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SURE START TALBOT and BRUNSWICK

CASE STUDIES REPORT

**A report on the evaluation of the Speakeasy, Transcience and
Education programmes**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents details of three case studies carried out as part of a local evaluation of the Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick programme. These case studies cover the following areas of activity:

1. The Speakeasy programme (an accredited programme published by the Family Planning Association)
2. The programme of work aimed at providing specific support for homeless and transient families
3. Initiatives linked to objectives around employment, benefits and training

Each case study involves an examination and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data from a range of sources including:

- Pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires (Sure Start devised or course specific)
- Independent questionnaires and interviews conducted by the research team with users and relevant staff
- A review of relevant materials where appropriate
- Attendance data from the Sure Start database
- Observations of activities

Findings were generally very positive with key strengths being identified as follows:

Speakeasy:

- ✓ Participating parents are happy to recommend the course to others and see the facilitator as motivated and enthusiastic
- ✓ The facilitator's approach to course delivery is flexible to suit the needs of users
- ✓ Evaluations of the course by parents are very positive
- ✓ Use of interactive materials to explore issues in depth is well received

Home & Transcience (H/T) work:

- ✓ Increased access to Sure Start services by homeless people since the H/T worker has been in post
- ✓ Consistent and persistent approach to engaging socially excluded families
- ✓ Understanding of impact of social exclusion is shown through the worker's approach to helping access to services at the parents' own pace

Employment, Benefits & Training:

- ✓ Organic gardening course and example of excellent practice with opportunities for mainstreaming
- ✓ A range of levels of entry to training and development opportunities
- ✓ Effective networking by CSW across agencies creating a shared understanding and shared objectives
- ✓ Course provide for a broad range of life and vocational skills
- ✓ Coursed delivered at convenient times for parents and crèche facilities provided
- ✓ Excellent promotion of volunteer opportunities

Key recommendations arising from the case studies are summarised below:

- Record attendance data for all courses and explore reasons for drop-out
- Establish processes for systematic collection and analysis of course evaluation data
- Increase awareness of local service provision in surrounding non-Sure Start areas to support re-locating families
- Introduce procedures to monitor outcomes of H&T work
- Monitor and improve links with Housing Advice, Landlord Services and Homeless Health team
- Improve links with private sector housing

Overall, the three case studies show that a great deal of positive work is taking place through Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick and that these activities are likely to be making a real difference to people whose lives are especially chaotic.

Finally, at the end of the report, Section 5 presents evidence to show Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick's progress towards achieving specific targets in the health area.

Section 1: Speakeasy Project

The first area selected for case-study analysis for the evaluation of Sure Start TAB is the Speakeasy Programme. Data was collected in the following ways:

- Interview with Speakeasy Facilitator
- Interview with Community Support Worker Team Leader
- Observation of Speakeasy Session
- Analysis of data from: -
 - Speakeasy pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires
 - Sure Start end-of-programme questionnaires
 - Independent questionnaires/interviews conducted by the research team
- Review of Speakeasy Facilitators' Pack

1.1 What is Speakeasy?

Speakeasy is an accredited training programme published by the Family Planning Association, and endorsed through the Open College Network (North and East London and Hertfordshire (NELH)).

The aims of this training (identified through the Speakeasy leaflets) are to help parents: -

- Be more confident talking to their children about sex and relationships
- Brush up on facts about the changes that girls and boys go through at puberty
- Increase parents' knowledge about the different kinds of contraception that are available
- Understand sex and relationships education in schools

The rationale for this programme is based upon research findings that most parents can feel embarrassed or unsure about how to address the topic of sex education with their children, coupled with the facts that most young people want to hear about this information from their parents.

Accreditation for Facilitators

In order to deliver the training programme, facilitators have to attend a three day training course, and submit assignments on a range of related issues, e.g. sexually transmitted infections, prevention, contraceptive perspectives from religious beliefs/cultural backgrounds, etc. A core part of the training programme is also for the trainee facilitator to actually run a Speakeasy course, and submit a portfolio of evidence, before receiving accreditation at OCN Level III.

Accreditation for Participants

The Speakeasy course has been designed not only to equip participants with knowledge and confidence, but also to encourage them to acquire accredited certificates of attainment at OCN Level I and/or Level II through compiling a portfolio of evidence.

Contents

The Speakeasy facilitators' pack is fully inclusive, containing course outlines and facilitator notes, as well as a range of interactive resources, e.g., video, hand-outs, worksheets, quizzes, fact sheets, etc, for use during the course. Suggestions for

additional resources (e.g. physical aids, literature, web links, etc) are also provided within the pack, and pre- and post-course evaluation measures are built into the programme.

Speakeasy is designed as an 8 x 2 hour session programme, the weekly aims of which are: -

- **Taster Session:** To inform participants about the Speakeasy Programme and give an outline of the OCN (Open College Network) accreditation process.
- **Week 1:** To develop an agreed set of guidelines for working together and to explore participants' own learning in relation to SRE (completion of pre-course evaluation questionnaire)
- **Week 2:** to acquire an understanding of the physical and emotional changes for children at puberty
- **Week 3:** to be able to identify the needs of children at different stages of their development and explore learning opportunities with their children.
- **Week 4:** To explore influences inside and outside the home and their impact on children.
- **Week 5:** To explore different methods of contraception and their advantages and disadvantages. To explore different types of STIs and their impact on sexual health.
- **Week 6:** To explore the development of an SRE policy in line with national guidance in the context of a local school.
- **Week 7:** To explore and understand strategies for child protection (completion of post-evaluation questionnaire)

A Presentation Event is also built into the programme (by Sure Start TAB) at which participants are awarded their certificates. It was deemed important by the team that a celebration of achievement is organised for the parents, as, for some, this is their first qualification since leaving school, and so may be an important stepping stone into further qualifications/learning.

1.2 Links to Sure Start Objectives

The Speakeasy training programme directly relates to Sure Start key objectives under the theme of 'Improving the Ability to Learn' in terms of: -

- 'Reduce by 12% the number of children aged 0-3 in Sure Start area living in households where no-one is working'
- 'Increase proportion of parents (of children of all ages) who have Level 1 literacy skills'

Sure Start TAB have also identified local objectives to improve learning and raise the level of academic attainment within TAB wards, ensuring more people are obtaining qualifications assessed at NVQII and using this qualification to get people back into work. This is particularly pertinent to the Talbot and Brunswick wards, with more than 40% of people recorded as having no qualifications and only 48% of people residing within this geographical area being employed, the remainder identified as unemployed or not working for other reasons.

These objectives are supported through the Speakeasy programme, by increasing participants' confidence and self-esteem through the acquisition of accredited certification, and encouraging parents to access additional training programmes provided by Sure Start and local training providers. Childcare is provided by Sure Start to encourage parents' engagement on the training programmes.

In addition, this course links into wider local objectives/performance indicators through the Teenage Pregnancy Unit. These objectives concern reducing the number of teenage pregnancies and raising the age of first sexual activity for young people, and lowering the rate of sexually transmitted infections. The rates against all three indicators are considerably higher in Blackpool than the national average.

1.3 Interview with the TAB Speakeasy Co-ordinator

Kim Critchley is the Speakeasy Co-ordinator for Sure Start TAB. Whilst, Kim holds key generic Community Support Worker accountabilities to consult, signpost and encourage registration with new service users into Sure Start, she is also responsible for the co-ordination and facilitation of the Speakeasy training.

Kim advised that she started her career as a volunteer for Home Start supporting people in the community to overcome adversities and identifying that empathy and understanding enable her to work well with local community groups, empowering them to take control over their lives and aim high. Following this work experience, she was employed at the Community Development Team (Blackpool Borough Council) for a year developing community groups. Kim has worked at Sure Start TAB since it started three years ago.

Kim has passed the Level III accreditation process and is therefore a validated facilitator of the Speakeasy Programme. Prior to running the Speakeasy programme, Kim also attended the Love Letters training, enabling her to be qualified to distribute condoms. It is intended that Kim undertake the next stage (Level IV) in the Speakeasy accreditation process by becoming a moderator of the participants' portfolios.

a) Courses Run

The first Speakeasy course was run in February and March 2004 and was facilitated by Kim Critchley and Lesley Hodder (Prevention Officer – Teenage Pregnancy Unit). This experience provided the two facilitators with the necessary requirements to achieve Level III accreditation. The second course ran in June and July 2004 and was facilitated solely by Kim, with volunteer support on a couple of the sessions. TAB Sure Start has also just completed the third Speakeasy Course (started in May 2005). A further two Community Support Workers from the team have received the Level III Speakeasy training, and are running the recent course to achieve the appropriate accreditation experience. Kim advised that from September 2005 she will resume running the Speakeasy courses (with support from trained colleagues as appropriate). The reason for additional staff receiving Speakeasy training has been to support Kim in delivering the programme. In addition, due to the positive feedback and recognised benefits of this course, additional qualified staff will enable the training to be offered to more parents.

No attendance data is available for the first programme, but three out of five parents completed the second, and all parents who started the third training course also

completed it (only two of the parents missed one of the taught sessions). If more than two sessions are missed, parents are requested to attend a future group as they will have difficulties completing the portfolio of evidence for accreditation. It is recognised that for some parents, 8 weeks commitment is very difficult to achieve, primarily because of familial/personal issues. Two of the parents, who did not complete their first course, have subsequently joined a further course to complete the qualification. It is also very promising to record that the vast majority of parents completing the Speak Easy course did obtain the Level II accreditation.

b) Recruitment of Participants

All the parents who have attended the Speakeasy training to date have been female. Whilst Sure Start would like to attract men to the course, at present there is no male worker. In order to engage men onto the course, it is felt to be essential that a male co-facilitates the course to ensure they are comfortable with participation.

The children of the parents who have accessed Speakeasy to date have been of mixed ages. Recruitment onto the training, however, has been somewhat targeted towards mothers of older children, as it has been observed that they obtain more benefits from attendance. Therefore, when a Speakeasy course is due to start, the Administrator is asked to highlight all parents residing within TAB who have teenage children (as well as a child meeting the Sure Start criteria of under 5), and they are sent a letter outlining the programme and giving contact details. Whilst parents are not turned away from the Speakeasy course, Kim has noticed that parents who have only younger children have more difficulty associating with sessions looking at developmental changes of teenage/older children. Those who have older children were seen to more actively engage in the training, making clear associations with the theory against their personal experiences.

Other promotional methods of the Speakeasy course are through the posters displayed at the Tiddlers and Tiddlywinks (TandT) group. Parents are asked to write their contact details on the posters, if they are interested in attending. (Please refer to Figure 1 for example of poster). TandT runs twice a week and is reported as one of the most well attended TAB Sure Start activities, and is, therefore, one of the effective methods of encouraging parents to attend additional Sure Start activities. Kim regularly attends the groups to meet new parents to promote the Speakeasy group and to provide ongoing support and advice for parents who have completed the course. Speakeasy leaflets are also circulated within new registration Sure Start Induction Packs, and details of the forthcoming courses are advertised in their tri-quarterly newsletters.

There is currently no waiting list for the course, the promotion of the training being undertaken prior to course commencement.

Just before the course is about to start, a letter is forwarded to all parents who have expressed an interest in attending. Parents are invited to attend a Taster session, at which they watch the Speakeasy video, and Kim explains in more detail what the course will consist of. Kim stresses that it is important that the accreditation process for the course is clearly explained, to ensure that parents are fully aware of what they will be committing to. Crèche facilities are provided by Sure Start to support the training, and refreshments are provided to parents during the sessions (tea/coffee and biscuits).

c) Content

During the first session parents are asked to produce a Group Agreement, identifying the ground rules for the group. For example, the Group Agreement for the second course was: -

Group Agreement

1. Be on time
2. Help one another
3. Respect others and their opinions
4. Listen to each other
5. No question is too silly
6. Laugh with each other, not at each other.
7. Coffee breaks
8. Confidentiality within the group
9. Consideration and apologies, if you cannot attend the group
10. To be sharers of information

This is viewed as a useful exercise to allow the group to bond and apply consensual frameworks of participation. An essential part of the training is to encourage parents to talk openly about sex and sexual relationships, telling their own stories about how they learnt about these issues. It is important, therefore, that parents feel comfortable about expressing their opinions and feelings in front of the group.

The Speakeasy programme takes parents on a timeline, looking at children from 5 years up to teenage years, helping parents recognise when their children are getting curious about body parts, and different developmental stages of childhood and adolescence.

The programme allows parents to explore the influences on young people in terms of conforming to sex and relationship pressures.

Kim also identified that a significant part of the training makes parents aware that it is better to be honest and truthful when addressing sex and relationships with young people (e.g. avoid making-up names for sex organs). This approach provides young people with clear as well as accurate information from which they can make their own informed choices over their body and sexual relationships.

Visual representation of the impact of sexual histories. This concept is used to illustrate that a young person, who has sex with someone who has had multiple partners, may significantly increase their chances of contracting a STI. This exercise re-enforces the necessity for young people to employ safe sex principles

d) Group / Interactive Resources

As recommended within the Speakeasy guidance, a range of resources has been obtained for this course: -

- Contraceptive Kit (obtained from the Family Planning Association)
- Body Board Display Resource (anatomical diagrams/sex education graphics for use in changes at puberty session)
- *Leaflets and books*

- Is everybody doing it?. Guide to Contraception. Family Planning Association.
- 4Girls – A below the bra guide to the female body. Family Planning Association.
- Love Stings – Beginners Guide to STIs. Family Planning Association.
- 4Boys – A below the belt guide to the male body. Family Planning Association.
- 4You – Growing Up – What it’s all about. Family Planning Association.
- The Diary of the other Health Freak. Ann McPherson and Aidan MacFarlane
- Understanding the Factors of Life. Susan Meredith and Robyn Gee. Osbourne Press.
- How Babies are Made. Alistair Smith. Usbourne Flip Flap Books.
- Lets Talk about Sex – Growing Up Changing Bodies. Robie H. Harris. Walker Books.
- Where Willy Went – The big story of the little sperm. Nicolas Allen.
- Hair in Funny Places. Babette Cole. Random House.

It should also be noted that whilst the majority of leaflets and books are recommended through the Speakeasy Course, additional resources have been obtained through Kim. It is Sure Start’s aim to build up a substantial range of resources for parents to access during the course, the content of which can be read and discussed with their children.

Kim spoke very highly about the programme, and the interactive resources purchased to support the delivery of the training. The Body Board is described as really good fun to work with and is a fantastic aid through which the different developmental stages of young people can be visualised (refer to the observation report for full details of Body Board). In addition, the contraceptive kit allows kinaesthetic learning, through allowing parents to touch, feel and recognise different methods through which young people can be kept sexually safe. Kim stressed the importance of making the delivery of the Speakeasy training as interactive as possible, in order to meet the range of learning needs across the participants.

In order to support the participatory nature of the training, Kim advised that she is always on the look out for additional materials, e.g. newspapers, magazines, TV programmes, leaflets, books, etc. Parents are actively involved in their learning, writing on the boards, hosting discussions, etc., “it is good to get them really involved – it is great fun”. Part of the programme also involves parents contacting their local schools for copies of the Sex Education Policies. This was an eye-opening and interesting focus of discussion related to the information contained across different educational establishments.

Observations by the facilitator are that, when parents first start the training, they are uncomfortable in saying names for sexual body parts and do not want to get involved. As the course develops, parents start to grow in confidence, get involved with interactive aids (polystyrene body parts, condoms, etc) and begin to talk freely in the group. Indeed, whilst the outcome of the programme is to help parents have the correct knowledge and information about sex and relationships which can be relayed back to their children, the course is designed to be fun and does need to be delivered within a relaxed format.

The Speakeasy pack is very structured, with set time periods allocated to all activities within each of the eight sessions. Kim advised that whilst the course content is followed as intended, a flexible approach is undertaken concerning the timing of activities/sessions - with additional time being provided to cover particular issues based on the needs of the group. Sure Start aim for parents to succeed, and it is therefore recognised that the delivery of the course should be adaptable to suit individual learning needs. In addition, whilst the first two courses were completed within the anticipated 8 weeks, Kim emphasised that she would be willing to extend the course, e.g. to ten weeks, if appropriate.

One of the parents who completed Level I and II during the first course, actually co-facilitated some of the sessions during the second course. The parent had gained so much through the Speakeasy programme, she felt that she personally wanted to get involved with the delivery. Kim reported that the parent selected the sessions she wanted to be involved with, these being the topics and issues, which she felt most comfortable with delivering. This was perceived as a fantastic experience and opportunity for the parent, and the peer led nature of delivery is one which is intended to be encouraged and extended upon as more and more parents complete the Speakeasy course.

1.4 Evaluation Data

A range of evaluation data has been included within this case study analysis. This data relates to the inbuilt Speakeasy pre- and post-course questionnaires, evaluation data collected by the Speakeasy facilitator, questionnaires distributed by the Research Team and an independent evaluation provided by one of the parents.

