Multi-agency Working in Sure Start

Coventry South East

by

Sarah Dahl, Lucy Clarke

and Carol Aubrey

Address for correspondence:

Childhood Research Unit
Institute of Education
The University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL United Kingdom
Tel: 024 7652 4486
Fax: 024 7652 4177
Email: c.aubrey@warwick.ac.uk

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Summary

i) Overall survey results on multi-agency working for the four Coventry Sure Start Programmes

- A survey of multi-agency working in four Coventry Sure Start programmes was carried out.
- The aim was to identify key success factors in and key challenges to effective practice.
- In total, eighty-three questionnaires were returned from team members in the programmes, the Accountable Body (that is, the city Primary Care Trust), Lead Agency (in this case, the City Council) and the Partnership Boards, including parents.
- Both quantitative and qualitative analysis was carried out.
- Views concerning the influence of local authority structures and boundaries were mixed with rather more respondents feeling they facilitated than hindered multi-agency working and with a sizeable minority reporting that they had no influence.
- The majority of respondents thought that resources in the form of staffing arrangements and time investment in Sure Start programmes facilitated multi-agency working.
- The vast majority of respondents thought that individuals’ and Sure Start programme teams’ high expectations and priorities affected multi-agency working.
- Aims and objectives of local Sure Start programmes were regarded by the vast majority as facilitative of multi-agency working.
- Views concerning the effect of confidentiality and information-sharing strategies between the various agencies on multi-agency working were mixed, with rather more respondents thinking they facilitated than hindered such work and a minority feeling they had no influence.
- The vast majority of respondents felt that a common language across professional groups facilitated multi-agency working in Sure Start local programmes.
- Views regarding the challenge that budgets and financial arrangements posed to Sure Start multi-agency working were mixed in respect of the impact of conflict within or between agencies providing Sure Start staff, concern about general lack of programme funding and sustainability of services and the creation of more effective use of resources by the reduction of repetition and overlap.
- The majority of respondents felt that issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure Start concerned understanding of the roles of others, conflicts over areas of responsibility and the need to go beyond existing roles to work in new ways.
- Respondents were mixed in view and were less certain whether or not aims of specific agencies competed with local Sure Start programme aims as a result of different Government targets, differences in target groups and different emphases on preventative versus crisis intervention.
• The vast majority of respondents felt that non-financial resources such as the allocation of time, provision of staff and physical space in which to work together effectively, created a challenge to multi-agency working.

• The majority of respondents felt that poor communication within and between agencies involved with Sure Start created problems between those working at different levels within agencies, could lead to different availability of professionals from different agencies and undermined successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments.

• Respondents’ views on the effect of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice were mixed. The majority felt that multi-agency working did not disrupt existing agency cultures, values and ways of working but did feel that specific policy and practice differences hindered shared practice. The vast majority felt that different data management systems affected information sharing and did impact upon shared practice.

• In terms of management strategy, the vast majority felt that multi-agency working was strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level but were less sure whether management strategy drive was organised carefully in order to carry along the various participants from each agency. A majority did feel that the Sure Start management strategy encouraged like-minded individuals who sought new ways of working in order to meet shared goals and work across existing management structures.

• The vast majority believed that additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies would be helpful and shared an active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level. Views were mixed as to whether a ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ management approach to engaging with other agencies was desirable.

• The vast majority of respondents believed commitment and willingness of Sure Start team members to be involved in multi-agency work was sustained by an active desire to engage with other agencies at the management level and at the delivery level with an active desire to engage with other agencies by a ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ management approach.

• In terms of roles and responsibilities, the vast majority believed there was a need for a clear understanding of what was expected so that different agendas were not pursued. There was a need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations were realistic and a need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contributions.

• The majority believed that common Sure Start aims and objectives were being achieved by the programmes through the recognition of a need for common ground and like-minded people, for a real purpose to joint working and a needs-led approach that replaced agency-specific agendas.

• The vast majority of respondents felt that communications and information-sharing within the Sure Start local programmes had been supported by opportunities for dialogue and open communication between agencies, personal relationship building and procedures and systems of information dissemination.

• The majority felt that leadership or drive of individual Sure Start Programme Managers demonstrated clear strategic direction, showed tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress and could bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change.
• Respondents’ views were very mixed regarding the involvement of the right personnel from specific agencies on the Sure Start local programme, at the right level of responsibility to make the necessary decisions and activate the right services and with the right priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies.

ii) Specific survey results on multi-agency working for Sure Start Coventry South East programme

At the time of the survey, there were 35 partnership board members and 26 staff in total at SSCSE.

• As in the main survey, SSCSE participants were mixed in view concerning the influence of local authority structures and boundaries.

• As in the main survey, SSCSE participants thought that resources in the form of staffing arrangements and time investment in Sure Start programmes facilitated multi-agency working.

• As in the main survey, SSCSE participants thought that individuals’ and Sure Start programme teams’ high expectations and priorities affected multi-agency working. In fact, all SSCSE participants shared this view.

• As in the main survey, SSCSE participants regarded aims and objectives of local programmes as facilitative of multi-agency working.

• As in the main survey, views of SSCSE participants concerning the effect of confidentiality and information-sharing between the various agencies on multi-agency working were mixed.

• As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCSE participants felt that a common language across professional groups facilitated multi-agency working in Sure Start local programme.

• As in the main survey, views of SSCSE participants regarding the challenge that budgets and financial arrangements posed were mixed in respect of the impact of conflict within or between agencies providing Sure Start staff and sustainability of resources. A more positive view was held by respondents concerning general lack of programme funding though creating more effective use of resources (human and material) by reducing repetition and overlap was regarded as a concern by most participants.

• As in the main survey, SSCSE participants felt that issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure Start concerned understanding of the roles of others, conflicts over areas of responsibility and the need to go beyond existing roles to work in new ways.

• As in the main survey, SSCSE participants were mixed in view and were less certain whether or not aims of specific agencies competed with local Sure Start programme aims as a result of different Government targets, differences in target groups and different emphases on preventative versus crisis intervention.

• As in the main survey, SSCSE participants felt that non-financial resources such as the allocation of time, provision of staff and physical space in which to work together effectively, created a challenge to multi-agency working.
• As in the main survey, SSCSE participants felt that poor communication within and between agencies involved with Sure Start created problems between those working at different levels within agencies, could lead to different availability of professionals from different agencies and undermined successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments.

• As in the main survey, SSCSE participants’ views on the effect of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice were mixed. The majority did not feel that multi-agency working disrupted existing agency cultures, values and ways of working but did feel specific policy and practice differences hindered shared practice. The majority felt that different data management systems affected information sharing and did impact upon shared practice.

• As in the main survey, in terms of management strategy, the majority felt that multi-agency working was strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level. It encouraged like-minded individuals who sought new ways of working in order to meet shared goals and work across existing management structure. It was also felt that management drive was organised carefully in order to carry along the various participants from each agency.

• As in the main survey, the vast majority believed that additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies would be helpful and shared an active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level. Views were mixed as to whether a ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ management approach to engage with other agencies was desirable.

• As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCSE participants believed commitment and willingness of Sure Start team members to be involved in multi-agency work was sustained by an active desire to engage with other agencies at the management level, at the delivery level and an active desire to engage with other agencies by a ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ management approach.

• As in the main survey, in terms of roles and responsibilities, the vast majority believed that there was a need for a clear understanding of what was expected so that different agendas were not pursued. There was a need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations were realistic and a need for a mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contributions.

• As in the main survey, the majority of SSCSE participants believed that common Sure Start aims and objectives were being achieved by the programmes through the recognition of a need for common ground and like-minded people, for a real purpose to joint working and a needs-led approach that replaced agency-specific agendas.

• As in the main survey, the majority of SSCSE participants felt that communication and information-sharing within the Sure Start local programmes had been supported by opportunities for dialogue between agencies, personal relationship building together with procedures and systems of information dissemination.

• As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCSE participants felt that leadership or drive of individual Sure Start Programme Managers demonstrated
clear strategic direction, showed tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress and could bring together the Sure Start team in order to generate change.

- As in the main study, SSCSE respondents’ views were very mixed regarding the involvement of the right personnel from specific agencies on the Sure Start local programmes, at the right level of responsibility to make the necessary decisions and activate the right services, and with the right priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies.

iii) Interviews with representatives of the Leading Agencies

The second stage of the investigation attempted to investigate the key factors of success and the key challenges facing multi-agency working in the four Sure Start local programmes by probing, in more depth, issues identified in the survey. These areas were related to participants’ knowledge of the leading agencies, information regarding roles and responsibilities, knowledge of non-fiscal resources, issues relating to sharing information, data procedures and communication. Thirty-six in-depth, semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of team members, Partnership Board members, from each of the four programmes and representatives of the Accountable Body and Lead Agency.

- Participants commented on the role of Coventry City (CC) and the Primary Health Care Trust (PCT) as ensuring that the financial details outlined in the local programme’s plan were executed.
- A lack of capacity and, hence, a delay in prioritising support for Sure Start, at the strategic level within the PCT, was mentioned by both interviewees. This resulted in members of the finance team being employed on temporary contracts and in becoming involved in issues outside of their remit, such as legal and estate management issues.
- One interviewee described the effect of the CC on the local programme as one of supporting and advising Programme Managers. The effect of the PCT was described by both participants as having a less positive effect on the local programmes in terms of the time taken to make decisions.
- The impact on local programmes of having two leading agencies was also thought to have added complexity and, hence, challenge.
- Both interviewees felt that Sure Start goals complemented those of their parent agencies but acknowledged that ‘operational issues of one agency created particular challenges’.
- Both participants identified their priorities at a strategic and operational level as well as involvement in the Senior Sponsors Group.
- Both participants referred to the challenges posed by staff being employed by the PCT on temporary contracts.
- One participant acknowledged lack of office space as a challenge.
- Both participants mentioned challenges regarding information sharing between team members and the PCT.
- Both participants generally agreed that communicated was hindered by being centrally located and that improved IT networks were needed.
• Challenges posed by team members who were used to working in different ways were also mentioned.

• Regular meetings with the Partnership Board and Programme Managers were considered to be successful ways to ensure effective communication.

• In terms of leadership style, it was reported that there was a real willingness to share, to learn and to take the lead and a strong personal commitment by Programme Managers was shown.

• Challenges posed at the strategic level in the authority were identified and lack of leadership from Sure Start national office with regard to constantly changing policies was mentioned.

iv) Partnership Board Interviews
The four sample Board members interviewed represented the PCT, CC, an independent local charity and a parent.

• The role of the Senior Sponsor group, made up of Senior Managers of both the CC and PCT and Programme Managers was explained in terms of its management responsibility.

• Three participants identified that the PCT did not take on their role as Accountable Body adequately at the beginning and, indeed, any decision processes were much slower than they were with other agencies involved in the programme.

• Two interviewees believed that the existing structures in both the CC and PCT caused the Sure Start programme to be slow to develop.

• Three members considered that their role within the board to be one that facilitated communications between the CC and PCT. Moreover, the Partnership Board was thought to be becoming more effective with time.

• Views concerning the complementarity of roles and responsibilities of the parent agency were mixed. One view was that there was still ‘work to do’ so that all agencies were working to the same agenda.

• Three participants commented that although traditionally there had been more of an emphasis on intervention, agencies were keen to work in a more preventative way, as Sure Start was set up to do.

• All participants interviewed viewed their role as representing the various groups they belonged to, whether voluntary, statutory or parent.

• Several issues of staff recruitment were raised by participants. There was a lack of professionals in general, a problem in filling posts that were left, duplication of services offered and, anyway, staff who were appointed needed to have ‘that bit extra’ beyond what would be required for a mainstream post.

• The mainstreaming agenda and, therefore, the temporary nature of funding needed to be ‘taken on board’.

• Using multiple venues meant that the programme could reach the people concerned in their own communities.

• Using existing buildings meant Sure Start staff did not have to wait for new buildings to be completed.
• Awareness of the procedures that Sure Start team members used to gather, store and retrieve data related to Sure Start families was mixed within the group of participants interviewed.

• There had been some difficulty over the sharing of information between agencies and respecting confidentiality though there was a feeling that the condition was beginning to improve.

• Board members thought that communication within and between all parties, that is the team the Partnership Board and the agencies involved, was strong in this programme.

• At the same time, there were still challenges associated with gathering together a large diverse group at one time, date and place, for example, in ensuring that parents were helped to steer the development of the programme.

• The programme had adopted both formal and informal strategies for trying to gain contact with those deemed ‘hard-to-reach’. A new challenge was the influx of asylum-seekers and refugees.

• It was noted that a cross-programme forum had been established for all programmes to meet and discuss ways of engaging people within their areas but informal contact was thought probably to be the best way to engage with people who might not access the services independently.

v) Team Member Interviews

Five team members of differing levels of seniority and position were selected to be interviewed. The length of time that they had been involved in Sure Start varied. The newest team member interviewed had been employed for slightly less than one year, another had been there for eighteen months. One person had worked there for two years and the other two staff members were part of the original team and had worked there for just over three years.

• All participants were aware of the strategic lead taken by the leading agencies. It was also noted that the CC were heavily involved with setting up the project, for example, choosing the area that would become the original Sure Start South East. Regarding the role of the PCT, staff believed that their primary function was to deal with finance, being the Accountable Body for the project. They were also a supplier of staff, mostly related to fulfilling the health targets of the project, but were seen to take a less ‘hands on’ approach to the project than the CC.

• The CC and PCT were seen as imperative, in so far as without their involvement, the programme would not operate. Health- and education-based organisations were seen as complementary, meaning that families had access to a whole range of services in the same place. However, bureaucracy that surrounded both organisations was seen as a hindrance. Many issues highlighted were thought to be on their way to resolution. It was noted that there had already been improvements and that regular meetings were now scheduled between the CC, the PCT and Sure Start Programme Managers, in order to share information.

• All team members were aware of the Sure Start targets that they were working to. They felt that they were not expected to work to targets from the CC and PCT but were governed by the Sure Start targets.
Participants did not feel parent agency goals contradicted those of Sure Start. The Sure Start emphasis on prevention ‘to improve the community as a whole’ rather than intervention at a time of crisis, it was felt, was an area where there might be less agreement.

When asked about Sure Start in relation to the goals of other agencies in the area, the general consensus was that all were working toward the same aims even though the priorities of each agency might differ. Regarding working in partnership with both the leading agencies and others, one member posed the challenge that those involved needed to have trust.

All participants were clear about their role and personal responsibilities. Job descriptions/formal roles were seen as broader than the traditional roles that they may have had. The roles held within Sure Start were not only seen as providing the specific services to the children and families in the area but also giving away skills and knowledge to other professionals, both in and out of Sure Start.

In terms of staffing, not all posts were filled which meant that some activities could not take place. The impact of staff leaving and posts not being filled very quickly meant that even ‘some activities that had started had to be stopped, bringing disappointment to the service users’. Reasons for delays in filling posts related to the time taken to get advertisements into the public domain, not renewal of contracts and filling key posts with temporary members of staff, all of which were out of their control. Within the Sure Start programme overall, however, relationships between staff representing the range of professions working for Sure Start were viewed as positive.

The programme operated from several sites and between these sites there was a general consensus by all interviewed that enough office space was available.

As the buildings that were occupied by Sure Start were ones desired by local parents, the space available was not always as ideal as it could be for running activities and sometimes the reputation of the building was not favourable. Storage space was an added challenge.

All staff were aware of the procedures for storing data. It was known that the process for doing so was changing to central storage, enabling any member of staff to gain access information families’ Sure Start contact.

The sharing of information, even between staff members, proved a difficult area. Most problems were believed to surround the local PCT, in terms of sharing between internal agencies or, at a higher level, the programme obtaining information directly from the PCT. Whilst a data-sharing protocol between the CC and PCT had only recently been received, delay in creating this had impacted on the meeting of Government-set targets.

