SURE START WEYMOUTH AND PORTLAND

AN EVALUATION OF THE SPEECH & LANGUAGE SERVICE

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Thank you

- To the families and the service providers who agreed to take part in this study
- To the Speech & Language Worker for her assistance throughout this evaluation
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report describes the findings from the evaluation of the Speech and Language service delivered to the community of Weymouth and Portland by Sure Start Weymouth and Portland.

A stratified sampling technique to target key families was used and a total of nine telephone interviews with service providers and eight face-to-face interviews with parents were carried out.

The data from the parents and the service providers reinforced each other in stating that a very beneficial service was being provided. All services and innovations proposed by the Speech and Language Development Worker (SALDW) have been provided. The SALDW has been shown to effectively change behaviour by giving very clear information, working with people in their own environments and tailoring help to the individual. All of these interventions had a noticeable effect on the development of the children’s language skills.

The parents and the service providers were extremely positive about the following areas of the SALDW’s service:

- Working with families and the provision of home visits for people who cannot attend clinics for a variety of reasons;
- The ‘normalising’ of speech and language therapy by turning it into fun and games for everyone;
- Running groups and courses that promote language development for parents and children;
- The training of staff and delivery of speech and language services at nurseries enabling the early provision of information and advice on things that can be done to develop children’s language skills.

This report demonstrates that there is a huge need for speech and language input in the Weymouth and Portland area. It also reveals that the inflexibility in the community system is not enabling the needs of all families to be met. The system operated by Sure Start Weymouth and Portland has managed to work with these hard-to-reach groups and produce very effective outcomes. It is suggested that the community speech and language therapy (SALT) services need to consider adopting some of Sure Starts interventions so as to offer a more effective service that reaches all families.
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Introduction

This report describes the findings from the evaluation of the Speech and Language service delivered to the community of Weymouth and Portland by Sure Start Weymouth and Portland. The evaluation is part of the overall research and evaluation strategy of the Sure Start programme that aims to examine the impact of the Sure Start programme on children, families and communities in the local areas.

This particular evaluation, undertaken by Bournemouth University, was designed to investigate the role of the Speech and Language Development Worker (SALDW) who delivers the Sure Start service and how the programme was meeting the needs of Sure Start registered users and other health and educational professionals in the area.

The report is divided into the following sections:

- Background information on:
  - The National Sure Start Programme
  - Weymouth & Portland Sure Start
  - Speech and Language (literature review)
- Speech and Language within the National Sure Start Programme
- Speech and Language within the Local Weymouth & Portland Sure Start Programme
- Purpose of this study
- Methods used
- Research findings
- Conclusion and recommendations
Background on the National Sure Start Programme

The national Sure Start scheme is a government initiative introduced in 1998 to work with parents-to-be, parents and carers to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of their young children. The considerable financial resources invested in the scheme are concentrated on relatively small, well-defined areas that could be considered to be disadvantaged, such as the four areas covered by the Weymouth & Portland Sure Start programme.

Sure Start is delivered at the local level through over 520 individual Sure Start schemes which bring together early education, childcare, health and family support and concentrate on children from 0 to 4 years of age. Located within each Sure Start Centre, and at the heart of each community, are quality activities and services provided by play and early year’s workers, speech and language therapists, child psychologists and health professionals. Sure Start is strongly community based and is required to have a high level of community involvement and to be culturally sensitive. There is considerable local-decision making on how national and local targets can be met and the local programmes are required to evaluate their own work.

The overall stated aim of Sure Start is to:
Work with parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of pre-school children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, to ensure that they are ready to thrive when they get to school. It also aims to strengthen families and communities.

In order to meet this aim Sure Start has four objectives that underpin all work.

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<th>Objective</th>
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<td>Objective One</td>
<td>To improve children’s social and emotional development</td>
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<td>Objective Two</td>
<td>To improve children’s health</td>
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<td>Objective Three</td>
<td>To improve children’s ability to learn</td>
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<td>Objective Four</td>
<td>To strengthen families and communities</td>
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One or more of these objectives should be embedded in all the Sure Start activities that take place at the local level.
**Background on Weymouth & Portland Sure Start**

The Weymouth and Portland Sure Start office is situated in Weymouth town centre. It covers the four Sure Start areas of Underhill (Portland), Westham, Melcombe Regis and Littlemoor (a map showing these areas is given in Appendix 1)

A number of activities, support services and courses for parents and children are provided by the Weymouth & Portland Sure Start programme with the aim of meeting the national objectives. These include:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sure Start Centre</strong></th>
<th><strong>Littlemoor</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Federated House</strong></td>
<td><strong>Community Centre</strong></td>
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<td>Crèche</td>
<td>Parents Forum</td>
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<td>Stay &amp; Play</td>
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<td>Mosaics</td>
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<td>Numeracy/literacy skills</td>
<td>Colourstrings</td>
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<td>Basic computer skills</td>
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<td>Paediatric first aid</td>
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<td>My child and me</td>
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<td>Coffee morning</td>
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**Melcombe Regis**

- Parents forum
- Colourstrings
- Coffee & play
- Babbling Babies
- Bumps 2 Babes
- My Child & Me
- Sure ways to de-stress
- Teenage parenting group
- Health after childbirth
- Teens and tots

**Westham**

- Parents forum
- Coffee morning
- Coffee & play
- Crèche
- My child and me
- Sure ways to de-stress
- Celebration day

**Underhill**

- Baby and toddler first aid
- Picnic in the park-opening
- Coffee morning
- Baby Massage
- My Child & Me
- Colourstrings
- Play & learn

**Other venues**

- Baby and toddler first aid
- Self awareness workshop
- Teenage parenting group
- Baby and toddler hygiene
- Beach play
- Teens and tots
- Colourstrings
- Aerobics

**Background information on speech and language**

The health, social sciences and humanities literature contains a significant amount of work on the clinical aspect of speech and language development. This focuses heavily on the practical element of the therapist’s work supporting speech and language development in people with physical impairments. Of more relevance to the therapist’s role in Sure Start is published work on collaboration with other health and educational professionals to enable children with speech and language difficulties to
access the whole of the curriculum and ways to support and empower parents and carers in their role.

**Speech and Language Therapist and the community:**
The development of the speech and language therapist’s role in the community is outlined in the work of Lindsay et al (2002). This work describes the change in role of the therapist from a clinic location using a clinical-based approach, to one where the therapist works within a community setting, collaborates closely with other community professionals and is directly involved in the training of other community workers to identify speech and language need. The literature is beginning to reflect the tensions and demands the new roles are bringing to speech and language therapists as they start to collaborate more fully with health and educational professionals from different working cultures and backgrounds.

**Speech and Language Therapy in schools:**
Historically schools have viewed language as part of literacy skills until the advent of the National Curriculum and the specific attainment target, Speaking and Listening. Difficulties with language then began to feature highly in Reception Class teachers’ areas of concern and there then became a need for specialist speech and language support. The potential challenges when working within an educational setting were addressed by Carol Miller from the University of Birmingham in her work Teachers and Speech and Language Therapists: a shared framework. She found that the necessary collaboration was not always easy because teachers and therapists were trained and ‘brought up’ differently. Their initial professional training conditions them to think and work in different ways. Therapists work with the aim of providing therapy to individual children with priority going to those with the greatest need while educationalists have goals that involve all children having access to all services and the whole range of the curriculum. Bringing these two approaches together, she argues, would provide a fuller support system for a wider range of children with language and communication difficulties.

**Role development and training of the speech therapist**
Speech and Language services within England and Wales have undertaken a number of fundamental changes in the last few years due to government pressures and policies. This includes the drive towards ‘inclusiveness’ in all services and the encouragement of ‘multi-professional collaboration’. Traditionally children with speech and language difficulties, particularly pre-school children, have received their support from a therapist at a local clinic. Each child would be part of a huge caseload and the quantity of support available has, by necessity, been decided on by the severity of the child’s needs and the availability of limited resources in terms of time and money.

For the child with speech and language difficulties, there is now a wide range of support available from both health and educational professionals. The speech and language therapist is involved in clinical and educational settings as well as with early year’s professionals. This involves empowering school staff and other early year's workers, through courses and individual support, to work with children on their
particular speech and language needs as well as supporting the child in accessing the whole of the curriculum.

This extension to the speech therapist’s role necessitates a change of setting for their work. As pre-school education has expanded and children and parents begin to access more than one educational provider, speech and language therapists have had to move their work away from the clinic setting and deliver their skills and expertise as part of a team within community activities and services.

The work of Letts and Hall (2003) provides a useful baseline for describing the task ahead for speech and language therapists in their role as potential providers of training and support for early years workers in the community. This work outlines where early years professionals are now in their extended role of identifying and working with children with speech and language problems and the amount of training and support needed. They define “early year’s professionals” as anyone working in a professional capacity with young children under five years of age. It is a useful umbrella term, which covers teachers, nursery nurses, playgroup staff and others in schools, day nurseries and créches. Letts and Hall’s (2003) research showed that there was very limited time devoted to speech and language development in the initial training and that while some of the early year’s professionals do have access to training very few workers felt their full training needs were really being met.

Sure Start and speech and language:
Sure Start nationally has produce a detailed document ‘Birth to Three Matters – a framework to support children in their earliest years’ and this sets out the positive environment a child should grow up in to encourage good speech and language development. The work concentrates on babies and very young children and their ability and need to communicate with significant people in their lives. It fits in well with the Sure Start ethos of constancy in relationships, responsiveness of parents and close relationships with protective adults.

Evaluations of speech and language, at present, have achieved very little published work apart from that available through the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) undertaken by Birkbeck College, University of London. Through their website www.ness.bbk.ac.uk they have published a number of reports on Speech and Language within Sure Start. For the purpose of this evaluation, none of the speech and language evaluations published on the NESS website are specifically relevant as they cover different aspects of the process:

Barnardo’s Fulford Family Centre looked at modelling speech and language support, staff training and consultation and the creation of an information pack for Family Link Workers, Health Visitors and parents.
Sure Start (Church Street) Westminster looked at whether a home visiting Speech and Language Therapy service is a viable way of identifying and enabling access to appropriate professional help
Foxhill and Parsons Cross, Sheffield set up a project to identify the required processes to increase staff confidence, awareness and knowledge of speech and language
development, to help staff in formulating targets for their individual settings, and to address areas and begin to affect change in areas of concern identified by staff.

The most relevant evaluation on the NESS website is the ‘Evaluation of Sure Start speech and language therapy groups’ undertaken in Kendray, Barnsley. Here they looked at progress of children within a nursery after receiving regular speech and language support from a Hanen trained therapist. The resulting data showed that children had made good overall progress in their language development but the study was unable to make the claim that it was of a direct result of this type of early intervention and approach.