Speakeasy Evaluation Data

Pre- and post-course evaluation questionnaires are built into the Speakeasy programme. Questionnaires measure the impact of the course in terms of increasing the confidence and knowledge base of parents to enable them to discuss sex, sexual health and relationships with their children. Questions are scored on a scale of 1 (not confident/little knowledge) to 5 (very confident/very knowledgeable). No completed evaluation questionnaires were available for the first course, and only three completed questionnaires were available from the second course. The questions and scores were: -

- a) *At the moment how confident do you feel talking to your children about sex and relationships?*
The results revealed that parents felt considerably more confident to discuss sensitive issues with their children by the end of the course (pre-course mean = 1.33: post-course mean 4.33)
- b) *At the moment how much knowledge do you feel you have to talk to your children about the following aspects of sex and relationships?*
 - i) **Changes during puberty**
Knowledge of developmental changes increased substantially by the end of the course (pre-course mean = 1.3: post-course mean = 5).
 - ii) **Sexually transmitted infections**

- Whilst parents felt reasonably knowledgeable about STIs initially, all parents recorded increases in their comprehension by the end of the course (pre-course mean = 2.3: post-course mean = 4.33)
- iii) **Contraception**
Parents reported an acceptable knowledge base of contraceptives at the beginning of the course. On course completion, however, parent's awareness of the full range of contraceptive methods was recorded at the maximum (pre-course mean = 2.3: post-course mean = 5)
- iv) **Keeping safe**
All parents recorded increased understanding of how young people can keep safe in relation to sex and relationships as a consequence of the course input (pre-course mean = 3: post-course mean = 5)

Sure Start Evaluations

At the end of the second course additional evaluation questionnaires were introduced by Kim to ascertain parents' wider views of the course. Participants were asked to record:

- their opinions and perceptions of the venue, handouts, preparation and content of the course,
- timing allowed for each topic,
- the perceived benefits of the topics covered,
- what parents least and most enjoyed about the course,
- whether they would recommend the course,
- whether the Speakeasy course had made them more confident about talking to their children about sex and relationships.

Kim thus recognised the importance of seeking service user views to develop the programme, as well as to receive feedback on the impact of the course.

A total of five questionnaires were received from the parents completing the second course, analysis of which revealed: -

a) **Venue**

All parents confirmed the suitability of the venue, parents stated they were happy with 'the size of the room', and convenience of location, e.g., '*it was only five minutes away*'.

b) **Handouts**

All parents stated they were happy with the information received on the handouts, as well as the oral explanation provided, e.g. '*they were also very well explained*'.

c) **Preparation/Course Content**

Positive comments were recorded by all parents in terms of the preparation provided by the trainer and the delivery of the content.

d) **Timing of Topics**

Whilst all parents were happy with the length of time to discuss various topics from a learning perspective, additional time was requested in order for parents to discuss the issues in more depth. Examples of comments received were: -

- '*Yes, I never felt rushed*'
- '*We could have done with more time because the topics were so interesting*'

e) **Benefits from discussion topics**

All parents felt that they benefited through the discussion topics, primarily because it had increased their knowledge and understanding, e.g.: -

- '*I did benefit as I learnt lots of new things*'

- *"I learned quite a bit. I was surprised at what I didn't know"*
- *"Yes, every discussion has benefited me"*
- *"don't cringe when kids ask about sexual acts"*

f) Would you recommend Speakeasy?

All parents claimed that they would, and even had already made recommendations for other parents to attend the Speakeasy course.

g) Enjoyed most/least about the course

Very positive comments were received. No negative comments were received. The majority of parents enjoyed all aspects of the course. Parents also identified the benefits of this course in terms of discussing sex and relationships with their children. Parents most enjoyed:

- *"Gaining more confidence and knowledge on how to deal with sensitive issues with my daughter"*
- *"Everything"*
- *"Finding out how easy it is to talk to my children about parts of body relationships and more"*
- *"Everything was very informative"*
- *"Enjoyed everything about the course"*

h) Increased Confidence in talking about sex and relationships

In terms of addressing the key outcomes of this accredited course, overall parents did feel more confident about addressing these topics with their children, examples of the comments being: -

- 'I have not put it to test, but yes I feel I could deal with most situations'
- 'I feel very confident'
- 'Yes, I now find I am more relaxed talking to my older child about certain subjects'
- 'don't feel I have to switch over the television when sex scenes come on'.

Research Team Evaluations

Observation

The session was delivered at a training room within the Laycock Gate Centre. When the participants entered the room, they were warmly greeted by the two facilitators running the course, and were provided with refreshments.

The session started with all participants and facilitators being seated around a large table, which facilitated participation as well as discussions by the whole group. An Ice Breaker exercise was introduced which consisted of all participants telling the group something about themselves that nobody else knows. Parents willingly joined in with this exercise, and a fun and lively exchange occurred. This clearly demonstrated that the participants felt both safe and comfortable in their environment to make disclosures.

The second task consisted of participants being issued with two pieces of paper, one depicting the outline of a human male and one representing a human female. Participants were asked to identify all the sexual body parts, physical changes which occur during puberty and the emotional changes that young people go through during adolescence. After twenty minutes, the group were asked to convene in a circular seated area, with the body board resource being placed on the floor in the middle of the circle for all to view. One of the facilitators asked participants in turn to read out their answers for male's hormonal and physical changes. As these answers were provided, the facilitator used the body board labels to decorate the body board, using observational

as well as verbal reinforcement of the pubertal changes for adolescents. Once the 'male' body board was complete, this exercise was then repeated for females. The format of the session allowed participants a variety of opportunities to ask questions and this was appropriately facilitated throughout. Everyone appeared to be positively engaged with this exercise and the delivery of the sessions allowed for good-natured banter to occur. During the session there were a number of occasions which demanded a clear lead from the facilitators to bring the group to order and move through the exercises, for the most part this was sensitively and appropriately managed. Refreshments (tea/coffee and biscuits) were also available for parents to freely access throughout the entire session. All the participants had folders with course work in and throughout the session they added to their files as they progressed through the various exercises.

At the end of the session, the facilitators advised participants about their homework requirements, which in this case were to complete the 'body' sheets with the additional/amended information gleaned through the group exercise and discussions. All participants requested additional sheets (depicting the human forms) in order that information could be neatly detailed and included within their portfolios.

Overall perceptions were that this was a well-delivered, lively session in which participants were actively engaged, and appeared to thoroughly enjoy and to learn from.

Evaluation questionnaire

As part of the observational analysis, parents were asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire by the research team, which asked parents to record their perceptions and satisfaction with the course, reasons for attending and benefits of engagement. Satisfaction scales were included, as well as opportunities for parents to detail qualitative feedback. The results from five parents are presented as follows: -

a) Reason for attendance

Parents either offered social opportunities or the perceived benefits in relation to their parental responsibilities as reasons for their attendance on the course:

- 'Get to know other parents'
- 'I have six children so I thought it would be beneficial'
- 'To meet people'
- 'I have a senior school child'

b) Satisfaction with Speakeasy Course

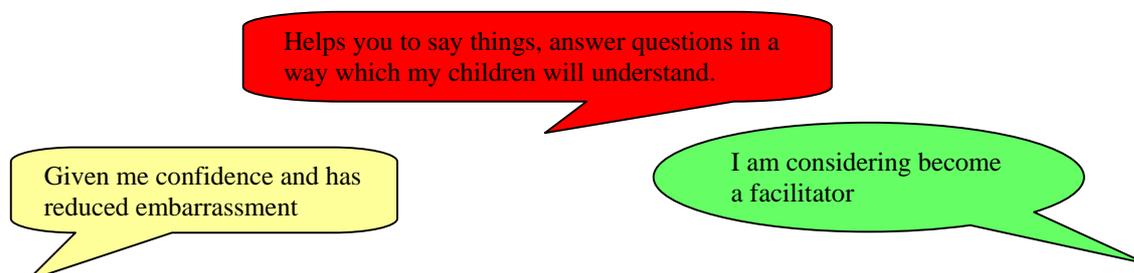
All parents stated they were very satisfied with the course as well as the staff delivering the training. The main reasons provided as to why parents enjoyed the course related to the learning and comprehension opportunities it had provided. Examples of the comments received were: -

- 'Gaining a qualification and having more knowledge'
- 'The team work and learning about the ages of conducting sex education with children'
- 'Very educational/important to learn to talk to children about sex education'

It is important to note that none of the parents identified any negative aspects of the course.

c) Benefits of Attendance

When asked to detail the benefits of attendance, the parents' answers reflected the perceived outcomes of the course in terms of increased knowledge and confidence in discussing sex-related issues.



Independent Evaluation

One of the parents also wrote their own evaluation of the Speakeasy programme of their own volition: -

"This is an evaluation of the Speakeasy course and my tutor Kim. The course I found extremely useful and informative. I have gained much confidence since starting this course and feel more ready and at ease with the questions my developing children will be throwing at me. This is mainly due to the way the course was taught. I found Kim very personable even though we touch on some rather embarrassing topics; Kim was able to get us to participate freely. She encouraged us to express our opinions and share our own experiences, which also help us to understand what children and young adults go through, something as adults we tend to forget. I would recommend this course and Kim to other parent"

Future Evaluation Measures

The research team and the Speakeasy facilitator discussed other possible evaluation methods, which could be utilised within the programme. It was suggested that feedback could be obtained from children/young people of parents who had completed the course. This consultation provided valuable insights into the impact of the training on young people, and the opportunities for them to discuss sensitive and emotional issues with their parents.

1.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Kim is highly enthusiastic about Speakeasy, and feels that this training could be rolled out to teenagers/young people possibly as part of the PHSE curriculum (Personal Health and Sex Education) in schools. Allowing young people opportunities to use the Contraceptive Kit, so they can understand the range of methods available, what they look like, how they are used, etc. In addition, the body board could be utilised to enable young people to identify with their emotions and through visual representation to be aware of the developmental changes they are experiencing.

Overall, Speakeasy appears to be a fun way for parents to learn about sex and relationships and evaluation methods have provided highly positive feedback. Parents are more knowledgeable about sexual health issues, as well as being much more confident in addressing sex and relationship issues with their children by the end of the Speakeasy course. No improvements to the course have been requested by participants, with parents enjoying all aspects of the course, as well as identifying the potential benefits this knowledge will have in supporting their children.

Key Strengths

- Parental recommendations to other parents who may benefit from the course
- Flexibility of approach and an informal learning setting
- Positive evaluations from parents
- Use of interactive and novel materials to explore issues in greater depth
- Gaining the groups' commitment early on through establishment of ground rules and course objectives

Key Recommendations

The course evaluations demonstrated that participants perceive the Speakeasy course as being delivered by motivated and enthusiastic workers. Elements of good practice are evident throughout the course. The following recommendations are intended to enhance and systematise the future development of this very positive work:-

- There is a need to ensure attendance data is recorded for all courses to assess dropout rates, reasons for dropping out and total numbers of parents accessing the course.
- Collection of evaluation data is imperative to assess impact of the training, as well as essential feedback through which the course can be developed. Whilst good practice has been identified in terms of obtaining additional evaluation material, this has only recently been introduced and needs to be continued.
- The length of time for portfolios to be assessed is excessive. However, improvements will occur with Kim being a moderator of the coursework.
- Consideration should be given to reinforce the message that parents can train to deliver the course. Short-term targets could be developed to recruit, say, one new parent from each course as a facilitator. This would increase the role of the parents in the Sure Start programme and contribute to its community-led thematic principles.
- Evaluation measures would be invaluable, which determine the impact of the course on how parents use their learning. It is suggested that a pilot is introduced to test the efficacy of this. Consulting with children whose parents have accessed the course would provide useful information and parental learning outcomes in terms of delivering effective and timely sex and relationship education to their children.

Section 2: Homeless and Transience

The second area for case study analysis relates to Homeless and Transience. Whilst all Community Support Workers within Sure Start TAB engage with and support vulnerable clients, one of the team has been given specific responsibilities in relation to this area of work. The reason for this role directly relates to the demographic make-up of the Talbot and Brunswick area. At ward level these geographical areas are both in the bottom twenty per cent nationally in terms of socio-economic determinants. There are two homeless hostel units within the TAB area, one containing twenty-one family units (located directly opposite the new Sure Start TAB Offices), while the other hostel contains eight family units (located very close to Sure Start). Because these wards cover the town centre areas, there are, in addition, high numbers of transient people moving in and out on a regular basis, indicating the high level of need for this targeted position. As for all Community Support Workers, the key aim of this role is to build up relationships with disadvantaged populations to ensure service users will access and receive appropriate support through Sure Start services.

The case study provides an in-depth analysis of the work undertaken by the Community Support Worker with homeless families. This analysis covers the types and range of support provided to these vulnerable families, as well as structured programmes to encourage parents to 'move on with their lives'

The case study was prepared through: -

- An interview with the Community Support Worker for Homeless and Transience
- An interview with the Community Support Worker Team Leader
- Observation of Activities
- Analysis of a range of evaluation methodologies: -
 - Sure Start Evaluation Questionnaires
 - Independent questionnaires/interviews conducted by the research team
- Course/activity details
- Assessment of Pilot Data
- Access to Soft Smart Data Base for Attendance Data

2.1 Interview with Homeless and Transience Community Support Worker

Averal Roscoe, the Community Support Worker for Homeless and Transience within Sure Start TAB has a work background of some twenty-three years in the mental health sector. These occupational experiences were within statutory, community and voluntary organisations. Averal has been in post at Sure Start TAB for approximately one year at the time of interview.

A number of the Community Support Workers within TAB hold generic responsibilities to engage, encourage and recruit families with young children (under age of 5) into Sure Start. These duties are often coupled with a specific area of responsibility. Due to the high volume of homeless families within TAB, this sample group are Averal's sole focus of targeted work.

2.2 Links to Sure Start Objectives

The work undertaken within this role represents all the Sure Start objectives, as well as the wider goals in terms of community reintegration and 'access for all', through provision of support within a highly excluded population group. The links within the themed objective areas are: -

- Improving Social and Emotional Development (through identifying potential child protection concerns)
- Improving Health (providing advice on health and safety, childhood illnesses, etc)
- Improving the Ability to Learn (through providing structured activities/programmes for homeless parents)
- Strengthening Families and Communities (by provision of family support)

2.3 Access to Homeless Families

Through close networking, Averal has set up good referral systems with the two homeless hostels within TAB to ensure she is notified as soon as any new family with children meeting the age of inclusion are admitted into the shared accommodation. The hostel referrals currently account for a considerable proportion of Averal's work. Additional sources of notification are received from within the Sure Start team via the Health Visitors. These health professionals pick up families through registration with GP's when they move into the area. Referrals/notifications are also received through Social Services, Education Services, Homeless Health Team, Housing Advice, Positive Activities for Young People, Behavioural Educational Support Team, etc. Due to the close vicinity of the hostel, referrals are also sometimes identified through the Community Support Worker by witnessing the family moving in to the building.

The Sure Start building has only been occupied since May 2005, with staff previously operating from a number of satellite buildings. Since this move, a significant difference has been noted with regard to hostel residents accessing the Sure Start building to visit Averal. Parents are either waiting to see Averal arrive before coming over, or even cold calling to see her in the office. This practice is highly positive in terms of building a cohesive community and access for socially excluded populations (important Sure Start objectives), and is very likely to increase.

The working relationships formed between these agencies are invaluable in terms of identifying key risk factors presenting within the families. The literature repeatedly identifies that homelessness is associated with a range of multi-faceted disadvantages such as familial violence, substance misuse, mental health, learning difficulties, etc. A risk assessment is therefore undertaken on all new referrals received, with further clarification of any issues being sought prior to an initial meeting taking place. Indeed, it is essential that Averal is fully aware of any risk situations, to ensure that she is accompanied on any high-risk visits.

Relationships are also in place with the BEST team, with referrals very recently being received. The identifiers for referral into BEST are when children are not attending school and presenting with welfare issues. If these young people are from within homeless families, referrals are now being made into the Sure Start services. In addition, as the BEST team provide support for young people only during term time, referrals are being received into Sure Start to support these young people over the school holiday periods. Appropriate signposting into local provision is carried out as appropriate, e.g. referrals into Positive Activities, Leisure Services, Barnardos, etc.

2.4 Engaging with Homeless Families

Homeless families within TAB present as a highly vulnerable population, in order to engage with families and steer them into Sure Start activities, Averal may have to visit families two or three times before she can begin to suggest accessing services.

On a basic level, the support provided within her role focuses on how to obtain benefits as well as what they are eligible to claim for, information on the statutory legislation surrounding homelessness, length of time waiting for housing decisions, etc, as well as facilitating the process of families registering with a local General Practitioner. In addition, needs-led support is provided for these families as they present, e.g. lifts to the hospital, co-ordination of emergency payments, etc.

Once a relationship has been formed, Averal starts to refer parents into Sure Start as appropriate, e.g. referrals made to Speech and Language Therapist, Health Visitors, Midwives, Training Co-ordinator, etc. Due to the chaotic nature of a number of these families, Averal strongly advocates services are provided within the hostel environment when appropriate to ensure the participation of these socially excluded parents, who often lack the confidence and motivation to gain access to services. Once it is felt that families are ready to move on, a registration form for Sure Start is completed, and activities and services available to the parents and their children are promoted. Parents as well as children are also provided with as much support as possible to enable them to attend, e.g. taking young people to the playgroups.

Care Plans can be completed with homeless families in terms of identifying what, when and by whom support will be provided. However, as the formality of this document can result in unnecessary pressure, these are not always completed. Averal advocates that access to services tends to operate on an informal basis and at a pace that the parents are at ease with. Cases are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure support is required, with information being fed back to the named referrer.

One difficulty faced by Averal is that due to the lack of available rented/council accommodation within TAB, 9 out of 10 families who present within the hostel are accommodated outside of Sure Start's geographical remit. This means that there is sometimes only a two to three month period in which to work with the family before they move on. If the parents relocate within another Sure Start area (there are currently three Sure Starts within Blackpool), a referral is made into the new service. In addition, if parents are accessing services within Sure Start, which operate on a borough wide basis, e.g. Relate, referrals can be made to ensure continuity with support. There are occasions, however, when parents are not placed within a Sure Start geographical area, which can be frustrating, particularly when positive relationships have been formed, and progress has been made in terms of parents receiving appropriate support. To partially overcome these issues, whilst parents would not be able to access training, or core service delivery within Sure Start TAB, they would still be encouraged to access drop-in sessions, e.g. mother and toddler groups, or to continue to act as volunteers as appropriate.