There were various successes and challenges with regard to communication at a variety of levels. The influx of new minority groups with a range of new languages was a challenge. Mobility of families within and outside the Sure Start programme area was another. Having multiple sites and associated dispersal of staff created yet another challenge. Being responsive to parental demand in terms of activity increased the difficulty of getting staff together. Despite this general relationships were viewed as good.

Access to and availability of ICT facilities varied among staff and meant that different systems were being used. Diary sheets and a memo postage system provided an additional support.
• Formal and informal meetings were encouraged in order to keep information sharing up-to-date and a city-wide forum, where different professionals could meet provided a further opportunity for exchange beyond the programme.

• As with communication, ‘hard-to-reach’ strategies were both formal and informal, including leaflets and posters, targeting particular groups, being responsive to ideas from the community, as well as working sensitively with individual families. Meetings between Programme Managers helped successful practices to be shared that encouraged those deemed ‘hard-to-reach’ to access services.

• It was concluded that in the light of the current political climate, where Sure Start local programmes were being rolled out into Sure Start Children’s Centres, there was going to be a continued emphasis on multi-agency working, in order to improve the life chances of children.

• In the words of one team member at Sure Start Coventry North – ‘how are these findings to be taken forward?’
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1.1 Social and political context

Children, child poverty and families have formed a crucial dimension of the political agenda since the arrival of the Labour Government in 1997 (Glass, 1999). The importance of children and families was apparent in their Manifesto (Labour Party, 1997). Since 1997, the Government has launched an 'unprecedented' effort to increase investment in families and young children and to develop a wide-ranging plan of action to expand and reform the early years system (OCED, 2001: 179). If anything, the significance of these issues has increased over the last few years with the Prime Minister's commitment in 1999 to end child poverty by 2020 and the Chancellor's pledge to halve child poverty by 2010 (Glass, 2001).

In 1997, a Comprehensive Spending Review was set up by the Government which looked at their priorities, pattern and level of public spending (HM Treasury, 1998). One of the most significant outcomes of this was the review of services for young children, involving both the Chancellor and the Treasury. The Cross-Departmental Review of Provision for Young Children acknowledged that a new approach to provision for young children was required (HM Treasury, 1998). As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review the Government announced a National Childcare Strategy. The aim of the strategy was to ensure good quality, affordable childcare for children aged 0 to 14 in every neighbourhood, including both formal childcare and support for informal arrangements (DfES, 1998). The National Childcare Strategy was to be implemented by locally-based Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCP) whose remit was to bring together different services at a local level. The National Childcare Strategy aimed to work in partnership with national and local government, other statutory agencies, employers, parents and private, public and voluntary sector childcare providers.

The Cross-Departmental Review of Provision for Young Children also reflected the view, by many Ministers, that current provision of services appeared to be failing those in greatest need. There was, at the same time, accumulating evidence from
programmes such as Head Start, in the USA, (a comprehensive child development programme serving children from birth to five, pregnant women and their families from low-income families) and the High Scope/Perry Pre-School Program, (which assisted low income, at-risk children in the community to gain a positive start at education and life) that investment in the early childhood could make the difference to a child’s lifetime opportunities (Schweinhart, Barnes and Weikart, 1993; Kresh, 1998). The Review reported that children growing up in poverty did less well across a range of indicators such as health, education, employment, involvement in crime than their peers; existing services for young children were of mixed quality, patchy in provision, and often did not work collaboratively; integrated support in the very early years could make a lasting difference to child outcomes (HM Treasury, 1998). Therefore, as part of the National Childcare Strategy special funding for children and their families living in disadvantaged areas was to be allocated through the ‘Sure Start’ initiative, a new community-based programme (Glass, 1999).

1.2 Sure Start

The Sure Start programme was introduced in England in April 1999. Sure Start was a Government-financed initiative for combating the effects of poverty and disadvantage for young children, aged under four years, and their families (Melhuish et al., 2002). It was designed to reduce the gap in outcomes between children growing up in poverty and the wider child population (Eisenstadt, 2002). As part of the Government’s policy to prevent social exclusion, Sure Start local programmes aimed to improve the health and well-being of families and children, before and from birth, so children were ready to flourish when they start school (Sure Start Unit, 2000). Sure Start’s four key objectives were to improve health, improve social and emotional development; to improve educational outcomes; and to strengthen families and communities (Sure Start Unit, 2000) thereby raising the physical, social, emotional and intellectual status of young children through improved services (Glass, 1999).

The Government intended to set up two hundred and fifty local programmes by 2001 to 2002, supporting approximately 18 per cent of children under four living in poverty (HM Treasury, 2000). The 2000 Spending Review included provision for a major geographical expansion of Sure Start, doubling the number of local programmes from two hundred and fifty to at least five hundred, reaching one third of children under four living in poverty by 2004 (HM Treasury, 2000). By reaching one-third of children living
in poverty, questions have to be asked about the provision or lack of provision for the existing two-thirds of children in similar circumstances. The targeting of specific geographical areas of disadvantage immediately excludes those children in poverty and their families who live outside the Sure Start boundary.

Each Sure Start local programme, ten years in longevity, was to be introduced in six rounds. Each programme, delivered by Partnership Boards, were established to work in partnership with parents, community organisations, statutory, private and voluntary service providers and all public sector professionals from the locality, ensuring that existing services worked well together in order to set up new services where gaps existed (Eisenstadt, 2002). Multi-agency working was at the heart of Sure Start, bringing together everyone who is concerned with children in the local community.

In summary, by co-ordinating the work of various agencies that were providing services for families and children, and by creating services specifically for the needs of a designated community, it was hoped that the effects of deprivation could be reduced so that children regardless of background could thrive when they reached school. This multi-agency approach seems idealistic with agencies from previous disparate services working hand in hand in an integrated manner. But since these agencies often have had different organisational cultures, career structures and working conditions, experience suggests that this relationship is often ‘far from cosy’ (Wiseman and Wakeman, 2002:40).

1.3 Sure Start Unit

In December 2002, three years after the launch of Sure Start local programmes, the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Unit was launched to co-ordinate the work of the major ministries in favour of children. The Unit is an integral part of the Government’s newly-formed Children, Young People and Families Directorate. The Unit, based in the Department for Skills and Education (DfES) and led by Baroness Cathy Ashton exemplified the Government’s commitment to deliver good quality integrated services ensuring the best start in life for every child, providing good quality childcare and enhancing parental opportunities (Sure Start, 2003).

Building on the Sure Start local programmes, further integration was planned through the creation of Children’s Centres (providing services to children under five and their
families, such as, early education integrated with full day care, parental outreach, family support, health services and effective links with Jobcentre Plus). These would enhance existing services and extend the benefits to more families and children up to the age of five, bringing an integrated approach to service delivery to areas where it was needed most (Sure Start, 2003). The majority of Children’s Centres were developed from Sure Start local programmes, Neighbourhood Nurseries (which offered 45,000 new childcare places to support families in the most disadvantaged areas of England) and Early Excellence Centres which provided high quality ‘one-stop shop’ integrated education and day care for young children and services and opportunities for parents, carers, families and the wider community both directly and in cooperation with other providers (Sure Start, 2003).

1.3.1 ‘Expansion’ of Sure Start local programmes
Since commencing this study, a 2004 Spending Review has been published by the Treasury. Stability, securing and opportunity for all: Investing for Britain’s long-germ future sets out the Government’s vision that every parent, wherever they live, should have access to affordable childcare and early years services their child needs (HM Treasury, 2004). Sure Start local programmes, initially intended to run for ten years, are now to be ‘rolled out’, within the next two years, into Sure Start Children’s Centres. Under the ‘guise’ of expansion of Sure Start local programmes, Sure Start Children’s Centres will provide services on ‘Sure Start principles’ which will be available to all (Glass, 2005: 2). The Government’s Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners (DfES, 2004a) is to have a Sure Start Children’s Centre reaching all children in the 20 per cent most deprived wards in England with an ‘aim’ for a Children’s Centre in every community in those areas. The new Centres will be created by developing existing nursery schools, Sure Start programmes, Early Excellence Centres, family centres or community facilities (DfES, 2004a).

The Children Act (DfES, 2004b) gave a clear focus and new status to children’s services. It established a duty on local authorities, giving them a particular leadership role in setting up the arrangements to promote co-operation between agencies, such as the Primary Care Trust and other appropriate bodies in order to improve children’s well being (DfES, 2004b). This Act will affect Sure Start local programmes. In contrast to some Sure Start local programmes, new Sure Start Children Centre’s will be managed by the Local Authority as opposed to a partnership between the Local Authority and the
community. Currently, Sure Start local programmes across the country are managed in a variety of ways, for example, some programmes are managed by national children’s charities. Programmes in Coventry will not see such dramatic changes as they are already managed by the Local Authority.

1.4 Evaluation

A central question that needs to be posed in relation to any initiative, such as Sure Start, concerns the extent to which it is adding, or is capable of adding ‘extra capacity, value and positive impact on the existing design and delivery of services’ (NESS, 2002:3). Large-scale investments such as Sure Start demand full and proper evaluation. The Government regards policymaking as a ‘continuous, learning process, not as a series of one off initiatives’ (Cabinet Office, 1999). They share how they intend to do this by evaluating programmes and policies.

‘We will ensure that all policies and programmes are clearly specified and evaluated, and the lessons of success and failure are communicated and acted upon. (Cabinet Office, 1999:Section 2.6)

1.4.1 Evaluation strategy for Sure Start local programmes

In light of this approach, there are two elements to the evaluation strategy for Sure Start local programmes. Firstly, a comprehensive, long-term, national evaluation of the impacts, implementation and economic cost of the programme as a whole; and secondly, a local level evaluation of individual Sure Start local programmes carried out by local programmes themselves and their evaluators (Sure Start, 2002).

1.4.2 National evaluation

The National evaluation for Sure Start (NESS) aims to provide a substantial new source of data on the impact of early interventions and childhood deprivation. NESS’s evaluation of the first four rounds began in January 2001 and measured the short, medium and long-term outcomes of Sure Start for children, families and communities (NESS, 2004). The evaluation of two hundred and sixty-two programmes focused on key themes and activities identified as a result of the first phase evaluation. It also considered changes in policy and sought to make a national assessment of the programmes’ cost effectiveness (NESS, 2004). This raises the question: Will an evaluation lasting only six years (NESS, 2002) be long enough to provide evidence that the investment in this programme represented good value for money and that the programme itself had had a direct effect on family poverty through children?
1.4.3 Local evaluation

The University of Warwick is evaluating four Sure Start local programmes in Coventry. The evaluation team is in itself multi-disciplinary involving health and education professionals. The local programmes vary in longevity from Round 6 to Round 2.

The programme managers in each of the four Sure Start areas during the consultation phase identified three areas on which the evaluation should focus: partnership effectiveness and team working; parental/family satisfaction; and speech and language service. In addition, each programme identified an area to be evaluated, unique to their situation: midwifery input; special needs provision; hard to reach strategies; and collaborative working with other local organisations.

1.4.4 Partnership effectiveness and team working

Aspects of multi-agency working and the development of effective working practices were highlighted during the consultation phase with key Sure Start professionals. These discussions stimulated consideration in more detail of the ways in which the Sure Start local programmes were drawing together professionals from a wide range of agencies in partnership so as to provide better services for families in their area. The final plans for the four Sure Start local programmes document a commitment to working in a ‘joined-up’ way. Terms such as ‘integrated working’, ‘working together in partnership’, ‘joined up thinking’ and ‘joined up working’ described the vision and philosophy of the programmes. Multi-agency working was, according to the plans, to be achieved by working in response to the needs of the community. This was to be achieved by establishing Partnership Boards which would ensure the delivery of an effective Sure Start local programme. The Partnership Boards were to consist of representatives of community and voluntary groups, service providers, statutory agencies and parents (Coventry City Council, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003).

Team members, Partnership Board members, with representatives from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and City Council (CC) took part in a survey which sought to investigate the successes and challenges of Sure Start multi-agency working (Dahl and Aubrey, 2004). The survey comprised a range of factual, closed questions with opportunities for participants to offer personal views and experiences as well. The
findings of the main survey will be discussed in Chapter 2 and the programme-specific findings for Sure Start Coventry South East (SSCSE) reported in Chapter 3.

The report will then present the interview stage that was planned as a follow up to the above survey.

1.5 Research questions

In summary, this study is an attempt to investigate the key factors of success and the key challenges facing multi-agency working in four Sure Start local programmes by probing, in more depth, areas of ambiguity, inconsistency and conflict arising from the survey. The questions for this study are:

- How much do we really know about effective multi-agency working?
- What are the key factors of success and what are the challenges of multi-agency working in Sure Start local programmes?
- What future lessons can be learned from multi-agency working for widespread dissemination?

Using these three questions to identify relevant literature the next chapter will review the literature relating to multi-agency working, beginning by locating it in the political context in which it evolved.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating to multi-agency working. It will discuss the Government’s endorsement of multi-agency working, consider successes and challenges of multi-agency working and examine multi-agency working in an early years context.

Although there are definitions of the terms ‘multi-agency working’, ‘partnership working’, ‘joined-up/joint working’, ‘inter-agency working’ and ‘multi-disciplinary working’ it was identified that authors struggle with how best to define such terms (Thames Valley Family Practice Research Unit, 2003). Atkinson et al. (2001; 2002) found that there was an enormous variation in initiatives and practice that operate under the name ‘multi-agency’. It appeared from the literature that these terms were used interchangeably to describe collaboration’s between agencies or between professionals from different agencies. This review will refer to the most relevant literature published in the United Kingdom from 1997, the beginning of the Labour Government’s tenure in office, to August 2004, when this study commenced.

2.2 Policy

One of the central elements of the current Government’s policy agenda has been to create a more ‘joined-up’ approach to strategy and service delivery (Pugh, 2003). As part of the Government’s agenda of social inclusion, multi-agency working in the childhood field has in the twenty-first century seen a rapid growth. Despite the Government's approach, cooperation and ‘joined-up’ working between schools and education services, social services and health professionals, in the interests of vulnerable children, has been welcomed (Audit Commission, 1992a and b; 1994; 1996; 1998). A study conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (Atkinson et al., 2001; 2002) indicated both the complexity and the potential of joining up services.
2.2.1 Health

In the field of health, the Health Act (Department of Health [DOH], 1999) and the White Paper Our Healthier Nation (DOH, 1998a) requires the National Health Service to strengthen partnerships with local authorities. The White paper Working together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (DOH, Home Office and Department for Education and Employment [DfEE] 1999:vii) sets out how all agencies and professionals should work together to promote children’s welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect. It is addressed to those

who work in the health and education services, the police, social services, the probation service, and others whose work brings them into contact with children and families. It is relevant to those working in the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors.

However, Victoria Climbie was failed by no less than thirteen professionals, from six different agencies, in a period of nine months prior to her death. This case highlights the challenges involved when agencies work together and the lack of communication between professionals. Getting the Right Start: The National Service Framework for Children (DOH, 2003) endorsed joined-up working as essential in order to improve the quality of young children’s lives and their future life chances.

2.2.2 Social Services

For Social Services, the Children Act (DOH, 1989), although published earlier than 1997, is significant in that it included a statutory requirement under Section 27 for 'increased efficiency' for interagency collaboration in order to coordinate the planning of local services for children. Modernising Social Services (DOH, 1998b) aimed to ensure a more effective coordination of services through improving joint working between health, social services, housing and other services. Modernising Health and Social Services – National Priorities Guidance 99/00-2001/02 (DOH 1998c), was directed jointly, for the first time, at Health and Social Services, and urged inter-agency working.

The Green Paper Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003:60) proposed a ‘move towards multi-disciplinary teams that bring together the relevant professionals who can work together in place easily accessible to children and families.’ It also acknowledged that Sure Start local programmes provided a model for the rest of the children’s sector as it moved towards joint working. The consultation on the Green Paper showed broad support for
the proposals and the Children Act (2004) was produced in the light of the consultation. The Children Act (DfES, 2004:2), created a clear accountability for children’s services and enabled better joint working.

