.g. baby changing room)

Other reason (please state)
...........................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................

Thank you for your time