A case study was presented of a young couple residing within one of the hostels. Whilst it was identified that both parents had mental health problems, the mother was very unwilling to talk about her illness. Averal described that over time she began to gain the

trust of this young woman, and by approximately the eighth visit she began to disclose her condition as well as the resultant difficulties she was facing. Averal referred the woman for Counselling Services, but as the couple are now moving out of the TAB area, she will not be able to work with them any longer.

A significant difficulty experienced by only engaging with parents over a short period of time, with sometimes late notification of when they are leaving the area, is that it has not been easy to assess the impact of the support received. However, at the time of interview, an exit questionnaire was introduced in order to evaluate the services provided by Averal. This feedback was also designed to identify any gaps within the service provision, and to ensure that the services meet the presenting needs. A total of four exit questionnaires have been completed to date - the analysis of which is presented below. It is recognised that this practice needs to be continued to ensure that targeted services reflect the needs of the local population.

Monitoring and evaluation

The majority of work undertaken by Averal tends to occur before parents are registered with Sure Start. However, all contacts with parents are recorded onto client contact forms, or home visit records. All information is then transferred onto the Soft Smart database system once the family is registered. If any family presents with child protection concerns, all information is retained within core file documentation in the Sure Start office.

Multi-Agency Practice

Averal plays a vital intermediary role in terms of homeless parents accessing local provision, both internal and external to Sure Start. For example, through good links with the Whitegate Family Centre (dealing with child protection cases), Averal is requested to encourage homeless parents to access their services. Close working relationships have also been forged across a range of key agencies within Blackpool, e.g. Social Services, Schools (Learning Mentors), BEST Team, etc. This practice reflects the Sure Start ethos in co-ordinating service delivery, with agencies working together to ensure service user needs are being met.

Whilst Averal's focus is to register and engage homeless parents within Sure Start activities, she does make referrals to a wide range of local provision. For example, referrals have been made to Counselling services, Kensington House (clothes and furniture), mental health services, etc. In addition, Averal carries telephone numbers with her to give to parents as required, e.g. Ad Action (drug users), AA, contraceptive services, domestic violence, etc. The Sure Start Team are constantly developing knowledge and understanding of local services as well as service user needs, thus ensuring that the most appropriate information and advice can be readily available. Indeed, Averal is strongly committed to core Sure Start objectives in terms of empowering individuals through information, thus allowing them to make informed choices.

Evaluation Data

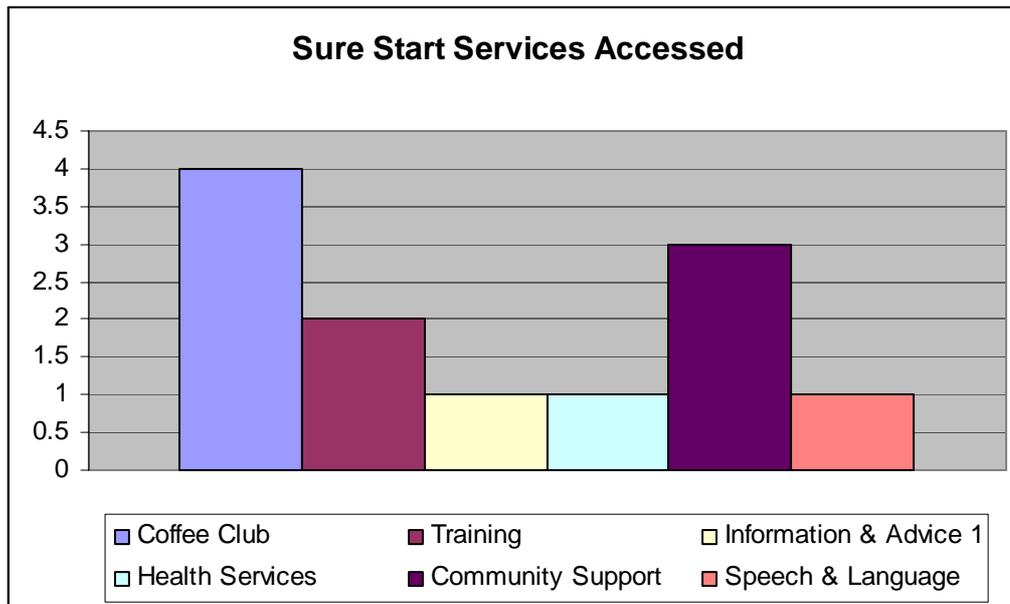
Exit questionnaires have been designed by Averal to receive feedback on a range of issues such as the quality of services received, whether parents are staying within the TAB area, and would use Sure Start services in the future. Additional questions relate to what Averal perceives to be the core focus of her work, e.g. increasing confidence of

parents and empowering them to plan for the future. All questions were open ended for qualitative replies.

Only four exit questionnaires have been completed to date. The results are detailed below: -

a) **Extent of Services**

In order to quantify the number of services accessed through involvement and encouragement by Averal, the questionnaire asked parents to identify from a list of activities, which services they had been involved with. The results are shown in the table below: -



This data shows that these homeless parents are accessing a range of services (with all parents selecting multiple options), demonstrating the potential impact of the support provided by Averal in engaging a socially excluded population.

Quality of Service Provision

All parents regarded the Sure Start services accessed to be of a high quality. Comments included: -

- ❖ "The services that have been offered to me have been excellent; really learn a lot"
- ❖ "Think Sure Start services give us so much help and advice".

b) **Benefits of Engagement**

When parents were asked to report on whether their confidence had increased through involvement within Sure Start, all responses were affirmative: -

- ❖ "My confidence has grown immensely"
- ❖ "Our confidence has grown"

With regard to whether parents felt more capable of planning for the future, again all responses were highly positive in terms of the support provided: -

- ❖ "Yes, people have sat down with me and talked about what problems I had before"

- ❖ "Yes, they helped me with getting my life organised and helped get my life together".

c) **Relocation/Continuation of Use**

Only one of the participants was moving into a house within the TAB area. All parents stated that they would use Sure Start services in the future.

d) **Any Other Comments**

Two comments were recorded by parents, one of whom requested the continuation of services after they moved into a new home, and the other using this opportunity to provide praise for the support received.

- ❖ 'I wish I was in the area as my confidence grew more, the people were extremely helpful and did so much for me'
- ❖ 'The staff are always on hand to help, nothing was too much trouble for them'

Conclusion

Whilst only four questionnaires have been completed, it is encouraging that this evaluation method has been introduced to measure the impact of this specialist provision. The results to date are highly positive, with all parents demonstrating active involvement with a range of Sure Start services. Service users also reported key benefits of engagement on their confidence level, as well as their abilities to plan for the future. These values/attributes have been identified as key difficulties faced within this disadvantaged group. Finally, a key measure of success is that all parents said they would access Sure Start in the future (where available).

2.5 Target Tomorrow

Averal, and her colleague (specialising in Training, Benefits and Employment) recently designed and ran a targeted five-week programme for parents within the homeless hostel. The outline for this programme was: -

- ❖ Session 1: Self Discovery
- ❖ Session 2: Money Magic
- ❖ Session 3: Moving On
- ❖ Session 4: Life Skills
- ❖ Session 5: Summing Up

This is an extremely innovative programme, purely based on the needs of the homeless residents. Averal has noticed that homeless parents need encouragement to take control over their lives. Accordingly, this course was designed to help homeless parents understand their current situation (as parents are often extremely traumatised at being placed within the shared accommodation). Intertwined within the programme was practical advice and skills to help homeless parents develop budgeting skills, and raise awareness of how to run a home. As one of the main reasons for homelessness is financial difficulties/debts leading to subsequent eviction from private tenancies, Averal wanted to enhance understanding of how to plan ahead for the future.

The course was run from 24th January to 24th February 2005 and delivered by Averal and Jean Osprey (Community Support Worker for Education and Employment – Sure Start TAB), a Holistic Therapist was also asked to deliver input over two sessions. Each session was 2 hours long, with a crèche provided for the children. Tea/coffee and

biscuits was also supplied to all parents. A total of four parents attended all six sessions, demonstrating excellent attendance rates and motivation levels for the parents to complete the course.

The promotional impetus for parents to attend was through the provision of ‘gifts’ at the end of each session, and also that the course was described as “*New Year – New You. This course may change your life forever and you will make new friends and enjoy yourself*”. Rewards are frequently viewed as a necessity to encourage compliance by this chaotic group, though the benefits of attendance on a personal basis are also made clear to encourage the parents to complete the programme.

Parents were targeted to attend this course, with Averal specifically wanting to work with mothers who were currently pregnant to help them plan for the new baby as well as a new home. Three of the four mothers who attended and completed the course were pregnant.

Course Outline

Session outlines were prepared for each week, detailing the timing and focus of each activity. For example: -

Session Two

Aim: To increase awareness of money management

10 mins	Introduction and setting of ground rules
20 mins	Tutor-led activity on definitions of income and expenditure
20 mins	Do's and don'ts with your money with handout and contact sheet
10 mins	Coffee break
55 mins	Personal budgeting plan with handout of useful numbers. Gift of calculator
5 mins	Plenary session

Expected Outcome A better understanding of the participant's own financial situation

Session Five

Aim: To introduce sources of support and advice

10 mins	Introduction to session Introduction to guest speaker
1 hour	Basic Skills
15 mins	Coffee break
10 mins	Evaluation, presentation of certificates, summing up

Expected Outcome Participant is more confident in own abilities to move on

These outlines demonstrate excellent practice in terms of producing a clear rationale, structure and standardisation within the training. An overview of the sessions from the facilitator's perspective was provided, as follows:

The first and third session were run by a Holistic Therapist who was asked to address issues of where the parents saw themselves now and to help motivate them to move forward in their lives. Session two focused on income and expenditure, with parents asked to complete homework for the following week by writing down all their financial transactions. This exercise was designed to focus on whether parents are living within their means and raise awareness of where and how they may be able to budget for unexpected expenditure. Session four allowed participants to address the basic requirements associated with a new home, such as setting aside money for utility bills. Parents were all provided with a standard letter at the end of the session, which they could use for future reference. The final session looked at issues around tenancies, encouraging parents to understand what happens when things start to go wrong, who to contact, etc. The Specialist Debt Advisor from the Citizens Advice Bureau in Blackpool was also asked to provide input concerning credit cards and finances, information on debt counselling, etc. This talk was designed to prevent mismanagement of finances, highlight perils to avoid, etc.

Resources

A number of resources were developed to support the delivery, such as budgeting sheets, worksheets, standardised letters, and handouts. At the end of each session, participants were presented with a gift, these being as follows: -

- Session 1: File (in which all information could be retained and a prize was presented to the best decorated)
- Session 2: Calculator (to help budgeting)
- Session 3: Book on budgeting skills
- Session 4: DIY/Home Improvement Manual
- Session 5: £10.00 Wilkinson's Vouchers

A certificate of attendance was also presented to all participants on course completion. Handouts were also designed to provide clear simple messages concerning financial management, e.g. 'The Only Way to Save Money is Not to Spend It' and 'If You Can't Afford It Don't Buy It'.

Facilitator Evaluation

On reflection, Averal identified that the input by the Holistic Therapist was not appropriately targeted. The therapist clearly did not understand the issues faced by homeless parents, making remarks such as 'if you are having a bad day, you need to run yourself a nice hot bath and relax on a comfy sofa'. Homeless parents are not afforded such luxuries within the hostel accommodation, using shared facilities and basic amenities. For future programmes, Averal would change input in terms of using a therapist who understood the issues faced by homeless families, and ensure their input was focused on an appropriate level.

Averal also realised in session four, when parents brought in their homework on financial transactions over the week, that these parents do not plan at all. 'If they have £100.00, they spent £100.00 before the end of the week'. It enabled Averal to appreciate that these mothers live for the here and now with little thought on what they will do tomorrow. Also when during the session parents were asked to identify expenditure over a 12-month period, none of the pregnant mothers accounted for the new baby, seeing their financial requirements being met by the Sure Start Grant (currently £500.00). Averal appreciated that for future courses, additional targeted work on budgeting would be

warranted earlier on in the course so that skills can be re-emphasised and re-addressed during the programme.

Since the course finished, requests have been received from hostel residents to attend the programme and Averal is planning to run the course again later in the year and to make it available to all vulnerable families.

Participant Evaluations

Standardised Sure Start evaluations were provided to all participants on programme completion. These asked for feedback on the venue used, childcare provision, the sessions they found most useful, the identified benefits of attendance, overall enjoyment with the course, as well as ideas for service development. Qualitative scales were included for parents to record their satisfaction (Poor – Excellent), prescribed lists for participants to identify their responses (session outline / potential benefits of attendance) and open-ended questions for potential improvements to the programme. The results from the four evaluations completed are as follows: -

a) **Venue/Childcare**

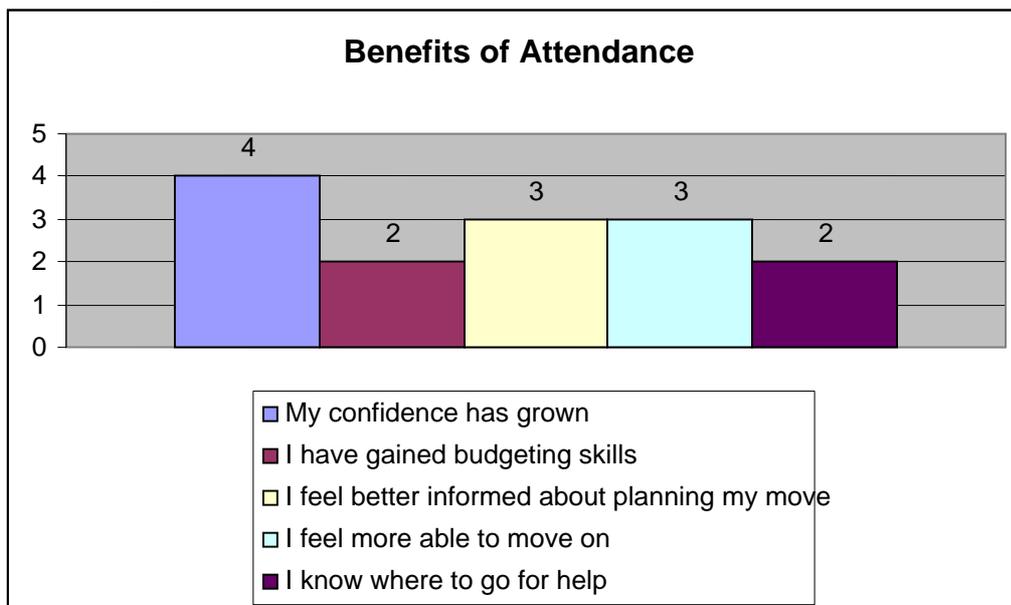
Very positive comments were received to these questions and whilst two of the participants rated the venue as very good, all other responses in terms of training location and childcare provision were given as 'excellent'.

b) **Session usefulness/Overall Enjoyment**

From a prescribed list of answers (self awareness, budgeting, housing information, Citizens' Advice Bureau), three out of the four responses highlighted all sessions as being useful. The remaining participant identified all bar budgeting. The overall enjoyment of the course was recorded as excellent by all parents.

c) **Benefits of Attendance**

Responses and answers are shown in the chart below: -



d) **Service Development**

Only one comment was recorded concerning additional issues to be covered within the course - about coping mechanisms for parents residing within shared accommodation: -

❖ *"Hard to cope living in a small confined space with many people"*

e) **Any Other Comments**

Two parents added comments on the questionnaire, both of which mentioned positive aspects of the programme: -

❖ "Very good; I did enjoy it a lot"

❖ "Course and staff were excellent and extremely informative"

Overall, the evaluations provide very positive feedback from the participants, with parents enjoying all aspects of the programme. Whilst budgeting was identified as a core focus of the course, this was perhaps not as prominent as might have been expected. However, this does correspond with the feedback provided by the facilitator in that future courses should address these skills earlier on within the programme.

Conclusion

Overall, this course can be summarised as providing a highly innovative and needs-led support for homeless families. The success of this course is demonstrated by attendance of all four parents throughout the course, as well as parents identifying the impact of the course on their confidence and ability to 'move on' into a more stable environment. Developments for future programmes have already been identified through the use of parent as well as facilitator evaluations, highlighting good practice.

2.6 Coffee Club

On a weekly basis, Averal and one other Community Support Worker host a Coffee Evening between 6-7pm in Gorton Street Hostel crèche room.

This project was initially introduced as a four-week pilot project for which a detailed Activity Overview was produced. The aims of this activity are to:-

- Provide family centre residents with a weekly opportunity to engage with Sure Start staff
- Provide family centre residents with a weekly opportunity to raise any concerns about themselves or their children
- Enable hostel residents to socialise in a supportive environment.
- All evenings to contain a health/education message through themed nights and/or quizzes, word-searches and magazines
- Videos and books made available to encourage literacy and engagement with the activity

To encourage attendance and access to services, parents would be allowed to bring their children to these events. This activity was seen as contributing towards meeting a number of Sure Start core objectives as follows:-

- **Improving Social and Emotional Well-Being** (e.g. reduce the proportion of children aged 0-3 in the Sure Start area who are on the Child Protection Register).
- **Improving Health** (e.g. parenting support and information available for all parents within the Sure Start area).

- **Improving the Ability to Learn** (e.g. Achieve in the Sure Start areas a reduction in the number of children with speech and language problems requiring specialist intervention).
- **Strengthening Families and Community** (e.g. Increase of families reporting personal evidence in the quality of services providing family support).