Each children’s service authority in England must make arrangements to promote co-operation between the authority, each of the authorities relevant partners and such other persons, or bodies as the authority considers appropriate, to improve children’s well-being and secure a better focus on safeguarding children.

2.2.3 Education

The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships have been established, as part of the National Childcare Strategy, to integrate care and education at a Local Authority level. The White Paper, Excellence in Schools (DfEE, 1998a), proposed that in every Local Authority an early year’s forum should plan childcare and education for local needs. It planned for a network of Early Excellence Centres to be set up in order to distribute good practice in combining education and care for children under the age of five.

The White Paper, Meeting Special Educational Needs: A Programme of Action (DfEE, 1998b), required local authorities to improve the way agencies work together to strengthen support for children with special needs. The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (DfES, 2002a) required a working partnership with parents and other agencies. The Education Act (DfES, 2002b), Section 175 introduced, for the first time, a statutory element to the duty of both the Local Education Authority and the school in relation to child protection and highlighted the need for professionals to operate within a multi-agency framework.

Despite the policies, legislation and initiatives discussed above little attention has been placed on how multi-agency working should be executed. Anning (2001:2) argues that ‘conceptual frameworks for setting up, managing and delivering ‘joined-up’ services are not provided’ yet it is clear that Government rhetoric and policy promote and call for collaboration between agencies. It has been suggested that professionals have been ‘simply instructed to collaborate and change working practices’ with little or no training (Tomlinson, 2003:5).
2.3 Key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working

2.3.1 Key factors of success

The key factors essential for successful multi-agency working identified in the literature are varied and wide-ranging. In the literature, certain factors were identified as being key to successful multi-agency working (Audit Commission, 1998; Jones, 2000; Atkinson et al., 2001:2002; Tomlinson, 2003). Firstly, the full strategic and operational level commitment required was deemed to be essential at all levels for those working together. Clearly commitment by those at an operational level or strategic level alone will not suffice, it is required by all. This highlights the importance of involving or employing the relevant personnel. Secondly, having a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different agencies and individuals was another key factor. However, for this to be successful the roles and responsibilities need to be communicated, respected and understood by all involved.

A third factor was sharing aims and objectives. Although agencies aims may differ, it is vital that agencies are prepared to work together concerning common goals. This may be difficult to achieve as agencies do not always share or show they are prepared to share common goals. Communication was identified as key to successful multi-agency working. For example, dialogue between agencies and the need for staff at all levels to be open and honest was considered to be crucial. The dissemination of information was also raised in the literature reviewed. This included sharing information effectively to avoid the reduplication of services and ensuring everyone had access to necessary data. Although some agencies may be more willing to share than others therefore it is essential protocols are adopted at the beginning of new programmes. The leadership of those involved at a strategic level was acknowledged as a key factor for a programme’s success. For example, the vision of those at a strategic level to ensure the clear direction and maintain the focus of an initiative is imperative. Finally, sharing funding of programmes was mentioned as being a key factor for ensuring its success. However, the distinction between pooled budgets, where one or more agency meets some, or all, of the costs and joint funding, where resources are provided by all on an equal basis created tensions with different agencies providing more resources than others.

Other factors identified within some of the studies included time, flexibility, location and training. However, Tomlinson states that ‘there exists considerable good practice in
multi-agency working between education, social services and health, as well as voluntary organisations and client groups' (2003:23). Inter-agency cooperation was recognised as problematic with clashes between professional cultures, competitions between departments or agencies for funding, reductions in overall budgets and low morale being commonly cited as the main contributory factors (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001). These challenges will now be discussed.

2.3.2 Challenges
For those working in a multi-agency context a range of challenges were identified which may hinder effective practice. The challenges identified reflected the complexities involved when professionals engage in multi-agency ventures (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001; Atkinson et al., 2001: 2002). Firstly, funding and resources were identified as the major challenge in any initiative, especially during the early stages of development. Concerns regarding conflict within or between agencies, lack of funding and sustainability all contributed to challenges posed by funding.

Another challenge included understanding the roles and responsibilities of others involved in the programme. For example, clarity was required regarding areas of responsibility and the need to move beyond existing roles. Although in practice personnel may be unclear as to their own role. Competing or different priorities of agencies and individuals were mentioned. For example, this may impact upon the involvement of professionals at a strategic and operational level. Non-fiscal resources, or the lack of them, were identified as an issue. For example, the challenges posed by lack of time may be due to the pressures personnel are under and amount of time required engaging with other agencies. Other examples included the resources of staff and staff shortages and finally, the physical space available to work together effectively (Atkinson et al., 2002).

Non-fiscal resources were essential both in developing and sustaining successful multi-agency initiatives. Communication or lack of communication was highlighted in the literature as a difficulty (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001; Atkinson et al., 2002). However, whilst expecting lack of communication between assorted agencies a lack of communication within individual organisations was also mentioned. Professional and agency cultures were mentioned in that multi-agency working disrupted and intruded upon existing agency cultures. For example differences between agencies policies and
procedures (Atkinson et al., 2002). Finally, it was clear that projects had to be seen to be strongly supported and promoted at a strategic level in order to remain credible at the delivery level (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001; Atkinson et al., 2002). The strong strategic management of any multi-agency initiative is essential for its success.

Other challenges less frequently mentioned in the literature included data collection and information sharing, training, and issues specific to the client group (Webb and Vulliamy, 2001; Atkinson et al., 2002). However these issues may be more challenging in different settings, for example where information sharing is a key element of an initiative.

2.4 Multi-agency working in early years settings

Whilst these key studies provide an invaluable insight into key factors of the success and challenges of multi-agency working, they do not necessarily relate directly or solely to studies within an early years context.

2.4.1 Centres of Excellence

Several studies have looked at some of the ‘difficulties and victories’ of integrated and joined up services in an early years context (Anning, 2001, 2002; Campbell, 2001; Wigfall and Moss, 2001). The challenges and successes encountered in these studies duplicate many of the issues already raised in this review, confirming that issues faced by those working as part of a multi-agency team are common to many. Challenges also included different legislative frameworks and conditions of service; preoccupations with different organisational issues; clashing professional values and priorities; dissimilarity of language and jargon; different training; pressures of time; huge complexities of different funding streams (Campbell, 2001; Wigfall and Moss 2001; Anning, 2002).

It appears that little attention has been paid by policy makers to how these groups of different workers share knowledge, gain understanding of each others’ beliefs and ways of working in order to present a shared vision of ‘joinedupness’ to their clients. However, Atkinson et al. (2001; 2002) provided examples of models of multi-agency working, drawn from a sample of thirty multi-agency initiatives. The research identified several models of joint working. They reiterated that multi-agency working is not easy nor easily achieved. The study highlighted a new ‘hybrid’ professional who had personal experience and knowledge of other agencies, such as their services, cultures,
structures and priorities. In order to achieve successful multi-agency working the evidence provided by Atkinson et al. (2001:2002) could be more widely applied to the workplace for those engaging in multi-agency work.

2.4.2 Sure Start national and local evaluations
Myers et al. (2004) drew together the findings of twenty-seven local Sure Start evaluations, at different stages of development, which have focused on, or included, the examination of partnerships and partnership working. The report looked at four areas of multi-agency working, including what constitutes successful partnership working. Responses included good communication between all members of the partnership, their organisations and the community; openness and transparency; receptiveness to others ideas; tolerance of different perspectives; strong management; clear objectives for the Partnership Board; wider representation on the board from the community, providers of services and statutory agencies; accessibility for parents and carers to be involved in the decision making process of the programme; knowledge of other professional roles.

It is interesting to note that participants were invited to consider what constitutes ‘successful’ partnership working, making an assumption that partnership working is, in general, successful. This report is based on a relatively small number of local evaluations and as such cannot be seen as a definitive explanation of how multi-agency working is operating in Sure Start local programmes.

2.5 Survey
As part of this University’s evaluation of the four Sure Start local programmes in Coventry, outlined in Chapter 1, a survey was undertaken which sought to identify successes, challenges and issues of multi-agency working in these programmes. The key factors in effective practice and the kinds of challenges identified by the NFER (Atkinson et al., 2001: 2002) were used as the basis for designing a questionnaire to survey a range of professionals, which included team members, Partnership Board members and representatives of the leading agencies.

Areas covered in the survey included common aims and objectives, sharing and access to non-fiscal and fiscal resources, roles and responsibilities, communication and information sharing, professional and agency cultures, management and leadership,
training opportunities, willingness to be involved and involving relevant personnel and competing priorities.

On a positive note it was found that Sure Start local management strongly promoted multi-agency working and encouraged like-minded individuals to work in new ways to meet shared goals. The importance of the leadership role of individual Sure Start managers was also stressed. The vast majority of respondents believed that Sure Start facilitated multi-agency working in terms of staffing arrangements, teams’ expectations and priorities and programme aims. Challenges were identified however, such as the allocation of time, provision of staff, and physical space to work effectively.

The survey highlighted areas of ambiguity, for instance, whether Local Authority structures and boundaries facilitated or hindered multi-agency working. Views were also mixed about the challenge of existing financial arrangements posed to multi-agency working, with concerns about avoiding conflicts between and within agencies. There was also a division in views as to whether existing information sharing and confidentiality strategies between agencies hindered or facilitated multi-agency working.

Despite the real enthusiasm of the Sure Start programme members, the respondents suggested that multi-agency working had not always been easy to achieve and this survey highlighted the complexity of the challenge facing Sure Start workers (Dahl and Aubrey, 2004). Despite the local Sure Start programmes vision and philosophy to work together in partnership as is documented in their final plans (Coventry City Council, 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003), findings from the survey indicated that there were still areas of ambiguity and uncertainty. This study, as indicated in Chapter 1, is intended to explore some of these issues in more depth. The areas to be investigated, in this study included participants' knowledge and structure of the leading agencies, information regarding roles and responsibilities of their parent agency, its aims and their personal priorities, non-fiscal resources including staff, time investment and accommodation, issues relating to sharing information and data procedures and finally communication within the programme and with other agencies.

2.6 Conclusion

There is an assumption that practitioners in early years settings, such as Sure Start local programmes, which are funded to model multi-agency work, are coping with the
intricacy of new demands made on them by the shifts in policy (Glass, 2001). However, the literature presented in this chapter highlights the complexity of multi-agency working, in general, as well as for Sure Start local programmes in particular.

In order to investigate the issues raised by the survey, follow-up interviews were conducted with a sample of those involved. The following chapter, however, will first outline the survey findings for the particular programme concerned, SSCSE.
Chapter 3
The survey

3.1 Introduction

The first two chapters have set the context to the study. This chapter will report the survey that was carried out. It aimed to identify key factors in effective multi-agency practice and key challenges faced by a range of professionals from a variety of agencies working together in partnership in SSCSE, in order to provide better services for the families in their area.

During the evaluation consultation period, aspects of multi-agency working and the development of effective working practices were highlighted in discussions with key Sure Start professionals. This stimulated consideration in more detail of the ways in which the Sure Start programmes were drawing together professionals from a variety of agencies to work together. Key questions that emerged were:

- How much do we really know about effective multi-agency working in Sure Start local programmes;
- What are the key factors in their success and what kinds of challenges are raised?

Of particular interest at this stage of the study was comparison of the findings of the main survey with those of the particular programme concerned.

3.2 Aims

Report of the programme specific element of the survey to be reported in this chapter thus aimed to:

- Consider in more depth the responses of SSCSE;
- Examine whether the key success factors and challenges raised by the overall survey were common to SSCSE.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Participants

At the time of the survey, 4 Partnership Board members and 13 staff responded from SSCSE. (Only those who identified themselves clearly as either a team member or a
Partnership Board member are included in this analysis. There were, in some cases, respondents who identified themselves as being from the Accountable Body, Lead Agency or a service provider. Although these were used in the analysis of the full data set, they were not used here, as it was not possible to ascertain whether they were, indeed, also a team member or a Partnership Board member.

3.3.2 Materials
Questionnaires were designed which drew upon reports from Atkinson et al (2001; 2002) and Tomlinson (2003) from an NFER study involving professionals from education, social services and health sectors of local authorities and focused on models of multi-agency activity, together with the challenges and the key factors for their success. A series of relevant fixed-choice questions was devised with opportunities for respondents to elaborate on their views. Areas covered included common aims and objectives, sharing and access to fiscal and non-fiscal resources, roles and responsibilities, communication and information sharing, professional and agency cultures, management and leadership, training opportunities, willingness to be involved and involving relevant personnel, and competing priorities. Participants were asked to identify their role within the Sure Start programme concerned and, if possible, to specify their role still further. Pilot questionnaires were distributed for comment to professionals with a number of different backgrounds, for instance, health, education and psychology and small adjustments were made (see Appendix C). The final draft questionnaires were then colour coded to allow for the possibility of comparing the responses of different programmes, as well as participants with different roles (see Appendix A).

3.3.3 Procedures
The survey was introduced at Partnership Board meetings and team meetings in each of the four programmes and help was offered for those whom might find the content and terminology used less accessible. In the event, no requests for help were received.

3.3.4 Analysis
The data were explored initially by recasting them in terms of frequency tables and the full data set were presented as histograms. For the purposes of the individual programme, frequency tables will be presented.
3.4 Results

Question 1: Local Authority (LA) Structures and boundaries

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<tr>
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<th>Facilitates</th>
<th>Doesn’t influence</th>
<th>Hinders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team members</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership Board</td>
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<td><strong>7</strong></td>
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<td><strong>6</strong></td>
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As in the main survey, SSCSE views as to whether or not LA structures and boundaries constituted a facilitating factor or a hindrance were mixed, with the minority stating that they had no influence.

Question 2: Staffing arrangements and time investment of Sure Start local programmes

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<th>Facilitates</th>
<th>Doesn’t influence</th>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
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Unlike the main data set where the majority of respondents thought staffing arrangements and time investment were facilitative of multi-agency working, responses for SSCSE were quite mixed and divided between ‘facilitates’ and ‘hinders’.

Question 3: Individual’ and Sure Start local programme teams’ expectations and priorities

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<th>Facilitates</th>
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<td>Team members</td>
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Just as the overall survey showed, SSCSE believed that staff had a high expectation of working as a multi-agency team.
Question 4: Aims and objectives of Sure Start local programmes

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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>15</td>
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As in the main survey, it was generally agreed by SSCSE that Sure Start local programme aims facilitated work in a multi-agency manner with a minority feeling the aims and objectives had no influence.

Question 5: Confidentiality and information sharing strategies between the various agencies involved

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<th>Facilitates</th>
<th>Doesn't influence</th>
<th>Hinders</th>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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Just as the main survey showed, views were divided in SSCSE as to whether confidentiality and information sharing strategies between the various agencies involved with Sure Start facilitated or hindered multi-agency working.

Question 6: The need for development of a common language across professional groups working in Sure Start local programmes

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<th>There is a need</th>
<th>Makes no difference</th>
<th>There is not a need</th>
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The overwhelming majority of respondents in SSCSE, as in the main study, felt that there was a need for a common language across professional groups.
Question 7: In practice, budgets and financial arrangements create a major challenge to Sure Start multi-agency working through:

   a) Concern about conflicts within or between agencies that provide Sure Start Staff

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<tr>
<td>Team members</td>
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In practice, views of Sure Start Coventry Start South East on the challenge to financial arrangements of conflicts within and between agencies were mixed, being evenly divided between those thinking there was a concern and those thinking there was not.

   b) Concern about general lack of programme funding

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<td>Partnership Board</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
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The overwhelming majority of SSCSE respondents felt that general lack of programme funding was not a concern. This was a clearer and more positive response than was found in the main survey.

   c) Concern about sustainability of the services and, thus, uncertainty of funding

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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As in the main survey, views of SSCSE about sustainability of services in respect of financial arrangements, were mixed.
d) Creating more effective use of resources (human and material) by reducing repetition and overlap

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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The majority of views of SSCSE concerning the effective use of resources to reduce repetition and overlap were positive.

