

SURE START PINEHURST AND PENHILL

LONG TERM CASE STUDIES

FINAL REPORT

JUNE 2005



Bridge Consulting Partners
69 Arley Hill
Cotham
Bristol BS6 5PJ

Tel: 0117 904 6923
Email: bridge_consulting@blueyonder.co.uk

Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary.....	3
1.1	Introduction.....	3
1.2	Aims and Objectives.....	3
1.3	Methodology.....	4
1.4	A summary of key findings.....	4
1.5	Meeting Sure Start and Every Child Matters outcomes.....	6
1.6	Recommendations.....	6
1.7	Conclusion.....	6
2	Introduction.....	7
3	Aims & Objectives.....	7
3.1	Objectives.....	7
3.2	Sure Start and Every Child Matters Objectives.....	8
4	Background.....	9
4.1	Demographics.....	9
4.2	Summary of initial Longitudinal Study October 2002-2003.....	9
5	Methodology.....	12
6	Key Findings.....	13
6.1	Services Used.....	13
6.2	How parents heard about Sure Start.....	14
6.3	Change in use of services.....	14
6.4	What encouraged families to use the Sure Start services.....	15
6.5	Differences in the children.....	16
6.6	Difference in the mother.....	17
6.7	Difference in partner / father.....	18
6.8	Difference in the family.....	19
6.9	Other services used outside Sure Start.....	20
6.10	Views and benefits of the other services used.....	21
6.11	Other services wanted.....	21
6.12	General comments.....	22
6.13	Evidence of long term outcomes.....	24
7	Meeting Sure Start and Every Child Matters objectives.....	26
8	Recommendations.....	26
9	A final conclusion.....	26
	References.....	27
	Appendix 1 - Questionnaires.....	28
	Appendix 2 – Personal Information of Interviewees.....	34

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

- Sure Start Pinehurst and Penhill is a third wave programme approved in August 2001, its lead and accountable body is Swindon Primary Care Trust
- There is a core team of 22 staff working from newly refurbished offices in Penhill, North Swindon.
- There are just 944 children aged five and under living in about 630 families, 40% of which are single parent families. The population is 10,065 with about 195 births per year. 95% of the local population is white.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

- To identify families willing to continue or begin involvement in the case studies, to include:
 - Members using Sure Start services
 - Previous members not using Sure Start services, but who had used them in the past (potential users)
 - Non-users of Sure Start services
- To explore knowledge of Sure Start and similar non-Sure Start services in the local area.
- To explore access to and the use of services, including the factors that influence decisions to use or not to use services and identifying those services that do not exist but for which there is a demand / need
- To explore the perceived impact of services upon:
 - Case Study parents – in terms of skills / confidence / use and support that they would not have gained previously
 - Sure Start children – in terms of development tests and baseline assessment on entry into school
 - Other family members – in terms of the quality of their lives
 - The community – in terms of areas that are developing in the community as a result of the networks families make when using Sure Start services
- To explore the perceived impact of services in relation to the four broader Sure Start objectives (learning, health, social and emotional well being, and family and community)
- To explore children's perceptions of the services and ascertain their views.
- To continue to and develop the involvement of parent researchers including the provision of a minimum of 3 training sessions.
- To follow up the key issues identified in the previous report.

Underpinning this evaluation are the four Sure Start objectives which are:

- Improving Social and Emotional Development
- Improving Health
- Improving Learning
- Strengthening Families and Communities

This evaluation will also assess the programme against the 5 key outcomes of the Government's 'Every Child Matters' initiative. These are:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Well-being

1.3 Methodology

The evaluation team were provided with the names and contact details of the 18 families who had participated in the Longitudinal Study in 2003.

There was difficulty contacting a number of families in the original study, and a couple of other families did not want to participate, despite the incentive of a £10 voucher.

The evaluation team also had difficulty recruiting parent researchers.

In total 12 families were interviewed. These were skewed to current users.

1.4 A summary of key findings

- The respondents mentioned a long list of Sure Start services they had used. Talk n Toys and the Breastfeeding sessions were the services used most. Speech therapy, Socks and Tiny Tumblers were also mentioned by more than a quarter of the sample.
- Health Visitors were the key method parents found out about Sure Start. Midwives and Sure Start contact at the birth of a child were also important methods how parents heard of Sure Start.
- 6 families had increased their use of Sure Start and 5 had decreased their use, mainly because their children were older. There was one previous user.

- There were number of reasons why families had been encouraged to use Sure Start. Key themes include:
 - the range of services available;
 - help and advice both general and for specific problems such as speech difficulties,
 - being contacted by Sure Start,
 - its proximity,
 - opportunity to meet other people and socialise.
- The key outcomes for the children of families using Sure Start are:
 - Speech therapy / talking
 - Confidence / independence
 - Social Skills / making friends
- The key outcomes for the mothers of families using Sure Start are:
 - Socialising / making friends
 - Parenting skills
 - Health
 - Confidence
- The key outcomes for the partner / father of families using Sure Start were more difficult to analyse as one-third of the sample did not use the services.
- The key outcomes for families using Sure Start are:
 - Socialising / making friends
 - Knowledge and advice
 - Family support
- Other services used by families include the NSPCC and various toddler groups and nurseries. One third of families interviewed only used Sure Start services.
- Families interviewed gave a long list of new services they would like. The main ones are:
 - Playground / play area
 - More groups
 - Days out / trips

All the people interviewed for this evaluation were very positive in their views and experiences of Sure Start Pinehurst and Penhill, and the impact its services had had on their lives.