Pilot Group

The pilot session ran for four weeks in September and October, 2004, at the end of which an evaluation was undertaken through assessment of attendance data and evaluation questionnaires. The questionnaires were also designed to help inform and plan future sessions. The results from the pilot are as follows:-

Attendance Data

Six, 9, 6 and 7 residents attended the four sessions. The activity engaged a total of 12 parents over the period. These results were viewed very positively in terms of engaging a highly stigmatised and 'hard to reach' population. The sign in sheets also included a section for parent's to identify whether they 'would like more information about Sure Start', to encourage access to Sure Start facilities/services.

Evaluation of the final session was designed to measure overall perceptions of the course, what aspects of the course they found to be worthwhile (e.g. refreshments, social activities, meeting with neighbours, etc), as well as potential ideas for development from a list – plus an open-ended section for parent's own ideas. The results were:-

a) **Perceptions of Coffee Club**

The majority of parents rated the Coffee Club as 'very good', with the remaining two responses evaluating the activity as 'good'.

b) **What has been worthwhile**

Responses were:-

Coffee and Cakes	4
Social activities (i.e. Quiz)	5
Meeting with your neighbours	5
Information about Sure Start	3
Books, videos, magazines	3

These results suggest that the most positive aspects of the sessions are the social opportunities through communication and shared activities (quizzes). An additional comment was also received from one of the parent's which reflected the chance for her to spend time as an adult in the shared focus of the group: *'I get away from the children'*.

c) **Coffee Club: Ideas for development**

Recipes and demonstrations (healthy cooking on a budget)	2
Aromatherapy	3
Exercise	3
Life Coaching	3
Crafts for Christmas	4

Invited guests (e.g. Drug services, alcohol services, mental health services, college)	3
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With regard to additional suggestions, only one comment was received which requested targeted activities for 'men'.

Post Pilot

Since the pilot was undertaken, a decision was made to retain this service, and the Coffee Club session has been running for approximately nine months (at the time of case study analysis. 39 parents have accessed this service to date, and whilst no weekly attendance sheets were available, Averal advised that there has never been fewer than 3 parents attending.

Averal presents a themed input at every session. These themes tend to be related to childhood illnesses and health and safety issues. For example, sessions have been provided on: -

- Meningitis
- Hepatitis
- Immunizations
- Healthy Eating
- Road Safety
- Headlice
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Dummies and Bottles
- Fire Safety
- Italian Themes (Pizza Night)

These themes tend to be identified through consultation with parents, as well as highlighted through informal discussions. For example, if parents ask questions related to a specific issue, Averal will consult with the Sure Start professionals working in this area to provide input within the session, again reflecting the needs-led services provided by Sure Start TAB.

Resources

Averal has a small budget for each session, the majority of which is spent on new magazines. Parents are free to read the magazines, complete crosswords, etc. Quizzes are also regularly introduced at the sessions. Parents tell Averal that they enjoy completing them, as is also evidenced by the evaluation questionnaires. A small prize is provided to the winner (of value no more than £1.00). Averal also ran a Christmas quiz over a 4 week period. The winner received a Hamper.

In addition, whilst Averal used to operate a Video Library, this has recently been disbanded due to everyone now requesting DVDs.

Averal describes the session as very informal, with topics discussed over tea/coffee and biscuits, with the facilitator and parents all seated around one table. She has witnessed the opportunities these meetings provide for the formation of friendships and support networks, which often co-exist, whilst parents cope with their current situation. Positive

feedback is received from the parents in that they look forward to attending, which in turn acts as a strong incentive for Averal to maintain this service provision.

Observation of Coffee Club

The Coffee Club is held in the playroom of the hostel on Gorton Street and was attended by both Averal and Jean Osprey who provided snacks, magazines, videos and light refreshments.

Five parents attended the observed group and participated in informal group discussions. Three parents brought their children who played independently with the toys in the room, supported by Jean, whilst parents chatted, read magazines or engaged in discussion with the two workers.

Parents seemed to enjoy the informal nature of the group, and the opportunity to sit and chat or read, or choose a video to watch later. Parents were able to ask for advice and information throughout and were provided with a range of information on planned activities by Jean and Averal. Two parents joined the group for a short time and then left. The informal nature of the group allows this, as the quiz was an activity that could be done at any point during the session. The answers were revealed towards the end and the prize of some chocolates was given out at the end of the session.

Overall perceptions were that this session clearly provided the workers with the opportunity to engage with families in a relaxed atmosphere. The workers initiated various discussions about children, their development and learning needs - with staff taking care to always celebrate small achievements with parents, encourage their questions and views.

Conclusion

The Coffee Club provides invaluable access to information, advice and support in a relaxed and welcoming environment. The social nature of the group was well regarded by the hostel residents, and due to the numbers of parents attending, this activity demonstrates success in engaging a highly disadvantaged and vulnerable group.

Because no evaluations have been undertaken since the end of the pilot period, a suggestion would be to increase the consultation and development opportunities through introducing regular feedback sessions (perhaps undertaken on a quarterly or six-monthly basis).

2.7 Potential Service Developments

Two facilitators are needed to run the Coffee Evenings. A potential development would be to have an additional childcare member of staff to tend to the children, so that the parents can take part more easily in the discussions, games, etc. Averal suggested that a Dad's Support Group would be a valued service within the hostel, as well as increasing the number of services that are delivered within the homeless premises. Plans are also in place for a stay and play session within the Hostel through the Portage worker encouraging parents to play with their children.

Due to the high volume of homeless families within the TAB area, it is recognised that the available support does not meet the demand evident within this disadvantaged group. Many of the parents present with a whole range of risk factors, such as histories

of violence, mental health concerns, lack of parenting abilities, low self-esteem, etc. Therefore, the extent of support required is very time consuming. As a consequence, it is recognised that Averal does not have the capacity to target families presenting as 'transient'. Discussions between the Community Support Co-ordinator and Programme Manager are underway to assess the structure of the Community Support team to enable additional capacity for supporting vulnerable families.

2.8 Conclusions and Recommendations

A number of key strengths and recommendations have been identified around the targeted and innovative needs-led support provided by the homeless and transience worker as follows: -

Key Strengths

- Homeless service users demonstrated clear impact of the role through the increased access of Sure Start services during the period of time the worker has been in post.
- Consistency and persistency of approach to engage socially excluded families.
- The worker's understanding of the impact of social exclusion through her developing and facilitating entry to services at parents' own pace.
- Use of Exit Questionnaires to obtain feedback as well as measuring the impact of service provision
- The work being undertaken has clearly been informed by an excellent understanding of the impact of homelessness on the confidence and motivation of service users. Interventions have been designed to address these through the support and advice of a multidisciplinary team.
- The services available through the worker have been shaped by her capacity to reflect proactively on how best to meet the needs of service users.
- The worker has followed the Sure Start ethos of forging good networks across a range of different agencies in order to facilitate access to services.

Key Recommendations

- It was clear that families moving out of the area would not always be able to access a Sure Start. It was therefore identified that the team needed to be fully aware of local service provision to ensure referrals are being completed upon relocation.
- New procedures are being introduced to monitor the core outcomes of all home visits with families.
- To maintain and improve liaisons with Housing Advice, Landlord Services and Homeless Health Team to ensure consistency in information provided to service users and reduce the risk of duplication of effort.

- To improve links with private sector housing to help facilitate the re-location of homeless families who wish to remain within the TAB area.
- The use of Exit Questionnaires should be encouraged and maintained.
- Homeless and Transience Community Support Worker to develop young people services/activities with new Education worker within Sure Start (when in post).

3. Employment/Benefits/Training

The final area selected for case study analysis within Sure Start TAB relates to Employment, Benefits and Training opportunities provided to parents. The evaluation of the work in this area being assessed through

- Interview with Community Support Worker
- Interview with Community Support Worker Team Leader
- Observation of two Training Sessions
- Analysis of Attendance Data (2004-05 training programmes)
- Sure Start Evaluation Questionnaires
- Research Team Interviews/Consultations with Service Users

3.1 Interview with Community Support Worker

Jaclyn Hargreaves is the Community Support Worker within Sure Start TAB, who holds specialist accountabilities for Employment, Benefits and Training projects. At the time of interview (March, 2005), Jaclyn had been in post for only six weeks, her predecessor within this area (Jean Osprey) leaving Sure Start earlier in 2005. Jaclyn has an Arts Degree and for twelve months before joining Sure Start was an Outreach Officer within a local library with responsibilities for training.

Links to Local Objectives/Outcomes

Jaclyn's role and provision of targeted activities relate to all Sure Start key objective areas: Improving Social and Emotional Well-Being, Improving Health, Improving the Ability to Learn and Strengthening Families and Community. However, as Jaclyn's role specifically focuses on Employment, Benefits and Training, the key objectives addressed through this provision (under the Improving the Ability to Learn theme) relate too:-

- 'Reduce by 12% the number of children aged 0-3 in Sure Start area living in households where no-one is working'
- 'Increase proportion of parents (of children of all ages) who have Level 1 literacy skills'
- 'All Sure Start programmes to develop a local target to ensure links between the local Sure Start partnerships and Employment Service jobcentres'

In addition, as identified within previous case-studies, TAB Sure Start have also identified local objectives to improve learning and raise the level of academic attainment within the TAB ward, ensuring more people are obtaining qualifications assessed at NVQII and using this qualification to get people back into work. This is of particular relevance to this geographical area with more than 40% of people having no qualifications and only 48% of adults being employed.

Post Development

Jaclyn's role is to understand the range of services and advice pertaining to employment, benefits and training provided locally, in order that she can provide information and sign post as appropriate. In order to facilitate this knowledge, Jaclyn has made formal links with Jobcentre Plus, and has recently shadowed a Lone Parent Advisor for the day, in order for her to understand their role, as well as comprehension of the benefits that are available for parents, e.g. working tax credit, child tax credit, jobseekers allowance,

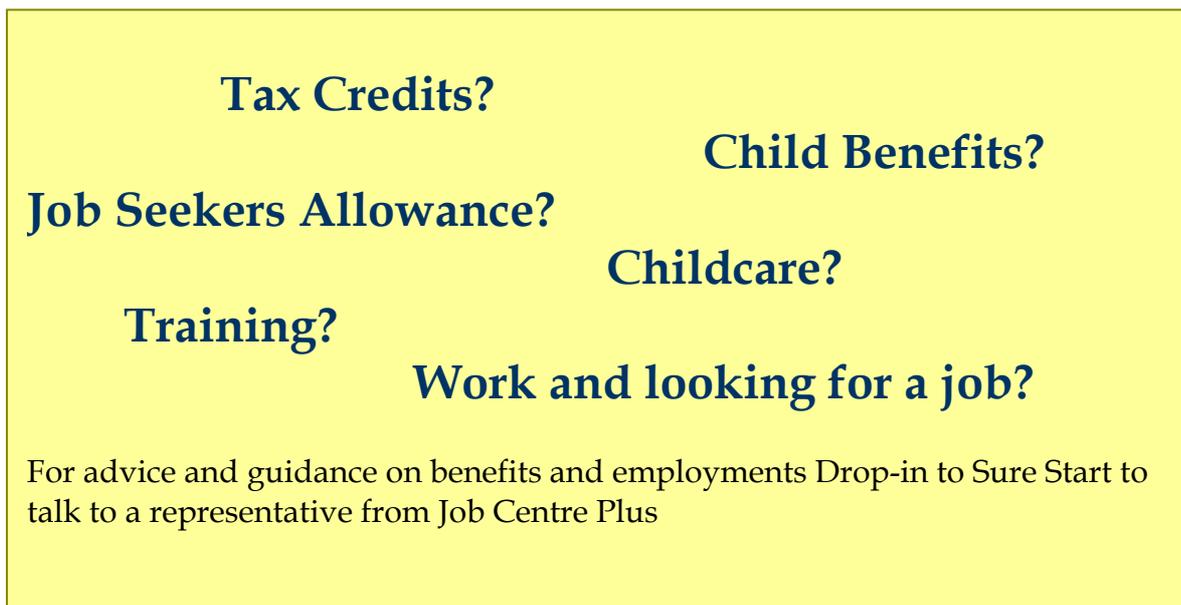
housing benefits, etc. Jaclyn also has organised meetings with a range of professionals through whom pertinent information can be sought, e.g. Connexions, Midwife (regarding the maternity alliance course), etc, as well as training courses identified to develop her professional competence.

3.2 Drop-In Services

a) Job Centre Plus

Jaclyn reported that in June 2005 a fortnightly drop-in service provided by Job Centre Plus (2 hour session) was offered on a pilot basis within Sure Start TAB. All parents can access this service in order to find out more information about available support for their transition back into employment, and to ensure they are claiming what they are entitled to. In addition, a computer portal via Job Centre Plus is to be installed within Sure Start to enable parents to search/view employment opportunities at any time. It is envisaged that by bringing in specialist services to the Sure Start building will encourage accessibility to these services, and will reduce the stigmatisation that a number of parents may feel when having to enter identified premises. The leaflet to promote these services is shown below: -

Do you live in Talbot or Brunswick wards? Do you need information on?



Tax Credits?

Child Benefits?

Job Seekers Allowance?

Childcare?

Training?

Work and looking for a job?

For advice and guidance on benefits and employments Drop-in to Sure Start to talk to a representative from Job Centre Plus

Whilst this was initially a pilot scheme consisting of three sessions over June and July, the service has proved to be popular and there are plans for it to continue.

b) Access to Employment

In addition to the above, Jaclyn is also in the process of introducing a weekly drop-in service focusing on helping parents entering employment. These sessions are to be facilitated by Jaclyn and are available over a 2-hour period every Friday. Whilst it is considered important that this drop-in is viewed as informal to encourage attendance, it is anticipated that structured support will be offered through job searches (via Job Centre Computer Portal, availability of job papers, on-line searches of job pages, etc) and discussion of career opportunities. Jaclyn will provide guidance and information on

individual training needs to help parents achieve their career choices and will make referrals made to the local college, as appropriate. Assistance will also be provided for parents in writing their own C.V.'s and completing application forms. This service is still being developed. Appropriate targeting of additional resources and/or support will be considered on an ongoing basis.

c) Advice Link Road show

Jaclyn is also in the process of co-ordinating an Advice Link Road show (14th July, 2005) to be held in the Sure Start building. The focus of this service is to address Social Exclusion by encouraging take-up of welfare benefits and advice services and increasing resident's access to good quality advice, leading to improved health and well being in the community. Advice Link works in partnership to join up services more effectively, sharing resources as well as expertise. There is a whole range of agencies who are working in partnership through Advice Link, e.g. Care and Repair, Jobcentre Plus, Primary Care Trust, Shelter, Supporting People, Connexions, Inland Revenue, Advice Services, Trading Standards, etc. In order to raise awareness of benefits and services within Blackpool, this team co-ordinate Road shows for residents to have access to specialist and general advice provided by advisors from a range of local organisations. Indeed, this service recognises that by holding events in local venues can mean that Advice Link can target areas of need, such as TAB.

d) Opportunities Fair

An Opportunities Fair was held in October, 2004 which was attended by local businesses and training providers. The aim was for parents to obtain information on career, training and employment opportunities. Unfortunately, due to limited advertisement and promotion, only 6 parents attended the day.

Jaclyn is planning a repeat of the Opportunities Fair sometime during September, 2005. It is envisaged that a much more structured and targeted approach will be adopted for the forthcoming event.

e) Referrals

Through her role Jaclyn has formed relationships with a number of local service providers to whom referrals can be made, e.g. Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, Inland Revenue, Blackpool Borough College, etc. This is to ensure that when parents are presenting with specific issues, Jaclyn is able to ensure effective sign-posting systems are in operation to meet the parent's needs. The knowledge and understanding of local service provision for this new member of staff is being built up through appropriate networking as well as development and learning opportunities.

3.3 Training

Sure Start TAB provides a wide and varied number of learning/development opportunities for parents. These courses are defined as Leisure Learning or Accredited. All are run by tutors at Blackpool and Fylde College. Jaclyn facilitates the publicity, registration of parents, venues, crèche facilities (through Sure Start), transportation (necessary only for the organic gardening training), etc. All training sessions last 2 hours to accommodate crèche limitations. The timings are organised to suit parents of school-aged children, e.g. courses start after 9.30am and finish before 3.00pm. One of the Community Support team are always assigned to support the training courses to encourage participation and provide support for parents. Sure Start certificates are

presented to all parents accessing the Leisure Learning courses, while formal certificates are awarded for courses accredited through the local College.

In order to specifically target the training opportunities, Sure Start TAB request that an Activity Proposal Overview is completed. This gives details of what Sure Start objectives the programme will target, how the activity will be monitored (activity sheets) and evaluated (evaluation questionnaires), the intended short, medium as well as long-term 'goals' (i.e. intended outcomes) of the course (from a service user perspective) as well as anticipated costs.

3.3.1 Leisure Learning

These are non-accredited courses designed to build up parents' confidence in accessing learning opportunities and enabling them to develop interests within specific areas. The overall aim of these courses is to encourage parents to move on to attend accredited qualifications, and then, hopefully to engage in paid employment opportunities in line with the Sure Start objectives. All the Leisure Learning courses are funded through the Economic Regeneration Development Fund (ERDF) accessed through Blackpool and Fylde College. The key objective of the training is to improve the basic skills of the workforce (key Government objectives), so all programmes are designed to contain elements of literacy and numeracy.

A wide number of vocational opportunities for parents were available in 2004-2005, focusing on arts and technology subjects such as IT, organic gardening, DIY, healthy eating, holistic therapy, Arts for Christmas, and Making Choices (introduction to Childcare course).

a) Making Choices

The course booklet states that this training was developed by two national training organisations that look after the training and qualifications needs of those working with children and young people. (This provision is in line with Government's Strategy to improve childcare provision and quality of childcare training). The programme designed to help people make informed choices about working with children and young people. This training is offered as a 15 hour course and covers all aspects of working with children/young people such as different jobs and types of work in childcare, education and play work, health and safety, other relevant legislation and the available qualifications and training courses. Certificates of attendance are provided at the end of course. This training programme is set within a qualification framework with the intention of trainees moving on to undertake the NVQ II in childcare (including placements with childcare providers).