Speech and Language within the National Sure Start Programme

At a national level, speech and language development is a fundamental part of the Sure Start initiative and is expected to be a part of all activities, either as its main focus or as a secondary aim. Children start communicating as soon as they are born and the interaction between an adult and child is the key to supporting language development. Sure Start aims to:

“promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, so that they can flourish at home, and when they get to school.” (Promoting Speech and Language Development - Guidance for Sure Start programmes 2001)

Statistically, it is known that children from areas such as those served by Sure Start programmes are more likely to have poorer spoken language skills than their peers in non Sure Start areas (Law et al. 1998). There is also an indication that there is a connection between the development of spoken language and the later development of literacy. Evidence is also available showing the relationship with emotional and behavioural difficulties, once again when the child is young and at a later stage (Cantwell et al. 1990, Botting & Conti-Ramsden 2000, Lindsay and Dockrell 2000, Clegg & Henderson 2001).

This would suggest that children raised in Sure Start areas are more likely to experience delays in language and, as a result, may go on to have difficulties with their reading and writing skills as they enter and progress through full-time education. Due to the possibility of associated behaviour challenges and the resulting long-term impact on a child’s education, it is essential to address speech and language needs as soon as possible.

Sure Start recognises the importance of speech and language for the young by making it a prime objective within Objective 3 – Improving children’s ability to learn. The aim of this target nationally was to reduce by 5% the number of children with speech and language problems needing specialist intervention in the Sure Start areas by 2004.

Sure Start encourages a holistic approach to the delivery of speech and language services and for this approach to be a fundamental theme within all the services and activities that local Sure Start programmes deliver to their communities. Speech and
language initiatives are not just about the highly specialist skills that the local speech & language worker can bring to the children but they also focus more broadly to include parenting skills, the home environment, the parental network of social contacts, community resources and the child’s overall health.

“Promoting speech and language development in young children is not just about actions for individual children or even for individual families: it is about changing the way communities view speech and language development, and changing the social and community context within which children develop.” (Promoting Speech and Language Development -Guidance for Sure Start programmes)

Speech and Language within the Local Weymouth & Portland Sure Start Programme

Speech and language support for children and families is already well established in the area through work undertaken at various clinics run by Dorset Speech and Language Therapy. The Sure Start speech and language worker works alongside and in conjunction with the community speech and language therapist. The intention of the Sure Start programme is not to replace the existing service but to develop and implement new ways of working that focus on early intervention and prevention of communication difficulties. The relationship between the Sure Start programme and the local speech and language therapy service is an important one so that local children and families can obtain maximum benefits from the two services.

The particular activities that are specifically speech and language based within the Weymouth & Portland Sure Start programme are:

- Training of workers at Sure Start;
- Home visits and teaching of parents, including those randomly selected for Sure Start Language Measure (SSLM) visits;
- Work and staff training at the Brackenbury nursery, Bincombe Valley Nursery, Westhaven pre-school and at the Weymouth Family Centre;
- My Child & Me Group;
- Fast track referral system;
- Babbling Babies Group.
Extending beyond the programme of activities undertaken by the SALDW, individuals who have received training can offer some services, and specialised work takes place with other early years providers in the area.

Weymouth & Portland Sure Start activities should ‘add value’ to the existing provision and work towards the speech and language target:

“To achieve an increase in the proportion of children having normal levels of communication, language and literacy at the end of the Foundation Stage, and an increase in the proportion of young children with satisfactory speech and language development at age two years.” (Promoting Speech and Language Development - Guidance for Sure Start programmes)

The SALDW described her general aim as being:

‘To promote the best ways of encouraging language and to talk to parents and advise parents on ways to do that as well as nursery staff, playgroup staff, family centre staff and staff that come into contact with children under the age of five and Sure Start staff as well...for all children wherever they are with their language.’ (Speech & Language Development Worker interview)

As a fundamental aim, Sure Start Weymouth and Portland seeks to identify children with degrees of speech and language delay at an early stage and, within the planned activities, give specialist help and advice to the child and their parents. Sure Start’s public service agreement target aims to achieve: ‘an increase in the proportion of children having normal levels of communication, language and literacy at the end of the Foundation stage and an increase in the proportion of young children with satisfactory speech and language development at age 2 years,. In response to this aim, the ‘Sure Start Language Measure’ (SSLM) has been designed to monitor changes in the language skills of two year olds within Sure Start communities nationally. The data concerning these SSLM’s is available in a separate Weymouth & Portland Sure
Start Report. As the findings are so relevant to this report, an overview of the statistics is available in Appendix 2. To summarise the findings, the SSLM and observations carried out by the SALDW for 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 showed a reduction of over 5% in children with speech and language difficulties. The national average for children needing further input was 20%, whereas Sure Start Weymouth and Portland’s data revealed that in 2003-2004 the percentage of children who may need further input was 38.7%, nearly twice the national average. The data for 2004-2005 showed a reduction, but the percentage (34%) was still much higher than the national average and remains a cause for concern. Consequently, the main finding from this data was the huge need for speech and language development in the Weymouth and Portland area.
How Speech and Language Support is Delivered in Weymouth & Portland and Dorset

Prior to Sure Start, speech and language support in the Weymouth & Portland area was delivered exclusively by Dorset Speech and Language Therapy Service. It was based in various local clinics with outreach to schools and homes according to individual therapists’ professional discretion.

Sure Start aims to deliver a speech and language development service that is less stigmatised and more focused on parent involvement. Even the title for the Speech and Language Therapist with this role in Sure Start was changed to Speech & Language Development Worker (SALDW). This was a decision that was taken after a few parents had stated that they did not like the term ‘therapist’ as it was too stigmatising. The SALDW is very aware of the needs of parents and children and her role in fulfilling these.

“It's less intimidating for parents coming along to Sure Start and hopefully less stigma attached than going to a clinic which is often associated with doctors and medical problems....it is for all children, whether or not they have got speech and language difficulty.” (SALDW)

“Parents feel consulted and that we are working with them rather than working at them....always consulted, always involved.” (SALDW).

“It is much more focused on their interaction with their child and getting them on the floor and playing with their child...encouraging their speech and language development at home.” (SALDW)

The work undertaken by the Sure Start SALDW will now be outlined in the following categories:

- Training of workers at Sure Start;
- Home visits and teaching of parents (SSLM home visits, non attendance at clinic appointments, fast track referral system);
- Work and staff training at the Brackenbury, Bincombe Valley & Westhaven nurseries and at the family centre;
- My Child & Me and other groups
Speech and language development work using books and games

Training of project workers at Sure Start:
Sure Start has a multidisciplinary approach to its delivery of services because so many of the project workers spend time working together. The skill mix consists of:

- The Speech & Language Development Worker (SALDW)
- Health Visitor;
- Midwife;
- Occupational Therapist;
- Counsellor and educational advisor;
- Child Development Workers and Assistants;
- Social Worker;
- Childcare Co-ordinator & Play Learning and Development;
- Worker;
- Public Health Worker.

There is a great awareness of other professional roles and the Sure Start office environment makes it extremely easy for the different professionals to liaise with and learn from each other. Joint sessions are often provided for families in their own home where the Health Visitor may make an appointment for both her and the SALDW or the Occupational Therapist to visit. Joint sessions can also be set up at the Sure Start Centre for example a Stay and Play session where the Child Care Team runs a session for the parent and child with the SALDW.

The SALDW has also run some training courses for the staff so that they can learn some of the basics of encouraging language development. This results in staff having more awareness and therefore being able to give general advice to parents about language, knowing and implementing ways within their practice of developing language and also knowing when they should ask the SALDW to become involved. Due to the multidisciplinary set-up at Sure Start and the flexibility of its workers;
more joint working and visits occur where professionals can continue to learn from each other.

**Home visits and teaching of parents:**
A number of families are visited at home by the SALDW including:

- Those who are randomly selected for a Sure Start Language Measure (SSLM) visit;
- Those who do not attend (DNA) clinic appointments;
- Those with severe needs for whom waiting up to 12 weeks for a clinic speech and language therapist appointment is particularly difficult (these families are seen by the SALDW via the ‘Fast Track’ system which is mentioned later in the report).

These will now be taken in turn and further explanations given:

**SSLM home visits:** The SSLM is a parental report tool designed to measure change in language skills of two year old children. It was developed in 2001 for the Sure Start unit by City University in conjunction with Sure Start individual programmes. It aims to measure the Sure Start Public Service Agreement (PSA) target on speech and language skills at both national and individual levels. Each year 60 families in the Weymouth and Portland area, with children between 23 and 25 months, are randomly selected to participate. Families are visited at home and parents are asked to complete a checklist of words their child can say, as well as make judgements as to whether or not they have concerns about their child’s language development. Sure Start Weymouth and Portland use these visits as a way of offering language encouragement advice to parents, as well as a means of collecting the data required. Although the SSLM is not designed to identify children who need speech and language therapy, observations by the SALDW can determine which families may need more support in encouraging their children’s language development. These families can be visited again for ongoing advice-giving sessions or can be channelled into the Sure Start crèche system, where the child development workers, along with the parents, follow language encouragement programmes set by the SALDW.

**Non-attendance at clinic appointments:** Non-attendance rates for speech and language therapist appointments in clinics are high in the Weymouth and Portland area. Possible reasons for this include:

- Clinics are uncomfortable settings for some families;
- Some families do not understand the need for speech and language therapy for their child or do not consider it as a priority;
- Chaotic lifestyles of some families makes appointment attendance difficult.

The SALDW has had the flexibility to visit these hard-to-reach families at home and to offer advice on their terms, rather than laying expectations on them to access help outside of their environment. During these visits, attempts to demystify and normalise clinic speech and language therapy can be made in the hope that the family will feel more willing to access clinic support in the future. The SALDW can look at the home environment and give practical advice on improving it from the speech and language point of view, such as reducing background noise from the television or radio. The SALDW can also demonstrate good ways to encourage the child, such as
getting on the floor so they are at the child's level and getting involved in playing. Some simple resources can be provided and others suggested which the parents can buy or borrow from a Toy Library.

Encouraging early speech through signing

**Fast track referral system:** Children referred to clinic speech and language therapy may wait for up to 12 weeks for an initial appointment. Sure Start recognises the need to give advice to families as soon as possible, and to minimise children's language difficulties at the earliest opportunity. For some families, a wait of 12 weeks can result in a reduced motivation in pursuing help for their child and a resulting non-attendance at their clinic appointment when they do reach the top of the waiting list. Families for whom this may apply or families whose children have such severe language needs that advice needs to be given as soon as possible can be seen by the Sure Start SALDW as a ‘one off’ visit at home while waiting for their clinic appointment. Clinics can be explained more thoroughly to them, attendance encouraged and the family can be given advice to ‘fill the gap’ as they wait for the community service. This interim service aims to reassure and inform parents from the earliest opportunity.

**Work and staff training at the Brackenbury Nursery, Bincombe Valley Nursery, Westhaven Nursery and Family Centre:**

Flexibility in the SALDW's role has enabled her to link in with schools, nurseries, playgroups and family centres on a more regular basis than is possible for the clinic speech and language therapists (SALTs). She has been able to work in those environments and has set up language groups and staff training. Children that need speech and language help who attend one of these organisations, can be put into a speech or language encouragement group and given focused input. The community speech and language therapist and the staff at the nursery and family centre can notify the SALDW of children that they think would benefit from this help. Training of staff in these settings has included:

- Observing and working with the SALDW;
- Training in following speech & language encouragement programmes;
- External training courses run by the Speech and Language Therapy Department in Dorchester.