1.5 Meeting Sure Start and Every Child Matters outcomes

It is evident from the findings of this evaluation that the programme of services provided to families by Sure Start Pinehurst and Penhill are meeting the four key Sure Start objectives (see 1.2 above).

There is also strong evidence from this evaluation that the programme meets all 5 key outcomes of the Government's 'Every Child Matters' initiative (see 1.2 above).

1.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed:

- There is a need to review and reconsider this element of the evaluation programme and to define what it aims to achieve and how this can be undertaken effectively;
- It is recommended that Sure Start and the evaluators set up a mechanism to have more regular contact with families in the sample;
- It is recommended that contact details of Sure Start families are kept up-to-date in order to facilitate more effective communication and for evaluation purposes;
- The programme should reconsider how to involve parent researchers, for example by organising a specific training course for a number of parents.

1.7 Conclusion

Overall, and despite some of the problems in interviewing the original sample of families, the Sure Start programme appears to have been successful in meeting its main objectives of improving the lives and life-chances of children and their parents.

The findings in general mirror the findings of the original Longitudinal Study carried out in 2003.

2 Introduction

Sure Start Pinehurst & Penhill is a third wave Sure Start programme approved in August 2001. The lead accountable body is the Swindon Primary Care Trust. The programme became a Children's Centre in December 2004.

The local evaluation aims to produce clear evidence of the effectiveness of the Sure Start model of service provision within the local community, in order to contribute towards the multi-agency development of integrated services across Swindon. It aims to provide a clear picture of the outcomes of the work, and identify what is and what is not working effectively in the areas chosen for evaluation.

There are four areas which are being reviewed as part of this evaluation. These are:

- Post-natal depression support outcomes
- The role of the Social Worker and Family Support Staff
- Fathers' Development Work
- Longitudinal Study

This review focuses on the Longitudinal Study, which has been renamed as the Long Term Case Studies Evaluation as this is felt to more accurately reflect the nature of the evaluation.

3 Aims & Objectives

3.1 Objectives

- To identify families willing to continue or begin involvement in the case studies, to include:
 - Members using Sure Start services
 - Previous members not using Sure Start services, but who had used them in the past (potential users)
 - Non-users of Sure Start services
- To explore knowledge of Sure Start and similar non-Sure Start services in the local area.
- To explore access to and the use of services, including the factors that influence decisions to use or not to use services and identifying those services that do not exist but for which there is a demand / need
- To explore the perceived impact of services upon:
 - Case Study parents – in terms of skills / confidence / use and support that they would not have gained previously
 - Sure Start children – in terms of development tests and baseline assessment on entry into school
 - Other family members – in terms of the quality of their lives

- The community – in terms of areas that are developing in the community as a result of the networks families make when using Sure Start services
- To explore the perceived impact of services in relation to the four broader Sure Start objectives (learning, health, social and emotional well being, and family and community).
- To explore children’s perceptions of the services and ascertain their views.
- To continue to and develop the involvement of parent researchers including the provision of a minimum of 3 training sessions.
- To follow up the key issues identified in the previous report.

3.2 Sure Start and Every Child Matters Objectives

Underpinning this evaluation are the four Sure Start objectives detailed in the Public Service Agreement 2003-06 and the desired outcomes of the 2004 Government Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters’. The Sure Start objectives are:

- Improving Social and Emotional Development
- Improving Health
- Improving Learning
- Strengthening Families and Communities

It has also been suggested by the National Sure Start Evaluation Team that the evaluation assesses the Sure Start Pinehurst and Penhill programme against the 5 key outcomes of the Government’s ‘Every Child Matters’ initiative. These are:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Well-being

4 Background

4.1 Demographics

The community of Pinehurst and Penhill includes part of Pinehurst and Gorsehill ward and Penhill ward in its entirety and is situated to the North of Swindon. The catchment area is contained within 'pram pushing' distance. Penhill is a 1950's estate whilst Pinehurst was built between the two World Wars. There is a stable core of long established residents, but new families are constantly moving into the area without extended family within the neighbourhood.

There are approximately 944 children under 5 in the Sure Start area of Pinehurst and Penhill (December 2004). These children live in approximately 630 families, of whom 583 are members of Sure Start and of these approximately 40% are single parent families.

Figures for 2004 from Swindon Borough Council put the total population of the Sure Start area at 10,065, with 195 births in the year 01/04/03 to 31/03/04 (Swindon PCT).

Unemployment is low in Swindon as a whole but just under half of the under 4's in the Sure Start area live in workless households. There is a small ethnic population, however 95% of the total population is white.

4.2 Summary of initial Longitudinal Study October 2002-2003

4.2.1 Background and methodology

The University of Bath undertook the preliminary Longitudinal Survey between October 2002 and October 2003.

This study recruited two parent researchers to assist with the interviews. The study set up a sampling structure based on six typologies of family characteristics representative of the area, and the aim was to interview one family representing each of the six typologies across three groups, which would total 18 families. The three groups were:

- members of Sure Start and current users
- previous users and therefore potential future users
- non-users

It was intended that these 18 families would provide the research sample for future on-going studies into the outcomes and impact of Sure Start on these families over a period of a number of years.

The final sample consisted of 9 current users, and 9 non-users and previous users. Qualitative interviews were undertaken by the parent researchers and the evaluator from University of Bath.

4.2.2 Key findings

The two key ways in which families found out about Sure Start was through advertising and through home visits by Sure Start workers.