**Question 8: Issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure Start concern:**

a) Understanding the roles of others

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<tr>
<td>Team members</td>
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<td>15</td>
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</table>

As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCSE felt that understanding the role of others facilitated multi-agency working.

b) Conflicts over areas of responsibility

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<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Partnership Board</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

The majority of SSCSE staff felt that work conflicts over areas of responsibility could create issues.

c) The need to go beyond existing roles to work in new ways

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<th>Yes</th>
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<th>Don’t know</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>
The vast majority of SSCSE felt that going beyond existing roles was necessary in order to work in new ways.

**Question 9: The aims of the specific agencies compete with Sure Start local programme aims due to:**

a) Differences in the target group/s

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</table>

As in the main survey, views of SSCSE were mixed in respect of whether or not differences in target groups’ aims competed with programme aims.

b) Different Government targets

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<th>No</th>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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</table>

As in the main survey, respondents at SSCSE were divided as to whether they felt that different Government targets competed with local programme aims.

c) A focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention

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<th>No</th>
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</table>

As in the main survey, views concerning the impact of agencies’ focus on preventative work versus crisis work were mixed in SSCSE.
Question 10: Non-financial resources create challenges concerning:

a) The allocation of time

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</table>

In line with the main survey, SSCSE felt that allocation of time created challenges to multi-agency working.

b) The provision of staff

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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>

The majority of SSCSE felt that provision of staff created challenges to multi-agency working, as was found in the main survey.

c) Physical space in which to work together effectively

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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Again, the majority of respondents felt that having physical space in which to work effectively together could create a challenge.

Question 11: Poor communication within and between the agencies involved with Sure Start:

a) Creates problems between those working at different levels within agencies

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<td>Partnership Board</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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</table>
In line with the main survey, the majority of respondents felt poor communication between agencies could create problems between those working at different levels within agencies.

**b) Creates different availability of professionals from different agencies**

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<tbody>
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The majority of SSCSE felt that poor communication could be created by different availability of professionals from different agencies.

**c) Undermines successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments**

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<tbody>
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</table>

As in the main survey, views concerning successful multi-agency working being undermined by poor communication between different local government departments were quite mixed.

**Question 12: The effect of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice:**

**a) Multi-agency working disrupts existing agency cultures (values and ways of working)**

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In line with the main survey, the majority of SSCSE felt that agency cultures did not adversely influence multi-agency working.
b) Specific policy and practice differences hinder shared practice

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Just over one half of SSCSE staff felt that specific policy and practice differences were hindering shared practice, though views were quite mixed.

c) Different data management systems which effect information sharing impact upon shared practice

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Two-thirds of SSCSE staff felt different data management systems impacted upon shared practice.

Question 13: The strategy of the management in the Sure Start local programme/s.

a) Multi-agency working is strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level

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Like the main study, it was felt by the vast majority of respondents that promotion of multi-agency working at management level strategy facilitated multi-agency delivery.

b) Management strategy drive is organised carefully in order to carry along the various participants from each agency

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</table>
The majority of SSCSE felt the management strategy was being organised to bring along participants from various agencies. This was a more positive response than obtained from the main survey.

c) Management strategy encourages like-minded individuals who seek new ways of working in order to meet shared goals and work across existing management structures

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</table>

In line with the main survey, Sure Start Coventry South-East felt that encouraging like-minded individuals to meet shared goals and work across structures was facilitating multi-agency working.

**Question 14: Training opportunities for Sure Start team members**

a) Additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies

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</table>

Like the main survey respondents, SSCSE felt additional training facilitated the extended role of agencies.

b) Training to enhance knowledge and understanding of other agencies

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As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCSE felt that training would enhance the knowledge and understanding staff had of other agencies.
c) Professional ‘single-agency’ development delivered at the home ‘base’ of the agency

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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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</table>

Like the main survey respondents, SSCSE were mixed in their view concerning the need for professional development to occur at the parent agency of each professional within the Sure Start team.

**Question 15: Commitment and willingness of Sure Start team members to be involved in multi-agency work is sustained by:**

a) An active desire to engage with other agencies at the management level

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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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</table>

In line with the main survey, SSCSE felt an active desire to engage with other agencies at management level facilitated multi-agency working.

b) An active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level

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<th>Yes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
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Again in line with the main survey, respondents felt an active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level facilitated multi-agency work.

c) A commitment/active desire to engage with other agencies by a 'bottom up' as well as 'top down' management approach

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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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</table>
In line with the main survey, SSCSE felt that a ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ management approach facilitated engaging with other agencies.

**Question 16: Understanding the roles and responsibilities of others**

   a) The need for a clear understanding of what is expected so that different agendas are not pursued

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<tbody>
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In line with the main survey, SSCSE felt a need for a clear understanding of others’ roles and responsibilities to avoid different agendas being pursued.

   b) The need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations are realistic

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Yet again, respondents felt understanding constraints of other agencies facilitated multi-agency working so that expectations were realistic.

   c) A need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contribution

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As in the main survey, SSCSE felt that mutual respect for professional roles of other agencies facilitated work.
Question 17: Common Sure Start aims and objectives have been achieved by the programme/s through:

a) Recognition of the need for common ground and like minded people

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The vast majority of respondents in SSCSE felt that recognition of the need for common ground and like-minded people facilitated the reaching of common goals.

b) Recognition of the need for a real purpose to joint working

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The vast majority of SSCSE felt the need for a real purpose to joint working supported the meeting of Sure Start aims and objectives.

c) A needs-led approach which replaces agency-specific agendas

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As in the main survey, the majority of SSCSE felt a needs-led approach facilitated the reaching of Sure Start aims and objectives.

Question 18: Communications and information sharing within the Sure Start local programme/s has/have been supported by:

a) Opportunities for dialogue/keeping open communication between agencies being achieved

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As in the main survey, the majority of SSCSE felt that open communication between agencies was facilitative of information sharing.

**b) Personal relationship building (communication skills, listening skills, the capacity for negotiation and compromise)**

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<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team members</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Board</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Again, as in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCSE felt that personal relationship building was facilitative of information sharing.

**c) Procedures and systems of communications and information dissemination (such as circulating meeting minutes) being in place**

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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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As in the main survey, the vast majority of SSCSE felt that communication and information dissemination procedures were facilitative of information sharing.

**Question 19: Leadership or drive of individual Sure Start Programme Manager/s:**

**a) Show/s clear strategic direction**

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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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The majority of SSCSE felt that the leadership of the individual Sure Start programme manager showed clear strategic direction.
b) Has/have the tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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The vast majority of SSCSE felt the manager had tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress.

c) Can bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change and overcome obstacles

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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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All respondents thought that the local manager could bring together the team in order to bring about change and overcome obstacles.

**Question 20: Involving the right personnel on the Sure Start local programme/s has led to:**

a) The right personnel from specific agencies being involved

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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Like the main study respondents, respondents were mixed in view about the influence of the right personnel from specific agencies being involved.

b) Personnel at the right level of responsibility to make the necessary decision and activate the right services being involved

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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership Board</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
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Again like the main study, respondents were mixed in view about the influence of personnel at the right level of responsibility being involved.

c) Priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies

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<th>Yes</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Board</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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As in the main survey, SSCSE were mixed in view about the priority being given to Sure Start work by individual agencies.

3.5 Discussion

As in the main study, SSCSE had high expectations of working as a multi-disciplinary team. They felt Sure Start programme aims and objectives facilitated multi-agency working and that there was a need for common language to be used across professional groups. Effective use of resources also needed to be made in order to avoid repetition and overlap in working.

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of others, it was felt, facilitated work as conflict over areas of work could create issues. It was recognised that there was a need to go beyond existing roles in order to work in new ways. There was a need for clear understanding of other agencies’ agendas, others’ roles and responsibilities, as well as the particular constraints of other agencies to avoid different agendas being pursued. Recognition of the need for common ground and like-minded people, as well as a real purpose to joint working facilitated the reaching of common goals. A needs-led approach provided the means for reaching Sure Start aims and objectives.

Provision of suitable staff, allocation of sufficient time and physical space could create challenges to multi-agency working. Poor communication within and between agencies could create problems between those working at different levels within agencies, as well as different availability of professionals from different agencies or between different local government departments. However, participants at SSCSE were not concerned about a general lack of programme funding.
Promotion of multi-agency working at the management level supported credibility at the delivery level and management strategies organised to bring along participants from various agencies were indicated. Moreover, respondents did not feel that agency cultures were disrupted by multi-agency working. Encouraging like-minded people to meet shared goals and work across structures facilitated such work. Additional training also facilitated the extended role of agencies. Respondents felt that an active desire to engage with other agencies at management level and at delivery level with a ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ management approach facilitated engaging with other agencies.

Open communication between agencies and personal relationship-building facilitated information sharing. Indeed, specific policy and practice differences and different data management systems could impact on shared practice. However, as to whether confidentiality and information sharing strategies between agencies facilitated multi-agency working, views of SSCSE were mixed.

At the level of infrastructure, views were also mixed in a variety of areas. Views were mixed about the impact of Local Authority structures and boundaries, financial arrangements, staffing arrangements and time commitments to multi-agency working. Views concerning the compatibility of different Government targets and local programme aims were also mixed. Views were mixed about the priority given to Sure Start work by individual agencies and the impact of a specific agency’s focus on preventative versus crisis work. There was also uncertainty about the influence of having the right personnel at the right level of responsibility from specific agencies involved and their commitment to engage with other agencies by ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ approaches.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Overall, those at SSCSE were very positive about multi-agency working at the programme level and recognised the multiple factors that impact on delivery of such work. As in other programmes, views were divided as to whether or not confidentiality and information sharing strategies between various agencies facilitated multi-agency working. Respondents were also quite mixed in view about the challenge financial arrangements posed to such work. The role of Local Authority structures and boundaries and the priority given to joint working by other agencies were other areas
highlighted. Such responses provided the stimulus to the next stage of the research that will be reported in Chapter 4.
Chapter 4
Interviews with representatives of the lead agencies

4.1 Introduction

Chapters 1 to 3 have introduced the study's origins, aims and the context of the study. The following three chapters will report the results of the interviews conducted with representatives of the leading agencies who have a strategic overview of all four Sure Start local programmes and sample team members and Partnership Board members from SSCSE.

This chapter will report the findings from the interviews with representatives of the leading agencies and will seek to identify and expand on the themes emerging from the data.

4.2 Aims

The overall aim of all the interviews was to explore, in depth, issues which were identified in the survey of multi-agency working, reported in Chapter 3, and to investigate the key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working in the same context. The specific aim of the interviews reported in this chapter was to elicit a strategic overview of Sure Start local programmes in the City. The interviews attempted to gain factual information, as well as the views and interpretations of key figures at this level.

4.3 Methods

4.3.1 Participants

Two people, involved to varying degrees and in different capacities with the leading agencies for the Sure Start local programmes, were interviewed. Interviewee 1 represented the City Council (CC) and Interviewee 2 represented the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Interviewee 1 was a senior administrator and Interviewee 2 was a financial adviser.
4.3.2 Materials
An interview schedule was generated from responses to the survey. The interview schedule was intended to probe, in more depth, ambivalent, interesting and conflicting responses identified by the survey, discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. The interviews used semi-structured open-ended questions (Appendix B).

4.3.3 Procedures
The researcher contacted each participant by telephone to arrange a mutually convenient date for a telephone interview and to explain the purpose of it. Interviewee 1 asked for the interview to be face-to-face, selecting the time and venue.

A tape recording of the interview was made, with the consent of each interviewee. In addition, key comments and responses to the questions were noted as the interview proceeded. Once transcribed, transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for validation (Appendix E).

4.3.4 Analysis
Themes were identified in the survey to be explored in more depth. Questions used in the interview schedule emerged from the survey, thereby providing the first layer of analysis. After transcribing a qualitative analysis software package, NVivo, was used to code transcripts, identifying key themes, issues and surprises.

4.4 Results
4.4.1 Knowledge of structures
4.4.1.1 Role of the CC and PCT
Both participants commented on the role of the CC as a ‘major’ employer of staff in the programmes. Interviewee 1 identified the strong involvement of the CC, stating that they ‘drive most of the issues Sure Start was trying to achieve’ but they were not concerned in directing the project or making decisions regarding budgets. However, Interviewee 2 stated that the involvement of the Council in some areas have appeared to have been, ‘for the good of the Council rather than for Sure Start’.

Interviewee 1 identified the PCT’s role as ensuring that the financial details outlined in each of the local programme’s plan were executed. A lack of capacity and, hence, a delay in prioritising support for Sure Start, at a strategic level, within the PCT, was
mentioned by both interviewees. This resulted in members of the finance team, employed on temporary contracts, becoming involved in issues outside of their remit, such as legal and estate management issues.

4.4.1.2 Effect of the CC and PCT on the local programme
Interviewee 1 described the effect of the CC on the local programme as one of supporting and advising the programme managers, encouraging initial involvement and contributing to the planning. Their role as an ‘employer’ was also mentioned.

However, the effect of the PCT was described by both participants as having a less positive effect on the local programme.

[The] Regional [Sure Start Office] are not very happy that we have three temporary contracted people responsible for our finance and that’s because the PCT are not prepared to go the formal route which impacts for Sure Start and it costs us more money.

Interviewee 2 identified the length of time it took for decisions to be made, which was not suitable for this type of programme, which is to last ten years.

Sure Start is something that needs to react and react quickly to serve their clients effectively.

The impact on the local programmes of having two leading agencies involved in Sure Start was also thought to have added complexity and, hence, challenge.

It does actually slow things down quite dramatically …

4.4.1.3 Effect of CC and PCT on own role.
Concern was expressed by Interviewee 2 regarding the impact of the PCT’s initial lack of capacity to offer strategic support within Sure Start. This was exacerbated by the lack of permanent staff. Temporary staff were working well beyond their job description.

4.4.2 Roles and responsibilities
4.4.2.1 Complement or contradict goals of parent agency
Sure Start was felt to complement the goals of, and work closely with, other departments within Interviewee 1’s parent agency. Interviewee 1 stated that Sure Start local programmes offered ‘additionality’ to services already offered by his/her parent agency. Interviewee 2 also identified the complementary goals of his/her parent agency but indicated operational issues of his/her agency in relation to Sure Start, created particular challenges.
As far as fundamental goals are concerned I don’t think there is a conflict. It’s the actual operational issues that cause the problems.

4.4.2.2 Individual’s priorities
Both participants identified his/her priorities at a strategic level, with their involvement in the Senior Sponsors Group and at an operational level. Interviewee 1 stated,

My role is very much about supporting the programme managers in terms of recruitment, training, health and safety and looking at sharing the learning because that is really key for us.

Interviewee 2 identified their priority as effective budget management. However, comments made on the breadth of the job, such as, ‘having to get involved in a lot of areas which are really nothing to do with finance’ resulted in a ‘broader job than the title would suggest’.

4.4.3 Staffing and space
4.4.3.1 Staffing
Regarding staffing both representatives referred to the challenges posed by the fact that some staff employed by the PCT were on temporary contracts.

Permanency of positions would … (have been) nice. It’s the uncertainty really and although I have had some extremely good people working for me as soon as a permanent position comes up for them they are out of here. They are bound to be. So you spend a month training them and then they are gone.

Within local programmes Interviewee 1 expressed concern regarding vacancies, changes to the job titles and job descriptions of some programme managers and whether services would be mainstreamed in the future.

It would be the biggest shame in the world if having spent all of this money for all of these years we don’t have learning from it that made a difference. We knew it wouldn’t have an outcome within two or three years. You know at the beginning, we were told ten to make a difference.

4.4.3.2 Space
Interviewee 2 identified lack of office space as a challenge.

One of my people came in to find somebody sat at their desk.