This course is actually provided through the Early Years Team (Blackpool Borough Council), and through working in partnership with Sure Start, the first Making Choices course was run in November, 2004. From assessment of the attendance data, it appears that only two parents attended the initial session (course designed to run for five sessions). The low attendance and commitment by parents is explained by lack of advertisement and understanding as to what the course was all about.

Sure Start TAB have taken the decision not to facilitate a future course. However, any parents expressing an interest in working within childcare are signposted through to the

Early Years department to access the training. Sure Start will, however, provide help with childcare to enable service users to attend, if appropriate.

b) Organic Gardening

This course is currently being run for the second time. The original course was six weeks long, which consisted of three weeks of theory and three weeks of practical experience. The hands-on practice achieved through the availability of an allotment through Blackpool Borough Council. The training therefore provides participants with the knowledge as well as know-how to practice their skills. From the Activity Proposal Overview form this course targets the Sure Start Objectives of Improving Health as well as Strengthening Families and Communities. The intended outcomes for participants are:-

Short-Term Goal Improve knowledge of organic methods of horticulture

Medium-Term Goal Use knowledge to develop Sure Start allotment

Long-Term Goal Sustain Sure Start allotment and produce organic vegetables for community

An additional outcome identified via the Research Team being to 'encourage healthy eating'.

Changes have been after the first running of the course – based on the service user evaluations. The course now runs for four, all of which are based at the allotment. It was felt that there was too much time taken up with the theoretical aspects of the course. Parents wanted to start learning through action. Thus, there has been good practice in terms of developing activities through service user involvement, as well as delivery of training designed to meet the learning needs of the participants.

Unfortunately there was insufficient attendance data for analysis, but since the first course ran, an Allotment Club has been formed by a number of the parents who completed the training. Provision has been made for this group to access the allotment on a weekly basis. It is anticipated that this group will grow as more parents access the training. In terms of developing exit strategies for projects and encouragement of access for socially excluded groups into mainstream activities, this opportunity for community cohesion demonstrates excellent practice.

c) Healthy Eating Course

This course when it was originally designed consisted of a taster session, followed by six taught classes. All meal preparations and ingredients are based on good hygiene practice and against the '5 a day principle' (fruit and vegetables) as promoted through the Department of Health. This course is designed to address the finding that socially excluded populations, particularly those of low socio-economic status, have been identified as having a 'poor' diet – often, in the case of young people, a 'take away' diet. The premise of this course is therefore invaluable in terms of promoting healthy outcomes for more disadvantaged populations residing within the TAB area. From the Activity Proposal Overview, this course supports three main Sure Start objectives: Improving Health, Improving Ability to Learn and Improving Social and Emotional Development. The goals of the activity are:-

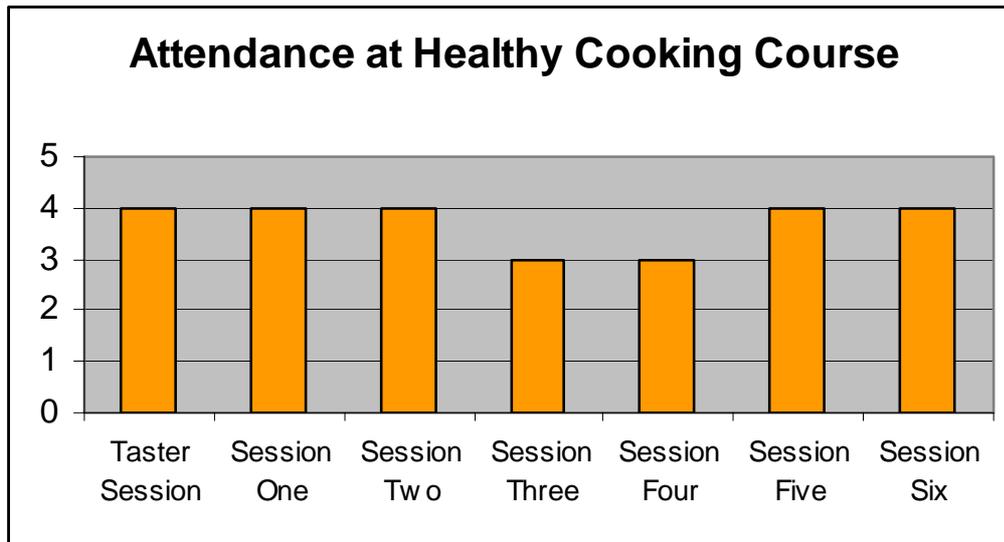
Short-Term Goal Clients to participate in making healthy menus, cooking

with fresh food

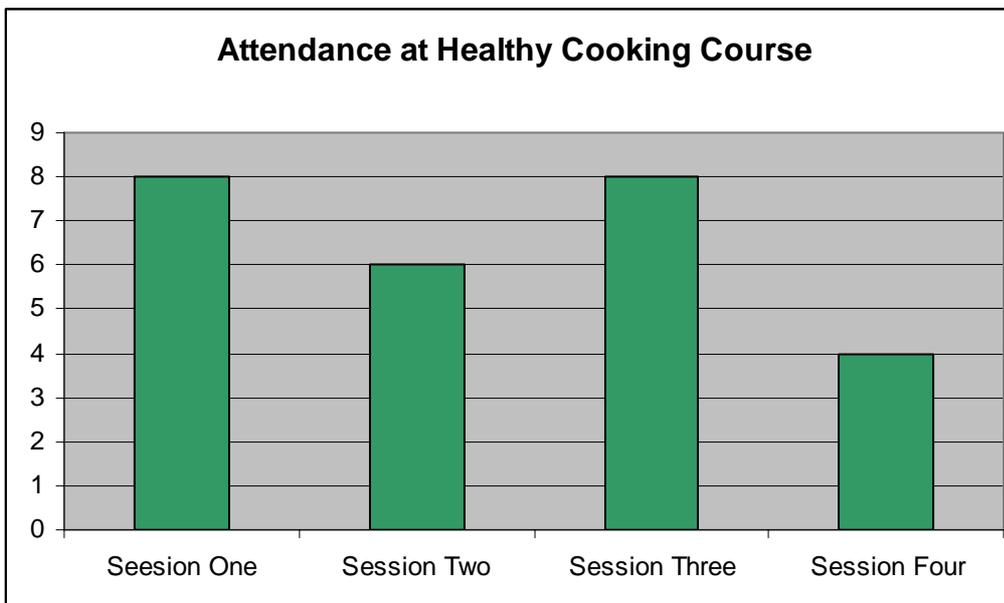
Medium-Term Goal To attempt healthy meals in the home

Long-Term Goal To improve knowledge of nutrition and establish healthy cooking/eating routines in the home using fresh ingredients

The first course ran from 17th January – 16th March 2005. There was generally good attendance across all of the sessions. Six parents took part in the course, although two attended only the taster session. The remaining four missed only two sessions between them, as is shown below:



The second course - held in May-June 2005 - ran for only four weeks, but attendance was better, as is shown below:



Although only four participants attended the final session, 8 attended the first and third sessions. Further evaluations should assess reasons for non-attendance, with feedback again determining programme design as appropriate.

Observation and evaluation of the Healthy Eating course

The observation took place on 8th June 2005 at Laycock Gate Centre. During this session, the group were making fresh pizza and wholemeal flapjacks in the kitchen using recipe cards. Of the facilities, participants said the kitchen was a bit too small for all of them, but otherwise were pleased with the course and the learning they had achieved. A number of parents described how useful they found the course, learning about nutrition and new and easy cooking methods. Managing their children's eating behaviours was a key discussion point between parents who also compared what strategies and approaches they had used to encourage healthier eating.

Food tasting was a popular element of the session, with all participants tasting the foods they had prepared. A number of parents described how they use the recipes they have worked on and have adapted their own and their children's diets since starting the course. Cost of food, difficulties in preparation and time for preparation was a common discussion point, as was the different and individual tastes of their families.

Overall perceptions were that parents were positively engaged with new cooking methods and the variety of healthy meals they could prepare within low-income families. All parents appeared to greatly enjoy the course, with friendly discourse occurring throughout.

After the observation of the Healthy Eating course, the research team undertook short interviews with the participants to identify:

- Reasons for attending the course
- What the perceived benefits were
- Satisfaction with the staff as well as the programme itself
- Recommendations for future courses.

Seven questionnaires were completed, the findings were: -

i) Reasons for Attending

The reason why parents wanted to attend the training related to learning new skills and the opportunities to socialise with other parents. A number of the comments received by the parents being: -

- 'meet other people and have fun – learn good health cooking'
- 'improve cooking and healthy cooking'
- 'fun and learning'

ii) Benefits of Attendance

The potential benefits of attendance identified by the participants directly relate to their reasons for attendance. Comments reflect knowledge and understanding of healthy cooking and mixing with other parents. Emotional benefits of accessing training were also reported. Examples of the remarks received being: -

- 'Learning healthier cooking and meeting nice people'
- 'Making new things I couldn't make before'
- 'More confidence in myself'

iii) Satisfaction with Staff and Programme

All parents expressed high satisfaction towards the staff on the course with one parent commenting 'she is a great teacher'. In addition, highly positive comments were made towards the programme, with parents reporting that the most enjoyable aspects of attendance related to their new skills and experiences, as well as health related benefits.

- 'Good cheap cooking and good for your health'
- 'Learnt different things'
- 'New experiences'

iv) **Improvements**

Five of the parents requested improvements to the course, all requesting a bigger kitchen for future courses.

Thus, the course meets the parents' expectations and all parents were highly satisfied with the staff ad training provided. All parents commented on their new cookery abilities, and were positive about using their abilities to prepare healthy foods for their families, and moving towards a healthier lifestyle. The only suggestion for improvement concerned the facilities.

d) Creative Writing

The course currently runs for 4 weeks and provides an introduction to creative writing using a range of teaching and learning methods. It includes an element of independent learning. The sessions are:

- Introduction to creative writing
- Rewriting the fairytale
- Dreams and the collective unconsciousness
- A good writer is a good reader

Participants are asked to provide some information on their likes and dislikes, and their expectations of the course. The tutor had expressed some difficulty in getting these returned. It may be that completion of these should be undertaken in class

This course was targeted specifically at hostel residents and had good attendance during the first week. The workers who cover the hostels normally go to the hostels to remind people about the course. Difficulties in repeat attendance were noted and the likely cause was residents moving on, and staff being on leave, which meant that no workers were available to remind participants and support their continued attendance.

The tutor is interested in the needs of her group, suggesting possible changes to the timing of the course if this would encourage attendance. In addition, whilst recognising that for hostel residents the course could provide an outlet through which parents will be able to express their emotions, this has to be seen in relation to participants' priorities of finding a new home and school for their families.

Impact of attendance and learning were provided by the tutor and support worker. Comments included:

- "Being able to talk to someone about books I have read"
- "I want to write my own book, this is helpful to me"
- "I really enjoyed attending and the content of the course."

Clearly the participants enjoyed the course, and some rescheduling and review could enhance future attendance.

e) Arts/Crafts

A Crafts for Christmas course was run over three sessions in the 2004-05 festive period, in which parents were involved in making cards and decorations. Ten parents attended at least one session, but three attended only once.

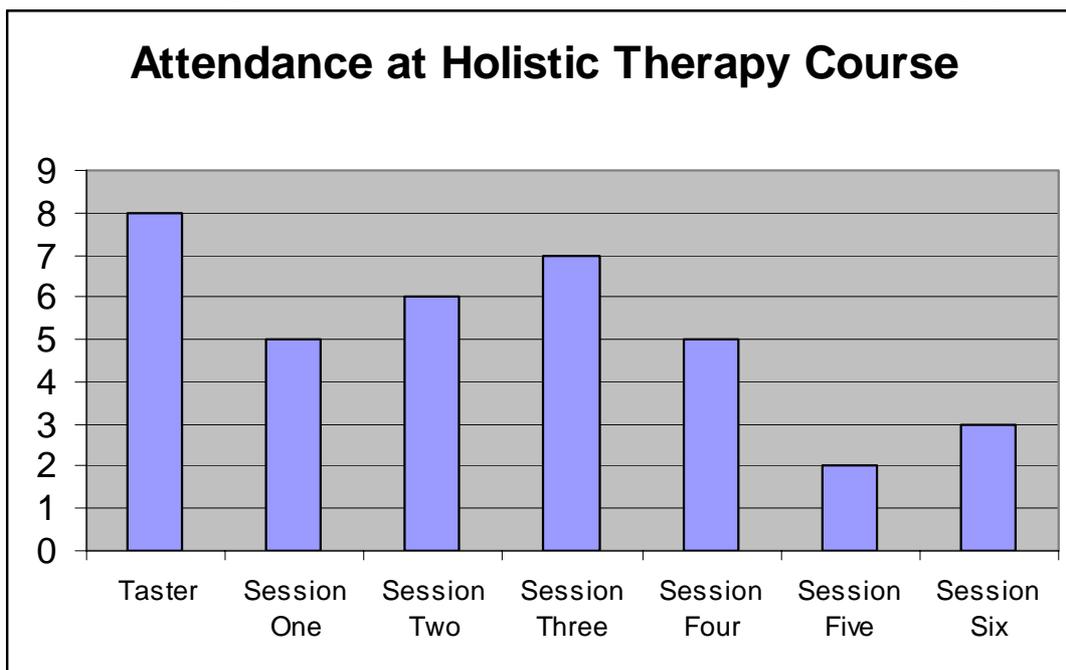
Participants reported greatly enjoying the course. Arts/crafts type projects are frequently requested by parents.

A further one day Arts activity of 'fine art/still life' was held on 22nd June, 2005 which engaged three parents and more art based courses are planned for later in the year. However, low numbers attending indicate a need to identify ways of encouraging participation.

f) Holistic Therapy

A seven-week Holistic Therapy course ran from September to November 2004 (the first week operating as a taster session). Eight parents participated. However, there was a clear decline in the numbers completing the programme (see figure below). Unfortunately due to a lack of available evaluation data it can only be suggested that the length of course was too long to sustain interest or commitment from the parents.

Whilst no Activity Proposal Overview was available for this course, through discussions it was determined that this programme aimed to provide parents with a 'treat' and incorporated a range of pamper sessions. Activities included Indian Head Massage, Aromatherapy, Foot Spas, etc. This programme was specifically planned to be held over the Winter months as it was envisaged that this period can exacerbate difficulties within disadvantaged families. The aims of the programme were, therefore, to improve overall well-being and introduce relaxation methods to a vulnerable population.



g) DIY Course

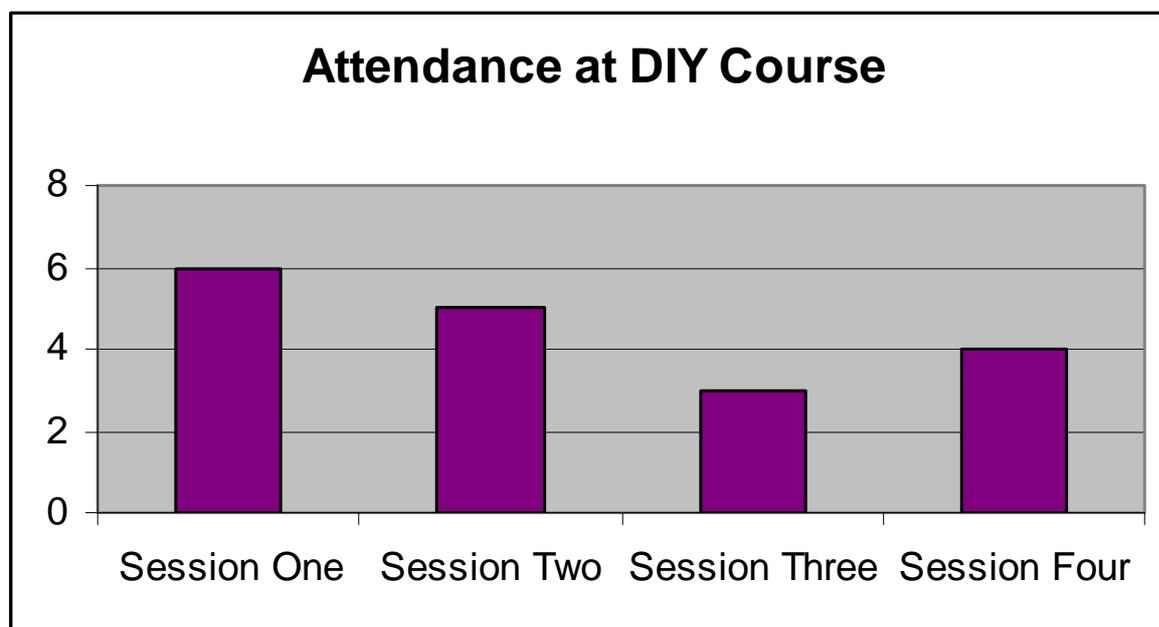
Between January and March, a four-week programme was run to develop parents' DIY skills. The aim of this training was to empower lone female parents to be confident to undertake basic DIY around their homes, e.g. changing a light bulb/fuses, putting up shelves, hanging pictures, etc. From the Activity Proposal Overview it was clear that this programme was designed to support the Strengthening Families and Community objectives of Sure Start. The goals of this activity are given below:-

Short-Term Goal To reduce accidents in the home

Medium-Term Goal To Improve skills to provide safe environment for family

Long-Term Goal To support progress to further training opportunities

The attendance data show a decline in the numbers engaging over the period of the programme. Eight parents accessed the training, but only three were present at one session, and three parents attended all sessions.