Current users had used the Sure Start services for the following reasons:

- Advice about children’s behavioural problems
- As a ‘one-stop’ provision to deal with a number of concerns about their children simultaneously – e.g. behaviour, speech and learning
- Parents attended to make friends, to gain advice on helping with children’s learning difficulties, and to gain support and help with breastfeeding
- Speech and language therapist identified and helped with children’s listening and speaking skills
- Parents approached family workers for practical help and as confidantes.

Previous users had used Sure Start services for the following reasons:

- Concern about children’s behaviour
- To help mothers of similar cultural background (in breastfeeding)
- Practical reasons such as crèche facilities when a mother was attending another group.

Non-users used the following services instead of Sure Start:

- Local nurseries who provided working day child care
- Childminders who provided working day child care
- Local nurseries that provided facilities that were in line with parents’ ideas of what “good” facilities were – such parents were prepared to travel outside the local area in order to fulfil their requirements
- Social Services provision, for example their Support Workers
- Personal networks of friends, who also had children of a similar age.

The University of Bath Summary Report also detailed the perceived impact of the Sure Start services influencing these impacts. These can be summarised as follows:

- Users with special needs in the family reported an increased level of use over time, used many kinds of help, and expressed a strong relationship with the family support worker or health visitor. This relationship helped empower parents, as well as providing them with help tackling behavioural problems and providing early learning activities through play-based services.
- Family support workers and health visitors have a key role in the success of the Sure Start programme – the more they become closely involved with a family the greater the impact of the services on that family.

- There were questions about whether Sure Start could help children with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- Some single mother users experienced a developing level of involvement as different needs arose over time. Both current and previous users who were single mothers identified the quality of their relationship with Sure Start providers as a key factor affecting their level of involvement with Sure Start.
- Viewing Sure Start as a “one stop shop” for services for all members of the family.
- The main benefits to users were in the following areas:
 - emotional and social development of both children and parents
 - health
 - children’s education
 - family relationships

5 Methodology

The evaluation team were provided with the names and contact details of the 18 families who had participated in the 2003 Longitudinal Study. Of the 18 names, two families had either moved from the area or had responded to the letter sent at the outset of the 2005 evaluations that they did not want to participate.

Phone calls were made to the remaining 16 offering an incentive of a £10 Asda voucher for participating.

Of the remaining 16, six were either not contactable as their phone number was not recognised or there was no answer (or facility for leaving messages) and one person did not want to participate.

A further five names were provided by one of the Sure Start midwives.

However, these families were users of Sure Start services and further skewed the sample to current and previous users of Sure Start, against non-users. The 2003 longitudinal study had also been skewed towards current and previous users with only four non-users being interviewed. The processes highlighted above meant two other non-users dropping out leaving only two families seemingly in that category, although it became apparent during the interviews that both these families were in fact users.

Three families were unavailable to be interviewed at the pre-agreed time, which further reduced the sample.

In total 12 families were interviewed. Of these 5 had participated in the 2003 evaluation.

It had been hoped to continue to use parent researchers to undertake the interviews. However, the two parents who had assisted with the interviews in the initial study were not able to participate. Another parent agreed to become involved as a researcher and undertook one interview before another commitment forced her to withdraw.

The evaluators did not have access to the questionnaire used in the initial study and therefore developed a series of semi-structured questionnaires which aimed to elicit both qualitative and quantitative information - see Appendix 1.

Interviews were arranged and took place in either the respondents home or at the Sure Start centre in Penhill.

The Evaluation Group agreed that the term Longitudinal Study did not reflect the changed nature of this evaluation. It has therefore been renamed the “Long Term Case Studies” to reflect the focus of the study.

6 Key Findings

Usage and response figures are the total number of times a factor was mentioned during the interview, and as a result totals will be greater than the number of respondents (12).

6.1 Services Used

The following services were mentioned as being used by respondents.

Service	Usage
Brightstart	1
Speech & Language Therapy	3
Talk n Toys	8
Toddler topics	1
Stress Management	3
Socks	3
Tiny Tumblers	3
Bumps and Babies	1
Pre-school	1
Parent Talk	1
Young Parents Group	1
Breastfeeding	4
Physiotherapy	1
Fathers' Programme	2
Cooking on a Budget	2
Computing	1
Aromatherapy	1
Homeopathy	1
Becoming a crèche worker	2
Toddler behaviour course	1
Playgroup / nursery	1
Social Worker / Family Support Worker	2

One of the husbands has been trying to use father's services but has found it difficult to find time due to shift work.

The disabled daughter of one respondent was given a place in the playgroup and nursery which enabled her to get used to being around other kids.

One mother had used the services of the Family Support Worker for practical help with problems with the housing department, help with obtaining tax credits and help and support with her partner's sickness problem and information about jobs to help him get back to work.

6.2 How parents heard about Sure Start

The following responses were given to the question “How did you hear about Sure Start services?”

Method	Responses
Health Visitor (non Sure Start)	3
Health Visitor (not specified)	2
Midwife	3
Sure Start contacting at birth	2
Leaflet in GPs surgery	1
Poster	1
Referral from pre-school	1

“Sure Start came out when the 3 year old was born, and just had a talk and a cup of tea”

“Via the Health Visitor. One of the children had eczema, and a Health Visitor came round. We were living in The Valley at the time. Didn’t really know about Sure Start 2 years ago and used to take 3 year old to Stratton Playgroup”

Another mother stated that when pre-school referred her to Speech and Language Therapy at Sure Start; it was the first she had heard of Sure Start, so it was a bit of a shock finding that it was available. She didn’t know about the services before and hadn’t received the newsletter. She has noticed the other Sure Start services now that she’s been to the Centre.