Once this input has been given, the organisation can then become more independent and effective in its delivery of this service while continuing to liaise with and get support from the SALDW. Feedback from the staff and parents has been very positive. The staff have enjoyed learning about language development and have become very good at assessing and implementing language development initiatives for the children. The resources have also been built up in the nurseries for language and listening games and quiet areas. All of this has been carried out under the guidance of the SALDW. The children have made great strides in their progress with comprehension, vocabulary, expressive language, speech/sound skills, attention and listening.
The SALDW at Sure Start Weymouth and Portland has completed a separate evaluation of the speech and language work that has been carried out at Westhaven Nursery. This report is available at Weymouth and Portland Sure Start Office.
'My Child and Me' and other groups:
This group targets families who would benefit from more parent/child interaction opportunities; advice on best practice for developing their children’s language & learning and behaviour management support. The groups are run by the SALDW and the Sure Start occupational therapist and are aimed at families with 2 year olds. The venues usually have two rooms so that there are no interruptions or distractions when the speech and language activity is carried out. A typical session starts off in the smaller room, beginning with welcome songs and sticker choices. There are lots of choice and waiting to encourage language and verbalisation and an emphasis is placed on encouraging early social skills & peer interaction. Children are encouraged in turn to put their name on the welcome board and then a language game is carried out, such as passing round a ‘feely bag’, pulling out an object and naming it or listening to and completing a comprehension task. Listening games with musical instruments are also included in sessions.

The group then moves into the bigger room for a physical, craft or music based session with the Occupational Therapist. During this the SALDW joins in with the parents modelling the right type of language to use to encourage their children's skills. Everyone then sits down together for a snack and again choice and socialisation are encouraged. The occupational therapist can also give parents advice on posture, sitting positions etc. The group then returns to the small room for more language work such as nursery rhymes or a story. The session is then finished off with a goodbye song and refreshments for the parents.

Other pre-existing groups, such as under one groups, playgroup and health visitor groups, can be attended by the SALDW and information given on promoting language development. Sure Start has also set up regular 'Stay and Play' sessions which are for 2 to 3 year olds and their carers. These target families who would like the opportunity to spend more quality time with their children, supported by Sure Start’s child development workers. Sure Start project workers such as the SALDW can also attend these sessions, as needed, to offer advice specific to their area of expertise. Through these groups parents have gained support from others whose children have similar language learning difficulties; have made new friends and have often been encouraged to access other Sure Start facilities. If they were attending a clinic appointment they would be on their own.

Singing game with activity sack:
Object from activity sack
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the evaluation was to examine the views of three groups of people concerning their perceptions of the speech and language service available from the Sure Start Weymouth and Portland programme:

- Parents and carers whose children had received speech and language support and advice from the Sure Start team;
- Health and educational professionals who were based in the Weymouth and Portland area who had had contact with the children and families who had experienced the speech and language service;
- Sure Start workers who were delivering the programme – namely the speech and language therapist and project workers.

The evaluation also aimed at finding out if the speech and language programme was beginning to reach the specified Sure Start objectives outlined in the Sure Start Weymouth and Portland document ‘The Best Start for Children, Building for Their Future’.

Preparation for the study
Ethical approval was obtained from the South West Local Research Ethics Committee prior to carrying out the study. Information letters and consent forms were given to all parents, carers and health, education and Sure Start workers who agreed to be interviewed. All participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the evaluation and could withdraw from the process at any time.
METHODS USED

A plan for the evaluation was devised by Bournemouth University, Sure Start Weymouth and Portland and the South West Local Research Ethics Committee. The sample had to cover a broad spectrum of families to reflect the range and nature of the Sure Start SALDW’s role. Up to a dozen telephone interviews were to be carried out with service providers that the SALDW had worked with. Face-to-face interviews with the Speech & Language Worker and the parents whose children had received input from her were also to be undertaken.

A stratified sampling technique was decided to be the most appropriate for these interviews and to incorporate up to 20 interviews.

Ethical issues

As the researcher was not a Sure Start worker she could not have access to the names and addresses of people the SALDW had been involved with. The SALDW compiled a list of names, for both the service providers and the families for each category which could be given to the researcher. The SALDW then wrote to everyone, briefly informing them about the study and asking them if they would be interested in taking part in the research project. If they were willing for the researcher to be given their contact details, a form was enclosed which could then be returned to the researcher in the pre-paid envelope provided. The letter and contact details form are shown in Appendix 4. Once the completed contact form was returned to the researcher, a more detailed information sheet and consent form could be forwarded onto them. The information sheet and consent form are shown in Appendix 5. When the consent forms were returned to the researcher, the service providers and families could be contacted by phone to arrange an interview at a convenient time.

A letter was also sent to the manager of the Community Speech & Language therapists, as the SALDW is seconded from the NHS, informing her of the study and seeking permission for involving the SALDW in the study. This letter is shown in Appendix 3 and a reply was received stating agreement for the study to continue.

The recruitment of participants to the study, the interviewing and the analysis were all undertaken simultaneously to enable the study to be as flexible and responsive as possible. The interviews followed a semi-structured style and the schedules for the service providers and the parents are shown in Appendix 6. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed by staff at the university. Content analysis was then carried out. As the analysis was undertaken out data saturation (Glaser & Strauss 1967) was reached. A decision was made between the researcher and the SALDW to reduce the number of interviews in certain categories. A total of nine service providers and eight parent interviews were therefore carried out.

DATA COLLECTION

Service provider interview data:
The SALDW had input into four nurseries and liaises with community speech and language therapists, health visitors, portage staff and Sure Start staff. The nine
telephone interviews that were carried out comprised of two interviews with a nursery, where several staff worked closely with the SALDW, and one interview from each of the other categories, where only one or two people worked with the Speech & Language Worker.

**Parent interview data:**
Eight parent interviews were carried out with the following:

- Two interviews were with families where the speech and language therapist had seen them just once. A target of three interviews had originally been set, but as no new information was emerging from the data they were stopped after two.

- Three interviews were with families where the child had been seen in their own home. This equalled the target that had been set for this category.

- Three interviews were with families where the child was seen in nurseries or pre-schools. The target set for this category had originally been ten. As the data soon became saturated it was decided to finish the interviews after the third.

The final category of interviews was meant to be families who had complained about or not attended their sessions. These could not be carried out as the two families who fell into this category did not agree to participate in this study.
RESEARCH FINDINGS

INFORMATION FROM SERVICE PROVIDERS

The SALDW has had input into four nurseries and liaised with Community Speech & Language Therapists, Health Visitors, Portage staff and Sure Start staff. The nine interviews carried out with service providers were selected from these and comprised of the following;

- Three staff working in nurseries (two teachers and one assistant),
- A family centre worker,
- A pre-school teacher,
- A community health visitor
- A Sure Start health visitor
- A portage worker
- A community speech and language therapist

The data from the service provider interviews could be seen to fall into the following four themes.

- Knowledge of the Sure Start SALDW’s role
- Effect of having the Sure Start SALDW’s input
- Sure Start working
- Feedback received about the service

Each of these themes will now be taken in turn and more information given.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SURE START SALDW’s ROLE:

In this theme the service providers talked about their knowledge of the SALDW having to find new ways of working in trying to move the boundaries of interprofessional and personal working and her aim to normalise speech and language therapy.

New ways of working: When talking about new ways of working, the service providers mentioned the Sure Start SALDW trying to work at different levels and aiming to work preventatively. They knew that she was trying to make her input more accessible and talked about how she visits established groups of children. While there, all the service providers were aware of her aim to educate the staff and parents about ways they could develop language skills as well as giving the children speech and language input.

“It has been really useful to have somebody come in to play the games and give us ideas that we can do within the routine of our day here and also, it has been a point of contact for parents as well, speaking to parents and making appointments with them……if we had a problem we could speak to her about it.” (Weymouth Family Centre)
A few of the service providers added that having a fresh face come in to give the children some input, rather than the same staff, had an impact on the children. They were all aware that SALDW aims to provide staff and parents with ideas to enable them to carry on developing children’s speech and language skills. This is especially the case in the nurseries where she has been going in and specifically training the staff to run speech and language groups.

“She gives work to our team...quite detailed instructions and she makes sure that we have the resources too. If we haven’t, she will send us a pack of pictures that we can make into a game, so she sees it through. She is also on the end of the phone if we have any questions. It’s wonderful, you know, when we actually see progress because the children are getting so much input and those that can only concentrate for a few minutes, can get that few minutes every day.” (Bincombe Valley Nursery staff)

The children were not the only ones to benefit from this as the staff found this role very rewarding.

“It has given us a confidence boost, that you can do it yourself as well, so yes we’ve gained a lot of new skills.” (Brackenbury Nursery staff)

Moving the boundaries of interprofessional and personal working: The next section of this theme covers the service providers talking about the Sure Start SALDW striving to move the boundaries of interprofessional and personal working. All of the service providers interviewed felt that the relationship between Sure Start and the community speech and language services worked well and was described as “brilliantly assisting, overlapping sometimes, but never duplicating”.

They all viewed the SALDW as being able to slot in and provide exactly what was needed for all concerned. She was described as having that “team work approach”. She liaised well with other professionals both within and outside of Sure Start and was seen to be very accessible.

“She’s been excellent, sending back copies of who is attending which group, any extra information we might need. She will say if she’s done a visit to a family that had been referred to us (the community speech and language team) but was still on the waiting list, sending us back her initial assessment and advice which she had given to the family...she has been very good at keeping us in the picture.” (Interview 16)

Service providers all commented that it is very easy to get in contact with her to discuss any concerns and get ideas.

“Having that team work approach makes such a difference because then I can say to the mum ‘Well I’ve spoken to ... (mentions SALDW by name) and she thought so-and-so and may be if you work on that.” (Interview 9)

The communication and accessibility of the SALDW were frequently commented on by all service providers and described as being excellent. Service providers mentioned receiving reports automatically rather than them having to phone up and
make a request, which some added would often not get done. They also mentioned how having the SALDW come into their organisation opened up the communication. It was very easy to discuss any children they had problems with whether in person or over the phone.

**Normalising speech therapy:** The last part of this theme covers the service providers discussing the ‘normalising’ of speech therapy that Sure Start is trying to achieve. The aims of the SALDW to make her work more understood and accessible was mentioned by all of the service providers.

