



Working With Men

**An Evaluation of Sure Start
Wolverhampton East (SSWE) Fathers'
Support Work Project**

**Undertaken by *Working With Men* on behalf of
Sure Start Wolverhampton East**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Sure Start is a cross-departmental Government programme aiming to enhance the provision of health, welfare and education services to families with children under 4 years old. Through local programmes involving the delivery of inter-agency support to families, Sure Start aims to reduce poverty, improve children's prospects by raising parents' aspirations, improving their parenting skills and providing them with access to support, training and hence into employment.

In Sure Start Wolverhampton East (SSWE) the programme has involved, since the spring of 2004, Fathers' Support Work through commissioning Base 25 and targeting men with activities, events and individual support to meet Sure Start objectives. In September 2005 Working With Men was commissioned to evaluate this work and this summary reports the main outcomes and recommendations arising from that evaluation. The evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of the work, the potential for sustaining good practice and to provide evidence of a model of working which can influence the mainstream agenda of Children's Centres.

What we did

This evaluation involved scrutinising a variety of written materials including those relating to national policy and good practice in working with fathers and those produced at local level relating to the specification for the work, minutes of meetings where it had been discussed, strategic documents and results of needs assessments and surveys with fathers and families in Wolverhampton. We also looked at all the Fathers' Support Worker's monitoring, evaluation and supervision records. We interviewed 10 professionals from a database generated by SSWE and undertook a consultation with 5 fathers and 2 mothers and their children through a Fathers' Support Work activity.

What we found

What do we know about working with fathers in the context of Sure Start programmes?

The context within which Fathers' Support Work in SSWE was developed seems to have mirrored that within Sure Start programmes nationally. A national evaluation has shown that although local programmes generally recognise the potential benefits to children which come from the involvement of their fathers in their upbringing there remains a low level of paternal engagement with programmes and where fathers are engaged it is most likely to be with what are described as outdoor fun-type activities and that they often preferred to do things with their older children rather than babies.

What works with fathers in the context of Sure Start programmes?

In line with what we know about good practice in working with fathers generally, Sure Start work with fathers seems to work best when there is

a designated worker in place, provision is targeted at fathers and the work is conducted in the context of clear, shared goals identified by committed cross-sectoral management. In addition, we also know that good practice with fathers involves adopting a positive approach, using creative recruitment strategies, being clear about what we expect from fathers and what we will provide to them, working in ways that are concrete, practical and solution rather than problem focused.

What did the SSWE Fathers' Support Work set out to achieve?

Fathers' Support Work in SSWE aimed to engage with at least 50 fathers, 25% of whom were to be from ethnic minorities, in the first 12 months of operation with the objectives of:

- Supporting them to explore and be confident in their role as a father, reducing some of the feelings of exclusion and isolation;
- Empowering and supporting them to access mainstream services and helping to influence the delivery of these services;
- Building stronger families by exploring issues around relationship development, e.g. with the mother, child, children and wider family;
- Supporting them into employment, education or training;
- Empowering them to build support networks and encouraging positive peer mentoring;
- Educating the community about the positive image of fatherhood and challenging some of the negative stereotyping often associated with young dads.

The work set out to achieve these aims and objectives by:

- Integrating fathers into existing networks, including Sure Start and links made with jobcentre Plus and training providers;
- Offering the opportunity for fathers to gain support through case and group work;
- Developing action plans with individual fathers;
- Implementing information interventions;
- Implementing home visits and first contact opportunities;
- Supporting referrals to Sure Start, Base 25 and other external organisations;
- Offering training opportunities to fathers, including through training offered within Sure Start and Base 25;
- Engaging fathers in volunteer opportunities within Base 25 and Sure Start.

How is Father's Support Work in SSWE organised?

The Fathers' Support Worker is employed on a part-time basis for a total of 18.5 hours a week. The post is managed through SSWE and supervision is provided by Base 25 which also convenes and provides the worker with access to a Dads' Workers' Network.

What has it achieved?