6.3 Change in use of services

Usage	Responses
Increased	6
Decreased	5
Previous User	1

Reasons given for decreased usage include:

- Children have got older
- Gone back to work
- Daughter now at school, and not a lot for a baby of 9 weeks
- Used to use Bumps & Babies, stopped when daughter was 18 months old

Reasons given for increased usage include:

- Use more to meet people – there is a lot of knowledge and experience in the parents’ network
- Increased since Centre opened
- Increased because of problems in the family

6.4 What encouraged families to use the Sure Start services

There were a large number of answers to this question. Key themes are:

- The range of services available,
- Help and advice both general and for specific problems such as speech difficulties,
- Being contacted by Sure Start,
- Its proximity,
- Opportunity to meet other people and socialise.

“The help it’s given to the children. The one child with a speech problem went to Bright Start and then the Playgroup, which gave him confidence. The speech therapist came out and encouraged him and now he’s speaking really well. The older child hasn’t used the services so much as she was already in a playgroup when Sure Start started”.

“The fact that Sure Start made contact. As the children have got older there have been more Sure Start services available”.

“The Social Worker and Family Support Worker introduced themselves [when husband was in hospital] and said they were not there to interfere, but to help, advise, give us moral support, which is what they have done. For example, first thing this morning (Monday), the Social Worker phoned: ‘We’ve heard your younger son was knocked down at the weekend by a police car’. The Social Worker came round with paper and pens for son, he was thrilled, meant he played while she talked to my husband”.

“Basically to get me out of the house and give the kids a chance to socialise”.

One mother mentioned as a reason for using Sure Start meeting people and getting knowledge from other mums, especially for things short of what she would go to the doctor for.

Another mother highlighted the proximity of Sure Start and the fact that there is lots going on for mums and kids. She used to live near the town centre and there was nothing available there. She found Sure Start it very friendly, has made lots of new friends, her isolation has reduced and she is learning new things.

Another heard about Sure Start from pre-school. She feels Sure Start is a good place to talk to other mums outside the house and is impressed by the facilities and space, and by the fact that Sure Start provide snacks and milk for children.

One family had a disabled daughter and needed help. Sure Start had been a big help providing both a speech therapist and physiotherapist. They also got her

boots which helped her to walk, helped her to talk “properly”, and got her into Jigsaw Nursery. This gave the family a break as well as helping the daughter to get used to being away from her parents.

6.5 Differences in the children

Difference	Responses
Speech problems / talking	7
Potty training	1
Confidence / independence	7
Made friends	3
Social skills	4
Education / help into school	1
Health	2
Improved behaviour	3
Walking	1
Playing	2

“The work with the Speech and Language Therapist has helped enormously. It has helped to encourage play, talking, sign language, confidence through acting with other children in Tiny Tumblers. There was a lady who worked at Sure Start who used to use the Saddlers (Special Needs) club the child used to attend, so she really understood the situation. The sign language has been really important and made life easier.”

This family have noticed a week by week progression and have been helped in knowing when to move on to the next stage of the child’s speech and language development by the therapist.

Other comments include:

“[Child] has come out of himself. He doesn’t mind being left in the crèche and has made lots of new friends. Toddler Topics run by the Health Visitors has helped with behaviour management and this, in turn has helped my own parenting skills.”

“The 2½ year old had a bit of a speech problem; mixing with other children he’s a lot better, although some of that due to the nursery he also goes to which is not Sure Start. He’s not nervous with other people; it’s done a lot for his confidence”.

One mother noted that Sure Start is a good back up when immediate help is needed, for example things you wouldn’t go to a doctor about.

Another highlighted the differences in terms of education, health and social skills (for example speech and language therapy). Specifically there was valuable help in getting her 5 year old child into mainstream schooling.

6.6 Difference in the mother

Difference	Responses
Confidence	4
Made friends / socialising	5
Knowledge e.g. speech work	1
Benefits of breastfeeding	2
Parenting skills	4
Post Natal Depression	1
Health e.g. stress, pain, depression	4
Education / training / skills for employment	2
Volunteering	1
Opportunity to relax	1
Little / no difference	2

“The help the kids have got has transferred [to me]”.

One mother (a previous user) felt Sure Start helped in terms of confidence and knowledge about the benefits of breastfeeding. Her children have had no health problems and they are very close to her, which she thinks breastfeeding has contributed to this. She had actually passed the information on to another mother the morning of the interview.

Another mother noted definite differences when pregnant recently. She was nervous about being able to feed the new baby after very bad experiences with her first born, including mastitis and hospital admission. Now she is confident after having learnt different techniques at the breastfeeding support group; and through the group she gets tips over coffee from other parents. She couldn't have done it without support from her midwife and others. She has also learnt how to hold her new son. She breastfed him for seven months until she went back to work.

Another felt Sure Start had helped very much with giving her confidence. She will be doing the Early Years certification next month with a view to becoming a crèche worker, which is a good example of introduction into employment. The Aromatherapy and Stress Management courses have also helped her to cope with stress. She has also benefited from being on the Parents Talk Committee.

One mother had been helped tremendously with how to deal with Post Natal Depression. She had also benefited from the Homeopathy service which helped

relieve the pain of a cyst. The same mother also felt she has been helped with parenting skills.