> “Sure Start has taken speech therapy out of the Crystal Palace domain ...I think Sure Start has delivered speech therapy in a very normal and acceptable way and it is seen as part of a child’s development, which is how I’d like it to be seen actually.” (Community Health Visitor)

Even the title of ‘Speech and Language Development Worker’ was chosen with the aim of breaking down barriers. This was in response to the views of Sure Start parents who stated that they did not like the term ‘therapist’ due to the stigma attached to it. Service providers all commented on the fact that people seem to see the Sure Start SALDW as a friend and that the way she communicates with them, particularly as this is influenced by the fact that she tries to choose normal environments for the family such as the home, seems to really get the message through and enable behaviour changes. This is particularly influenced by the fact that the SALDW tries to choose normal environments to work with the families, such as their homes. There was a general understanding that the Sure Start SALDW can approach the delivery of services from a slightly different angle, due to the flexibility of her role.

> “...she’s prepared to look at things much more globally...to give mums advice on all sorts of issues around speech therapy like chewing, children with special needs and make suggestions about things that I wouldn’t have thought of really.” (Interview 5)

Most of the service providers also mentioned her preventative work and described it as helping to redefine speech and language input. Some service providers went on to add that she would also give advice on encouraging speech development for all children and not just those who were experiencing difficulties.

> “I know she would say that her role is to be much more preventative....to be much more looking at ways of encouraging speech development and preventing speech problems.” (Interview 9)

Some service providers commented that they believed the result of all these actions caused parents to encounter less stigma. The parents would mention the SALDW by name as if they are seeing her, rather than having an appointment with a speech and language therapist. The approach of the SALDW makes her work seem more normal and acceptable.
EFFECT OF HAVING THE SURE START SALDW 'S INPUT

In this theme, the service providers talked about the SALDW working with staff, informing parents and report writing.

Working with staff: When discussing working with staff, the service providers all mentioned how informative the SALDW was. A lot of explanations were given and staff could learn a lot through observing her interacting with the children, such as getting down to their eye level, playing games with them, giving choices, her use of story time and the introduction of sign language. Additional written information was often left for staff to look at as well. Some staff went through training programmes, others just learnt through her, but all found their experience beneficial.

“You pick up different things and you start, your practice changes because of what you've seen her do, so I think my practice has changed and I think that's what's happening…I think people have learnt a lot about the small things they can do.” (Sure Start health visitor)

“…having her come here was wonderful, it was a pity it wasn't going to be longer but again I suppose once she's empowered us on how to do it, then we can continue.” (Weymouth Family Centre staff)

The changes the families are making were seen by some of the service providers as having a knock-on effect to other siblings. Younger children, for example, may get rid of the bottle or dummy sooner and parents sit and read to them, where as this may not have happened with the older child.

“I think what Sure Start seems to have done, certainly in this area, has got through to the parents and the home environment. Parents seem very conscious now of where the problems lie and are helping with their children at home.” (Bincombe Valley Nursery staff)

Informing parents: Service providers all talked about informing parents. Staff found themselves knowing enough to be able to pass on information to parents about how they could incorporate good speech and language development practice into the home environment, such as turning off background noise, giving the child choices, giving the child eye contact and games that could be played. The SALDW was described by all of the service providers as being incredibly good at communicating with the parents, whether she was seeing them during home visits or in a group environment.

“The speech therapist who’s been working in the same fashion for a number of years can’t explain in such an easy way, you know? They use their language and I think the parents respond to that.” (Interview 5)

The SALDW also runs workshops to improve parents’ awareness, sends reports to parents informing them of their child’s progress, and regularly spends time with the parents giving information and passing on tips. Some of the service providers were aware of the knock-on effect of this, with parents passing on information to other parents, changes in practice and the seeking out of more advice.
“Because these mums are all going to groups together, talking to each other about what’s happening and seeing the benefits of the therapists working as a team, they’ve actually started thinking maybe that could help my child.”

(Interview 9)

**Report writing:** The final area in this theme is report writing. Where formal feedback on children’s language progress is required the SALDW will write a report. These have been described by service users as being very useful and they can also be passed onto the parents. It has also helped staff in their own note taking.

> *I think it's made us more aware when we're note writing, you know, different things that we can look out for and the improvements that have been made.*

(Interview 3)

The fact that the SALDW also takes the trouble to pass on this information, rather than waiting for requests for reports, also made a difference and was commented on by all of the service providers interviewed.
SURE START WORKING

This theme details the interprofessional working of Sure Start, the relationship and comparisons between community services and the Sure Start service and the need for the Sure Start interventions.

**Interprofessional working:** Many of the service providers discussed the interprofessional approach within Sure Start, stating that they were all aware of the other professionals’ roles and communicated well with them. Service providers seeing a family could pass on some knowledge to the parents and ask them if they would like to see the SALDW. If they had any concerns, it was easy for project workers to get more information from the SALDW back in the office.

Joint visits at the family’s home are often arranged by Sure Start if there are children who are seen by both the SALDW and another professional (such as play worker, occupational therapist or health visitor). It is easier for the Sure Start team to arrange these because they are all based in one place and have greater flexibility within their roles than many community staff.

“…the Sure Start speech and language therapist is readily available, whereas community ones aren’t…they don’t very often do them (joint visits) because they haven’t got the time.”

(Interview 8)

These joint sessions and the resulting communication between different professionals has led to more idea sharing which has been very positive. Other project workers were believed to have a much greater understanding of speech and language development than they had before taking up their posts. One service provider described this by explaining how the SALDW changes peoples practice by educating them and as a result her ideas:

“infiltrate other people…that’s especially true with the work that she has been doing with the play workers at Sure Start.”

(Interview 4)

**The relationship and comparisons with the community service:** The service providers all went on to state that outside Sure Start the SALDW worked well interprofessionally, keeping other professionals informed of her actions and making communication with them very easy by phoning and sending written reports.

“…having that teamwork approach makes such a difference because then I can say to the mum ‘Well I’ve spoken to the SALDW and she thought so-and-so, and may be if you work on that.”(Interview 9)

The service providers seemed to have a good understanding of the referral system and the working relationship between the Community Speech and Language Service and the Sure Start Speech and Language Service. Any confusion about who to refer to when the Sure Start service was implemented was quickly rectified and everyone interviewed knew how the different systems worked and their role within them.
The overwork of the community speech and language therapist was frequently talked about and the resulting inflexibility and delay in accessing services. The Community Speech and Language Therapist was very much aware of this and the impact that it has upon families. She was very appreciative of the interventions by the Sure Start SALDW;

“She has helped where she has visited because our waiting lists, particularly at the moment, are quite long. She has been able to visit families to give them some initial advice...They have then come along with a much better understanding when we see them, which makes a lot of difference and as some of our parents are now waiting 12 weeks, some a little bit more, so to be seen... alleviates a lot of anxiety.” (Community speech & language therapist).

The rate of people not attending appointments at community speech and language clinics is quite high in the Sure Start areas and most of the service providers often commented on this. ‘The speech therapist would show me a list of people she’d called in and next to them would be DNA (did not attend), DNA all the way down’. There was awareness that this could be due to differing reasons such as not understanding the need for the intervention, anxiety about the clinic setting, or the delay between the appointment letters being sent out and the date of the appointment.

‘I’d have mums ringing up and saying “I still haven’t heard anything and I’m really desperate” and then a few weeks later I’ll get a thing come through from the speech therapist saying that the person DNA’d an appointment.” (Interview 9)

The visits that the Sure Start SALDW made to families in their own home were known about by all the service providers interviewed.

“I think the home contact is extremely important and the way they explain things to them.” (Interview 5)

She could go to the homes of families who were known to miss appointments and give them some more information. This would either lead to them feeling able to attend the clinic or a decision made to help their child at home. Everyone interviewed discussed the child being seen in a ‘normal environment’ when they were seen at nursery or at home by the SALDW, as opposed to the more formal clinic setting.

She could also give advice to people who were waiting for appointments so that they had some information on helpful things they could be doing at home.

“I know she is trying to have some contact with families who fail to attend clinics and also a sort of stop-gap role so the ones that get referred to the routine speech and language, for her to see them in the three month waiting time to offer them support and advice before they actually get to see someone from the community services.” (Interview 4)

The need for the Sure Start service: The last area within this theme is the need for the Sure Start service. In this section of the theme service providers discussed the
feedback they received from parents concerning the speech & language service offered by Sure Start and also gave their own views.

The targeting of extra resources for areas identified as being more deprived was commented on by everyone:

“..they’re directing the (contact to) .what’s called deprived areas, where speech and language is likely to be more of a problem than elsewhere.”
(Interview 5)

Speech and language was identified by all of the service providers as being a significant problem in their areas and was mentioned by some as being their ‘biggest need’. The overstretched nature of the community services was also commented on by all those interviewed. Also mentioned by several people was the need for early recognition of speech and language problems. Children aged 0-4 were considered by all of the service providers as being in a key period for identifying problems with speech and language.

The interventions of Sure Start were considered to be managing to identify children at an earlier age and therefore reducing the chance of their problems affecting them in later life. The reaching out to people in different ways and the flexibility within the role of the Sure Start SALDW was mentioned by all the service providers interviewed. The SALDW was also seen as being very useful in the tackling of this enormous problem. Working with families, offering parents hints and tips, running workshops to improve skills, increasing their awareness of books and games, and stimulating language were considered by all interviewed to be a very much needed interventions offered by Sure Start. Training staff at the nurseries attended by Sure Start children not only resulted in families receiving a very effective form of input but also helped to motivate some of the parents to do and learn more. The advice over the phone, the visits to the family’s home, the more readily available service and the focus on working with parents and passing information on were frequently discussed. One of the health visitors interviewed summarised the way Sure Start works as:

“seeming like a luxury service, but I don’t think it is, I think it is what children deserve…I think it is how speech therapy should be really.”
(Community Health Visitor)
FEEDBACK RECEIVED ABOUT THE SERVICE

All of the service providers interviewed were very positive about the input of the Sure Start Speech & Language Service. One person interviewed went on to add;

“I think the speech and language therapy has been one of the best parts of Sure Start enterprises in this area and there have been other things which are quite nice but I wouldn’t have said have had so much impact, so the speech and language therapy has been a real bonus, a real positive bonus.”

(Interview 9)

In this theme the positive and negative comments have been grouped together and are shown in the following tables.

Positive comments: The main positive comments from the service providers have been grouped together under the following headings: positive feedback, good communication and improving the situation (see Table 1)

Main positive comments about the Sure Start Speech and Language Development Service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive feedback</th>
<th>Good communication</th>
<th>Improving the situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• All positive from health visitors in the community</td>
<td>• Good communication between the SALDW and other professionals</td>
<td>• Word of mouth is saying the situation is better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very positive, extremely positive</td>
<td>• Good leaflets</td>
<td>• Really notice the difference and very pleased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Only had positive feedback about her</td>
<td>• Mums report that they have learnt a lot about the small things they can do</td>
<td>• Very good at helping us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very pleased that Sure Start speech &amp; language is happening</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Have really benefited from her support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Very positive feedback from parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Has been very good that she has given information to people on the waiting list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There’s nobody who is not happy about it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Negative comments: The negative comments centred on there being such a need for speech and language support in the area that services wanted more of the SALDW’s time. The postcode targeting system operated by Sure Start frustrated many of the service providers because the community speech and language system was so overloaded and inflexible that staff wished they could use the Sure Start services for all of the children who needed help. In some settings, only a few of the children were in the postcodes for Sure Start and, due to the working arrangements agreed between the community and Sure Start, these children could only be offered limited intervention by the Sure Start worker.
The final section covers comments made about the limited crèche spaces at Sure Start and the support staff role. For a few months the SALDW was able to work with two volunteer mums and some of the service providers commented on this. They had found it very useful because it expanded the range of the SALDW’s role. However, these two volunteers were unable to stay in their posts and the SALDW no longer had the time available to train any replacements. The main criticisms made are shown in Table 2.