In the period under review the work has necessarily been diverse, exploratory and developmental with a focus on developing networks of contacts with fathers, families and other professionals. The work has built

some momentum and presence, especially where it has been sustained through activities like the 'Dads and kids story time' sessions. Overall it seems to amount to a solid start to working with fathers, laying down a good basis on which to develop a more comprehensive service and, in the short term, a reasonable and appropriate level of progress in the context of a new initiative within a relatively new Sure Start Programme (SSWE is a round 6 programme only approved on 1st April 2003)

This evaluation showed that the Fathers' Support Worker has achieved the following:

- Has made good progress towards meeting the target of contacting 50 fathers in the first twelve months of work having contacted around 30 and worked fairly intensively with about half this number in a period of 9 months.
- Implemented a range of strategies for meeting, engaging and recruiting fathers to Father Support activities;
- Planned and implemented two major one-off social events for fathers and families – A Pirate Event and Dads DIY;
- Planned and implemented a programme of 'Dads and kids story time' Puppetry and Christmas Crafts sessions in collaboration with the SSWE Library Link Worker;
- Provided a small number of fathers with individual support work across a range of education, legal and welfare issues including signposting and referral to appropriate agencies;
- Undertaken a range of promotional activities, including producing posters, flyers, issuing mass mailing to families registered with SSWE and organising high-profile community-based events and activity days all of which will have contributed to raising public awareness of SSWE services and role of fathers;
- Engaged at least one father in volunteer opportunities;
- Stimulated some other groups and individuals within SSWE to promote work with fathers and refer fathers for individual support.

In the view of other professionals interviewing as part of this evaluation this had a range of positive impacts on fathers and families including:

- In the few cases where referrals have been made by SSWE services to the Fathers' Support Worker and there has been feedback on outcomes, these have been positive for fathers who have supported with appropriate advice and support to access other specialist services;
- The library-based 'Dads & kids story time' sessions have resulted in more fathers using the library at other times;
- More men have accessed SSWE services as a whole;
- A few men engaged by the Fathers' Support Worker have promoted the service to other men;
- At least one father has volunteered to help with other SSWE events for fathers;
- SSWE services have had positive feedback from fathers about engagement with Fathers' Support Work activities;
- Some fathers engaged by the worker no longer see SSWE as exclusively providing services for women and children.

And, among fathers there are signs that their experience of the work has been positive and indications that it may have knock-on benefits for them and their families. They noted that they valued the opportunities provided by father support activities to:

- Spend time with their children;
- Engage in activities with their children that would usually be the preserve of mothers;
- Acquire new skills for themselves;
- Socialise with other fathers;
- Have their children socialise with other children;
- Engage with their children in activities which contribute to the children's education and development;
- Relieve their partners' of the childcare for a short period;
- Demonstrate their support for Sure Start activities.

What should happen next?

On the basis of the evaluation, and in light of an expectation that Children's Centres, as the agency which will mainstream Sure Start Programmes will adopt a target around engaging with fathers, *Working With Men* suggests developing Fathers' Support Work in the SSWE locality in light of some basic principles which should guide the work in the future:

- That the primary aim of Father's Support Work in the future should be to build on the provision that already exists;
- That work with fathers is oriented around consideration of the entitlement that children have to access the benefits which can come from paternal involvement in their care and upbringing;
- The focus should, wherever possible be on co-ordinating and developing what provision already exists, and mainstreaming successful approaches, methods and ways of working;
- The acknowledgement that some fathers are reluctant users of services, and that services are inexperienced at targeting and engaging them.

The recommendations of professionals and fathers for taking the work forward focus around the development of proper planned programme of work for the Father Support Worker for at least the next year which aims to:

- Contact, engage and recruit more fathers and especially more socially marginalised fathers to the work.
- Develop programmes of activities which appeal to fathers other than those who are confident in their role in relation to their children, for example, lone fathers, fathers separated from the mothers of their children and stepfathers.
- Facilitate work at a deeper level, so that it moves beyond contacting and engaging fathers to supporting them in parenting skills and improving engagement with their children.

- Ensure that services continue to consider to what extent they are providing appropriate, accessible and relevant opportunities for fathers and support them in doing so.
- Ensure that those Sure Start initiatives not yet fully engaged with Fathers' Support Work engage and support the engagement of fathers with specialist provision routinely. This requires, as a priority, establishing levels of trust between the Fathers' Support Worker with colleagues as not yet fully committed to or engaged with the work.
- Achieve the mainstreaming of the 'Dads & kids story time' sessions.
- Continue the promotional activity, particularly work advertising events targeting fathers but also develop more targeted activity which reaches socially marginalised fathers and those not already in contact with Sure Start and other services.
- Achieve a better balance between general recruitment activities and specific support for groups and individual fathers
- Develop monitoring systems that are more robust and appropriate to recording the work as it changes from primarily contacting and engaging to providing potentially more complex packages of support. This should include, as a minimum, recording detailed information about the relationship of the father to their children and their ethnicity.
- Access supervision through base 25 as the local provider of expertise in working with fathers.