A number of respondents mentioned that participating in the Sure Start programme had made them more confident. One mentioned that Sure Start makes it easy to get to know people in the area, and felt that if Sure Start was not there it would be much harder.

One respondent had become a volunteer with various elements of the Sure Start programme including the Management Board, Bright Start Nursery Development Group, Parents Forum and café.

6.7 Difference in partner / father

Difference	Responses
Practical support	1
Emotional support	1
Parenting skills	1
Support breastfeeding	1
Reduced stress	1
Nothing / don't use	4
No partner	2

“They [Social Worker and Family Support Worker] told us it’s not the kids’ fault, it’s the way you tell them; instead of shouting, talk to them. I’ve had to adapt. Sure Start said, ‘Why not try it this way, or this way, give it a go?’ 9 out of 10 times it has worked. Sometimes it’s not the kids’ fault, it’s my fault. Perhaps I’m the odd male who has swallowed his pride and asked for help. I was tearing my hair out because the kids were not listening to me.”

“Very bitter when came out of hospital; the Family Support Worker just sat and listened. I went through depression stage; the Family Support Worker put me in touch with NSPCC counselling; I wouldn’t have known about him without Sure Start.”

In general, responses to this question were limited as few fathers had participated in any meaningful way in the Sure Start programme, with the exception of one respondent who had participated in a number of elements of the Father’s Development Work programme. This father felt he had benefited through both the practical and emotional support he had received from both the Sure Start team and also the NSPCC’s Fathers’ Development Worker.

Another respondent, a father who is a current user, had also been supported by Sure Start to undertake a computer course.

One mother mentioned that her partner works a 90 hour week and therefore finds it difficult to participate, but she relays back what she’s learnt, so there may be some indirect benefits for the partner.

Another said that her partner has attended fathers’ services but because of shift work this is difficult. Her husband would attend groups and she feels there should be more for men. He did attend the Saturday morning NSPCC group, but didn’t feel welcome. This mother thinks there should be more for fathers and kids so that it would give the mums a break. Another respondent said her partner had attended Fathers’ Time twice.

The partner of another respondent came to Talk and Toys once when he had a day off work and was very impressed with all the different things that they do with the kids. He was also very happy and supportive that she could continue to breastfeed. He is also happy when he hears what his older son has done.

6.8 Difference in the family

Difference	Responses
Confidence	1
Made friends / socialising	3
Knowledge / advice	3
Children’s behaviour	2
Family support	2
Things for children to do	1
Not much / None	2

Again the responses to this question were fairly limited, and perhaps have not reflected the experiences of the other evaluations where significant differences in family cohesion and practical improvement have been seen.

“We realise that there’s more support now that the Penhill Centre is built. When we had problems with our first son we didn’t know who to turn to. We saw Wendy [health visitor] over his behaviour. There’s always someone here to ask – brilliant!”

“Not much really; except for son’s improved attitude”

The social aspects of Sure Start again feature heavily. One mother mentioned that it was a good place to meet families who had similar problems, which helps diminish the feelings of isolation such problems can cause. She also noted that Sure Start was a good place to gain knowledge and advice from other mothers and from the childcare professionals, which has a knock-on effect on the whole family.

Another respondent praised Sure Start’s help for the family during a period of intense and complex problems. This respondent highlighted that the typical perception of Social Workers is one where they interfere in a family and take the children away. The family’s experience of the Sure Start Social Worker was totally opposite to this common perception, and was very much based around ‘what support can we help family with?’. Sure Start had also provided advice to this family around the range of welfare benefits that were available to them, much of which they were unaware of.

6.9 Other services used outside Sure Start

Service	Usage
School	1
Toddler group – various locations	2
Nursery - various	2
NSPCC groups – e.g. Playstart	3
Pre-school	1
Sadler Unit	1
KOALA Special Needs Playschool	1
Health Visitor at GP surgery	1
None / Sure Start only	5

This shows the reliance of many families in Pinehurst and Penhill on Sure Start and NSPCC.

“Nothing, just Sure Start as everything is in one place which is important.”

“Use the health visitor at the surgery; see her every week when I take the 7 week old to clinic.”

One respondent used to use the NSPCC toddlers group when they first moved to Penhill and lived nearby, and before they heard about Sure Start. They then heard about Playstart at NSPCC (which is a service jointly run with Sure Start) who came to play with the oldest child to help him with his speech, and then with youngest child about being clingy. In the same family the younger son goes to the Bright Start nursery twice a week, but Sure Start helped pay half the fees for his first three months.

Another respondent was waiting for a referral to the NSPCC in order to improve her older son’s attendance record at school.

6.10 Views and benefits of the other services used

“KOALA’s and the Sunshine Playschool provided good services.”

“Jackie [surgery health visitor] brilliant; if any problem can phone her, any family problem we have with kids, or this one not sleeping, or his breathing, his feeding, his hernia. Jackie is really good: ‘try this, let me know if it doesn’t work, then try that’. Jackie trying to get both Dad – and mother – on stress management course at Sure Start, hopefully during day when other children at school. If mother had known about it earlier, she would have done it.”

“NSPCC really good.”

It was noted that both NSPCC and KOALA’s services have helped with children on a practical level.

For one family, the experience of the Sadler Unit was very positive around developing speech for their son. The same family also felt that the nursery has improved his coordination and concentration.

Another family felt these services had helped them as a family in as much as it has helped the kids and therefore had knock on effects.

One mother praised PlayStart (NSPCC / Sure Start). She felt that it was good that someone came to the house to play with the children and give her a break.