Main criticisms of the Sure Start Speech and Language Development Service:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More time with SALDW wanted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Would have liked her for longer, for her to come in for six week periods, two or three times a year and give feedback on children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Time was set aside for her and her speech development, different person for the children, now staff have to incorporate it into their routine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postcode restrictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Find the postcode restrictions frustrating, lots of our families are not in Sure Start areas and therefore can’t use the services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difficulties with the postcodes, rules out a lot of families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Frustrating as postcode based</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limits within Sure Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Crèche spaces limit the service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support staff for speech and language unable to be maintained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
**INFORMATION FROM FAMILIES:**

Eight parent interviews were carried out. Two interviews were with families where the speech and language therapist had seen them just once. Three interviews were with families where the child had been seen in their own home. The final three interviews were with families where the child was seen at nurseries or pre-schools.

The data from the family interviews could be seen to fall into the following five themes:

- Knowing a child needs help;
- Meeting the SALDW;
- Services offered;
- Effect of receiving help;
- Comments on the community services.

Each of these themes will now be taken in turn and more information given.

**KNOWING A CHILD NEEDS HELP**

In this theme the parents talked about their anxieties and also the frustration that their child was displaying.

**Anxieties:** Out of the eight interviews carried out with families, two were seen just once, as part of the Sure Start Language Measures (SSLM) visits. These families did not have children with language problems and therefore did not have concerns in this area. However all of the other six families interviewed did have concerns for their child’s speech and language needs. Most had deduced that their child did not have problems comprehending speech but their anxieties tended to focus on their child’s verbal communication. One set of parents knew that their child would need constant speech and language input due to an underlying medical condition. Other parents were worried about their child’s speech; they felt that there may be a problem and that their child should be receiving some kind of help. In the majority of cases, this was just before or once the child was two years old.

All of these parents had mentioned their child’s speech to the health visitor and several had been referred to the community speech and language therapist but were experiencing problems caused by the waiting list for this service, sometimes as long as six months. The parents felt this just added to their concerns as they wanted to see their child receive some help and even after being referred this still wasn’t happening with the community services due to the high demand on the service.

“I would recommend the Sure Start people because it was just instant and reassuring. When you’ve been told by the health visitor you’ve got a six month wait at a two year olds age, it is quite a long time for them, but when it was instant, within a week, you felt you were confident to help them along the way really, not thinking what can I do within that time.” (Interview 11)

**Frustrations of the child:** Some of the children were displaying frustrating behaviour as they struggled to communicate. One mother described how she felt after
a long period of trying to get help from her health visitor and community speech and language service. She could see the frustration building in her child. The situation did get resolved once she had access to Sure Start’s SALDW.

“...because obviously I could see he was getting frustrated and I was thinking, 'Well why is he not talking?'...but we got there in the end, thank goodness.”
(Interview 2)

Some of the other children had siblings who would communicate for them so the frustration wasn’t a problem, but they were not being motivated to improve as their needs were being met by the other child.
MEETING THE SALDW

In this theme the parents talked about their impressions on meeting the SALDW, what it was like to have her come to their home and how their children responded to her.

First impressions: All of the parents talked about how approachable the SALDW was, describing her as having a very relaxed and friendly style. They also all mentioned that straight away she made her time fun and interesting for the child by chatting to them and playing with them on the floor.

“She was really friendly from the start and I’m just glad I made contact with her, definitely.” (Interview 2)

“...the children were relaxed, I was relaxed, you know, ... (mentions the SALDW by name) was relaxed, it was really nice. Nice and comfortable.” (Interview 6)

Many of the parents went on to describe how she also managed to keep the family dynamics by including them and the child’s siblings in her activities

“It was excellent...she was really good about my older child as well, including him with it, brought lots of toys for them to play with...So yes, excellent.” (Interview 11)

Meeting SALDW at home: The parents were asked to talk about what it was like when the SALDW came to their home. They all stated that the assessment lasted around an hour and that it was a game rather than a test for the child. It involved colours, fun books, pictures and games, such as matching shapes or building towers.

“...its good that she came to the house and she actually saw my child how he is because he’s relaxed in his own environment. When they’re in somewhere else they’re always a bit quiet or a bit shy before they find their feet, but it was good that she came round to the house...plus you can see how the parents interact with their kids” (Interview 11)

Parents would receive a lot of information from the SALDW because she could see their home set-up and advise on the environment, such as background noise, and give them information on games and activities that they could play with their child. She would also leave them some resources to use at home, such as a book or a game, and these would be changed regularly.

How children responded to the SALDW: All of the parents interviewed stated that their child had loved the session. The SALDW seemed to have exactly the right approach by being informal enough to keep it fun, but firm enough to ensure that the child developed speech and language skills.

“She’s got a personality where she’s quite strict but she’s really nice and he only had the things that she brought to play with. She was very good It’s hard to put your finger on how she is because where it sounds as though she is
quite strict but children know how far to push her and she makes them do it, but he won’t do it for anyone normally, but he would for her. He responds really well and I don’t understand why.” (Interview 18)

The parents all described how she coaxed the child to continue and if they lost interest she would bring out something else and get their attention back. She would always bring three or four things to ensure that the child would not get bored. The parents could all see that their children were enjoying themselves and were amazed that someone could keep their child’s interest for a whole hour and actually get them to talk.
SERVICES OFFERED

In this theme the parents discussed the flexibility that the Sure Start service offered, the passing on of skills, the communication and giving the child what they needed.

**Flexibility:** All of the parents mentioned how quick the Sure Start service was to respond to people’s speech and language needs. There was also a range of services available at Sure Start designed to meet the differing speech and language needs that children had and the parents found this invaluable. They were aware of most of the services available and talked about the courses for parents, the home visits, the nursery input and the way Sure Start worked with the community. One mother, who was waiting to be seen by the community services, was seen by the SALDW via the ‘fast track’ service offered.

“It was instant and it was really helpful and sort of bridged that gap before actually getting the appointment down at the surgery, so it was very valuable really….just instant and reassuring.” (Interview 11)

“When you have been told by your health visitor you’ve got a six month wait at a two year olds age, its quite a long time for them, but when it was instant, within a week, you felt you were confident to help him along the way, not sort of thinking what can I do with that time.” (Interview 11)

If cancellations had to be made, the service offered by Sure Start was described as being flexible enough to accommodate this and another appointment could be arranged as soon as it suited the family.

“She is polite, she is helpful and if you phone her and say I can’t make it, she’ll wait and then phone you and say do you want to make it today.” (Interview 12.

The parents also discussed their child being be seen in normal situation for them, such as in the home, at the Sure Start crèche or at nursery, and this was very important to them. The follow-up service offered by the SALDW was also highly valued to all of the parents. They mentioned getting letters and phone calls from her to check that everything was going to plan, which they stated they appreciated receiving.

**Passing on skills:** The parents knew that the SALDW trained staff at Sure Start and at nurseries. Some parents went on to say that because the staff had been trained at their children’s nursery they were now able to receive speech development input on a daily basis. They commented that everyone worked in the same fashion so there was continuity for the child between the nursery input and any session that the Sure Start SALDW had with the child.

Giving the parents ideas on how to develop their child’s speech and language skills was mentioned in all of the interviews and was said to be incredibly valuable.
“She could give me pointers, what I possibly wasn’t doing, to sort of improve him, which it did...She gave me information sheets and we did quite a lot with him. Lots of little tips and things.” (Interview 11)

“It was small easy things to do, my child would just say ‘yes or no’ so she said to ask questions that needed two words like ‘would you like orange juice or fruit juice?’ I mean it did work, I’m really pleased. I would have never thought of doing it.” (Interview 6)

The SALDW also gave advice on lots of games that they could buy or obtain from a toy library. All of the parents had been advised on how to react to their child’s errors, which they found very useful.

“I might have pulled him up and said ‘no, it’s not that way, it’s this’. She said not to do that but just repeat the word the correct way and then repeat it again within the sentence, so that the child doesn’t get despondent because he is not saying it right.” (Interview 18)

Some of the parents and their children attended a six week course run by the SALDW called ‘My Child and Me’ and they described it as being very useful.

"It was extremely useful, I just watched his speech develop. Each week had a theme and we were given information sheets on what would be happening the next week, what the theme would be and some ideas and things we could work through at home with the children, which was absolutely excellent.” (Interview 2)

Several parents commented on how being given specific speech and language development skills helped to alleviate a lot of their anxiety.

**Communication:** The liaising that the SALDW does with the community speech and language therapist was mentioned in several of the interviews. These parents felt that there was good liaising between Sure Start and the community and that the Sure Start SALDW ensured that they got their clinic appointments. One of the parents felt that, because of the good communication between the services, there was continuity between Sure Start and the community.

“They do near enough the same stuff. That’s really good because it follows on from each other.” (Interview 12)

They also felt able to contact her if they thought it was needed, as she made herself so accessible and was easy to talk to.

“She is very easy to talk to and so if I’ve got any problems or I’m stuck with a game or I think the games not working or whatever, I can call her and she’s quite easy to talk to and I’m not sort of worried.” (Interview 14)

**Giving the child what they need:** All of the parents interviewed regularly expressed that their child was getting what they needed. They described games being played, the child learning through these games and the child doing really well as a result. The
child was always described as being involved and interested in what was going on throughout the whole session as their individual needs were planned for and therefore met. They all stated that every time the SALDW came she would bring something different so the child was always stimulated.

“He’s got very limited concentration and she gears all her play to the fact that he will get bored quickly, so she does have plenty of things to get his attention.” (Interview 18)

They also all noticed how much the SALDW managed to observe and get out of the children; how through games she would be able to determine the words the child couldn’t say.

“She did very well, to find out the words the child couldn’t use without them being aware of it.” (Interview 11)

The parents whose children were getting input through the nurseries were all happy with the situation and stated that they felt the resources were good and the staff skilled. They described the library at the nursery as containing books suitable for their child’s needs and the staff as giving the parents advice.
EFFECTS OF RECEIVING HELP

In this theme, the parents discussed how their child’s speech and language was improving, how the speech development work was seen as ‘normal’, that the children receiving it were being motivated and that the parents were being well informed.

**Child’s speech and language was improving:** The parents who saw the SALDW regularly all said their child’s speech had improved and that their language development needs were being met. They also described how their children were encouraged to get involved.