Interviewee 2 suggested a strategy to overcome challenges to office space which would allow them to spend more time in each local programme, facilitating the relationship between those at an operational level and those at a strategic level.

If we could actually have offices out in the projects, my day-to-day management and assistance basis that would be extremely good. But at the end of the day we have to have access to PCT’s accounting system
to produce the accounts... We can't have that access unless we are actually on a PCT site.

4.4.4 Data procedures and information sharing.
Both participants mentioned challenges regarding sharing information between team members and the PCT. Interviewee 1 stated the length of time taken for Sure Start to receive information, if at all, had stopped local programmes reaching the targets set by the government.

The Sure Start Unit are frustrated because at the end of the day if we can't have the birth data, or only part of it, then our reach figures which are the national agenda of how many families you are reaching can't be met.

However, a letter sent from the senior administrator who has access to PCT records to a Sure Start family was mentioned as one strategy to share information.

We've agreed a path that is acceptable that the data goes to the senior administrators who are employed by the PCT. They then write the original letter of invitation to the person. So the letter goes from the project to the new birth. Asking if they can have a visit. And on the response 'yes' to the letter we can send anybody out. It's that initial 'yes I agree'.

4.4.5 Communication
Both participants generally agreed that communication was hindered by being centrally located and that improved Information Technology (IT) networks were needed. Interviewee 1 identified challenges posed by team members who are used to working in different ways. This was being addressed by the introduction of training sessions for team members. Ensuring dialogue with outside agencies, such as the local hospital Trust, from the onset of new appointments was identified as one way of improving communication.

Regular meetings with the Partnership Board and programme managers were considered successful ways of communicating with each together. These meetings provided opportunities for regular dialogue and information dissemination.

4.4.6 Leadership style
Interviewee 1 identified individuals, specifically the programme managers and city councillors as having 'a real willingness to share with each other, to learn and to take the lead on things' with regard the leadership style. The innovative style of one
programme manager was highlighted by Interviewee 2. The personal commitment of the programme managers was strongly identified by both participants.

You are asking them to be an excellent communicator, an excellent multi-task manager for lots of agents and people who’ve never worked together.

They’ve got a real willingness to share with each other to learn and are also willing, I think, to take the lead on things.

In terms of empowerment for parents they’re very sensitive, very thoughtful, very caring.

The ‘enormous challenges’ programme managers faced were also raised. Regarding negative approaches in leadership, the ‘biggest single problem’ was identified as the ‘insular approach’ at strategic level within the CC and PCT. The lack of leadership from the Sure Start national office, with regard to constantly changing policies was mentioned by one participant.

4.5 Discussion

Since the inception of the first of the four local Sure Start programmes in the City, four years ago, overcoming obstacles between those at a strategic level have been evident and are as yet, not entirely resolved. The working of two leading agencies in Sure Start local programmes was a recurrent theme throughout the interviews. Indeed the initial lack of capacity of the PCT and, thus, delay in prioritising involvement of the PCT was highlighted by their temporary employment of finance staff, employed to manage the Sure Start budget, and lack of office space for that finance team.

The differing nature and levels of involvement of the leading agencies towards Sure Start local programmes also affected those at an operational level. Employing staff from several differing agencies to work together in Sure Start local programmes created tensions such as different pay scales, holiday entitlement, terms and conditions and ways of working. One of the major consequences of this related to information sharing strategies. Pressure came from Central Government for Sure Start local programmes to meet targets, as part of the National Evaluation, yet the unwilling of the PCT to share data concerning clients with non-PCT employees, had not facilitated the process. This issue may be at the point of resolution, although it has taken four years to get to this position.
Clearly the relationship between the participants and the programme managers is essential in ensuring successful multi-agency working, at all levels, within the organisation. Both participants indicated their confidence and trust in the working relationship established between themselves and the programme managers. However, changes in personnel, within the leading agencies or amongst programme managers, could still pose a challenge to the development of such positive working relationships.

4.6 Conclusion

The results highlighted the complexity of the challenge facing those involved with Sure Start local programmes at a strategic level. In this case, attitudes of senior management within leading agencies, particularly the PCT, created tensions which have affected both those working at a strategic level and those working at an operational level. The results highlight the need for the clarification of roles and responsibilities of the leading agencies and their representatives from the outset of such programmes. At a strategic level there is a strong desire for success. One participant stated:

> It's a great idea in theory but we have too many people with their own agenda who are not prepared to throw their agenda away for the common good. I think that's the biggest single problem we have throughout. We do have a lot of people who will do that but they are not necessarily in a position of authority to enable it to happen.

Perhaps it has been unfortunate that, in practice, the nature of Local Authority decision-making at strategic level does not always appear to facilitate the working of personnel at an operational level towards the true agenda of Sure Start local programmes.

The next chapter will describe the results from interviews with selected SSCSE Partnership Board members.
Chapter 5
Partnership Board Interviews

5.1 Introduction
Interviews were conducted with sample members of the SSCSE Partnership Board. This chapter will report these findings from these interviews and will seek to identify and expand on the themes emerging from the data.

5.2 Aims
The overall aim of all the interviews, as previously outlined, was to explore, in depth, issues emerging in the survey of multi-agency working and investigate the key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working in the same context. The specific aim of the interviews reported in this chapter was to explore how Partnership Board members as representatives of different organisations, community ventures and programme users worked together as part of a multi-agency team. The interviews attempted to gain factual information as well as the views and interpretations of Partnership Board members.

5.3 Methods

5.3.1 Participants
The four sample board members interviewed represented the PCT, CC, an independent local charity and a parent.

5.3.2 Materials
An interview schedule was generated from responses to the survey reported in Chapter 3. The interview schedule was intended to probe, in more depth, ambivalent, interesting and conflicting responses identified by the survey. The interviews used semi-structured open-ended questions as described in the previous chapter (Appendix B).

5.3.3 Procedures
The researcher contacted the Senior Administrator of the programme who in turn contacted each participant. Letters were sent out via the Senior Administrator to the participants giving information about the content of the interview (Appendix D).
Arrangements were made for telephone interviews to take place at a time convenient to them.

During the interview the researcher noted key comments in answer to the questions. A tape-recording of the interview was also made with the consent of the interviewee. Once transcribed, transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for validation (see Appendix E).

5.3.4 Analysis
As previously mentioned, themes were identified from the survey, to be explored in more depth. Questions used in the interview schedule emerged from the survey, thereby providing the first layer of analysis. After transcribing, a qualitative analysis software package, NVivo was used to code transcripts identifying key themes, issues and surprises.

5.4 Results
5.4.1 Knowledge of Structures
5.4.1.1 Role of the CC and PCT
One participant explained the role of the Senior Sponsor group. This was a body made up of the Chief Executives of both the CC and the PCT. Programme Managers of each of the four programmes were also involved. The objective of this group was seen as helping Sure Start overcome difficulties, particularly at the beginning, with issues such as boundaries with statutory agencies. Their role was, for instance, to provide line management responsibility. It was explained that their role diminished as the programmes became established.

In terms of the South East Partnership Board their role is a little bit more tenuous now, as most of our programme is rolled out. Whereas their role in the, for example, the Coventry Sure Start North would be a lot more focused because they [are at] a stage of development.

Regarding the roles that the PCT and the CC played, it was evident that there were tensions at the beginning. For a time the CC was acting as both the Lead Agency and the Accountable Body; the then NHS trust, now the PCT, did not fulfil its role.

Back then the Health Care Trust should have been the Accountable Body but were not. So the Local Authority became the Lead Agency and Accountable Body role in the early days.
Three participants identified that the PCT did not take on their role as Accountable Body adequately at the beginning and, indeed, any decision processes were much slower than they were with other agencies involved in the programme.

Everything, to me, seems a little bit slower and this is my view. Decision making processes seem to take longer.

It was the general view that the PCT were "finding their feet" with their role as Accountable Body, and although they were "still taking some time in establishing proper support functions and financial accountability systems", they were actually becoming more effective. There was thought to be more communication between those at a strategic level and those at an operational level within the organisation, therefore decisions were being made that assisted the development of the Sure Start programme.

There appeared to be the view, from one participant, that now the programme was established the role of the CC, as it currently was, was questionable, no longer being needed to get over the initial hurdles.

Well the City Council is the Lead Agency and we have kept that on although clearly, at this stage in the Partnership Board, there is a question mark about what the role of the Lead Agency is. It's the Lead Agency in terms of developing the plan and starting the work on delivery; it is quite crucial.

The parent representative from the Partnership Board was unsure about what each of the roles were. They were aware, however, that the CC enabled new builds to take place. They also held the view that there were struggles for power within the different agencies represented.

5.4.1.2 Effect of the CC and PCT on the local programme

Some tensions were thought to be evident at the beginning of the programme by one participant. It was felt to be a bit of a struggle trying to keep the funding for Sure Start as additional to, rather than in substitute of, monies already being spent by the other agencies in the authority.

It's often local government views that there is new money in the area therefore this could be substitute money for some of the services that we run, understanding the pressures on the budgets certainly within the Local Authority. That led to some tensions and whilst the Partnership Board was established to a partnership with equal partners you know for the Primary Care Trust to deliver the plan.
Two interviewees believed that the existing structures in both the CC and PCT meant that the SS programme was slow to develop. It took too long to obtain clearance in order to spend money, when, indeed, the nature of the programme meant that the opposite should be true.

The structures within statutory bodies, for example the financial structures, and [being] accountable to the national government and local government and the way that they operate mean a slow development of Sure Start programmes.

There has been some stumbling blocks with the Primary Care Trust and the City Council around the time it’s taken to bring [about] capital projects … and planning permission and plans for backing but nothing that can't be resolved.

One Partnership Board member felt that, at a local level, the PCT were "disappointing". This member believed that the team members originating from the PCT were working independently, rather than engaging with other health workers which did not hold to the Sure Start philosophy of working in new ways.

5.4.1.3 Effect of CC and PCT on own role

Three members considered their role within the board to be one that facilitated communications between the CC and PCT. One person in particular highlighted that the Partnership Board was becoming more effective with time. Communications were more frequent and issues were being resolved.

I think that we are getting a much better voice now, … between the members of the Partnership Board. We are … getting to the key people who … make decisions, so I think that we are working together more. We have got a much closer relationship, in my view.

One member also added that because the Partnership Board was not dominated by one agency, the reality of working in partnership was easier to realise.

5.4.2 Roles and Responsibilities

5.4.2.1 Complement or contradict goals of parent agency

When asked whether the goals of Sure Start complemented or contradicted those of the parent agency that the board members represented, one member noted that whilst the two sets of goals should be complementary, especially in the light of the agenda for change and modernisation, presented by the government, through the Children Act (DfES, 2004b), the reality was that there was still work to do so that all agencies were working to the same agenda.

Well they should complement completely and utterly but, again, it's how far along the road to modernisation the Local Authority is and also the Primary Care Trust Board because there are established ways of working and established managers in both of those statutory agencies. … My perception is that the work within Sure
Start may threaten some of the established views on how to deliver services to children and families.

Another member saw this differently, suggesting that goals did not need to be the same as long as the agency was working with Sure Start and that there was communication so that services were not duplicated.

It's about growing together … main stream services and the services of Sure Start and not getting duplication. Because a lot of things that Sure Start do that … main stream [agencies] do as well and it's bringing that together.

One member saw the questioning of the aims of Sure Start and representatives' agencies as positive; it meant that there was a forum to be able to challenge established practices.

5.4.2.2 Specific aims of Sure Start differing from other agencies
The three participants that commented felt that although, traditionally, there had been more of an emphasis on intervention, agencies were keen to work in more of a preventative way, as Sure Start is set up to do. It was highlighted by two that the agencies were at different stages in the process of changing practice.

I am not sure that [the aims] differ. … The Local Authority would clearly like to do more preventative work. I mean resource issues means that it's very difficult for them to actually put preventative strategies in place in several of the areas of work in a Sure Start programme. Again within the Primary Care Trust I think the Primary Care Trust is moving forward on this wider agenda.

5.4.2.3 Individuals' priorities
Interestingly, all members interviewed viewed their role as representing the various groups they belonged to, whether voluntary, statutory or parent. This allowed the views of all interested to be represented within the Partnership Board and, hence, the programme, as well as allowing them to support the programme. Two members noted the importance of parents' views and wishes being represented and acted upon. Regarding some agencies, particularly voluntary ones, one participant noted that although there was initial involvement this had abated with time.

5.4.3 Staffing and Space
5.4.3.1 Staffing
Concerning recruitment of staff, several issues were raised by the respondents. Firstly, the lack of professionals in general, therefore having a knock-on effect with Sure Start. This was particularly poignant in terms of health professionals.
I think it's a national problem ... around nursery nurses, health visitors, speech therapists and that obviously affects people like Sure Start and other organisations. Its just about making it more attractive isn't it and what we can do within Sure Start to attract people in. ... I think it's just an ongoing problem within the health service at the moment.

We are [trying] at the moment to get a midwife and a speech and language therapist [assistant]. We have put the adverts out but no one seems to have come forward.

There was also a problem when a member of staff left; it took a long time to re-fill the post which meant that services started by the original employer were not always able to continue.

Secondly, one Board member expressed surprise at, what was considered, duplication of services offered by other agencies, due to the recruitments that had been made for the Sure Start programme.

I am amazed at how many people are involved on the staff, especially as I see other people from other agencies doing some of these jobs already.

Thirdly, one person identified that the staff they were looking to employ, as a Sure Start local programme, were those who could perhaps offer a bit more than what was required in the equivalent, mainstream post. This narrowed down the number of potential employees. Another person agreed with this, noting that the families living in the areas covered by Sure Start had “multi-layered needs” and, therefore, staff were required to be flexible and provide the “one-to-one personal contact” that they needed.

Also related to the issue of staffing was the mainstreaming agenda. One participant noted that it was an issue that ought to be regarded with immediate seriousness as time was running out. Those services provided by Sure Start staff would be lost if they were not taken onboard by the parent agencies that the Sure Start staff belonged to.

Well that's a difficult one. Well the key challenge at the moment is the mainstreaming [agenda]. ... Mainstreaming will have to start coming about because that funding is only up to 2006/7 and that's an agenda that really, I think, hasn't been grasped as it should be yet by either the Primary Care Trust or the Local Authority. Some discussion does go on but I am not sure how far. I would like to see that much further progressed.

5.4.3.2 Space

In terms of space to operate services, two participants mentioned the decision, from the outset of programme development, to use existing buildings rather than setting up new ones. This has created both positive and negative situations. For example, using
multiple venues means that the programme can reach the people involved in their own communities.

We have done very well over in Sure Start South East because our parents decided that they did not want a flagship building. Because our programme stretches across, possibly, two distinct neighbourhoods, with the initial programme development stage we decided that we would use existing facilities within the area. [This] has meant that we have been able to be very flexible and attempt to accommodate meetings and work with parents on the Partnership Board within their own locality.

It has meant, however, that not all venues were as ideal as the programme would like them to be for delivering services.

The only problem is … space. … [At] some Stay and Play [sessions], the [staff] have to take the stuff to the venue and then, of course, because they have got to carry it all there, it’s a health hazard for them and [having to] pack it away all the time. … There is just no space for them to keep their stuff.

In terms of office space for the Sure Start team, not having to wait for new buildings to be completed meant that the programme got underway reasonably quickly, taking tenancies or ownership of existing buildings. However, it has also meant that there has often been a lack of space for those that needed it. This situation had eased since the team acquired office space in the new health centre in Willenhall and the one new build that was planned specifically for Sure Start, a Children’s Centre, had been completed.

We have just opened this new building in Willenhall so Sure Start have got some offices downstairs and as far as venues go we are pretty good.

5.4.4 Data procedures and Information Sharing

5.4.4.1 Data procedures

When asked if they were aware of the procedures that the Sure Start team members used to gather, store and retrieve data related to Sure Start families, two of the four Partnership Board members were not. One member noted that information was taken from registration forms for monitoring purposes for the programme.