6.11 Other services wanted

Service	Responses
Play area / play ground	4
More groups	2
Toddler groups	2
Mothers & Baby group	1
Coffee morning	1
Parenting courses	1
More in Pinehurst	1
Days out / trips with kids in holidays	2
Swimming at the Oasis	1
Barbecue	1
Welfare Benefits advice	1
Help with legal matters	1
Advice with employment	1
Help with children’s sleeping	1
Things for older children	1
More for Dads	1

The main facility wanted by respondents is a play area. A couple of respondents mentioned the new Twist leisure centre and pool – one said it would be close enough to use, the other that it would be too far away.

Other parents wanted to see more groups. One mother suggested a group for single parents. Another suggested toddler groups on Wednesday or Monday to give parents more of a choice. A third suggested a Mother & Baby group, as she felt there was not a lot for a mother with a 7 week old child. One respondent wanted more activities for toddlers along the lines of “Bumps and Babies”, which was not as physical as Tumbletots. She also felt that it would be good to have different groups for older children and younger children, unlike Talk and Toys which was attended by children of all ages. Another thought that Sure Start only had two parenting courses a year and should have more.

One respondent felt there could be more services and activities in Pinehurst. It was felt to be difficult to get to Penhill for single parents that don't drive.

“Some of us parents can't get up to Penhill; getting there is a nightmare; you can walk but you're knackered when you get there; getting four kids on a bus is a nightmare.”

Two respondents suggested organised trips and days out during school holidays.

Other suggestions included providing advice and information for helping people out with benefits and tax credits. One parent felt that with a newborn baby there was not a lot of time to find out about these things at; particularly for a single parent. The same respondent suggested Sure Start could also give help with legal matters.

Another need was to provide something for older children as many families have children aged over 5 as well as younger children that meet the Sure Start criteria.

It is clear that some of the services and activities wanted by parents are already provided by Sure Start and its partners, although they are unaware of them. It is recommended that Sure Start review their communication and promotion strategy to ensure all parents are aware of the range of services and activities on offer.

6.12 General comments

All respondents were asked for any final questions and comments.

These were, as expected, very diverse, but almost universally the parents who were interviewed were positive in their experiences and perceptions of Sure Start and the impact it had had on the lives of their families.

The most critical comment about Sure Start was made by one parent who felt that trying to get hold of someone in Sure Start was difficult. They had left messages but sometimes felt they were waiting for a few days for a response.

One interviewee likes the locality of Sure Start. She liked the fact that staff there will know her and know about her child. When Sure Start wasn't there she had to stay in and so the services have been really welcome. She thinks a lot of people now know about Sure Start via word-of-mouth. She felt that the café is a good focal point. The Speech and Language Therapist was thought to be really good and applied the Sure Start Language Measures and gave tips on how to encourage speech. Overall she felt Sure Start is a great facility for the area.

A second respondent felt that Sure Start is really good and she is still discovering things about it. She uses the Pinehurst centre mainly and likes the flexibility of morning and afternoon sessions. The main contacts have been via Speech and Language Therapist and the pre-school sessions. Her sister who lives in Stratton is quite jealous of the service.

A previous user stated that if she has another child Sure Start would be the first port of call. She has passed on the breastfeeding knowledge to her sister in Goa, and also to her partner. She felt isolated with her first baby, but Sure Start made things a lot better with the second child

A current user feels Sure Start has got better over time and has learned from any mistakes made. It was originally hard to get Speech and Language Therapy help, but this has improved over time. She feels the café needs to be open more often as it's really good and its existence could also be promoted more. She also praised the way Sure Start support breastfeeding and their open attitude to it. Sure Start have also helped her get a disabled buggy for her son as well as disability benefits; and a staff member helped her fill the form in as she is dyslexic. Finally, she felt the monthly newsletter is good.

A single mother feels it is a brilliant service, has no problems or drawbacks with it, and cannot think of anything that could be done better. She feels that Penhill is a friendly area and that Sure Start is one of the agents for this. She uses Sure Start as a drop-in and also uses the café. She finds it is a useful source of knowledge, for example, pre-schools ; she had signed up for a local pre-school which she wouldn't have known about if it hadn't been for Sure Start. She noted that the local Children's Information Service didn't mention that particular pre-school when she asked them. She gets the monthly newsletter which she finds very good.

Another single mother suggested having a group for single parents, courses such as first aid and more holiday activities and days out. She wanted advice about

getting back into employment. She had not got a bad word to say about Sure Start.

Support around breastfeeding, including follow-up sessions, was very good according to another parent. Sure Start had also helped the family with getting an injunction against the mother's previous partner.

Another positive aspect of Sure Start, according to another parent, was that the staff were flexible in their approach and didn't say "you have to do it this way". She had recommended Sure Start to a few other families having difficult times and noted that they have got their lives back on track due in part to the work of Sure Start.

6.13 Evidence of long term outcomes

It was possible by comparing the original interview notes from the University of Bath evaluation in 2003 to the interview notes collected as part of the 2005 exercise to identify 5 families who had been interviewed on both occasions.

The evidence from these would generally seem to be that Sure Start has had a long term positive effect on both the interviewees and their children.

Case 1 had only been given information about Sure Start at the first interview and had been too pre-occupied to make contact. By the second interview she had visited Sure Start and had used the Speech and Language Therapy service, the Pre-school and Tiny Tumblers. Her experience with all services was very good and the family had, in particular, noticed a week by week improvement in their child's speech. Further at the initial interview she felt that she would feel more confident about visiting Sure Start if she felt confident her child would be looked after. Clearly this is now the case. She feels confident in the services, her own feelings of isolation have lessened and she feels she is "*still discovering things about Sure Start*".