“I feel my child just started talking really well and he’s just picked things up over the few months we’ve been in contact with .... (mentions SALDW by name) and I don’t really do much with him now because I’m quite happy with him now.” (Interview 2)

“...nobody seemed to help except her (the SALDW), to be honest. To give me an idea of what to get him that would help him with his speech. So that is why I think she’s great.” (Interview 18)

One parent described how her child had not improved when seen at the clinic, but after the SALDW's input, improvements were noted. The parents stated that their child’s speech was clearer, their concentration was said to be improving and their child was less frustrated. These comments applied to the children receiving input at nurseries as well as those who saw the SALDW in their home.

One parent said her child now had more normal problems for her age rather than something very noticeable. Some parents also added that the situation between siblings had improved because the SALDW would include them in her work as she encouraged the less vocal child. Children would learn how to take turns and listen instead of talking for the other child.

Quite a few parents mentioned that without Sure Start the situation for their child would not be so favourable.

“Without Sure Start, hopeless, my child would be so far behind if it wasn’t available.” (Interview 6)

**Speech and language work being ‘normal’ and the children being motivated:** All of the parents discussed how the SALDW made her input fun, with anyone joining in it was normal and just like playing games.

“If you say what have you been doing at nursery he is quite happy to “He’s enjoyed the games and he comes home talking about it and say he’s been doing some speech work. Well he doesn’t know that it is speech work, it’s just playing to him.” (Interview 14)

Her work would also be carried out in a normal environment for the child, such as in the family home or in the same nursery room as the rest of the children, but just a
different part, such as a quiet corner. The parents all described their child as loving the speech and language work, and being very keen to take part.

“...he always looked forward to going, every week I said to him ‘we’re off to see the Sure Start ladies’ and he would get really excited. Because he got to know them really well he wanted to communicate with them and he wanted to communicate with the other children, I think that encouraged him to start talking and having a go and saying things.” (Interview 2)

The parents being well informed: All of the parents stated that they felt involved and well informed with regard to their child’s speech and language development. Most mentioned getting written reports from Sure Start. One parent added that she enjoyed looking back over these reports and seeing how her child had progressed. She found this motivating and encouraging for herself which in turn helped her to continue with her efforts to promote her child’s speech and language.

“It’s helped my child and it’s helped us to help him basically, and the being informed bit’s really important because you need to know how to help your child at home, because I think parents do want to help their children.” (Interview 14)

A few parents added that having this information meant they could promote good speech and language skills for their other children. Several parents also commented that they were well informed about the whole picture. The SALDW would let them know when she had liaised with the school that the child would be attending, or any other organisations, and they found this very helpful and reassuring. Some parents do want active involvement and this is backed up by literature. Allen & Hudd (1987), for example, state that there is a need for professionals to recognise the parents’ wishes and abilities to become involved in their child’s care. The need for quick diagnosis and intervention, adequate treatment and services, effective communication and information were all needs of families in this study, which is also consistent with the literature (Beresford 1994, Pain 1999, Sloper 1999).
COMMENTS ON THE COMMUNITY SERVICE

In this final theme the parents mentioned the community services liaising and working well with Sure Start, the demands placed on the community services and then these services not having the flexibility to meet some needs.

The community services liaising and working well with Sure Start: A few of the parents interviewed thought that Sure Start and the community speech and language services worked in a similar fashion and liaised well with each other. One mother whose child is receives input from both the community and the Sure Start SALDW said:

“They do near enough the same stuff. That’s really good because it follows on from each other...Her speech has come on really well since she’s been doing it with ...(mentions the community and Sure Start therapists by name) It’s so much better, you can actually understand what she says.” (Interview 12)

This mother found that both services were informal enough and targeted her child’s needs. However, most of the parents considered the community services to be operating in a different way to Sure Start. These parents stated that they received minimal information, if at all, from the community clinic, that they didn’t really know what they could do at home and had limited communication with the therapist.

“She didn’t give me any information on what to do though. I mean, I do know that. There wasn’t, oh do this, ....And you don’t really hear about any reports. They don’t really keep you informed.” (Interview 18)

The demand on the community services: The parents frequently mentioned how overworked the community speech and language therapist was and all understood the demands on the services. They then discussed the consequences of this and the main areas were their need for reassurance and information plus the delay in receiving community services. The parents described how they were concerned about their child’s speech but due to the demands on the community services there was a long delay in getting information, which couldn’t be obtained until their child’s appointment came through.

“I know they are over-stretched and busy, but that doesn’t help you when you are worried about your child does it?” (Interview 2)

Some of the children had just enough language skills to get through the health visitor checks but parents still had concerns and wanted advice and reassurance. These parents stated that they were not happy with the information they were given at the time, such as ‘His big brother is probably talking for him’ or ‘He will probably have improved by next year and if it hasn’t we can refer him then’. These parents described the community system as still leaving them worried about their child’s speech and language and in need of information and reassurance.

All of the parents interviewed described how long it took to get an appointment. Delays of three months were often mentioned and sometimes as long as six months. A couple of parents mentioned that the appointments are sent out too far in advance for many busy parents and could easily be forgotten. Another comment was that
appointments may get cancelled, or the child could become ill and be unable to attend, and then the families have to be given another appointment and wait a further three months. The length of time between appointments was also commented on by a couple of parents.

“She (the community speech and language therapist) would see him once and then wouldn’t see him for another six months.”

(Interview 18)

These families found the appointments too infrequent to meet their child’s needs. Also the length of the appointment was commented on by a few parents. The community speech and language therapist tended to spend only 20 to 30 minutes with these parents. The Sure Start SALDW was able to spend at least an hour with them which, along with her more frequent appointments, consequently had more of an impact on the child’s development.

The community not having the flexibility to meet some needs:
Finally, the parents also mentioned the lack of flexibility within the community system and how this effected meeting the speech and language needs of children. A few parents were aware that their child gained more when receiving speech and language input individually, rather than in a group setting, as they got too easily distracted by the other children. These parents were aware that the community system only offered their child six weeks of individual therapy and then their child had to attend a group. They much preferred the flexibility of the Sure Start system where if the child didn’t manage well in a group they could continue to be seen individually.

One mother with twins didn’t find it easy to attend clinics appointments and doesn’t like using phones or answer machines. She was very aware that without Sure Starts ability to deliver a service in the home, her child’s speech and language needs would probably have gone unmet. When asked to describe how she thought the situation would be without the Sure Start service she stated:

“It would be horrendous, hopeless; my child would be so far behind now if it wasn’t available. I did have an appointment with the speech therapist through my health visitor but I missed the appointment because I think one of the girls was ill. I phoned her up and said you know ‘It is really, really important that I see the speech therapist, and I still haven’t heard anything.’” (Interview 6)

Several parents commented on the atmosphere at the clinic, describing it as not very relaxing and very formal.

“...down at the surgery it was actually in separate rooms, which wasn’t their environment so my child was very shy to start with.” (Interview 11)

“To be honest, especially when they are a bit hyperactive and he misbehaves and lies on the floor and has fits and things, so it’s stressful to try and get them there....by the time I’ve got him to the clinic, we’re both stressed because he’s misbehaved so badly.” (Interview 18)
These parents felt that if the child was not affected so much by the surroundings their progress would be better. One mother added that her child responded so badly to the restraints of the clinic environment that the efforts of the community speech and language therapist had no effect on her child whatsoever. All of the parents interviewed considered there to be far too few speech and language therapists in the community. Some added that this reduced their flexibility and therefore their ability to meet the range of speech and language needs that children have.
CONCLUSIONS

Limitations of the existing service:
The demands on the community speech and language service were understood and commented on by everyone interviewed. The existing community services were not believed to have the flexibility to offer home visits, regular ongoing training of nursery staff or the running of groups for parents and children. The frustration resulting from the long delay in being able to see a therapist was frequently cited by parents and service providers. Both parents and service providers commented on the feeling of anxiety caused by parents knowing that a child needs help, but not being able to receive any intervention or assistance for several months.

The community system was described as adding further to this frustration by not allowing some problems to be acted upon early enough. Parents described having concerns over very young children and being told to wait until their child was two years old to seek treatment. Parents also mentioned having children with just enough ability to pass the two year check but still having concerns about their speech and language. Both scenarios resulted in families not being referred for the help and advice, which was what they desperately wanted. It was also discussed on by both parents and service providers that the clinic environment did not suit everyone and that some family’s needs could not be met by the existing community services.

The community system was also viewed as not being flexible enough to adjust to last minute changes such as illness. If an appointment had to be missed through illness the family then had to go back to the beginning of the waiting list. Appointments were also mentioned as being sent out so far in advance that they were actually forgotten about when the time came to attend. The high frequency of ‘Did Not Attend’ (DNAs) that resulted from these issues was also mentioned.

The role of the Speech & Language Development Worker (SALDW):
The SALDW stated that she aimed to:
• Promote the best ways of encouraging language development for both parents and service providers and to complement the existing community service;
• Make the parents feel consulted, kept informed and ensure there was a focus on their interaction with their child;
• have the ability to carry out home visits and therefore provide a service for more harder to reach families;
• Set up language groups at nurseries (Brackenbury, Bincombe Valley, Westhaven and the Family Centre) and at Sure Start (My Child & Me and utilising the Stay & Play system), enabling her skills to be passed on and language development to become normalised;
• Establish a ‘fast track referral system’ that aimed to get advice to parents when they needed it, which was as soon as they became concerned.

The data from the parents and the service providers reinforced each other in stating that a very beneficial service was being provided. Everything that the SALDW said that she aimed to provide has been shown to have been provided. The data also indicates that the SALDW was accurate in assessing what sort of service was needed.
to provide in order to meet the demands of the local community and supplement the existing speech and language service provision.

The outcomes of the SALDW’s interventions feed into all four of the Sure Start National Objectives which are referred to on page 2 of this report. The SALDW’s role has made strides towards reducing stigma within speech and language therapy and aims to provide a service that is fun, interesting and can involve all children, not just those with speech and language problems. The SALDW has been shown to change behaviour as she gives very clear information, can work with people in their own environment and tailors support to the individual family. All of these interventions have had a noticeable, positive effect on the development of children’s language skills in the Sure Start programme.

The Sure Start Speech & Language Development Service:
The speech and language development service offered by Sure Start has fitted in well with the existing community provision. The flexibility within the role has enabled new initiatives to be implemented and people to be reached who previously could not be accommodated within the service. Families who previously would have appeared as ‘Did Not Attend’ (DNA) statistics were being reached by the Sure Start service due to the introduction of home visits. Some of these families, once visited by the SALDW, progressed to being able to attend clinic appointments and began to access other Sure Start groups. Children who attended one of the nurseries that had been working with the SALDW would also receive input there, due to the training of staff in the development of speech and language. The data shows that once trained, the nursery staff were very effective in working independently to meet some speech and language needs and always felt able to contact the SALDW if they needed further information. Their training resulted in the children who attended the nursery being able to receive speech and language input on a daily basis if they needed it. Speech and Language groups (‘My Child & Me’ and ‘Stay & Play with the SALDW’) helped the parents as well as the children. The SALDW was able to offer ‘fast track referrals’ where families could be seen and advice offered while they waited to see the Community Speech and Language Therapist. This service was greatly appreciated by the parents.