5.4.4.2 Information Sharing

When asked if there were any problems with information sharing for team members there was a mixed response from the interviewees.

One member was of the opinion that at the beginning of the programme, other professionals, outside of Sure Start were concerned about their jobs and the role that Sure Start was to play in the area. This situation resulted in a lack of trust and,
therefore, a lack of communication of information. This was overcome once people realised that Sure Start was not intended to take over from the main services and there was no longer a problem.

One board member noted that “there is some difficulty over sharing of information between agencies and respecting confidentiality”. Another member noted that this was “not just a Sure Start Problem but with other agencies as well”. This person’s opinion was that the condition was beginning to improve and those involved, from the various agencies, were starting to debate how confidential information could be shared amongst professionals.

5.4.5 Communication
Concerning communication, the respondents identified both successes and challenges.

5.4.5.1 Successes
Several board members thought that communication within and between all parties, that is the team, the Partnership Board and the agencies involved, was strong in this programme.

Good feedback, … that’s crucial. Things are fed back, positive things, about Sure Start and it's fed to all the relevant organisations.

One board member expressed the view that liaison between the board and decision-makers from the two leading agencies involved with Sure Start were progressing and that these senior figures were more aware of the needs of Sure Start.

I think that there has been more communication between the partners. … There has been more communication from the top down and bottom up, basically.

The board members appeared to have easy access to the team. One board member noted that s/he had maintained regular contact with them. Slightly more formal communication between the whole board and the whole team was also seen as an asset.

I think in the South East they have got a … programme manager who does very well to communicate with the team. I think that she has very good meetings with them and the information gets fed both ways; from the Partnership Board down and back.

There was a difference in view about how often the Partnership Board met; one person thought it to be about once a month and another thought every three months.
Attendance was variable and it was noted by one member that membership was about to be reviewed as there had been some resignations and they had yet to be replaced.

Times of board meetings were changed to accommodate parent members, highlighting the focus of the programme board that parents were to drive the programme. This was acknowledged by one parent from the board:

Well they have actually just said it's up to the parents, if we choose to have it at a different time then by all means and let the family environment officer know and they can arrange another time with everybody. Because it's parent-based and we can choose whatever time we want so we chose to have it in the mornings because it's easier and they have done that.

This parent also explained how information was passed between board and parents through a team member, whose post involved liaising between parents and the board.

Parents know and have a choice, [they] have a say in what's going on.

Pertaining to communication about services to the communities served by the programme one member thought that information was easily accessible for the people, the most effective way being utilised most of the time.

I think the information packs and information services offered by Sure Start are fairly readily available. I mean, we could probably get more outlets but I think generally it is there but it's really directing people to them. So I think that the most effective way is paper.

Contrary to this view, one member thought that leaflets were often less than effective as there were poor levels of literacy in the Sure Start area.

Another success was thought, by two of the board members, to be the face-to-face contact that ensued; “just wandering around the community meeting parents and children”. Most team members had opportunities to do this as part of their function for Sure Start. Also, the team were easily identifiable by their uniforms. This, too, was thought to be a good form of communication.

5.4.5.2 Challenges
Many of the successes for good communication also had their more challenging aspects. Possible problems with working in such an inter-agency way were noted by one member. One of the partner agencies, for example, might not want to work in the way proposed by the other agencies.
Partnership Board meetings proved difficult to arrange. Trying to find a time when everybody could make the meeting was almost impossible. Due to this there was thought to be few meetings when all partners attended.

One member highlighted the difficulty that parents on the Partnership Board faced; the meetings were too formal. It raised the concern that the parents, who should be helping to steer the development of the programme, would be disempowered. It was thought that new ways of obtaining the parents views were to be found.

One Board member noted that the programme had started offering a new service that was held at the same time as a service offered by one of the partners in the area. This was viewed as a less than effective way to utilise resources in the area.

5.4.6 Hard-to-reach strategies
The programme had adopted both formal and informal strategies for trying to assume contact with those in the community deemed 'hard-to-reach'.

A cross-programme forum was established which created a forum for all programmes to meet and discuss ways of engaging people within their areas.

Three different groups of people, within the area, were identified as specific groups that were hard to engage. One group, identified in the final plan for the South East, was that of travelling families. The Sure Start area included a large traveller's site, with which Sure Start workers engaged.

They have got a team who actually go out and introduce themselves and ask them if there is anything that they would like. They have got a great relationship, at the moment, at the traveller's site. ... The children always ask when they are coming back. ... They are building up a great relationship with the mothers as well.

A newer aspect of the programme was working with asylum-seekers and refugees. This strategy was, at the time of interview, not fully developed. The third aspect, viewed as "probably the most difficult", by one board member, was engaging with parents who felt that they had had really bad experiences with statutory agencies. Team members have also been made aware of certain issues relevant to the area, such as drug and alcohol abuse. One member felt that, with many of the issues in the area, it was "about raising awareness within team members".
One member identified that Sure Start workers were working with their equivalents in the main stream services, promoting the work of each other in both formal and informal ways.

As noted previously, informal contact was viewed the best way to engage with people who may not access the services independently. As one member noted: “your physical presence is important”.

5.5 Discussion

The interviews reveal the sense of pride and the successes of Sure Start: the project has “touched the lives of many families; having an extra team coming into the community has made a difference”.

I am massively enthusiastic of Sure Start because in my experience, it’s one of the very first initiatives that has looked to break that wicked cycle. … It’s the frame of poverty, low expectations, poor access to services and so on and I actually think that Sure Start is something that … will start to break some of that cycle, not working on its own, but working with partners.

At the same time, the interviews show the early tensions, in terms of roles and responsibilities, between the local programme and leading agencies that took time to establish proper functions and support systems. Challenges in terms of staff recruitment, buildings, communication and information sharing are all identified but there is a sense of trust being build and improvements being made. As noted by one participant: “there is a pace of change thing that statutory bodies find difficult … it’s almost like trying to turn the Titanic round … I am not sure many statutory agencies recognise the potential for Sure Start”. Another participant acknowledged this.

It's a learning curve for most organisations. I think it's often bandied about – working in collaboration – but in practice it's more difficult than actually it is in theory. But I think it's about working hard at it and getting people together and having a shared vision.

5.4 Conclusion

These findings highlight the difficulties for those involved on the partnership board, including the PCT’s initial lack of commitment to the programme through lack of capacity, and duplication of existing services. Dialogue between all stakeholders is
essential in ensuring successful multi-agency working and the role parents play should not be underestimated.

The next chapter will describe the results of interviews with selected team members of SSCSE.
Chapter 6
Team Member Interviews

6.1 Introduction
Selected team members were interviewed. This chapter will report the findings from these interviews and will seek to discover and develop the themes emerging from the data.

6.2 Aims
The overall aim of all the interviews was to explore, in depth, issues which were identified in the survey of multi-agency working, reported in Chapter 3, and to investigate the key factors of success and challenges of multi-agency working in the same context. The specific aim of these interviews was to gain an insight into the operational workings of team members. The interviews attempted to gain factual information as well as the views and interpretations of team members.

6.3 Methods

6.3.1 Participants
Five team members of differing levels of seniority and positions were selected to be interviewed. The length of time that they had been involved in SSCSE varied. The newest team member interviewed had been employed there for slightly less than one year, and another had been there for eighteen months. One person had worked there for two years and the other two staff members were part of the original team; they had worked there for just over 3 years. There was a mixture of full- and part-time staff.

6.3.2 Materials
An interview schedule was generated from responses to the survey. The interview schedule was intended to probe, in more depth, ambivalent, interesting and surprising responses identified by the survey. The interviews used semi-structured open-ended questions as described in Chapter 4 (see Appendix B).
6.3.3 Procedures
The researcher contacted the Senior Administrator of the programme who in turn contacted each team member identified to be interviewed. Arrangements were made for telephone interviews to take place at a time convenient to them.

A tape-recording of the interview was made with the consent of the interviewee. In addition, key comments and responses to the questions asked were noted as the interview proceeded. Once transcribed, transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for validation (see Appendix E).

6.3.4 Analysis
As previously mentioned, themes were identified in the survey to be explored in more depth. Questions used in the interview schedule emerged from the survey, thereby providing the first layer of analysis. After transcribing a qualitative analysis software package, NVivo, was used to code transcripts identifying key themes, issues and surprises.

6.4 Results
6.4.1 Knowledge of structures
   6.4.1.1 Role of the CC and PCT
Regarding the role that the CC played within Sure Start, all members were aware of the strategic lead taken by the leading agencies. It was also noted that the CC were heavily involved with setting up the project, for example, choosing the area that would become SSCSE.

One member remarked upon the larger involvement that the CC had with the educational side of Sure Start. “The majority of the staff are employed by the council” so there was also an interest in personnel matters with the staff employed by them.

   They are the ones who applied to the City Council to become part of the Sure Start programme and they … did the early consultations to identify the areas where programmes would be most appropriate. So I think that they are quite an important stakeholder in it. My understanding is that the City Council did most of that element of work with support from a number of professionals within the Primary Care Trust. … I see them as a strategic lead and they are the Lead Agency to the project. But I would also see them as a key stakeholder in making a difference really.
One member noted that City Councillors sat on the Partnership Board, so there was also a more local and somewhat personal involvement from representatives of the LA as well as the larger one. Another member mentioned how, when the programme was without a manager, someone from the CC “stepped in immediately to provide strategic management”.

Regarding the role of the PCT, most staff were aware that their primary function was that of dealing with finance, being the Accountable Body for the project. They were also a supplier of staff, mostly related to fulfilling the health targets of the project, but were seen to take a less ‘hands on’ approach to the project than that of the CC. One member noted that staff from the PCT were “left more to get on with what they do”.

Another staff member commented that there were less people that appeared to be involved with the project at a strategic level from the PCT.

There seems to me that there is a lot less people within the Primary Care Trust to take strategic leads of projects that are to do with public health like ours. … In the Primary Care Trust [it] seems that there is a lot less people to do that strategic work. It's always like just a couple of people, so consequently there is not enough people. … So I think that it’s not that they don’t understand the need, it's just that they are not sufficiently manned. They haven’t got the resources to really manage how Sure Start can work from the health perspective.

6.4.1.2 Effect of the CC and PCT on the local programme

The CC and PCT were seen as imperative, in that without their involvement, the programme would not operate. One member noted that “without them [the] programme would not run”.

Having both health- and education-based organisations were seen as complementary, meaning that families had access to a whole range of services in the same place. One member commented that this approach was even more effective because families were seeing the same staff members regularly and were able to build up relationships with them.

I have seen it work and I have had parents tell me that it works, not only because it’s in one place, it’s because they have got to know and trust different members of staff.
The bureaucracy that surrounded both organisations was also seen as a hindrance by several staff members. Having to place orders and certain requests took a lot longer because the Sure Start programme was not able to act independently. Almost inconsequential matters were also demonstrated to prove a problem. For example when internal post was not collected and transferred regularly between the organisations, various matters were dealt with at a much slower pace than would have been the case if SS were independent.

We ... become part of a bureaucratic system; for instance having our invoices paid and our orders met. We can't directly order things, we have to order them through suppliers approved by the Primary Care Trust or there are limits on how much you can spend and those sorts of things. But if we were an organisation in our own right we wouldn't have that.

The CC’s procedures were followed for most aspects of the programme but due to some staff being PCT employees and others being NHS employees, all three systems had to be known, particularly by the administration team. One team member mentioned that it may be better to “have an overall policy for Sure Start” instead. Having to remember which set of procedures to use in which circumstance proved a challenge.

Frustration was expressed by one staff member over an issue resulting from SS not being informed of procedure changes with which they then had to comply.

The Primary Care Trust changed the finance expenses form and we never had the new one. So we were only informed when we sent in the wrong one.

The PCT were identified as often having a negative effect on the programme by some staff members, not because there was a lack of interest from them but because they were seen as reluctant to endorse certain practices without hard, quantitative evidence, which was not yet available.

I don’t think it’s because they haven’t got the interest. I think it’s the fact that unless they can absolutely prove that something works, they don’t take risks. ... The Primary Care Trust ... relies much more on quantitative research.

This staff member felt that there needed to be some sort of compromise between the two agencies, where more evidence of a quantitative nature was provided by those who did not normally do so but also, that less was expected by those who did.
There also seemed to be much less strategic involvement and direction from the PCT. It was highlighted that the CC had provided a project officer whose remit included the four SS programmes in the city. There was, however, said to be no equivalent post in the PCT.

The project officer who leads Sure Start in Coventry is not funded by Sure Start [but] the City Council, … but there isn't a mirror image within the Primary Care Trust

Many of the issues highlighted were thought to be on their way to resolution. It was noted that there had already been improvements and that regular meetings were now scheduled between the CC, the PCT and SS, in order to share information.

6.4.1.3 Effect of CC and PCT on own role.

One member, noting that the PCT were the financial managers of the programme, felt that they had a large effect on her role. They provided her wages.

Staff members worked different hours, had different holiday entitlements and the way days of sickness were recorded according to whether they were CC of PCT employees. This meant that forms had to be sent to the correct agency, dependent on which staff member was involved.

Also, depending on which organisation the team member originated from, staff had a line manager in their SS programme manager but also had professional management from representatives from one of the leading agencies.

All team members were aware of the SS targets that they were to be working to. They were not expected to work to targets from the CC or PCT, but were governed by the SS targets.

6.4.2 Roles and responsibilities

6.4.2.1 Complement or contradict goals of parent agency

No staff member felt that the local programme contradicted the fundamental goals of either the CC or the PCT. For instance, one team member noted that, although taking on a very different role within SS compared to a mainstream role, the SS role enabled this team member to fulfil that was wanted by the mainstream service and, indeed, provided the means for it to happen.
In [the main service] that's what we have always aimed to do. … It's a very different role but very complementary to what happens through the [parent agency].

Several interviewees noted that the complementary nature of SS with the leading agencies was not particularly planned but happened anyway. One team member explained that because SS is parent-led this is what drives the programme. Another perceived that there were often coincidences that occurred that seemed to work in everyone's favour. An example was given:

As Sure Start came on stream the Social Services closed all their nursery provision across the city. … We then came in to provide a service that the City Council absolutely needed. So we complemented the aims of the authority very well.

One area, not thought to necessary conflict but to differ between SS and the leading agencies was the area of prevention versus intervention. Several respondents observed that the main aim of SS was “to do a lot more work generally, with all families, to improve the community as a whole”, rather than intervene at a time of crisis as many other agencies did.

I think … a lot of places … are very focused on crisis management and dealing with things as and when it happens and Sure Start is trying to prevent everything.

One interviewee noted that intervention was also needed but it was important to keep prevention as the focus of SS. Another respondent also remarked that the type of work carried out by SS was the type of work that the main service would like to offer but did not have the funding for.

6.4.2.2 Complement or contradict goals of other agencies

When asked about SS in relation to the goals of other agencies in the area, the general consensus was that all were working toward the same aims, even though the priorities of each agency might differ.

Regarding working in partnership with both the leading agencies and others, one member posed the challenge that those involved faced – trust.

It's about working in true partnership, and if they want to do that they have got to trust you. They haven't got to think that you are going to go away behind their back and do something that impacts on their services.
6.4.2.3 Individuals’ priorities

In terms of each individual’s priorities, all were clear about their role and personal responsibilities. Job descriptions/formal roles were seen as broader than the traditional roles they may have once held.

I see my role very much as one of being part of a multi-agency team and therefore it does fit in with Sure Start

My job description is quite varied but it also you can pin point where exactly I stand within the project.

This meant that support was needed through the uncomfortable period as staff adjusted. However, all felt that their jobs fed into, and complemented, those of others in the team.

There is an issue where people have worked in a certain way for a long time … and need to be supported to change a little bit.

The roles held within SS were not only seen as providing the specific services to the children and families in the area but also giving away skills and knowledge to other professionals, both in and out of SS.

Raising the profile of [service] across the team and across the specialists in the whole area.