Case 2 had not re-used any of the services since the first visit, however she had passed on the information she had gleaned from the Sure Start breastfeeding course she had attended, still saw other mothers from the same course which lessened feelings of isolation, and saw Sure Start as the first port of call were she to have another child.

Case 3 had, at the initial interview, used Sure Start mainly as a one stop provision and had used Play and Learn, Talk and Toys and Speech and Language Therapy services. She had also attended the Young Parents group and stress management course. The summary was that whilst Sure Start had attempted to impact her and her family in the areas of social development coupled with health and family relationships it had not yet made a significant

impact, though there was a relationship with the family worker which she found supportive.

Though her use of services has decreased because she ceased using Bumps and Babies, her own involvement now extends to Sure Start volunteering and the Management Board.

Case 4 were interviewed on both occasions as a couple. At the initial interview it was stated that Sure Start had had an impact on all the members of the family, particularly through the strong and trusting relationship held with the Sure Start Family Worker and also by providing a multi-disciplinary organisation to help with a number of different needs such as childcare. The father had also taken an active role in the Fathers' Group.

Since the initial interview their use of services has increased and Sure Start have continued to help greatly with parenting skills and the parent/child relationship and the emotional needs of the family – *“don't know how we'd have coped [without Sure Start] with what we've gone through over the last few years.”* Further they have recommended Sure Start to other families having a hard time.

Case 5 had 3 children at the initial interview, the youngest being 3 with special educational needs. At the second interview they had a 2 month old child. Their use of the service has decreased over the last 18 months as the special educational needs daughter is now at full time school and they felt there weren't many services for their new child. At initial interview it was felt that the daughter struggled with Play and Learn and Tiny Tumblers as neither group encouraged close parent child interaction. Attending Nursery provision had helped, however with routines and social development. Though it is unclear with regards to thoughts in hindsight on Play and Learn and Tiny Tumblers the family is clear that Sure Start had been a big help especially the nursery and the speech and language and physiotherapy services secured. The daughter has continued with Sure Starts help to develop in terms of walking, talking and progression through pre-school and encouragement into mainstream.

7 Meeting Sure Start and Every Child Matters objectives

It is evident from the findings of the Long Term Case Studies Evaluation that the programme of services provided to families by Sure Start Pinehurst and Penhill are meeting the four key Sure Start objectives which are:

- Improving Social and Emotional Development
- Improving Health
- Improving Learning
- Strengthening Families and Communities

There is also strong evidence from this evaluation that the programme meets all 5 key outcomes of the Government's 'Every Child Matters' initiative, which are:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Well-being

8 Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed:

- There is a need to review and reconsider this element of the evaluation programme and to define what it aims to achieve and how this can be undertaken effectively;
- It is recommended that Sure Start and the evaluators set up a mechanism to have more regular contact with families in the sample;
- It is recommended that contact details of Sure Start families are kept up-to-date in order to facilitate more effective communication and for evaluation purposes;
- The programme should reconsider how to involve parent researchers, for example by organising a specific training course for a number of parents.

9 A final conclusion

Overall, and despite some of the problems in interviewing the original sample of families, the Sure Start programme appears to have been successful in meeting its main objectives of improving the lives and life-chances of children and their parents.

The findings in general mirror the findings of the Longitudinal Study carried out in 2003.

References

“Sure Start Longitudinal Studies – Summary Report for the period October 2002-2003” – Dr Rita Chawla-Duggan, University of Bath, September 2003.

“Sure Start Pinehurst & Penhill – Parent Satisfaction Survey – November to December 2004” – Sure Start Pinehurst & Penhill, February 2005

Appendix 1 - Questionnaires

LONGITUDINAL STUDY - QUESTIONNAIRE CURRENT USERS

Introduction

In 2003 researchers from Sure Start Pinehurst and Penhill and the University of Bath asked you about your use of services for families of young children.

This is a follow-up survey to find out how your usage of family services has changed over the last 18 months and how those services have had an impact on your family. You will have received a letter from Sure Start telling you about this survey.

All information you give will be treated in confidence and any information published in the report of the survey will be anonymous.

Family Information

Name:

Name of partner:

Names and ages of children:

Address:

Telephone Number:

1. Are you, or members of your family, still using Sure Start services?
Yes No (If "No" go to Q.11)
2. If "Yes" which services are you using and how often?
3. How did you hear about Sure Start services (e.g. advertising, home visits, Health Visitors, friends)?
4. Has your use of Sure Start services increased / decreased or stayed the same over the last 18 months? Give details.

5. What has encouraged you to use Sure Start services?
6. What differences have you noticed in your children as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. education and learning, health, social skills, behaviour changes)? – *Differentiate between children 0-4, and 5+*
7. What differences have you noticed in yourself as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. skills, confidence)?
8. What differences have you noticed in your partner as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. parenting skills)?
9. What differences have you noticed in your whole family as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. act more like a family, new friends, involvement in the community)?
10. In addition to the services provided by Sure Start are you using other services for families and children? Yes No (If “No” go to Q.18)
11. Which other local services for families with children have you used (e.g. nurseries, childminders, social services support workers, parenting classes, personal network of friends)?
12. What has encouraged you to use these other services?
13. What are your views of these other services (e.g. good, bad)?
14. What differences have you noticed in your children as a result of using these other services (e.g. education and learning, health, social skills, behaviour changes)? *Differentiate between children 0-4, and 5+*
15. What differences have you noticed in yourself as a result of using these other services (e.g. skills, confidence)?
16. What differences have you noticed in your partner as a result of using these other services (e.g. parenting skills)?
17. What differences have you noticed in your whole family as a result of using these other services (e.g. act more like a family, new friends, involvement in the community)?
18. What other services would you like to see in the Pinehurst and Penhill areas for families with young children?
19. Have you any other comments or questions you would like to make?