The main reason for the dropout rate was related to the content of the programme. The College tutor assigned to this training, rather than run the course as originally intended, decided to ask the parents 'what they wanted to make'. This escalated into the parents making 'rocking horses'. As the venue was not appropriate for this to be facilitated, it was felt that this built up unrealistic expectations in parents in terms of a) achieving the skill to make this piece of furniture, and b) undertake such an arduous task within a four week course. This decision also resulted in extra costs being charged to Sure Start for additional materials not originally accounted for and has led Sure Start to take the decision not to run the course in the foreseeable future. However, it should be noted that all parents learned how to make boxes and to spray-paint and decorated them with transfers.

h) I.T.

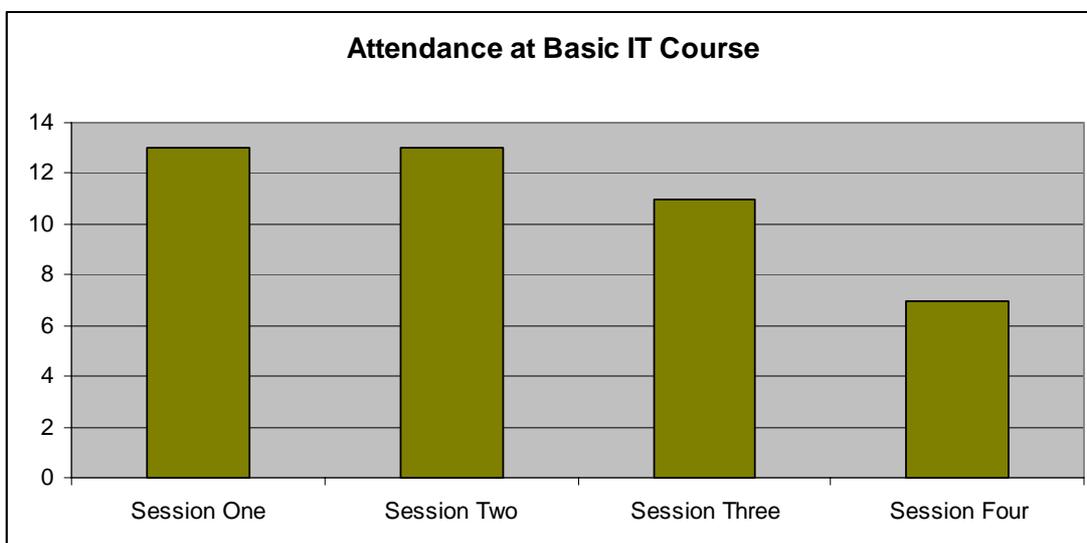
Sure Start offer a number of IT programmes: an initial Basic Course, an Intermediate Course and a CLAIT (equivalent) qualification. The latter two courses fall under the Accredited Training routes, and the Basic course represents a Leisure Learning opportunity. This linear array of IT provision programmes was designed to teach parents very basic operating instructions and use of programmes to familiarise themselves with computerised systems. The aims being that once parents complete the Basic Course, they will be encouraged to access the accredited training routes. As knowledge and comprehension of computers is increasingly essential within many occupational fields, it is recognised that these skills can equip parents with essential employability skills to enable them to join the labour market.

From the Activity Proposal Overview, the IT provision links directly to the Improving Ability to Learn objectives of Sure Start, and the perceived outcomes were identified as:-

- Short-Term Goal* To gain confidence in using PC's
- Medium-Term Goal* To obtain qualifications by progressing to College/ evening classes via distance learning
- Long-Term Goal* To use knowledge in C.V. and assist in gaining employment

Due to Sure Start TAB operating from satellite bases prior to the new build being completed (March, 2005), the IT courses were operating from a local training room, with lap-tops being brought on-site by the College tutors. As internet access was required for the accreditation of the Intermediate course, this has meant that only Basic IT has been available until the Sure Start building opened. Whilst there is patchy attendance data available for the IT provision prior to March (2005), through discussions it would appear that this has operated more as a drop-in event, as opposed to a formal course. No analysis of formal attendance data has therefore been undertaken for this period, though it would appear from the signing-in sheets that approximately fourteen parents accessed these learning opportunities.

Sure Start is now fully operational with its own IT training suite and the first formal four-week Basic Course ran from May to June, 2005. Attendance data is shown below:



In total fourteen parents accessed this course, but attendance declined markedly as the course progressed.

Sure Start evaluation questionnaires were distributed at the end of the training, these questionnaires asked parents to record their satisfaction with the practical aspects of the training (venue and childcare), their overall enjoyment and whether and how these skills will be used. Questionnaires also asked parents to identify from a set list of options how these IT skills will benefit them. All seven parents who finished the course (all of whom attended every session) completed questionnaires, the results of which are as follows: -

a) **Practical Support**

All parents were positive about the venue used for the activities (5 replied that they were very good and 2 that they were good). Out of the 5 parents who required childcare, 4 said these services were very good, and one said satisfactory (due to their children being supervised within a separate location).

b) **Overall Enjoyment**

In terms of the overall enjoyment, four of the respondents stated that it was very good, 2 rated it as good and the remaining parenting recorded their enjoyment as satisfactory.

c) **Confidence in using skills and how the skills will benefit them**

All parents stated that they would use the skills they have been taught. The ways in which parents said that IT will help them in the future are shown in the table below: -

Will help me at home	7
Will help me at work	2
Help me to find work	2
Enable me to move onto more advanced IT	6
Give me confidence to find voluntary work	0

Conclusion: These results are positive with all parents wishing to use these skills, particularly within their home environment and the majority wishing to further their IT training through accredited qualifications. Whilst only a small number of parents felt that this course would help them to find work, this may be due to the vocational nature of the programme, and recognition that they will need formal certificates to enable them to access the labour market. As 50% of parents did not complete the course, it may be useful to follow up reasons for non-completion, with modifications identified for the programme as appropriate.

3.3.2 Accredited Courses

In line with the Sure Start objectives to raise the level of literacy and encourage parents back into the workforce, a number of accredited training programme are offered. To date the courses offered have related to health and safety issues, e.g., Paediatric First Aid and Food Hygiene (as well as First Aiders certificate), and employability skill base through IT (Intermediate IT and CLAIT (equivalent) and Volunteer qualifications. Once parents have accessed and obtained qualifications through the accredited route, they are

encouraged to enter into further education via the local college. The majority of the accredited courses are funded directly by Sure Start.

a) Paediatric First Aid

To support the Improving Health and Ability to Learn objectives of Sure Start an accredited training programme was designed to promote awareness of symptoms and causes of childhood illness. This enhanced awareness aims to empower parents to seek medical intervention before emergency admissions become necessary. This programme also enables parents to obtain a First Aid certificate. From the Activity Proposal Overview, the intended outcomes for parents were identified as:-

Short-Term Goal Be able to deal with emergencies in the home

Medium-Term Goal To obtain emergency first aid certificate

Long-Term Goal Progress to advanced qualifications, use certificate to gain employment.

This course consisted of four sessions, and was run over November – December 2004. A further course is due to start in September, 2005 and due to the high volume of parents requesting this course, it is envisaged that this course will run consecutively during term-time.

There was excellent attendance for the first course, with all five parents who started the course attending all four sessions.

b) Basic Food Hygiene

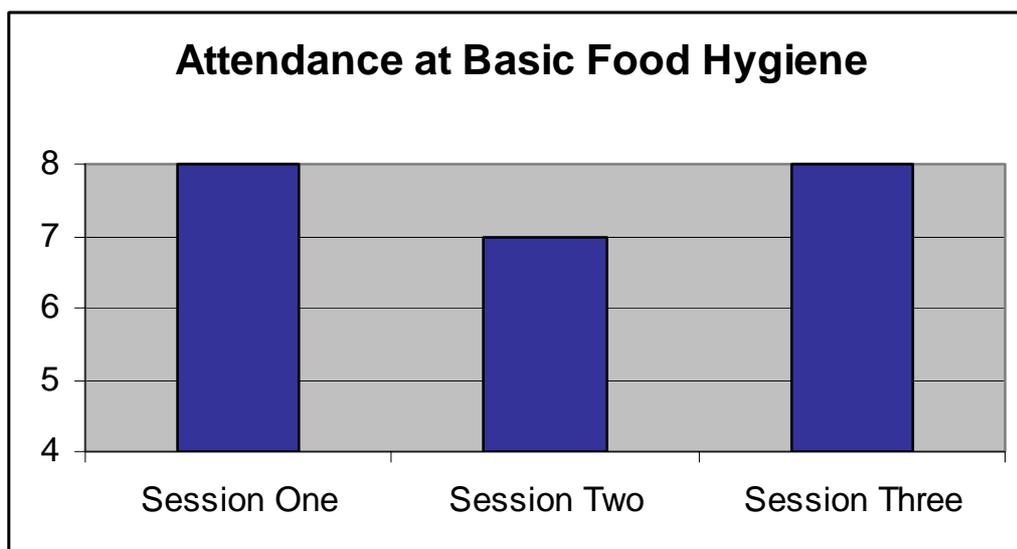
As identified from the Activity Proposal Overview, the Basic Food Hygiene course supports the themed objectives of Improving Health as well as the Ability to Learn. This training is designed to reduce childhood illness, through raising parents' understanding of the storage and preparation of food. This course was also viewed as an important vehicle through which employment opportunities could be sought, e.g. kitchen / domestic assistants. The overall goals of this course are:-

Short-Term Goal Improve food hygiene in the home

Medium-Term Goal Obtain Elementary Food Hygiene Certificates

Long-Term Goal Progress to advanced qualification /career opportunities.

This initial training programme consisted of three sessions, and ran during September 2004 (see below for attendance data).



Analysis of attendance rates, revealed excellent perseverance by the parents with only one service user missing the second session. A further Basic Food Hygiene course is also running over June/July 2005.

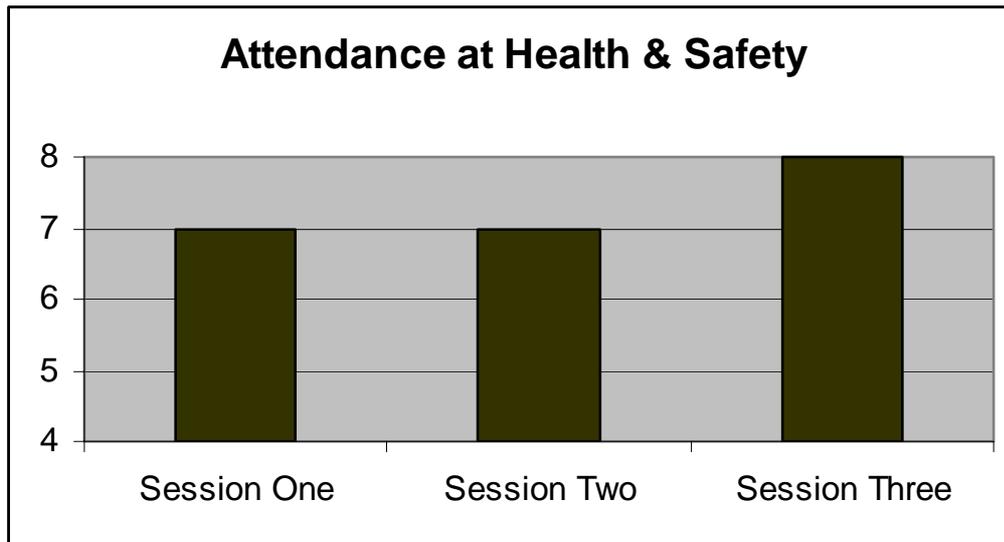
c) Health and Safety

A three-week accredited health and safety course is available for parents, covering all the basic principles of how to keep families safe, e.g. making parents aware of risk factors, and how to avoid them. Again, this is perceived as an important building block not only to impart essential information in line with Sure Start objectives under Improving Health and Ability to Learn, but also to encourage parents to pursue further accreditation. The intended outcomes are:-

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <i>Short-Term Goal</i> | Improve safety in the home |
| <i>Medium-Term Goal</i> | Obtain elementary Health and Safety Certificate |
| <i>Long-Term Goal</i> | Career opportunities |

Analysis of the signing-in sheets from the course which ran during November 2004 reveals a total of eight parents attending the course, two of which missed just one of the three sessions (see below).

Plans are underway to run this course later in the year.



d) IT

As identified previously, there are two accredited IT programmes offered to parents once they have attended the basic course through the Leisure Learning route. These courses provide an Intermediate and Advanced IT accredited qualification (though the accredited course is only due to be introduced later on in the year). The first formal Intermediate Course was offered through Sure Start in June/July, 2005.

Observation

The observation of an Intermediate IT session took place in the IT training suite at the Sure Start building on 17th June 2005. The crèche facilities for the course were provided at the Church hall (situated around the corner). The session took participants through the use of hot keys (CTRL +*). Each participant used a PC and practiced each task, until they were familiar with what functions keys performed. Participants each received a copy of the sheet outlining the key functions and were asked to practice these outside of the class if possible.

The facilitator was able to provide individual support where needed, and was able to lead the group through the various exercises. When participants were unsure of the next step they were advised on what keys to use, and what this action would do.

At the end of the session, the tutor outlined the next stage of IT training, i.e. CLAIT and ECDL. The majority of participants expressed an interest in undertaking further training, mainly seeing it as a new challenge and an opportunity to undertake accredited training which would be useful for them in both home life and in their work/planned work.

Observations saw evidence of building confidence and skill in parents - participants were pleased with their own progress and abilities, which was always validated and acknowledged by the tutor.

Evaluation

After the observation of the Intermediate IT session, the research team undertook short interviews with the participants. These interviews were designed to find out the potential

benefits of attendance and satisfaction with the staff as well as the programme itself. They also aimed to identify recommendations for future courses. Five questionnaires were completed, the findings are summarised below:

i) *Benefits of Attendance*

The perceived benefits of attendance specifically relate to the ability to use computers, as well as the social aspects of the training. Examples of the comments received are: -

‘Meeting new people and learning new things’

‘Learning how to use a computer’

ii) *Satisfaction with Staff and Programme*

All parents expressed high satisfaction towards the staff on the course and well as the IT programme itself. Parents said that the most enjoyable aspects of attendance related to the learning opportunities, as well as how the course was delivered. Examples of comments received by the parents are: -

‘Learning new things’

‘Made it easy to understand / not complicated’

iii) *Improvements*

Only one of the parents requested an improvement to the course and this related to additional materials - ‘more handouts’.

Overall it appears that the perceived benefits of attendance directly relate to the parents’ desire to learn. Parents are highly satisfied with all pertinent aspects of the course and positivity was highlighted by the fact that only minimal improvements are suggested.

e) Volunteer Opportunities

Access All Areas

As identified within the course leaflet, this training has been developed in partnership with Preston Sure Start for local parents and volunteers who are interested in being involved in their community. The course has been developed to encourage local people back into employment, education or simply to gain more experience in community volunteering.

There are three key areas addressed during the course: -

- Community Development and issues that affect our communities
- Personal Development
- Progression Skills

This course consists of a 10-week programme, which covers the following issues: -

1. Induction
2. What is a Community
3. Domestic Abuse
4. Alcohol and Drugs Awareness
5. Communication Skills / Conflict Management / Equal Opportunities
6. Disability Awareness
7. Job Applications
8. Interview Skills and Techniques

9. Presentation Skills / Course Evaluation
10. Progression Routes and Presentation

The course is endorsed to NVQ level I or II through the Open College North West, with all attendees having to complete and submit a portfolio for accreditation.

At present this training is 'bought in', however, to ensure cost effectiveness and continuity of these opportunities, two of the Community Support Workers are due to access a 'train the trainers' course to enable Sure Start to run the training in-house.

To date Sure Start TAB has provided two courses. Six parents completed the first course, and whilst the second course had not finished at the time of the interview, 10 parents are currently accessing this training programme. It was identified that the first course was not effectively publicised so parents did not really understand what the programme was about. Since the first course was finished however, there has been considerable interest in this training through parent recommendations, so it is anticipated that there will be an increase in numbers of service users obtaining Volunteer qualifications in the future. In addition, whilst the majority of parents who have completed the training achieved NVQ Level I accreditation, it is anticipated that additional support and encouragement will be provided for parents to enable them to achieve NVQ Level II within future courses (supporting the Sure Start objectives).

From the Sure Start TAB perspective Access All Areas enhances voluntary work already being undertaken, as well as offering opportunities to new parents who want to get involved. This programme raises the awareness, empathy and understanding of the disadvantages and problems faced within communities, such as disability, equal opportunities, domestic violence, substance abuse, etc. However, a significant facet of the programme is that it contains a 'back to work focus' through which parents have opportunities to put together their own personal profiles, producing CVs, completing applications, developing presentation skills, etc. The final session consists of a presentation day at which participants are awarded a certificate. This session also used to look at areas of work they are interested in undertaking within the community, career aspirations, etc.

Befriending Service

Sure Start TAB are in the process of developing a Befriending Service. This is where members of the community encourage other residents to get involved within Sure Start, acting as an advocate and mentor to support parents. This process is viewed as operating on a cyclical basis of empowering parents who in turn will empower others, supporting community cohesion, raising opportunities for life success, etc.

This Befriending service is still in its early stages as it is recognised that supplementary advice and guidance, additional to the Access all Areas training, is required prior to volunteers working with individual parents, e.g. relating to conflict management. Additional training needs for Befriending volunteers is also now being provided through the Volunteers Induction Training for all volunteers, e.g. health and safety, child protection and confidentiality.