Parents and service providers believed that the Sure Start SALDW offered exactly the right approach in that the service could reach out to people in different ways. The SALDW was informative at an individual level and consequently families could learn a lot from her. Parents were amazed that their child’s concentration could be retained for so long, much of this was due to the environment in which the support was being provided. As a result, children who were not able to improve within the constraints of the community clinic environment have been able to do so with the SALDW. The service was also flexible enough to respond to families who needed appointments adjusted at the last minute due to illness, or who just had a slight problem and needed more information to overcome it.

The findings from this evaluation show that both the parents and the service providers have an extremely high satisfaction level with the Weymouth and Portland Sure Start Speech and Language service. The data also demonstrates that the SALDW was accurate in assessing what her service should offer, as it has been shown to
complement the existing community services and meet parent/children’s additional needs that previously could not be catered for.

The parents and the service providers were extremely positive about the following areas of the SALDW’s service:

| • Working with families and the provision of home visits for people who cannot attend clinics; and |
| • The ‘normalising’ of speech and language therapy by turning it into fun and games for everyone; |
| • Running groups and courses that promote language development for parents and children; |
| • The training of staff and delivery of speech and language services at nurseries, enabling the early provision of information and advice on things parents can do to develop the child’s language skills. |

RECOMMENDATIONS

The only criticisms received about the SALDW concerned the limitations of the crèche spaces and parents wanting more of the SALDW’s time. Weymouth and Portland Sure Start has now moved to a new purpose designed building that can offer more crèche facilities. Sure Start has also employed a Speech & Language assistant to carry out the language measures and offer ongoing home visits for up to 6 weeks (more if needed) for those most in need of language promotion following programmes set by the SALDW.

To add further weight to this report, it would be useful if data could be collected from local schools and the Community Speech and Language Therapists concerning the numbers of children entering the schooling system that need speech and language input.

This report demonstrates that there is a huge demand for speech and language input in the Weymouth and Portland area. It also reveals that inflexibility in the community system does not allow the needs of all families to be met. The system operated by Sure Start Weymouth and Portland has managed to work with these hard-to-reach groups and produce very effective outcomes. The community services need to consider adopting some of the Sure Start interventions if an effective service is going to be offered to all local families.

In conclusion, and to add further illustration to the points that have been made, a few additional quotes have been selected:

“a luxury service, but I don’t think it is, I think it is what children deserve…I think it is how speech therapy should be really.”(Interview 9)

“I think the speech and language therapy has been one of the best parts of Sure Start enterprises in this area and there have been other things which are quite nice but I wouldn’t have said have had so much impact, so the speech and language therapy has been a real bonus, a real positive bonus.” (Community Health visitor)
“Without Sure Start, hopeless, my child would be so far behind if it wasn’t available.” (Interview 6).

“...nobody seemed to help except her (SALDW), to be honest. To give me an idea of what to get him that would help him with his speech. So that is why I think she’s great.” (Interview 18)

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Since the writing of this report there have been some further developments in the speech and language service delivered by Weymouth and Portland Sure Start.

A new Sure Start pilot initiative called ‘Chatter Matters’ is being planned which aims to promote early language development for children aged nine to eighteen months and prevent future language difficulties from developing.

Weymouth and Portland Sure Start plans to carry out an evaluation of this initiative. Twenty randomly selected families/carers who attend their baby’s nine month check will be invited to participate. These will receive four home visits from the SALDW over a six week period during which early language encouragement ideas and advice will be shared, modelled and encouraged. Twenty families also randomly selected, will form a control group. Outcomes of the visited group will be measured through formal assessment of child language skills and an analysis of parent-child interaction styles, both at the start of the visiting period and six months later. Details will also be collected from each group concerning which children are referred to speech and language therapy at their two year check.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1:

Map of Weymouth and Portland Sure Start Areas:

Areas:
1 = Littlemoor
2 = Westham
3 = Melcombe Regis
4 = Underhill
APPENDIX 2:

STATISTICAL DATA FROM WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND SURE START
SURE START LANGUAGE MEASURE VISITS

Analysis for 1/4/03-31/3/04:
The Sure Start Unit target of 60 SSLM visits to two year olds a year was almost met for 2003-2004. The total numbers of these 'Sure Start Language Measures' (SSLM) are shown in Table 1. The number completed was 49, leaving a shortfall of 11 visits locally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Months</th>
<th>No of assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total no attempted</td>
<td>April 03-March 04</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no completed</td>
<td>April 03-March 04</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

All families visited received basic advice on best practice for encouraging early language skills. The visits were also a useful way of encouraging Sure Start membership. Attendance at SSLM visit was very good, with only 4 DNAs (did not attend) at the door out of 49 home visits.

It is important to remember that the SSLM is not designed to identify which children are language delayed and may need speech and language therapy. It is a parental report tool designed to measure change in language skills of two-year-olds over time. The SSLM acts more as a ‘quick marker’ of language skills across a community, not as a complete individual assessment of a child. However, as the SSLM visits were completed locally by a speech and language therapist, assumptions could be made as to the number of children seen who may have speech and/or language delay. These assumptions were based on the SALDW’s observations which were carried out during the assessment.

The number of families that joined Sure Start at the SSLM was 21 (42.9%). The number of families that were already Sure Start members was 28 (57.1%).

The total number of missed contacts was 21 and the reasons for these are given in Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for missed contact</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not attend at door</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved out of area</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusals</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to contact</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

The total number of children needing further speech and language input, based on observations, was 19 (38.7%). Further information is shown in Table 3.
The SSLM parental checklists indicate levels of parental concern regarding their children’s language development and also summarises children as having low or high word counts. The data from parental reports is shown below in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of concern</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>10 (20.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate/severe</td>
<td>7 (14.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special educational needs children</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

Observations of children's language skills at SSLM visits for 2003-2004 indicates a worrying 38.7% may need further input (18.3% are moderate/severe concerns). Current national information states that 20% of under fives have a speech and language delay of some nature.

The SSLM checklist results are less worrying than the observations but still indicate that 24.5% of the children visited have a low word count. This is closer to national statistics.

Parental concern (whether warranted or not) is fairly high at 36.7% of those visited.

**Analysis for 1/4/04-31/3/05:**
The Sure Start Unit target of 60 visits was again almost met for 2004-2005. The total numbers of these 'Sure Start Language Measures' (SSLM) are shown in Table 5. Out of the visits aimed for, 44 were carried out, leaving a shortfall of 16 visits locally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months</th>
<th>No of assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total No attempted</td>
<td>April 04-March 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No completed</td>
<td>April 04-March 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall percentage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

Attendance at the SSLM visits was again very good, with only 3 DNA’s at the door out of 44 home visits. The number of families that joined Sure Start at the SSLM was 12 (27.3%). The number of families that were already Sure Start members was 29 (65.9%).

The total number of missed contacts were 9 and the reasons for these are given in Table 6. A further 6 families were unable to be contacted.
Reason for missed contact | Number
---|---
Did not attend at door | 3
Moved out of area | 3
Refusals | 3
Unable to contact | 6

**Table 6**

Total number of children needing further speech and language input, based on observations, was 15 (34%). Further information is shown in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of concern</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>7 (15.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate/severe</td>
<td>7 (15.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special educational needs children</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7**

The same parental checklists were completed to establish numbers of children with low or high word counts and levels of parental concern over language development. The data from these observations is shown below in Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents concerned</th>
<th>Parents not concerned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-year-olds with Low Word count</td>
<td>6 out of 44 (13.6 %)</td>
<td>4 out of 44 (9.1 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-year-olds with High Word count</td>
<td>8 out of 44 (18.2 %)</td>
<td>26 out of 44 (59 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8**

SALDW’s observations of children’s language skills at SSLM visits for 2004/2005 are again worrying and indicate that 34% may need further input. This is however slightly less than the previous year when 38.7% needed more input. Visited children who presented with moderate-severe speech/language concerns came to 18%. The previous year had very similar results (18.3%) in this category.

The SSLM parental checklist results are again less worrying than the observations but still indicate that 22.7% of the children visited have a low word count. This is however less than the previous year (24.5%) and closer to national statistics.

Parental concerns, whether warranted or not, are fairly high at 31.8% of those visited. This is also less than the previous year when parental concern indicated through the SSLM visits was 36.7%.
APPENDIX 3:

LETTER TO MANAGER OF COMMUNITY SPEECH & LANGUAGE SERVICES AND REPLY

20th January 2004

Dorset Speech & Language Therapy
11 Shelly Road
Boscombe
Bournemouth
BH1 4JQ

Dear Hilary,

I am a research fellow at Bournemouth University currently working on the Weymouth and Portland Sure Start. The Speech and Language Therapy Service run by Claire Awcock is one of the services the Evaluation Working Group has decided to evaluate thoroughly. We are planning an identical approach to Ann Sharples evaluation of the Bournemouth Sure Start Speech and Language. We have also gained approval from The Dorset Local Research Ethics Committee.

Before proceeding I require management approval and am therefore writing to inform you of the evaluation and ask if it is agreeable with you that we continue.

To summarise the evaluation, the following interviews are planned to be carried out:
An in-depth interview with the Sure Start Speech and Language Worker.
Telephone interviews with all the consented healthcare professionals who have made referrals, nursery school teachers and Sure Start Project workers
Interviews with 20 families;
  3 Families seen by the Sure Start Speech & Language Therapist once (on the child's 2 year speech and language assessment)
  3 Families who are seen in their own home or at a drop in centre
  10 Families seen at the nurseries and pre-schools visited by the Speech & Language Therapist
  4 Families who have made complaints or asked not to be seen by the Therapist.

I have enclosed copies of the ethics form, the questionnaires, information sheets, consent forms and the covering letter that I sent to the ethics committee.

I look forward to hearing from you and if you want to discuss anything with me my home phone number is 01305 833419.

Thanking you,
Alison Dumbrell
APPENDIX 4a

LETTER AND CONTACT FORM FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

An evaluation of the Sure Start Weymouth and Portland Speech & Language Development Worker role.

I would be willing to be contacted by Alison Dumbrell (Research Fellow for the Institute of Health and Community Studies at Bournemouth University) and talk about the Speech and Language Development offered by Sure Start Weymouth and Portland.

All information will be completely confidential.

Please fill in the information below and return this form, in the envelope provided, to Alison Dumbrell.

Name  ____________________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Institute of Health and Community Studies, Bournemouth University, Royal London House, Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3LT

APPENDIX 4b

CONTACT FORM FOR PARENTS

An evaluation of the Sure Start Weymouth and Portland Speech & Language Development Worker role.
I would be willing to be contacted by Alison Dumbrell (Research Fellow for the Institute of Health and Community Studies at Bournemouth University) and talk about the Speech and Language Development offered by Sure Start Weymouth and Portland.