The aims, structure, methods and timescale of the evaluation

In September 2005 Sure Start Wolverhampton East (SSWE) commissioned *Working With Men* (WWM) to undertake an evaluation of the work carried out by the Fathers' Support Worker. This evaluation has a threefold aim of:

- Assessing the effectiveness, including the cost effectiveness of the work in relation to its stated objectives;
- Assessing the potential for sustaining areas of good practice, including ensuring mechanisms are in place to ensure that activities continue to be effectively monitored and data are available which can be used to demonstrate whether future targets are being achieved;
- And, providing evidence of a model of working which can influence the mainstream agenda for the Children's Centre which will shortly replace the existing structures within the provision takes place.

The structure and methods of the evaluation

This evaluation took place over the period of 14 weeks and involved the following:

- Identifying the aims of Sure Start;
- Identifying the aims and objectives of the Father Support Work and describing the main activities undertaken by the worker to meet these;
- Collating baseline data and monitoring information generated by the Father's Support Worker to evidence outcomes of the work;
- Collecting data in order to assess the impact the Father Support Worker has had on the community;
- Preparation of a report that SSWE can disseminate to their Partnership Board, Community Groups and Statutory Organisations and feeding back the evaluation results to the Sure Start team, parents, volunteers and partnership organisations.

In order to achieve this we engaged in the following activities:

- Scrutiny and analysis of a variety of written materials provided to WWM by SSWE and the Fathers' Support Worker relating to structural and strategic aspects of the project including:
 - The funding application and specification for the work which formed the basis of the commissioning arrangement between Base 25 as provider and Sure Start as commissioning agency;
 - Minutes of SSWE Strategic Project Leads meetings,
 - SSWE strategy documents describing Sure Start outputs and outcomes and organisational structures;
 - A report on the findings of a parent and carer user survey carried out by SSWE in August 2005;
 - The person and job specification for the post of Fathers' Support Worker.
- Scrutiny and analysis of a variety of documents relating to the monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the Fathers' Support Worker including:
 - Monitoring and session evaluation pro forma;
 - A variety of advertising and promotional literature relating to one-off and sessional events facilitated by the Fathers' Support Worker;
 - Fathers' Support Worker supervision meeting records.
- 10 Interviews with workers, management within SSWE and attached to organisations which have had or have contact and involvement with Fathers' Support Work activities including:
 - Adrian Amos, the Fathers' Support Worker at SSWE;
 - Jason Dudley, Base 25 Manager/ Supporting Young Dads Project;
 - Rachel Kilmister, Library Link Worker;
 - Mary Bentley, SSWE Programme Manager;
 - Gill Leach, Childcare Development Officer,
 - Members of the SSWE Healthy Start Team;
 - Christine Wright, Co-ordinator, Home Start Wolverhampton East;
 - Jenny Leach, Coordinator Children's Information Service;
 - Jenny Baker, Head teacher, Eastfield Nursery School;

- Nicholas Sullivan, Head teacher, East Park Infants School;
- A consultation with fathers engaged with SSWE Fathers' Support Work activities involving 5 fathers and 2 mothers.

We scrutinised documentation in order to describe the context within which the Fathers' Support Work takes place and the nature of the work itself, both in terms of the quantity of work and, where evaluative materials collated by the worker allowed, the quality and impact on fathers.

We interviewed professionals from a database generated by Sure Start project management and the Fathers' Support Worker. All interviews, except those with the Fathers' Support Worker himself who was interviewed twice, once over the 'phone and once face-to-face, were undertaken over the 'phone. Interviews were structured around a loose schedule of questions aiming to elicit elucidation on the work in terms of the nature of the engagement of the interviewee's organisations with it, the activities undertaken by the Father's Support Worker, progress, perceived impact on fathers and children and other outputs and outcomes. The schedule was amended in the course of each interview to reflect the particular perspectives and experiences of the interviewee (see appendix 1). Each interview was summarised immediately after completion and the data generated by all interviews analysed by collating interviewees' responses under themes reflected in the interview schedule.

A consultation was undertaken with 5 fathers and 2 mothers attending a 'Dads & Kids Story time' event organised by the Fathers' Support Worker. Interviews undertaken in the context of the consultation were structured around the a loose schedule of questions aiming to elicit information about the interviewees' motives for engagement for the work, their experiences of it, perceptions of the strength and weaknesses of the work, (and, where available, comparison with other forms of family support), positive and negative outcomes which they ascribed to the influence of engagement with Fathers' Support Work, perceived impact of engagement with the work on their children and other aspects of family life like relationships with the mother of the their child(ren) (see appendix 2)

The timing and timescale of the evaluation

The evaluation work was carried out sequentially, in three broad phases. The first phase involved meeting with the evaluation commissioners and Fathers' Support Worker supervisor to clarify evaluation processes and the outcomes against which the work would be assessed, collation of the contact database for interviews with professionals, compilation of documentation relevant to the work and the devising, in consultation with SSWE of the interview schedule. The second phase involved undertaking interviews with the Fathers' Support Worker, SSWE management, the worker's supervisor, other professionals working within SSWE, representatives of agencies and organisations who had had contact with the work and interviews with fathers. The third and final phase involved

collation and analysis of data, compilation and presentation of the evaluation report.