Parents' Forum

Sure Start TAB has an established Parents' Forum Group for which a formal constitution (including aims, objectives, membership, duties, etc) has been constructed. The aims of the Parents' Forum are:

- 1) To provide a voice for the parents and carers of the Talbot and Brunswick area on community issues, seek to improve community spirits, increase community participation and work in partnership with agencies for the benefit of the area.
- 2) To represent the Parents and carers on the Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick partnership.
- 3) To work in partnership with the Sure Start team to bring about positive change in people, community, local services and policies and to improve the quality of family and community life.

A number of consultation groups have been formed through the Parents Forum, their advice and participation is sought on a range of Sure Start issues/activities/events, etc. For example, a Consultation Group was formed to address the design of the new building and courtyard area (choosing colours, furniture, etc) as well as planning and coordinating a Centenary Day Event. The Parents' Forum is viewed as a highly proactive and valued part of Sure Start. Since becoming operational in August 2003 they have organised a number of social events, parties (Leap Year Party, Halloween Party, etc), Fundraising Events, etc. This group have also applied for and acquired their own funding from a range of sources, e.g. Local Area Network Fund monies obtained for toys for the Mother's and Toddlers Group, Community Chest funding for courtyard furniture, Children in Need funding for trips, etc.

All Parent Forum members reside within the TAB geographical boundaries, and whilst membership is viewed to be fairly fluid, there are approximately 18 current members. Formal systems are also in place regarding the appointment of main post holders, e.g. Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. It is through these methods that Sure Start view the sustainability of their services, with members of the community working in partnership to deliver and facilitate local services. The Parents Forum hold meetings twice a month, one operates as the formal meeting for which minutes are taken. The second meeting operates as a Working Group through which the Consultation exercises are planned and coordinated. Training opportunities for the Parents Forum are also identified and accessed as appropriate, e.g. Treasurer attended a bid writing course to support her role of managing the budget and accessing funding through Council for Voluntary Services.

Parents Forum Away Days are held once a year to focus on the role of the Parents Forum and its relationship to Sure Start and the partnership (as well as the associated objectives of each). The second Away Day was held on 9th June, 2005. This event contained a session concerning the development of the new Health Village (co-located within Sure Start building) to ensure that all Parent members were aware of Sure Start's wider developments. A Community Action Pack was also presented and discussed in the group (this document outlined how to set up and maintain a community development group). This presentation focused the group's attention on what they felt the Forum was achieving, as well as areas that required development. Through this session it was identified by the members that more attention towards 'action planning' was warranted,

and additional support has been organised to develop these activities. In the afternoon, a pampering session was organised consisting of an Indian Head Massage, this activity provided an opportunity 'to give something back to the parents'. These events overall are viewed by Sure Start as an important consultative exercise to gain feedback from the parents as well as to encourage focus within their activities.

Evaluations of this event were collated via Sure Start. Questionnaires asked parents to rate their satisfaction on the facilities provided, content and speakers of the sessions. Participants were also asked to identify whether the aims of the Away Day were met in terms of increasing their knowledge and understanding of volunteer activities, and whether they will continue to perform volunteering duties for Sure Start. Evaluation of five questionnaires completed at the Away Day on 9th June 2005 revealed: -

a) **Facilities**

All parents were positive concerning the venue, catering and child-care facilities provided, with the majority of responses rating these facilities as excellent.

b) **Sessions**

Parents rated the key speakers as well as the morning and afternoon sessions as excellent in the majority of occasions (the remaining comments rating these as either good or very good).

c) **Knowledge**

From the input delivered on the day, parents felt that they're more knowledgeable about: -

- i) Role of Sure Start in the community: 'better knowledge of the Health Village project'; 'understanding of parents forum';
- ii) Role of volunteers within the community: 'now know what opportunities are available'; it has made me want to volunteer more'

iv) When parents were asked whether they felt that the Parents Forum Away Day helps to strengthen families and communities, all participants replied in the affirmative. Comments included:

'Yes – provides a place for us all to discuss ideas'

'It makes you more aware of the community and your role'

'Yes, brings parents together'

v) All parents stated that they would like to continue volunteering for Sure Start in the future.

Overall these evaluations have revealed highly positive feedback towards all aspects of the Away Day, this event is seen as strengthening parents' awareness of the community issues, as well as their enthusiasm with volunteering.

A member of the Research Team also attended the Away Day to obtain additional evaluations from the group. Questionnaires were designed to measure issues such as the reasons as to why parents wanted to undertake volunteering activities, training opportunities provided and satisfaction with support provided. Analysis of nine questionnaires completed revealed:-

i) **Personal Demographic Information**

All parents completing the questionnaires were female, five were married or living with a partner, the remaining four were single. All volunteers have children who meet the Sure Start inclusion criteria. Three of the volunteers are currently in paid employment, though all of them stated that they had worked in the past.

ii) **Volunteering Experience**

All the parents who completed the questionnaires had been undertaking volunteer duties for a fairly substantial period of time (3 months to 24 months). Six had been engaged for at least a year. The average length of voluntary experience amongst the parents was calculated at 15 months.

The reasons expressed as to why parents wanted to become a volunteer, reflected altruistic motives, such as helping others and wanting to give something back into their communities. With additional reasons identified as learning new skills and social opportunities. Comments included:

- 'enjoy meeting others and helping people'
- 'to help out in my community'
- 'wanted to have a say in my kids future and help in the community'

The volunteers attending the Away Day are involved in a wide range of services/activities through Sure Start, these include:

- Allotment Club
- Tiddlers and Tiddlywinks / Playgroup
- Fundraising Events
- Open Days

iii) **Training**

All parents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the training opportunities provided. Learning and development programmes accessed through Sure Start were listed as follows:

DIY	2
Health and Safety	5
Speakeasy	5
Access all Areas	3
Food Hygiene	1
Basic IT	4
Intermediate IT	1
Healthy Cooking	2
Food Hygiene	1
First Aid	3
Simply the Breast	1

Three of the parents suggested potential improvements for the training courses all of which related to additional resources concerning availability of crèche places and length of time spent addressing particular issues. Comments included:

- 'some courses could be longer - drug and alcohol awareness in Access All Areas'
- 'open to more people, more course places and more crèche places'
- 'some courses could be longer'

However, one parent said, 'I don't think they should be improved, they are fine the way they are at the moment'

iv) **Benefits of Attendance**

The perceived benefits of these volunteer opportunities reflected personal and social developments, particularly with regard to increasing self confidence and helping parents make a transition back into paid employment. Comments included:

- 'I am more outgoing and confident'
- 'I find it rewarding'
- 'Gained a lot of confidence and many friends'
- 'Confidence has grown through my volunteer work and has prepared me for going back to work'
- 'made new friends'

Two of the parents said that they are actively seeking paid employment at the present time.

When asked whether they had any concerns about their roles, all parents apart from one replied no. The only concern of this parent was that, due currently work obligations, she was unable to undertake as many volunteer duties as she would have liked - 'find it hard to get involved as I am back at work'. All of the parents stated that they were very satisfied with the support received by Sure Start to undertake their volunteer activities.

v) **Improvements to Sure Start activities**

The only improvements requested by the volunteers related to more crèche spaces being available in order to enable more parents to attend.

Conclusion: These evaluations have revealed some excellent feedback in terms of how parents view the volunteer opportunities. A large number of these parents have been engaged in a voluntary capacity through the Forum for a considerable length of time, and they are highly satisfied with the training and support provided. The benefits of attendance demonstrate success through the perceptions of increased confidence as well as preparing parents to obtain paid employment. It is significant that all the parents completing the evaluations were females, which raises the possibility that Sure Start needs to target more males for volunteer opportunities. Whilst there are resource implications, the only improvements suggested relate to enhancing access through the provision of child-care.

Volunteer Activities

Discussions revealed excellent utilisation of parent 'volunteers' across Sure Start activities, not all of whom have accessed the Access All Areas training programme. The roles of these volunteers include running an Allotment Club, providing administrative and catering services, supporting various activities (e.g. Centenary Day) and co-facilitating programmes (e.g. Speakeasy Programme).

There are two tiers to the voluntary support provision within Sure Start TAB. Firstly there are volunteers who are parents residing within the geographical remit and who want to get involved with the activities. The other tier consists of people who are not necessarily living within the TAB area who may be referred through the Council for Voluntary Services and Volunteering Centre, or parents who used to live in the geographical area who have subsequently moved on. These volunteers may be older people, may not have children, have been out of work for periods of time, students on placement (health / child-care), or parents who do not want to lose relationships with Sure Start.

In order to formally support the volunteering opportunities, Sure Start TAB have very recently introduced a prescribed registration system. This system consists of parents completing a Volunteer application form, and the take-up of two nominated references. All applicants are also subject to Criminal Records Bureau clearance to ensure their suitability in working with vulnerable groups. Once all the documentation processes are completed, a one to one interview is organised to enable Sure Start to understand what experience the volunteers would like to gain. Defined volunteer sessions are also agreed during this meeting, formulating commitment from Sure Start as well as the volunteer. When volunteers are registered they are asked to sign a Confidentiality Policy, and Sure Start are now offering a two day Induction training programme covering issues such as child protection, confidentiality, equal opportunities, what is Sure Start and health and safety. A trial session is also organised at the Sure Start's mother and toddler playgroup for observational assessment of their potential. Once accepted as a Sure Start Volunteer, volunteers are furnished with a Volunteers' Handbook containing core procedures (e.g. child protection, transportation of young people, health/safety and security, etc) as well as a Code of Conduct which all volunteers are asked to sign (see below). Regular reviews with volunteers are carried out at regular intervals, the first review taking place after the first month, then after 3 months, 6 months, 9 months and 12 months.

The perceived benefits of this system are that the formalised volunteer support for the activities/services can then be built into staff ratios, promoting the delivery and sustainability of Sure Start. These opportunities are also reciprocal in nature, and through this experience volunteers will be able to achieve qualifications (i.e. work-placement opportunities supporting current qualifications) and can provide an important reference for those who are seeking employment (i.e. for those who may have been out of employment for a considerable period of time).

All registered volunteers are allowed to access Sure Start training opportunities, childcare and associated benefits (e.g. attendance on Summer trips) as part of their volunteer development. With training and learning developments being identified and targeted through their volunteer role, e.g. those providing admin would be encouraged to undertake IT training, those working in the kitchen would be encouraged to undertake a Food Hygiene course, etc. Whilst these added benefits are available for all registered volunteers, availability of these opportunities for those who do not meet the Sure Start criteria (e.g. do not reside within geographical area and/or do not have a child under 5) will only be possible if there are available places. Parents who meet the criteria for access to Sure Start always take priority access.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR VOLUNTEERS

Sure Start reserves the right to terminate a placement when it considers that it may be having a negative impact on the health, learning, social or emotional development of the volunteer and / or their family or the Community of Talbot and Brunswick, and / or when a volunteer is given a final written warning.

Volunteers will be required to comply with management and to conform to the organisation's rules at all times. If these rules are disregarded or the volunteer behaves inappropriately, redress may be sought through the discipline procedure.

The following are some of the rules that apply to volunteers:

- There should be proper and authorised use of Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick's equipment, time and property.
- Volunteers should satisfactorily perform any reasonable request appertaining to their function as agreed with their Volunteer Support Worker
- All safety rules should be adhered to at all times
- Safety equipment should be used at all appropriate times
- Volunteers' conduct, whilst volunteering for Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick, should be of an acceptable moral standard
- The taking of or being under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol whilst volunteering is not permitted
- Threatening or violent behaviour or language towards another volunteer, employee, young person, family or other associated with the project is not permitted
- Behaviour or actions which would in any way jeopardise the safety or well being of other volunteers, employees, young people, families or other associated with Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick is not permitted
- Smoking in non-smoking areas is not permitted
- Making of long or numerous private telephone calls is not permitted
- Volunteers must not use behaviour, language, or non-verbal language that is discriminatory
- Unnecessary disclosure of confidential information concerning the work of the Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick, volunteers or employees is not permitted. Volunteers must adhere to the policy on confidentiality
- Harassment of individuals, whether sexual, racial or otherwise is not permitted
- Bullying of individuals, in any form, is not permitted
- Removal of Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick's property from the premises without permission is not permitted
- Entering into a supportive relationship with any family in the Talbot and Brunswick area on behalf of Sure Start shall only be done with the approval of the Community Support Coordinator and where necessary adequate training has been undertaken

I hereby agree to a minimum of 12 months with Sure Start Talbot and Brunswick (including the time taken to process CRB, referees and undertake induction training)

Should I need to terminate my placement before this time I agree to give one month verbal notice.

Signed

Volunteer _____ Date _____

Volunteer Support Worker _____ Date _____

Community Support Coordinator _____ Date _____

The advertisement and recruitment of Volunteers is carried out through conventional methods as discussed within the previous two case studies, and Open Evenings are also held to make local residents aware of these opportunities (refer to poster below).

Outlines of the volunteer positions are also produced for potential volunteers, as depicted below.

Garden Assistant

When **Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs or Friday day time.**

Area of Interest **Children, families**

Type of work
Community, practical, DIY

Recruitment method
Application Form, Informal Discussion, police check, reference, trial.

Description
General garden duties, digging flower beds, planting. Allotment development

Skills and Qualifications	
Age / Gender restrictions	18 + No gender restrictions
Disabled Access	Yes
Equal Opportunities Policy	Yes
Expenses	Travel
Insurance Cover	Yes
Police Check required	Enhanced
Policy on taking on ex offenders	At the discretion of volunteer co-ordinator
Policy on taking on ex-drug users and those in rehabilitation	At the discretion of volunteer co-ordinator
References required	Yes
Training available	Yes

Overall Observations of Attendance Data for Training Opportunities

From a research perspective, what has been interesting to note is that parents appear to be more motivated to attend and complete the accredited courses when compared to the Leisure Learning programmes. However, as it is viewed that the vocational courses are available primarily to promote access to learning, it may well be that, by the time parents have the confidence and motivation to obtain qualifications, they are ready to succeed. In addition, the actual format and delivery of the sessions may well enforce more accountability for parents who sign up to the courses to achieve the qualification.

Overall some 52 parents have attended the programmes evaluated above, of whom only seven were men. Future courses may well therefore benefit from targeting more men to access these training opportunities.

3.4 Advertisement of Services

The advertising of all the Employment, Benefits and Training activities/services is promoted through a variety of methods. Firstly posters are produced (see examples of posters below), which are distributed within the Sure Start offices and venues. Forms are also posted out to parents asking them to identify from a check list the types of training they might be interested in. These forms are returned direct to the Sure Start Offices, or via the Community Support Workers. Leaflets advertising these services are also included in all new registration packs for parents, and details included within the Sure Start timetables (which are posted to all residents within TAB with at least one child under the age of 5). Another very important for advertising is through the Sure Start Team itself. It is seen as invaluable that all the Community Support Workers promote and support each other's activities. Potential attendee details are forwarded either on a

verbal basis to Jaclyn, or via a Sure Start internal referral form, documenting the information/courses the parents are interested in attending.

A further significant method through which these services are offered is via the Tiddlers and Tiddlywinks group, which runs twice a week. As this is one of the best-attended activities provided by Sure Start, Jaclyn tries to ensure she attends on a regular basis to talk to parents, and encourage their access on to the courses, drop-in sessions, etc.

Forms advertising the training courses are also forwarded to parents on a regular basis. This documentation asks them to indicate which learning/development opportunities they would be interested in attending. As the training courses are offered on a term basis, once they have commenced, Jaclyn starts to focus on organising future programmes, organising venues, phoning up parents to confirm their attendance, sending out letters of confirmation, etc.

3.5 Issues with Training Opportunities

Limitations of Training Opportunities

There are limitations concerning training opportunities, which mainly relate to what courses the college can provide. Whilst several parents may request programmes, it is not always possible to accommodate their needs. It is anticipated, however, that further consultation with service users and college networks will lead to additional and appropriate training sessions being introduced. A further restriction is that IT courses are limited to 12 participants based on the number of computers available. Again, future developments should consist of additional courses being provided to ensure 'access for all'.

Promoting Access

A significant development, which is due to start to encourage parents attaining accredited qualifications, is being introduced via the local College. This scheme will operate such, that if a parent accesses a minimum of 15 hours Leisure Learning training, a Basic Skills Assessment course is undertaken and parents will have free access to attend any full-time or part-time course run through the College. Additional funding will also be provided to parents to support their transportation as well as childcare.

Whilst it is recommended that training courses should start with ten people, it is apparent from analysis of the attendance data, that none of the courses meet this basic requirement, with a number of the courses engaging as few as six parents from the offset. Due to the disadvantaged nature of this geographical area with these wards reflecting some of the highest rates of transience compared to national statistics, the Sure Start Team recognise that parents start to attend courses, and then move out of their geographical remit. In addition, due to the highly chaotic nature of a number of families residing within these Town Centre wards, engagement at any level is viewed as a success to the team. Therefore, Sure Start appreciate that low numbers of parents accessing training is reflective of the nature of the community, and this is built into their capacity of developing training.

Crèche Facilities

One of the main limitations to providing training relates to the crèche. It is a fundamental necessity that the numbers of young people requiring this service is confirmed prior to training initiation, to ensure the ratios of workers to children meets the statutory legislation. Through discussion with the Team Leader, there are to be changes in the provision of this service. For two years Sure Start TAB was operating from satellite bases until their new build was completed. This has meant that crèche provision has been provided for all parents who have requested the service. It is appreciated that Sure Start need to consider mainstreaming and enhancing the efficiency of their provision, thus a new protocol is being introduced to ensure that crèche availability is prioritised by need and not convenience. Previously crèche workers have been recruited on a sessional basis to provide the necessary childcare, in future Sure Start are recruiting four crèche workers, two of whom will provide crèche facilities within the Sure Start building, and two will operate as outreach workers, travelling to the training venues to provide services onsite. Therefore, for future courses, any parents wishing to sign up for training opportunities will be encouraged to utilise existing support networks to provide their childcare, e.g. parents, partners, etc. Sure Start recognise the need to be more cost effective within their services, as well as giving the right message to parents to pursue their own support networks, as opposed to an over reliance on what is perceived as a 'bottomless pit' of provision.

