

**Sure Start Friar Park, Sandwell
2005**

DIY COURSE EVALUATION SUMMARY

Sasha Gelpi

B&Q short DIY course was set up to reach members of the community perhaps not yet engaging with Sure Start, with the most basic aim of teaching basic DIY skills which could save the participants the expenses of paying a professional to do basic DIY jobs around the house.

This evaluation aimed to find out what interested the participants in this particular course, whether they have found it beneficial and how, and will the experience of this course encourage them to continue engaging.

The Town Team has provided the funding for the courses whilst Sure Start has arranged to provide and cover the costs of childcare, and to provide transport from nursery to B&Q and back.

All 9 participants on the first DIY course were interviewed, on the minibus during their trip to B&Q and back, in the nursery waiting room, and during the actual course sessions. Personal observations and Sure Start's participant observer's observations were also taken into consideration when analysing data.

Thematical analysis was used to identify and extract the common themes in the dialogues and observations. The main findings can be summarised as follows:

- All joined to learn basic DIY and felt it would be an interesting and useful course.
- The course was positively received and all commented on how much fun they are having, and the good quality of tuition.
- They feel the course is teaching them valuable skills, which will bring long term benefits.
- All participants commented on the social value of the course and some have developed friendships out of the course setting.
- There was an overall feeling of confidence within the group and in their interactions with others in the group and the tutor.
- It was observed how participants talk to each other about other Sure Start programmes and encourage each other to join up.

In conclusion the course seems to have met its aim of teaching basic DIY - although this should be re-visited some months after completion to find out how much knowledge was retained and whether it has proved to be useful. The course also succeeded in attracting a number of those not previously engaging in Sure Start. For future research it would be useful to find out whether they continued to engage and how many of them did.

B&Q DIY COURSE EVALUATION

AIM:

The short DIY course was set up to create one more service/opportunity within Sure Start repertoire of programmes aimed at the community, through which Sure Start may be able to reach individuals perhaps not yet engaging with Sure Start. If these individuals are attracted to this course, the interest is in what attracted them to this course in particular, and whether they carry on to engage in other Sure Start activities after this and why.

On the basic level, the aim of the course is to teach participants basic DIY skills, enabling them to feel confident enough about fixing basic problems around the house for which they would have otherwise had to spend money on by seeking the services of professionals, or would have been left creating a potential health and safety issue.

This evaluation will aim to establish whether the basic aims and objectives of the group are being met, and if there are any further benefits and/or disadvantages of being in the group as perceived by the participants.

The course runs for 5 weeks with 2 sessions per week, and is being delivered by B&Q. The Town Team offered funding to cover the costs of delivering this project, and it was agreed that all participants in the programme will receive a tool box, tools and work bench, free of charge, upon the completion of the course, to the cost of £60 per person. The funding from the Town Team will cover 4 courses with 10 people in each. Another arrangement made is that Sure Start provide and cover the costs of childcare for the participants undertaking the course, and will also provide transport for everyone from the nursery to B&Q and back.

A member of Sure Start team will also attend each course as a participant observer, with the aims to put participants at ease ensuring

they have an enjoyable experience and increase awareness of other Sure Start services and activities.

METHODOLOGY:

Research Questions

The evaluation was aiming to answer the following research questions:

- How did participants find out about the class, and what attracted them to it?
- What expectations did they have about the course, and have they been met?
- Do they feel the course has taught them basic DIY skills?
- Has the course made them confident enough to attempt DIY at home?
- Have they experienced any other benefits of attending the course?
- How do they feel within the group?
- Have they attended other Sure Start activities prior to DIY, and/or will they be after it?

Sample

It was a convenience sample of all of the participants in the first DIY course run by Sure Start. There were 9 participants from the Mesty Croft, Friar Park and Woods areas, and interviews were undertaken in the 3rd week of the course (5th and 6th sessions).

Sources of Information

- Short interviews with the 9 participants which took place in the nursery waiting room, in the minibus to and from the nursery and B&Q, and during the actual course.
- Researchers personal observations
- Matt's (Sure Start's participant observer) observations
- Matt's discussions with the participants over the length of the course

- Marketing material sent to the community relating to the course

The data was analysed thematically, and common themes were extracted from the interviews and also the observations.

FINDINGS:

How they heard about the course and why they joined

All the participants heard about the DIY class through the Sure Start leaflet, and all of them joined simply to learn basic DIY, or to improve on some of their existing skills. They felt it would be a very interesting and useful course to do, especially as a few of them noted how things keep breaking around the house and DIY skills would enable them to fix some of them. Some of the comments made by women included:

- I ain't got a man to do it
- I wanted to learn all the secrets that only men know

For 4 out of 9 participants interviewed, this is the first Sure Start group that they joined, and there were further 2 participants who had only done the First Aid course prior to this. My initial feelings are that group attendance is due to how each person evaluates the benefits of them attending a group, and the value placed on the skills learnt and/or information shared. It would appear that this is the first group (apart from the 2 that did First Aid) that these participants felt was of value to them enough to attend. But I feel more in-depth interviews with these participants would be necessary to reveal whether this really is the case.