6.4.3 Staffing and space

6.4.3.1 Staffing

Each person interviewed indicated that recruitment was difficult. Not all posts were filled which meant that some activities could not take place. The impact of staff leaving and the posts not being filled very quickly meant that even some activities that had started had to be stopped, bringing disappointment to the service users.

If we … start a group in the community …then … the posts [leave] and it’s the impact, then, on the parents, having a service taken away but not having the staff to fill that gap.

One of the reasons given for the delay in filling some of the posts, by two respondents, was that advertisements took a relatively long time to make it into the public domain. This was not within the control of the SS programme.

It’s not … that people aren’t applying for the jobs, it’s that they are not being advertised in the first place. … Rather than placing an advert in the paper we have to go through the appropriate Lead Agency or Accountable Body and get it put through their systems which … takes … longer.
One person also thought that because of the general shortages of some professionals, the endorsing agencies may have felt that 'losing' a professional to SS was not in the best interest of the professional community.

Another member of staff highlighted the issue of staff contracts. Although still working for SS his/her original employment contract had expired at the time of interview and there was no new contract in place.

I am a contracted post and, in fact, the contract has run out now. … They are still paying me and I have just written another letter asking them about it.

Indeed, one person identified that staff in key positions were only temporary members of staff. This meant that there was no guarantee that these temporary staff members would be in post for very long, causing instability in that area of the work.

The [employee] that we have had for nearly twelve months has … left …with a vast amount of knowledge about the project. We have now got another temporary member of staff and we have got to start all over again. … The finance manager is a temporary member of staff and if they both leave … we could theoretically be in a position where nobody knows what's going on in finance.

Time management issues were also identified by two of the team members. As the roles that the staff fulfilled in SS were very varied, it was felt that it was difficult to complete all desired activities. There was an increased need, it was felt, to identify priorities for each period of time and stick to them. Added to this, as one person noted, was the ability to be able to respond to parents’ needs. This might mean that planned priorities needed to change.

Overall, relationships between the staff representing the multitude of professions working for SS were viewed as positive. One interviewee explained how all staff were “working together and everybody [got] on which [was] very important”.

6.4.3.2 Space

The programme operates from several sites. Between these sites there was a general consensus by all interviewed that enough office space was available. It was noted that the programme manager shared an office in order to make this possible.
Aside from one, all buildings occupied by SSCSE were existing buildings. This was the desire of the local parents. The implications of this were that the space available was not always as ideal as it could be for running activities.

> It would be lovely to have space at Barley Lea to run groups, but … we don’t have any space to run groups at all.

Small rooms were considered reasonably easy to get access to but larger venues were more difficult. It often resulted in the programme having to rent space for such activities which was felt to be a less than ideal situation.

It was also felt that using existing buildings sometimes had its disadvantage in that the reputation of the building was not always favourable and was a barrier to possible service users in the beginning. This problem was felt to have dissipated with time.

Storage space was viewed as more problematic, both within the SS buildings and at the various venues used by SS to run activities. Due to the volume of resources used, all staff identified how there would always be a need of increased storage space. When using other venues, staff became “like pack horses” because the venues were not exclusively used by SS.

> They have to [take] everything to a venue in their car and then they have to leave venues as if they weren’t there.

### 6.4.4 Data procedures and information sharing.

#### 6.4.4.1 Data procedures

All staff were aware of the procedures for storing data. It was known that the process for doing so was changing, from one where various staff members stored their own data to one where all information was to be kept centrally, enabling any member of staff to know what contact various families had had with SSCSE.

Initially everybody had their own set of records and a certain amount of space but over the last … nine months or so was realised that you could [have] embarrassing moments when, say, one member of staff didn’t know another member of staff was working with a family.

#### 6.4.4.2 Information sharing

The sharing of information, even between SS staff members, proved a difficult area. Most problems surrounded the local PCT. Firstly, there was "no sharing between
internal agencies". Staff who were also PCT employees were very clear of their inability to share information with employees originating from the CC.

It also occurred at a higher level. SS, as an organisation, was unable to obtain information directly from the PCT. Although members identified that they have "now, just, had a data sharing protocol between the City Council and the Primary Care Trust" it was indicated that the delay in the creation of this protocol meant that certain government-set targets had not been met.

We haven't … met any of our targets for [government-set target], whereas now we are starting to build up again on it.

Ironically, even those staff considered PCT employees within SSCSE were unable to access information at times.

Despite these difficulties, presently being resolved, it was very clear from all interviewees that, at the operational level, staff saw the value in sharing relevant information.

The people who work in the project now are very committed to sharing information. They understand that it's the only way that we can help the families that we deal with.

6.4.5 Communication

There were various successes and challenges with regard to communication at a variety of levels. The area that SSCSE operated in was identified as one that increasingly contained people who had various languages, other than English, as their mother tongue. In order to meet the needs of all groups of people within the area, one team member explained that, by using census information and by looking at the ethnicity of those who access SS, they were in the process of developing information sheets in various languages that could be given out to parents in the area.

One challenge in communicating with parents was that as parents relocated, whether within or out of the SS area, they did not inform the SS office.

Having several sites where team members were based, in conjunction with the volume of staff located at each, proved a challenge to effective communication. One person explained that it was "difficult … because it [was] very easy to have thought that you had communicated something to everybody and you [hadn't]". Tolerance with this was
seen as a virtue that staff possessed. One representative explained that "to keep highlighting what [was] happening" helped the situation.

Team members indicated that due to a variety of reasons, such as staffing services for parents that were full- or part-time, they might find it "very difficult to get together as a team".

The main problem with communication is that because of the services that we run, and [because] we run services when parents want them, we find it very difficult to get together as a team. Although we have a team meeting every fortnight you know it's not attended by every member of the team. … A lot of the team are part-time and a lot of the team are outreach workers so they work in people’s homes or at different sites.

One member expressed the view that "conventional meetings [were] not always how we [could] do things, they [were] a bit slow". Other methods were needed.

In spite of these challenges the general relationships between the staff body were viewed as good, implying that when staff did meet successful communication was assumed.

We don't really have any problems with it at all. We are quite a close team. We have a great sense of teamwork here.

This meant that various team members could promote the services of others. By communicating with each other they had enough knowledge to do so.

A further problem was access to information and communication technology facilities by different team members. Dependent upon the site at which staff were based, they might be using different systems. For example, some staff had access to the PCT system and others were not yet able to use full CC facilities in the same way. Even when this system was available it would mean that staff might "have two completely different systems" to work from.

In terms of other agencies in the area, both statutory and voluntary, team members felt that, overall, they had good or improving relationships and, therefore, effective communication with them. One team member highlighted how, in order to maintain this, it was important to make sure the work that each was doing was not duplicated by SS.

It comes back to … letting people know what you are doing and if it's not impinging on their areas it's, hopefully, supporting them.
Identified by several interviewees was the importance of personal communication. Good relationships were felt to be established with various agencies due to "face-to-face" communication and by being located in the middle of the community.

As noted, formal meetings were set up between staff members and informal meetings were encouraged, in order to keep information sharing up to date. There was also a forum, identified by one staff member, where different professionals could meet with their counterparts from other programmes, both across the City and more widely.

Further systems acknowledged as successful within the programme were diary sheets, that all team members completed, meaning that administrative staff could locate everyone, and a memo postage system, where notes could be left for various staff members.

6.4.6 Hard-to-reach strategies
One interviewee explained that there were various groups of people considered hard-to-reach. As with communication, hard-to-reach strategies were both formal and informal. Leaflets and posters, targeted at certain people groups were used to try and inform them.

It was also explained by one person that activities were promoted and if there was a lack of interest, team members would rethink and try something else "in order to keep [families] motivated to get out and do things".

Moreover, the four Sure Start local programme leaders in Coventry met periodically in order to discuss similar matters. This group has invited "different professionals from different agencies to get together" to attempt to identify practices that would encourage those deemed hard-to-reach to access services.

Finally, one team member explained that when engaging with a family that was considered hard-to-reach they "will visit the parent and … go very slowly" so that they are not overwhelmed. This approach has had successful results. In relation to one area in SSCSE, this team member stated:

    I can honestly say that we are the only agency that I have known of that are working actively [in the area].
Another important factor in reaching families seen as hard-to-reach was to use each professionals’ expertise within the team and combining this with what the families wanted from SS.

Accepting other professionals in the team’s expertise and actively listening to families and parents about what they want.

6.5 Discussion

The interviews in many ways highlighted areas of concern raised in the original survey but also indicated that issues were being resolved. Participants acknowledged the significant role of the CC and the PCT whilst recognising, at the same time, that organisation bureaucracies could serve as a hindrance. Whilst the PCT had, in general, had less strategic involvement and direction than the CC, there were signs that concerns were being addressed.

Overall, it was felt that SS goals complemented those of other agencies as one participant expressed it: “it does work, it can work and it is working”. There were still challenges regarding recruitment of staff and renewal of staff contracts. There were uncertainties about time management, storage space and buildings. Despite the frustrations, relationships between staff and, in particular, multiple representations of professionals from different agencies were viewed positively:

It's about working in true partnership and if [people] want to do that they have got to trust you. They haven't got to think that you are going to go away behind their back and do something that impacts on their services.

No, I think it's the way of the future and I think it's the thing on the ground that the people will understand. They don't really care who you work for or what your job is.

Information sharing was still a challenge and staff from different agencies might be using different electronic systems. This, however, was being resolved. Accessing the ‘hard-to-reach’ were being tackled at the both the programme and city level.

6.6 Conclusion

Despite the complexity of the challenge facing those working in such settings multi-agency working was successful at an operational level. Uniformity of procedures across programmes such as data gathering procedures and information sharing policies was
still to be standardised. However, this team was seeking to establish strategies to overcome such difficulties. Finally, the results served as a reminder of the importance of the commitment of the individuals who delivered the services.
Chapter 7
Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter seeks to draw together the various elements of this study. The aims of the study were to explore, in depth, issues that were identified in the earlier survey of multi-agency working (Dahl and Aubrey, 2004) and to investigate the key factors of success and the challenges of multi-agency working.

The opportunity to research multi-agency working in SSCSE arose from the University’s local evaluation of the four Sure Start local programmes in Coventry, of which multi-agency working represented one factor. This study was conducted part way through the Government’s ten-year childcare strategy, of which Sure Start local programmes formed one element. However, as mentioned in Chapter 1, since commencing this study it has been announced that Sure Start local programmes will cease to exist, in their current form, as they will be ‘rolled out’ to become Sure Start Children’s Centres within the next two years (Glass, 2005:2).

7.2 Research questions

The research questions arising from this study, as set out in Chapter 1, were:

- How much is known about effective multi-agency working?
- What are the key factors of the success and what are the challenges of multi-agency working in Sure Start local programmes?
- What future lessons can be learned from multi-agency working for widespread circulation?

Each of the questions will be addressed in the light of the literature and empirical work presented in this study.

7.2.1 How much is known about effective multi-agency working?

Since the arrival of the Labour administration in 1997, one key element of the Government’s policy agenda has been to create a ‘joined-up’ approach to strategy and service delivery. The literature reveals that as part of the Government’s agenda of
social inclusion, multi-agency working in the area of early childhood has seen a rapid growth.

Despite the number of initiatives introduced by the Government in the last eight years, the literature demonstrates that little attention has been paid to how multi-agency working can be achieved. Atkinson et al., (2001:2002) highlighted both the complexity and potential of working in multi-agency settings. Their study emphasised the investment needed, in financial resources and in time and commitment of the staff at delivery level, to develop new ways of working and also the attitudinal shift required by those at all levels to provide a successful initiative.

It appears from the results of this study that, perhaps through an initial lack of capacity, the PCT seemed to have provided insufficient support for the Sure Start local programmes. This, in turn, affected decisions at strategic and operational levels and team members within the programme. Notwithstanding this, the individuals employed by the PCT to work with team and Partnership Board members, were committed to the programme. At an operational level the dedication of the staff was evident through their positive responses and enthusiasm.

7.2.2 What are the key factors of success and challenges raised by multi-agency working in this particular Sure Start local programme?

The literature reveals that there is a lack of research into multi-agency working in the context of early year’s settings. Only a couple of studies identified related directly, or solely, to multi-agency working in a Sure Start context. However, despite the small number of studies which have looked at the key factors of success and challenges raised by multi-agency working, the literature revealed that regardless of the context, these key factors are similar.

The interviews revealed that the representatives of the leading agencies, Partnership Board representatives and team members, offered differing insights and perspectives with regard to what they believed to constitute the key factors of success and challenges raised by multi-agency working in this particular programme. Generally, multi-agency working at a delivery level was seen positively, whilst at a strategic level, inevitable delays in local authority decision-making was viewed less positively. In fact, this has been highlighted in a recent press report, which stated that working in a 'joined-
up’ way turned out to be problematic at higher levels, whilst at local levels it ‘often worked very well’ (Glass, 2005:2).

At a delivery level, several challenges of multi-agency working, noted in the literature, were identified by this programme. For example, communication, the number of locations, temporary building accommodation and lack of storage space created a challenge to this programme.

Whilst successes were mentioned, predominately by team members, there were many challenges to be faced. Despite Sure Start local programmes being present in the city for four years, the main challenge identified by all respondents was having two leading agencies involved, specifically the apparent initial indifferent attitude and lack of commitment of staff at a senior management level within the PCT. This, in turn, affected staff working at both strategic and operational levels. Having two leading agencies, creating many tensions, did not provide an effective model of multi-agency working for others in less senior positions to adopt.

Several issues, pertinent to this programme, but not identified as key challenges in the literature, were noted as being significant in the empirical results. Challenges particular to this programme included frustrations with sharing information and access to client details and, fairly or unfairly, the PCT was regarded as the source of these difficulties.

Whilst the literature identified the key factors for the success and the challenges raised by multi-agency working, few solutions and strategies were identified to overcome such challenges. However those working at a delivery level did, such as establishing a strategy for data procedures and sharing information.

**7.2.3 What future lessons can be learned from multi-agency working for widespread dissemination?**

Clearly, co-locating staff from partner agencies to work together when still employed by a parent agency created tensions for those working as team members, for those involved on the Partnership Board and for the representatives of the leading agencies. However from the very outset of Sure Start, the concept of ‘joined-up’ working appeared to have been challenging. Initially, Sure Start was a programme involving several Government Departments such as the Treasury, the DOH and DfES where a Health
Minister took the day-to-day lead. It then reverted solely to DfES control, to be run jointly by the DfES/Department for Work and the Pensions Minister. From this time, the role of the DOH, ‘never Sure Start’s most devoted fan, faded even further into the background’ (Glass, 2005).

Eight years after announcing the arrival of Sure Start local programmes, the Government has announced the dismantling of its ‘much-lauded’ 550 Sure Start local programmes and their replacement by 3,500 Sure Start Children’s Centres (Glass, 2005: 2). Sure Start Children’s Centres, however, will require the continuing and even extended commitment of the two agencies in working together. Indeed, Hodge (2005a) confirmed that the local authority would also take over the financial management of such programmes, thereby confirming the withdrawal of the PCT’s involvement. The Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners stated that it would, however, be twelve months before full details of how these reforms would be realised (DfES, 2004a).

Perhaps the community aspect and the partnership with parents is one of the most positive features of Sure Start local programmes. The programmes were to be ‘owned’ by local communities, parents and those who worked in the programme, in order for those for whom the programme was supposed to benefit could help shape the programme to work for them. Moreover, the empirical results highlight the role parents play in Sure Start and the importance of stakeholders to be engaged and involved in decision making.

It appears that multi-agency working, heralded as a success by Government, seen in Sure Start local programmes will be a feature of the new Children’s Centres. Interviews conducted with the other three programmes participating in this study highlight that the mainstreaming of some services is already beginning to happen across the City, for example speech and language services offered within Sure Start.