LONGITUDINAL STUDY - QUESTIONNAIRE PREVIOUS USERS

Introduction

In Summer 2003 researchers from Sure Start Pinehurst and Penhill and the University of Bath asked you about your use of services for families of young children.

This is a follow-up survey to find out how your usage of family services has changed over the last 18 months and how those services have had an impact on your family. You will have received a letter from Sure Start telling you about this survey.

All information you give will be treated in confidence and any information published in the report of the survey will be anonymous.

Family Information

Name:

Name of partner:

Names and ages of children:

Address:

Telephone Number:

1. Since the previous research survey in 2003 have you used Sure Start services?
Yes No (If "No" go to Q.10)
2. If "Yes" which Sure Start services have you used?
3. What are your views of Sure Start services (e.g. good, bad)?
4. What differences have you noticed in your children as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. education and learning, health, social skills, behaviour changes)? *Differentiate between children 0-4, and 5+*

5. What differences have you noticed in yourself as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. skills, confidence)?
6. What differences have you noticed in your partner as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. parenting skills)?
7. What differences have you noticed in your whole family as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. act more like a family, new friends, involvement in the community)?
8. Would you consider using Sure Start services again?
Yes No Give details
9. In addition to the services provided by Sure Start are you using other services for families and children? Yes No (*If "No" go to Q.17*)
10. Which other local services for families with children have you used (e.g. nurseries, childminders, social services support workers, parenting classes, personal network of friends)?
11. What encouraged you to use these other services?
12. What are your views of these other services?
13. What differences did you notice in your children as a result of using these other services (e.g. education and learning, health, social skills, behaviour changes)? *Differentiate between children 0-4, and 5+*
14. What differences have you noticed in yourself as a result of using these other services (e.g. skills, confidence)?
15. What differences have you noticed in your partner as a result of using these other services (e.g. parenting skills)?
16. What differences have you noticed in your whole family as a result of using these other services (e.g. act more like a family, new friends, involvement in the community)?
17. What other services would you like to see in the Pinehurst and Penhill areas for families with young children?
18. Have you any other comments or questions you would like to make?

LONGITUDINAL STUDY - QUESTIONNAIRE NON-USERS

Introduction

In Summer 2003 researchers from Sure Start Pinehurst and Penhill and the University of Bath asked you about your use of services for families of young children.

This is a follow-up survey to find out how your use of family services has changed over the last 18 months and how those services have had an impact on your family. You will have received a letter from Sure Start telling you about this survey.

All information you give will be treated in confidence and any information published in the report of the survey will be anonymous.

Family Information

Name:

Name of partner:

Names and ages of children:

Address:

Telephone Number:

1. Since the previous research have you used Sure Start services?
Yes No (If "No" go to Q.10)
2. If "Yes" which Sure Start services have you used?
3. What are your views of Sure Start services (e.g. good, bad - why)?
4. What differences have you noticed in your children as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. education and learning, health, social skills, behaviour changes)? *Differentiate between children 0-4, and 5+*
5. What differences have you noticed in yourself as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. skills, confidence)?

6. What differences have you noticed in your partner as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. parenting skills)?
7. What differences have you noticed in your whole family as a result of using Sure Start services (e.g. act more like a family, new friends, involvement in the community)?
8. Would you consider using Sure Start services again?
Yes No Give details
9. In addition to the services provided by Sure Start are you using other services for families and children? Yes No (If "No" go to Q.17)
10. Which other local services for families with children have you used (e.g. nurseries, childminders, social services support workers, parenting classes, personal network of friends)?
11. What encouraged you to use these other services?
12. What are your views of these other services?
13. What differences have you noticed in your children as a result of using these other services (e.g. education and learning, health, social skills, behaviour changes)? *Differentiate between children 0-4, and 5+*
14. What differences have you noticed in yourself as a result of using these other services (e.g. skills, confidence)?
15. What differences did you notice in your partner as a result of using these other services (e.g. parenting skills)?
16. What differences did you notice in your whole family as a result of using these other services (e.g. act more like a family, new friends, involvement in the community)?
17. What other services would you like to see in the Pinehurst and Penhill areas for families with young children?
18. Have you any other comments or questions you would like to make?

Appendix 2 – Personal Information of Interviewees

Interviews were generally held with the mother

Family Number	Number of children	Ages of children	Partner	User status
1	2	5 & 3	Yes	Current
2	2	3 & 2	Yes	Current
3	2	3 & 2	Yes	Current
4	2	11 & 5	Yes	Previous
5	4	9,8,5 & 5 months	Yes	Current
6	1	2	No	Current
7	1	4	No	Previous*
8	2	2 & 9 months	Yes	Current
9	4	11,10,5 & 2 months	Yes	Current
10	4	15,13,5 & 3	Yes	Current
11	2	5 & 3	No	Current
12	3	7,4 & 2	Yes	Current

* - this mother had been a current user in the first phase of the study in 2003.