Considering that the only marketing tool was a leaflet informing people about the course, whose main heading stated that all participants will receive a free toolbox and £60 worth of tools upon completion of the course, it has been noted that none of the participants mentioned this as being the main reason for them undertaking the course. The free tools were only mentioned by 3 participants, and even then the comments were placed as passing remarks, rather than of great importance:

- Oh yeah, and we all get a free toolbox, with the tools and this workbench, which is really cool

Their expectations and how the course met them

None of the participants seemed to have any clear expectations about the course, and when asked about what they thought they would learn, they replied with 'don't know' or 'had no idea'. Yet, they all felt that the course has taught them a lot more than they imagined.

All the comments about the course in general have been positive and they have all said about how much fun they are having doing it. They all look forward to coming to each session:

- I have found this a brilliant experience and have had so much fun
- Wouldn't change a thing about the course

Learning of new skills and confidence to use them

Comments made by the participants indicate that they feel the course has achieved its aim of teaching them DIY skills, and has made them feel confident about using these skills in their own homes. They feel these skills are valuable to them, and can benefit them by saving them money:

- I want to lay laminate flooring, I ain't paying someone to do it if I can do it myself

Another woman remarked that usually she would call on her dad to help her with DIY, but now she feels able enough to attempt to do things on her own.

Week after the course covered hanging doors, one of the women came to the class excited to tell everyone of her achievement:

- I did it! I fixed my door all by myself and it works now

Majority agreed that the hardest part of the course to learn has been the chiselling, and some are still easily confused when it comes to measuring. Most have found using power tools as the best thing on the course, and are expressing wishes to do more work with them, and purchasing their own.

Quality of the course set-up

Other things mentioned through the interviews were the quality of tuition, which everyone was very happy about. They found the tutor easy to follow, friendly and approachable, and the course material relatively

easy but teaching them relevant and useful skills. Participants also commented on the size of the group:

- Size of the group is perfect and allows you to stay focused without too many distractions

Social aspect of the course

One major area has come into view through the interviews and that is the social aspect of the group. All the participants made some comment as to the social value of coming to the course:

- It's really nice to meet other mums and talk to them
- It's really really fun and I enjoy doing it with the other mums

A few of them now meet regularly beyond the B&Q course, and talked enthusiastically about a party they all went to together. They also spoke of many friendships that have been found through other Sure Start activities in general.

Two of the participants are very active and join up as many groups as they can, and have probably tried each group at least once:

- Once I started meeting people that was it! Now nothing gets done at home!
- I'm constantly doing something, but I love it!

My general observations are that the group overall felt very friendly and interested in each other, and eager to help each other with the task if they noticed someone struggling. There was an overall impression of confidence - not necessarily in the work they were doing, but more in relation to how they related to others in the group and the way they spoke to me about their experiences.

There was a lot of communication between members, chatting to each other about their lives and 'story sharing', sharing funny DIY related anecdotes, remembrance of which was triggered by the course activities. Prior to the course, whilst in the nursery waiting room, they also shared childcare experiences and gave out advice and tips to those who mentioned problems.

Encouragement to join other Sure Start activities

Listening to the dialogue between participants, I noted how they tell each other about other groups they could attend. One woman was successfully persuaded to put her name down for the IT class during the DIY session. Matt has reported similar observations:

- Mother A: I am looking for a group to take my child to where they can play
- Mother B: Well Sure Start run a play group where you can leave your child to play
- Mother A: No, I mean so that I can take part in the play with them
- Mother B: Oh Sure Start also run a Play & Stay session where you can go and play with your kids

All of them told me they are either already attending other groups, or are in the process of looking at which ones to join, after their positive experiences with the DIY group. Whether they do carry on to join other groups and which groups they join will be tracked separately.

Through interviews, they also told me how they tell their friends about groups and try and get them to come along.

Evaluation Conclusions:

The conclusions so far are that this course appears to have achieved its main objectives in teaching the members how to do basic DIY, has increased the members' self confidence, and has provided a good quality of tuition and the right environment for the learning to occur and make the participants feel positive about themselves and the course.

To confirm that learning has occurred and information retained it would be necessary to do a follow up study some months after the course completion to identify whether the participants had a chance to apply any of their skills in the home and whether they still feel confident enough to do so after an extended period of time.

In this case Sure Start's marketing technique of using leaflets seems to have worked as it has attracted a significant number of those not previously involved with Sure Start's activities. The question is whether the offer of free tools was actually the real reason for such a good response, or whether the participants are being genuine in claiming that all they wanted was to learn basic DIY as the course promised.

Further benefits of the group have been identified as the development of a community support network between the members, as well as the fun aspect of the actual course activity as well as the fun of socialising with the other members in and out of the group setting.

This research has also identified how a positive experience of attending one group, influences the members in deciding on participating in other groups and activities. Peer support may also play a large part in whether they do attend other groups or not, as other members urging them to join up makes them feel accepted and not on their own, and therefore more confident about coming to other groups.

Again, these are only assumptions and more in-depth interviews will have to be done to show a truer picture of the thought processes influencing the reasons why people join groups.