Overuse of Leisure Learning

A key issue, which has been identified, relates to the overuse of the Leisure Learning courses. These programmes are designed to move people on to access formal qualifications and subsequently encourage parents into work. However, it has been recognised that there is a tendency for parents to keep accessing vocational courses, in order to have a break from their children, and with no desire of using this training to achieve certified qualifications. In addition, feedback from attendance data has revealed that some parents keep starting courses and not completing them. Sure Start will, in future, restrict the use of these services for people who are committed to attend, and who are ultimately pursuing an intended goal.

Sure Start therefore appreciate that there is a need to make sure that these opportunities are targeted at the appropriate people and are currently in the process of analysing this overuse through the Soft smart Sure Start database. More formal processes are planned to help Sure Start as well as the parents understand what they ultimately want to achieve, thus ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of these learning opportunities.

Step into Learning Programme

The education worker advised that this new course commencing in August 2005 will be rolled out to all Sure Start staff to help them identify the basic skill and learning needs of parents they are working with, this will also ensure that parents are appropriately signposted into relevant support and available courses.

3.6 Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, a number of key strengths and recommendations have been identified through this varied and targeted work: -

Key Strengths

- Early identification and perusal of mainstream opportunities was demonstrated in the Organic Gardening Course. This method should be documented and replicated for other courses to make the longer-term sustainability of Community Training programmes possible.
- There is an established range of entry points for parents to access training and development opportunities.
- Good interagency approach and understanding of shared objectives was illustrated by the level and type of networking established through the lead Community Support Worker.
- Although the courses did not engage the minimum number of participants normally required, this demonstrates that the programmes have been willing to meet the needs of the local community, which are chaotic and difficult to engage.
- Courses encourage learning opportunities for a broad range of both life and vocational skills clearly welcomed by participants. This contributes to enhancing the social capital of local people and meets the aims of the programmes community -ed ethos.
- Courses are delivered at times convenient to parents and provision of crèche facilities is clearly much needed to ensure attendance and participation.
- There is excellent utilisation of volunteer opportunities to support the sustainability of Sure Start.

Key Recommendations

- Consider introducing a sign up session at the start of each term where parents can find out details about the commitment to and length of the course as well as content. This will assist them in making informed choices about their own learning styles and abilities, and engagement with relevant and appropriate training opportunities in the future. Fun taster sessions should be provided prior to course initiation to ensure commitment and suitability.
- Introduce monitoring systems to follow-up non-attendance.
- Continue to re-enforce the importance of attendance, particularly for those parents who access accredited courses.
- Ensure monitoring and evaluation systems are routinely addressed across the programmes, including introducing wider evaluation measures, which systemically identify impact, capturing data, which illustrates the real benefits of attendance.

- Review of crèche provision should ensure cost effectiveness whilst not deterring parents from access to training.

SECTION 4: Overall Conclusion to Case Studies

These case studies have provided useful insights into targeted, innovative and needs-led service delivery. The key strengths to be highlighted are the close formation of multi-agency networks, an inclusive agenda which recognises at all levels the impact of poverty, exclusion and marginalisation of the client group and a community based approach which is clearly facilitating the development of greater capacity and skill amongst local people.

Recommendations have been identified throughout all areas, though a key issue reflects a need for consistency in monitoring attendance and evaluation of the services to ensure impact is identified and evidenced.

SECTION 5: Supplementary section showing progress in meeting health- related targets

5.1 Unwell child admissions 2002 to 2005

The chart showing the number of 0 to 3 year old children in the TAB area admitted to hospital as “unwell” shows a clear reduction in numbers admitted over this time period for children aged 2 and 3 and some reduction for ages 1 and under. For children aged 3, there is a marked 57% reduction in the number of cases over the three-year time period. For children aged 2, the reduction is 67%, for children aged 1, the reduction is 11% and for children under one, the reduction is just 3%. Interestingly, there was a considerable increase in the number of admissions in 2003-2004 compared to 2002 – 2003 for the under ones (there is also a slight increase this period for 3 year olds) – with cases rising from 64 to 89, but falling down again in 2004-2005 to 62. These figures are extremely positive with regard to progress in Sure Start key target areas.

5.2 Severe accident admissions 2002 to 2005

The chart showing the number of 0 to 3 year old children in the TAB area admitted to hospital as a result of “severe accident” is shown in the second chart below. For the under one year olds, there is a clear and steady reduction in the number of admissions over the three years from 9 cases to 6 – a reduction of 33%. The pattern for one-year olds shows an increase from 8 to 11 cases from 02/03 to 03/04, but this then falls to show an overall reduction of 37.5% from 02/03 to 04/05. The pattern for the two year-olds also shows a small rise in the middle year, but an overall reduction of 33% (6 cases to 4) across the 3 years. Similarly, the 3 year old data shows a rise from 5 to 6, 02/03 to 04/05, but then falls again to the original level of 5 cases in 04/05. Again, there is a positive move towards reducing admissions under this criterion for most age groups across the period shown.

5.3 Respiratory infection admissions 2002 - 2005

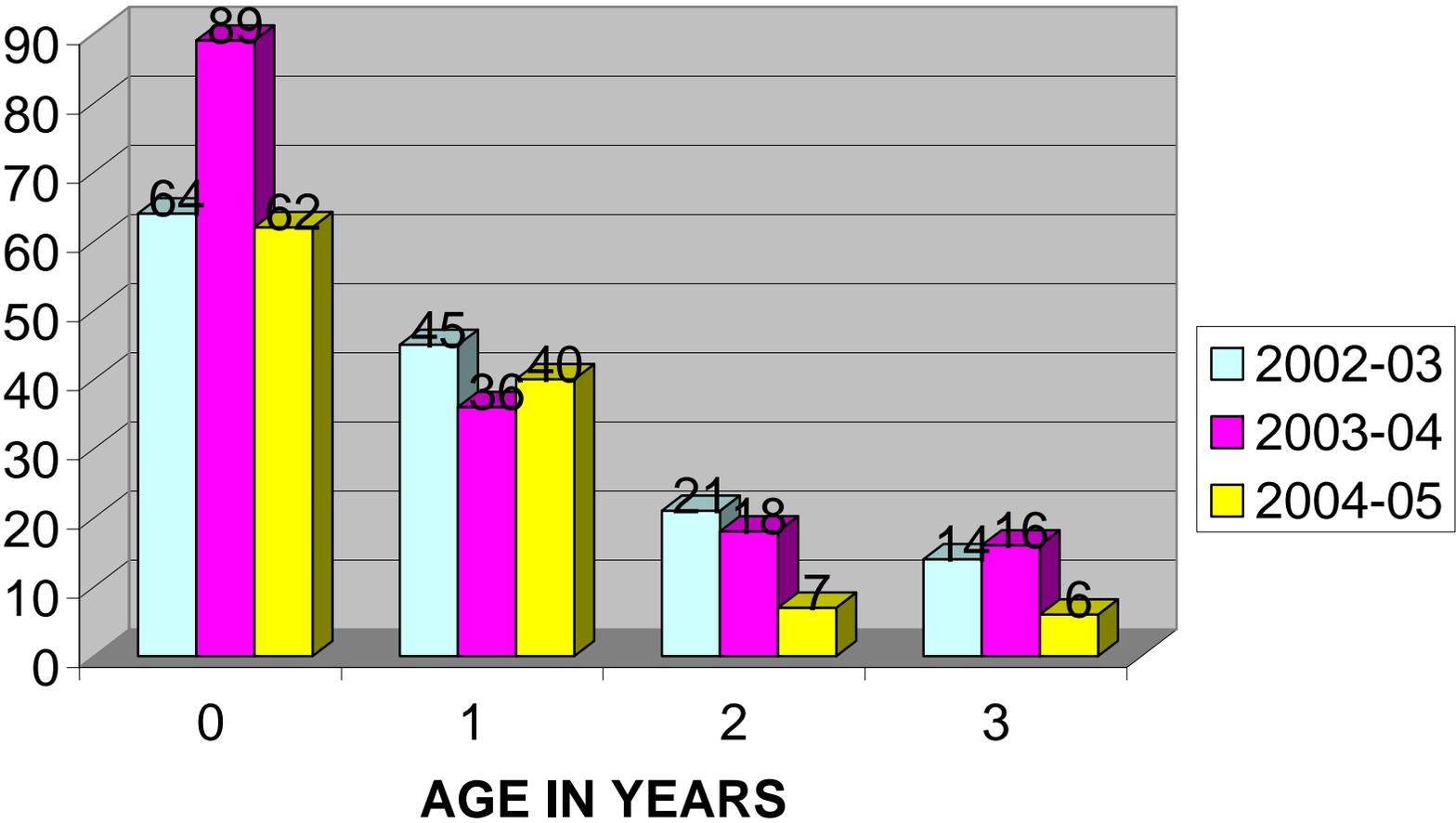
The chart showing the number of 0 to 3 year old children in the TAB area admitted to hospital as a result of “respiratory infection” shows a varied pattern across the three years with the number of cases increasing steadily for children under one (18, 35, 39) and for 3-year olds (6, 10, 11). The 1-year olds show an interim reduction, but then a final increase to levels higher than 02/03 (16, 8, 20) and the 2-year olds show an increase followed by an overall decrease in the final year (9, 20, 6). It is unclear why this pattern is so varied but it may reflect the virulence of respiratory infections in the population generally across this period of time.

5.4 Hospital admissions with gastroenteritis 2004 to 2005

The chart showing the number of 0 to 3 year old children in the TAB area admitted to hospital with gastroenteritis shows that most children admitted during this period (12) were aged one or under. Only three 2-year olds were admitted during this time and four 3-year olds. No comparative data across years is available at the present time.

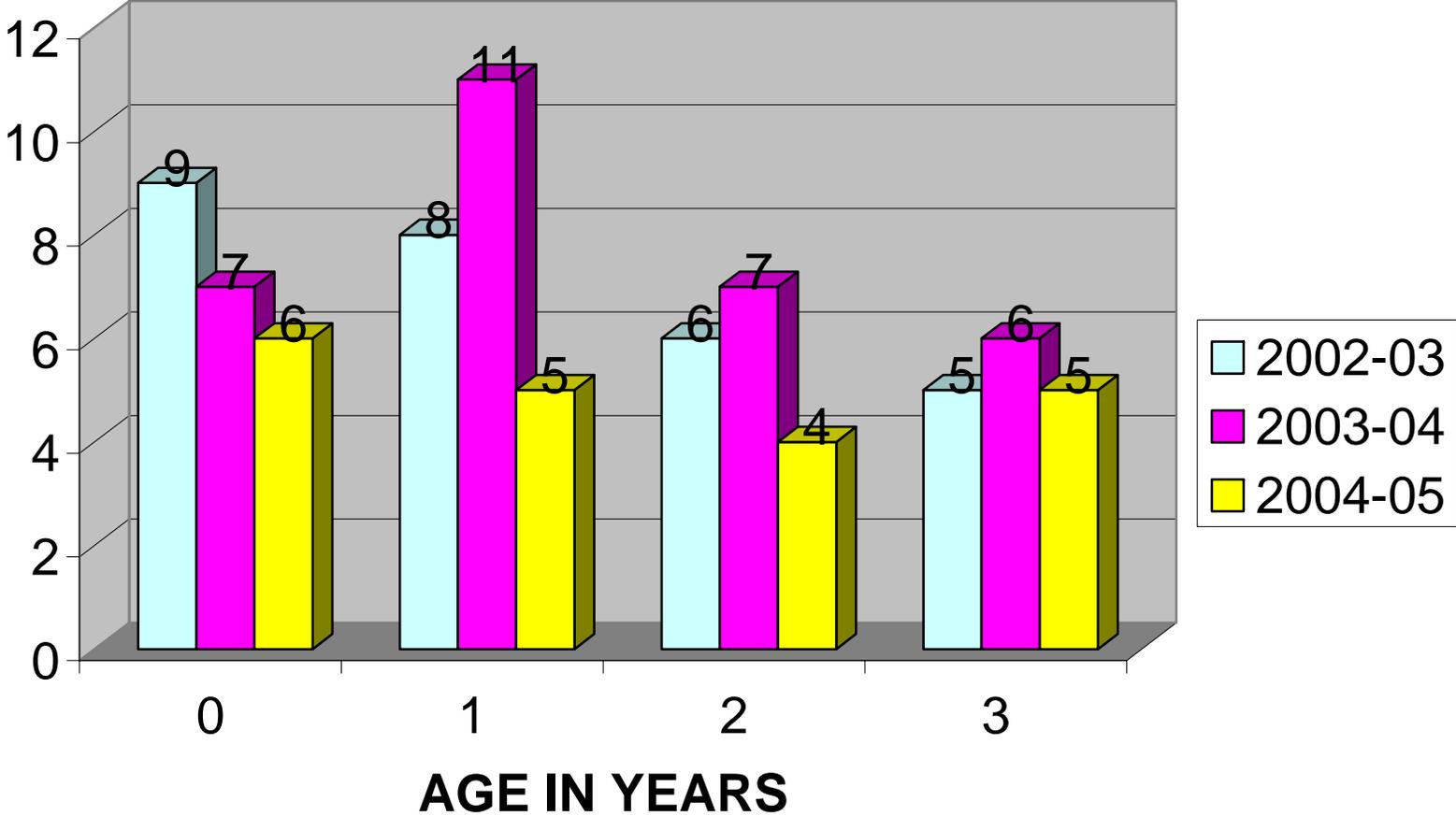
UNWELL CHILD ADMISSIONS 2002 TO 2005

**NUMBER OF
0 - 3 YEAR
OLDS**

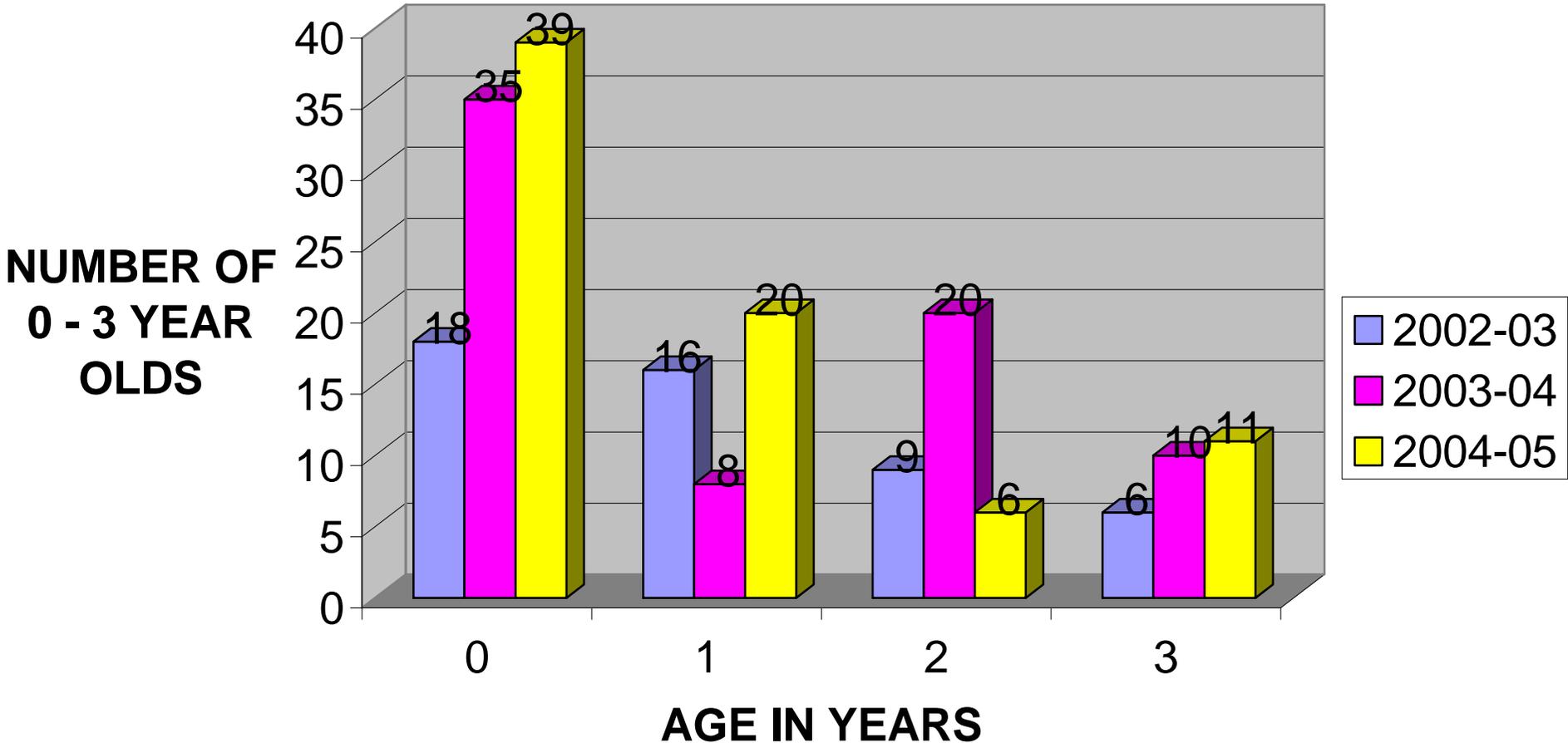


SEVERE ACCIDENT ADMISSIONS 2002 TO 2005

**NUMBER OF
0 - 3 YEAR
OLDS**



RESPIRATORY INFECTION ADMISSIONS 2002 TO 2005



2004 - 2005 ADMISSIONS WITH GASTROENTERITIS