A striking theme recurring through all the interviews is the amount of time needed to work successfully as part of a multi-agency team at all levels, in addition to the time taken to ensure the trust of local communities and parents. Effective multi-agency working, without clear guidelines as to how this is to be achieved, is going to take time to establish, at least ten years according to the Government’s initial announcement (Glass, 1999). Alistair Darling, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury posed the question,
before the programme was launched, ‘How can you assure me that this programme will not lead in ten year’s time to a lot of boarded-up, fly-blown family centres such as I have seen in my own constituency and elsewhere?’ (Glass, 2005). In October 1999, there were only two local projects up and running yet, by July 2000, the programme was extended to five hundred and fifty local projects. Sure Start local programmes were perhaps expanded too quickly on a national scale before evidence, based on real experience of running it, had been accumulated.

7.3 The limitations of the study

The period given to collect data was governed by time constraints of the local evaluation of the four Sure Start local programmes. In some instances, personnel failed to keep appointments for interviews, although every effort was made to reschedule interviews at their convenience. This resulted in the data gathering taking place over a longer period of time than anticipated.

The time allowed for this study, therefore, resulted in focusing on personnel working within the programme. Whilst this provided valuable information, other stakeholders’ views did not feature. A further study might seek to elicit the views of those working in partner agencies and outside agencies, regarding multi-agency working in the context of working with Sure Start. This would provide an overview of how multi-agency working is viewed by all stakeholders and the impact it has had in different sectors. This leads us back to a particular finding in Chapter 3 related to the survey: Sure Start Coventry South East were divided in view as to whether the management strategy to bring along participants from various agencies facilitated multi-agency work. Moreover, it serves as a reminder that by focusing on participants’ perceptions of multi-agency working (strategic and operational) it may have under-estimated a very important aspect of the way any team operates, that is, its management. Øvretveit et al (1997) suggest that there are two specific challenges to creating management structures in multi-disciplinary teams. First is the challenge of establishing management which allows members from different professions appropriate autonomy. Second, there is a need to establish responsibility for managing the total resources of the team. Øvretveit et al describe five types of management structure for teams: profession-managed, where practitioners are managed within their professions by line managers; the single manager, who manages all practitioners regardless of their professional discipline, including ‘clinical’ supervision, advice and management monitoring; joint management, which is a mixture of the two
previous types; *team manager-contracted*, where has a budget and ‘contracts in’ the services of different professionals; and *hybrid management* based on characteristics of the other four types. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this piece of research to investigation the relationship between the type of management that has evolved in Sure Start, further pieces of evaluation might look specifically at the relationship of the particular management type adopted and the extent to which this facilitates multi-agency work from particular agencies.

### 7.4 Conclusion

This study highlights the complexity of the challenge facing those working in Sure Start local programmes. With the recent statement announcing the end of the ten year Sure Start local programmes it can only be hoped that Sure Start principles are established and embedded in Sure Start Children’s Centres. However, there is no evidence that new organisations such as local authority Children’s Trusts can bring into the mainstream the Sure Start multi-agency approach of early intervention and prevention. The involvement of the health service is imperative for the success of such programmes, yet their framework does not oblige it to co-operate with other local agencies.

Meanwhile, with £1.8 billion per year pledged to help build a nationwide network of 3,500 new Children’s Centres, Margaret Hodge (Hodge, 2005b:1), the children’s minister has said:

> It is early days and we have always said this was a long-term programme but it is true some of the early targets were not sensible. But if you look at Sure Start together with early education and the new concept of children’s centres, I think we are powerfully on the route to witnessing a stunning transformation of the life chances of this generation of children.
References


Sure Start (SS) local programmes aim to draw together a range of professionals, from the various agencies that they work for, and have them all working together, in partnership, in order to provide better services for the families in their area. This partnership working, commonly referred to as multi-agency working, is what Sure Start is about. This questionnaire seeks to investigate the challenges and the key factors of success of Sure Start multi-agency working. It is drawn from the research of Mary Atkinson et al (2002a & b) at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

Please identify your role within Sure Start by ticking the appropriate box.

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If possible please specify your role further:

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**PARTNERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE**

For each of the following statements please tick **ONE** box that most closely reflects your view.

1. Local authority structures and boundaries:

| Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working | 1 |
| Don’t influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other | 2 |
| Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working | 3 |

Can you say more about this?

2. Staffing arrangements and time investment of Sure Start local programme/s:

| Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working | 1 |
| Don’t influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other | 2 |
| Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working | 3 |

Can you say more about this?

3. Individuals’ and Sure Start local programme teams’ expectations and priorities:

| Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working | 1 |
| Don’t influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other | 2 |
| Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working | 3 |
4. The aims and objectives of Sure Start local programme/s:

| Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working | 1 |
| Don't influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other | 2 |
| Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working | 3 |

5. Confidentiality and information-sharing strategies between the various agencies involved:

| Facilitate Sure Start multi-agency working | 1 |
| Don't influence Sure Start multi-agency working one way or the other | 2 |
| Hinder Sure Start multi-agency working | 3 |

6. The need for development of a common language across professional groups working in Sure start local programmes.

| This is a need | 1 |
| This would make no difference | 2 |
| There is no need | 3 |
For EACH of the following statements please circle yes, no or don't know.

7. In practice, budgets and financial arrangements create a major challenge to Sure Start multi-agency working through:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Concern about conflicts within or between agencies that provide Sure Start staff</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Concern about general lack of programme funding</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<td>b.</td>
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<th></th>
<th>Concern about sustainability of the services and, thus, uncertainty of funding</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<td>c.</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Creating more effective use of resources (human and material) by reducing repetition or overlap</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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<tr>
<td>d.</td>
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Can you say more about this?

8. Issues around roles and responsibilities adopted by individuals working within Sure Start concern:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Understanding the roles of others</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conflicts over areas of responsibility</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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<td>b.</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The need to move beyond existing roles to work in new ways</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
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9. The aims of the specific agencies compete with Sure Start local programme aims due to:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Differences in the target group/s</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Different Government targets</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. A focus on preventative work versus crisis intervention</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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Can you say more about this?

10. Non-financial resources create challenges concerning:

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<tr>
<td>a. The allocation of time</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The provision of staff</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Physical space in which to work together effectively</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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Can you say more about this?

11. Poor communication within and between the agencies involved with Sure Start:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Creates problems between those working at different levels (management and delivery levels) within agencies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Creates different availability of professionals from different agencies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Undermines successful multi-agency work through poor communication between different local government departments</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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Can you say more about this?
12. The effect of professional and agency culture on Sure Start practice:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Multi-agency working disrupts existing agency cultures (values and ways of working)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Specific policy and practice differences (for example, different personnel and referral systems) hinder shared practice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Different data management systems which effect information sharing impact upon shared practice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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Can you say more about this?

13. The strategy of the management in the Sure Start local programme/s.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Multi-agency working is strongly supported and promoted at management level in order to remain credible at delivery level</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Management strategy drive is organised carefully in order to carry along the various participants from each agency</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Management strategy encourages like-minded individuals who seek new ways of working in order to meet shared goals and work across existing management structures.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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Can you say more about this?

14. Training opportunities for Sure Start team members – there is a need for:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Additional multi-agency training to meet the extended role of agencies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Training to enhance knowledge and understanding of other agencies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Professional ‘single-agency’ development delivered at the home ‘base’ of the agency</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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15. Commitment and willingness of Sure Start team members to be involved in multi-agency work is sustained by:

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<td>a.</td>
<td>An active desire to engage with other agencies at the management level</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>An active desire to engage with other agencies at the delivery level</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>A commitment/active desire to engage with other agencies by a ‘bottom up’ as well as ‘top down’ management approach</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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Can you say more about this?

16. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of others:

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<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>The need for a clear understanding of what is expected so that different agendas are not pursued</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>The need to understand the constraints on other agencies so that expectations are realistic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>c.</td>
<td>A need for mutual respect for the professional roles of other agencies and their contribution</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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Can you say more about this?
17. Common Sure Start aims and objectives have been achieved by the programme/s through:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Recognition of the need for common ground and like minded people</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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<td>b. Recognition of the need for a real purpose to joint working</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. A needs-led approach which replaces agency-specific agendas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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Can you say more about this?

18. Communications and information sharing within the Sure Start local programme/s has/have been supported by:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Opportunities for dialogue/keeping open communication between agencies being achieved</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Personal relationship building (communication skills, listening skills, the capacity for negotiation and compromise)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Procedures and systems of communications and information dissemination (such as circulating meeting minutes) are in place</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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Can you say more about this?

19. Leadership or drive of individual Sure Start Programme Manager/s:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Show/s clear strategic direction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Has/have the tenacity to overcome obstacles to progress</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Can bring together the Sure Start team in order to bring about change and overcome obstacles</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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20. Involving relevant personnel on the Sure Start local programme/s has lead to:

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<th>The right personnel from specific agencies being involved</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Personnel at the right level of responsibility to make the necessary decisions and activate the right services being involved</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Priority being given to the work of Sure Start by individual agencies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Don't know</td>
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Can you say more about this?

21. Is there anything more you wish to add?
APPENDIX B
Evaluating Multi-Agency Working in Sure Start:
Interview Schedule

Main aim of the interview
- To investigate the key factors for success and key challenges in Sure Start multi-agency working;
- To consider in more depth areas identified in the previous survey of Sure Start multi-agency working.

Background information and introduction to the interview

Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed and for your support for this research.

As a follow-up to the recent survey by The University of Warwick of multi-agency working in four local Sure Start programmes, we are seeking further information and deeper insights into the key factors underpinning success and challenges in multi-agency working. Consequently, your views and insights are very much appreciated.

The interview will take between 30 and 45 minutes.

We should appreciate being able to tape record the interview.

Individual responses will be treated as confidential and will be anonymous in that your name will not be used in any subsequent report that is prepared.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. How long have you been involved with Sure Start?
2. What role/s have you had in Sure Start? (PROMPT: different roles; different Sure Start programmes; in/out of the area; full/part-time; seconded/employed by whom; involved in action plan?)

KNOWLEDGE OF STRUCTURES AND BUDGETS

3. How would you describe the role the i) LA; ii) PCT play in Sure Start?
4. How, if at all, do you think these roles affect the local programme/s? (PROMPT: in terms of sustainability; financial implications; staffing; time; precariousness of funding.)
5. How would you say the overall involvement of the LA and PCT affects your day-to-day working as a part of a multi-agency team, if at all?
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6. How or to what extent would you say the local Sure Start programmes complement (or contradict) the fundamental goals of your ‘parent’ agency/individual agencies? (PROMPT: Are Sure Start goals linked to specific agency plans, policies or statutory responsibilities? To what extent are goals common?)

7. Do you feel that specific aims of local Sure Start programmes differ from those of individual agencies, for instance, in terms of the emphasis placed on preventative strategies rather than clinical intervention?

8. Do you feel that you know what your priorities are as part of this Sure Start team/the Sure Start programmes? If yes, what are they? (Individual’s expectations)

________________________________________________________________________________________

STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS AND TIME INVESTMENT

9. What do you see as the key challenges in the current staffing situation, if any, in your/ local programme/s? (PROMPT: Staff shortages; changes in personnel; appointing staff with commitment/compatibility at all levels; lack of time to work with other agencies.)

10. What challenges have there been, if any, in terms of shared space (office space, private space for interviews, meeting space, informal/common room space? (PROMPT: How are these issues being addressed? Is there enough available space suitable for different purposes?)

________________________________________________________________________________________

INFORMATION SHARING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

11. What procedures (actual mechanisms) are in place for Sure Start team members, as representatives of specific agencies, for gathering, storing, retrieving and using data related to Sure Start families? (PROMPT: Can you give examples of good practice and challenges that you feel are being addressed?)

12. What are the key challenges to information sharing for Sure Start team members, as representatives of specific agencies? What strategies and systems are needed to overcome these?

________________________________________________________________________________________

COMMUNICATION

13. What are the challenges, if any, to day-to-day communication between Sure Start team members who are, at the same time, representatives of specific agencies? (PROMPT: Differential access to methods of communication, different availability for different people and different levels of communication.)

14. What strategy/strategies is/are needed to overcome these?

15. What methods of communication, if any, are successful?

16. Do you think that it is unsettling to specific agencies if their existing working practices are challenged? If so, why?

________________________________________________________________________________________
LEADERSHIP – REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LEADING AGENCIES ONLY

17. Considering the experience you have had with Sure Start can you identify up to three features of positive Sure Start leadership? Can you identify up to three features of Sure Start leadership that may be less helpful?

FINALLY

18. What strategies or approaches have been used/have you used in order to reach ‘hard to reach’ Sure Start families? \(\textbf{PROMPT: Give examples of successful and unsuccessful approaches/strategies}\)\n
19. Considering your experience and involvement in Sure Start can you say up to three positive things that contribute to successful multi-agency working and up to three negative things that hinder successful multi-agency working?

20. Do you have any further comments or issues you would like to raise regarding multi-agency working?

Thank you for your time.
APPENDIX C
Results of Pilot Interview Schedule

Evaluating Multi-Agency working in Sure Start: Interview Schedule was piloted in two local Sure Start programmes between 21st July and 13th August 2004. In total five team members were interviewed, at different levels of seniority, positions and with differing employers, and one Partnership Board Member.

Participants stated that they felt the schedule is too long, some questions too wordy and complicated and there is some repetition of questions. Despite these comments each interviewee was able to give a considerable amount of feedback from most of the questions posed and felt that the schedule covered key areas relating to multi-agency working.

The schedule was given to a Senior Researcher at the University and two professionally qualified personnel to look at the clarity of the questions and to ensure that the questions fulfilled the aims of the study. All three stated that if the schedule is to be completed in half an hour the number of questions and probes would need to be reduced.

In light of the pilot I would recommend the following:

- Shorten question three to read, “How would you describe the role of the i) LA; ii) PCT?”
- Delete question 6 as the participants stated that the overall goals are the same for each SS project and that they could spend half an hour discussing the goals!
- Re-word question 7 to state “How or to what extent would you say the local SS programmes goals complement ….” and possibly reduce the number of probes.
- Each participant felt that they did not understand question 9 as it is too long and as a result did not answer it. Could this be deleted?
- We could delete question 11 as if it is an issue it would come out in question 12 – (which it did in the pilot) and add it as a probe to question 12.
- It was felt that question 13 and 14 were repetitive. Could we delete question 14 and add it as a probe to question 13?
• Question 15 could be deleted as this issue is dealt with in questions 16 and 17.
• During the pilot I did not have time to use all of the probes due to the time constraints. I think that we could cut out all but the most essential probes and then use the others as a starting point for analytical headings for coding the responses afterwards.
APPENDIX D
Letter to Partnership Board Members

Dear

As a follow-up to the recent survey by The University of Warwick of multi-agency working in four Coventry Sure Start programmes, which highlighted many interesting findings, we are now seeking further information and deeper insights into the key factors underpinning success and challenges in multi-agency working.

The survey is being followed up by telephone interviews which will allow us to explore in more depth your personal views and opinions about multi-agency working. The interview will cover the following issues: knowledge of structures and budgets; roles and responsibilities; staffing arrangements and time investment; information sharing and confidentiality and communication.

The interview should last approximately half an hour and appointments will be made at your convenience. Individual responses will remain anonymous, be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be identifiable in any subsequent report that is prepared.

If you have any queries or questions relating to the interview please contact me on 02476 524412 or email me at Lucy.clarke@warwick.ac.uk.

Many thanks

Lucy Clarke
Researcher, University of Warwick
Dear

**Evaluation of Sure Start local programme – Multi-agency Interviews**

Many thanks for taking time to be involved in the above research. Your comments have been most valuable.

I am writing to inform you that the analysis of the interview you gave has now taken place. Major themes have been identified and a draft report is currently being collated. Some carefully chosen statements will be selected to be included in this report. However, as assured when the interview took place confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured in the report. Attached is a copy of the transcript of your interview. Should you have any concerns please let me know as soon as possible.

Again, many thanks for taking part in this research.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Clarke

Researcher, University of Warwick

Tel: 02746524412