All information will be completely confidential.

Please fill in the information below and return this form, in the envelope provided, to Alison Dumbrell.

Name ____________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Institute of Health and Community Studies, Bournemouth University, Royal London House, Christchurch Road, Bournemouth, BH1 3LT

APPENDIX 5a

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Information Sheet – Service Providers

Title of Research Study: An evaluation of the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Speech & Language Development Worker Role

Date: March, 2004

Research Team: Alison Dumbrell, Dawn Jackson, Caroline Marshall, Catherine Abery and Melissa Ashdown.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.
Thank you for reading this.

**Background to the research:**
Sure Start is a Government initiative which aims to improve the health and well-being of families and children before and from birth, so children are ready to flourish when they go to school. It does this by:
- Setting up local Sure Start programmes (Sure Start Weymouth & Portland) to improve services for families with children under four
- Spreading good practice learned from local programmes to everyone involved in providing services for young children.

The Speech and Language Development Service at Sure Start Weymouth & Portland is not intended to replace existing therapy services. Rather, it aims to ‘add value’ to what is already available by promoting speech and language development, reducing difficulties associated with poor communication skills and preventing persistent speech and language delays.

**Aim of the research Study:**
We are carrying out a number of research studies in the Westham, Littlemoor, Melcombe Regis and Underhill areas of Weymouth & Portland to find out how families feel about the Sure Start Programme.

The Sure Start Speech & Language service is one area of the Programme we are evaluating. We aim to interview professionals from education and health and members of the Sure Start Team who are involved with this service. We would like to get your views and would be very grateful if you would consider taking part in a telephone interview about your experience of and involvement with this service.

The interview will last for approximately half an hour. You will be provided with the name of the interviewer and a copy of the interview guide prior to the interview. A convenient date and time for the interview will be arranged with you.

**Ethical considerations:**
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Interviews will be taped, with permission and everything that you tell us is strictly confidential and will only be seen by the research team. All information will be anonymous when written up. The study has received ethical approval from the West/East Dorset Local Research Ethics Committee.

Should you agree to take part you will be given a copy of this Information Sheet to keep and a copy of your signed Consent Form.

A copy of the research report will be available, if you would like one.
Thank you.

If you require further details about the research, please contact:
Alison Dumbrell
Institute of Health & Community Studies,
Bournemouth University, Christchurch Road,
Bournemouth, BH1 3LT
01202-504172

CONSENT FORM FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

Title of Project: An evaluation of the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Speech & Language Development Worker Role

Name of Researcher:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet [3/04] □

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. Confidentiality and anonymity are assured. □

3. I agree to take part in the above research study □

___________________  ____________________   ____________________
Name     Date       Signature

___________________  ____________________   ____________________
Name     Date       Signature

Please indicate a good time for us to contact you and arrange an interview:

_____________________________________________________________________

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APPENDIX 5b

Information Sheet for Parents

Date: March, 2004

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

My name is Alison Dumbrell. I am a member of a team of researchers who are carrying out a number of research studies in the Westham, Littlemoor, Melcombe Regis and Underhill areas to find out how families feel about the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Programme. We are employed by Bournemouth University.

Research Team: Alison Dumbrell, Dawn Jackson, Caroline Marshall, Catherine Abera and Melissa Ashdown.

1 What is the study about?
Sure Start is a Government initiative which aims to improve the health and well-being of families and children before and from birth, so children are ready to flourish when they go to school. It does this by:
- Setting up local Sure Start programmes (Sure Start Weymouth & Portland) to improve services for families with children under four
- Spreading good practice learned from local programmes to everyone involved in providing services for young children.

2 The Speech and Language Development Service at Sure Start Weymouth & Portland is not intended to replace existing therapy services. Rather, it aims to ‘add value’ to what is already available by promoting speech and language development, reducing difficulties associated with poor communication skills and preventing persistent speech and language delays

What is its purpose?
The purpose of this study is to describe the role of the Sure Start Speech & Language Development Worker and consider whether it is starting to meet the national Sure Start Programme target of improving children’s early speech and language development.
Why have you been chosen?
Your child has received speech & language support from the Sure Start Speech and Language Worker. The Sure Start Speech & Language service is one area of the Programme we want to look at in more detail. We would like to get your views about the service and would be very grateful if you would consider taking part in an interview about your experiences and involvement with this service.

What will happen if you do agree to take part?
We aim to interview up to 20 parents/carers who have had contact with this service. The Speech & Language Development Worker will ask if you are willing to take part in the study and for you to sign a consent form. You are free to say no at any stage of the study.

Are there any disadvantages to taking part in this study?
If you agree to take part in an interview, this may take about half an hour of your time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
You will not receive any direct benefit from taking part in the study, but we hope that the information we get will help to improve the service in the future.

Confidentiality – who will know that you are taking part in the Study?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of service your family receives. Interviews will be taped, with your permission, or notes taken if you prefer and everything that you tell us is strictly confidential and will only be seen by the research team. All information will be anonymous when written up.

The study has received ethical approval from the West/East Dorset Local Research Ethics Committee.

What will happen to the results of the study?
Should you agree to take part you will be given a copy of this Information Sheet to keep and a copy of your signed Consent Form.

A copy of the research report will be available, if you would like one.

Where can you get further information?
If you would like to talk about this study further, Alison Dumbrell (Researcher at Bournemouth University would be very pleased to talk to you on 01202 – 504172)

What happens now?
If you would like to take part, you will be offered a consent form by the Sure Start Speech & Language Worker and an interview with you will be arranged.

If you do not wish to take part, there is nothing you need do.

Thank you for considering taking part in this study.

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Title of Project: An evaluation of the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Speech & Language Development Worker Role

Name of Researcher:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet [3/04]

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without it affecting the standard of service my family receives. Confidentiality and anonymity are assured.

3. I agree to take part in the above research study

___________________  ____________________   ____________________
Name     Date       Signature
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Please indicate a good time for us to contact you and arrange an interview:
APPENDIX 5c:

Information Sheet – Speech & Language Development Worker

Title of Research Study: An evaluation of the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Speech & Language Development Worker Role

Date: March, 2004

Research Team: Alison Dumbrell, Dawn Jackson, Caroline Marshall, Catherine Abery and Melissa Ashdown.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Background to the research:
Sure Start is a Government initiative which aims to improve the health and well-being of families and children before and from birth, so children are ready to flourish when they go to school. It does this by:

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Aim of the research Study:

We are carrying out a number of research studies in the Westham, Littlemoor, Melcombe Regis and Underhill areas of Weymouth & Portland to find out how families feel about the Sure Start Programme.
The Sure Start Speech & Language service is one area of the Programme we are evaluating. We aim to interview professionals from education and health and members of the Sure Start Team who are involved with this service. We would like to get your views and would be very grateful if you would consider taking part in a telephone interview about your experience of and involvement with this service.

The interview will last for approximately half an hour. You will be provided with the name of the interviewer and a copy of the interview guide prior to the interview. A convenient date and time for the interview will be arranged with you.

**Ethical considerations:**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Interviews will be taped, with permission and everything that you tell us is strictly confidential and will only be seen by the research team. All information will be anonymous when written up. The study has received ethical approval from the West/East Dorset Local Research Ethics Committee.

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A copy of the research report will be available, if you would like one.

**Thank you.**

If you require further details about the research, please contact:

Alison Dumbrell  
Institute of Health & Community Studies,  
Bournemouth University, Christchurch Road,  
Bournemouth, BH1 3LT  
01202-504172

**CONSENT FORM FOR SPEECH & LANGUAGE WORKER**

**Title of Project:** An evaluation of the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Speech & Language Development Worker Role

**Name of Researcher:**

*Please initial box*

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet [3/04] ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. Confidentiality and anonymity are assured.

3. I agree to take part in the above research study

___________________  ____________________   ____________________
Name     Date       Signature

___________________  ____________________   ____________________
Name     Date       Signature

Please indicate a good time for us to contact you and arrange an interview:

_____________________________________________________________________

APPENDIX 6a

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

1. What are your feelings about Speech & Language support for children aged 0-4?

   - Sure Start
   - Speech & Language service
   - checks

2. Can you tell me what you know about the role of the Sure Start Speech & Language Worker?
3. How do you view the Speech & Language service within the Sure Start Programme?
   - good things
   - not so good things

4. In what capacity do you work with the Speech & Language Worker?
   - your role/impact
   - follow up/feedback

5. Are you or have you referred any children?
   - if not, why not?
   - received referrals from the Sure Start Sp & Lang Worker (Comm Therap Int only)

6. Do you think this service is making (will make) a difference?
   - how
   - record-keeping of progress
   - individual children – Sure Start/non-Sure Start (Nursery School Int only)
   - Clinic/Sure Start

7. Do you think that there is a need for this service in the Sure Start area?

8. Have you had any feedback from families who have received support from the Speech & Language Worker?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add?
APPENDIX 6b

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS

1. How did you first come into contact with the Speech & Language Worker from Sure Start?
   - reason
   - where
   - referral

2. Was this your first experience of the Speech & Language service?
   - with child currently receiving the service
   - if no, with child currently receiving the service/siblings

3. How do you view the Speech & Language service within the Sure Start Programme?
   - good things
   - not so good things
   - child’s feelings/response
   - role of parents

4. What happens in a typical session?
   - ability to move at individual pace
   - time available
   - being in control
   - informal/formal

5. How do you feel your child is progressing?

6. How do you feel about the work that the Speech & Language Worker has been doing with your family?

7. What are the differences (if any) between attending Sure Start and the Clinic?
   - one-to-one
   - group work
• more formal/less formal

8. Has your child had any speech & language progress checks?

• feelings about the checks
• understanding
• 2 year check

9. Is there anything else you would like to add?
APPENDIX 6c:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES FOR SPEECH & LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT WORKER

1. Could you tell me something about the aims and objectives of your role within the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Programme?

2. Can you tell me what happens in a typical group you are involved with?  
   • which groups?

3. What do you think are the differences (if any) for a parent attending a group and receiving your support and for those attending the Clinic?  
   • parental/child interaction  
   • environment  
   • parental involvement  
   • labelling

4. How do you think parents view the Speech & Language service within the Sure Start Weymouth & Portland Programme?

5. What do you think are the advantages/disadvantages of working within the Sure Start Programme?  
   • time  
   • knowledge of community (family)  
   • relationships  
   • ‘client’/family  
   • regular support  
   • multi-disciplinary support  
   • empowering  
   • support from group/other parents  
   • cost-effectiveness – missed appointments

6. Can you tell me about the referral process?  
   • from Sure Start  
   • Nursery School  
   • Health Professionals
7. Can you tell me something about the role of parents?

8. Can you tell me about the progress of the children?

9. Can you tell me about the role of the Speech & Language support worker?

10. Can you tell me about baseline measures?

- new Sure Start targets
- measures at 2
- Health Visitor checks

11. Is there anything else you would like to discuss?