This work was originally projected to take 12 weeks, beginning at the start of September 2005 and finishing at the end of October in order to meeting the exacting timescale determined by demands to elicit information on the basis of which to be able to argue for continuing financial support of fathers' support work after the restructuring of Sure Start within the ambit of Children's Centres and plans to celebrate and showcase work with fathers in SSWE and across the City through a conference planned for the end of November. However, because of staff leave the evaluation only began in earnest three weeks into September and, then, was further delayed by the disruption caused by the autumn half-term break. This meant that the report was only completed in the second week of November.

The evaluator and evaluation agency

This evaluation was conducted by Simon Forrest for Working With Men, under the supervision of Trefor Lloyd, the organisation Director, to a detailed specification submitted in response to an invitation to tender for the work. WWM has considerable experience and expertise in the evaluation of small-scale work with fathers alongside programme and resource development and consultancy (see appendix 3).

The Context of Fathers' Support Work in SSWE

Over recent years there has been an increasing recognition of the benefits to children of the participation of fathersⁱ in active parenting reflecting both developments in practice, the efforts of lobbying groups advocating on behalf of fathers and a shift in discourse within public policy away from viewing fathers' roles principally in terms of financial providers for families towards viewing them as care-givers¹. The origin of these shifts away from perceptions of the role of fathers as primarily 'bread-winners' towards providers of emotional, educational and social nurture and care on a par with mothers lays in wider changes in the social, economic and cultural status of men and women and views of their role within the family, particularly the erosion of traditional associations between gender and work and the splitting of the world into broadly masculine and feminine spheres of influence and involvement where male roles and masculine characteristics were associated with the social sphere outside

ⁱ For the sake of brevity we will use the term 'fathers' throughout this report but, unless otherwise indicated, deploy it as shorthand referring to biological and non-biological fathers and significant adult male carers in families reflecting the trend within research for the main differences in outcomes for children to reflect not the biological relationship between themselves and their male carer but their degree of involvement in parenting.

the family and female roles and feminine characteristics were associated with the domestic sphere of the family. The thrust of these changes, although it may not always be realised as much in practice as in aspiration, is towards the greater inclusion of men in childcare and the household coupled with heightened expectations of their engagement with a range of 'emotion work' in their relationships with women and children. Reinforcing this cultural shift in views and experiences of male and female roles in parenting an emerging body of research has identified that there are potentially profound social and personal benefits to be derived by both children and men from higher levels of domestic involvement and emotional engagement^{2,3,4,5,6}. The development of a range of public policy has reflected this social change in family life and the expectations and aspirations of many fathers for greater involvement in their children's lives. Coupled to explicit, albeit arguably limited measures, like the institution of paid paternity leave for fathers, they are now named in many policy documents relating to educational, health and welfare issues as important providers of care and support in relation to children's development⁷.

The National Policy Context for Sure Start Programmes

This shift in public policy and public service practices towards supporting both male and female parents/carers in providing financial and social support for their children underpins the Sure Start programme. Sure Start is part of wider commitment to tackling poverty and inequalities in health and education through the development of a raft of new structures, programmes and services for young families. In this endeavour a special emphasis has been attached to supporting families with young children to achieve better access to health, welfare, education and employment services. The Sure Start programme is cited by Government as a central plank in this work aiming to achieve better outcomes for children and their parents and hence their communities by increasing the availability of childcare, improving the health and emotional development of children and supporting parents in improving their parenting skills and accessing the labour market. This is to be achieved by joined-up working, at national and local levels, between health, welfare and education services around to principles which enshrine a commitment to early intervention, being led by and responsive to service users' needs and flexible service provision and delivery.

The ultimate aim of the programme is to ensure delivery of free early education for all three- and four-year-old children, affordable, quality childcare and after-school activities in every area, and children's centres and health and family support in disadvantaged areas where they are most needed. The programme also aims to work with parents to build aspirations for employment and for their children's education. Currently Sure Start is working towards targets (which are shared with a number of government departments and initiatives) set out in 2004 Spending Review, DfES Public Service Agreement which include improving children's communication, social and emotional development so that by 2008 50% of children reach a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage and reduce inequalities between the level of development achieved by children in the 20% most disadvantaged areas and the rest of England and contributing to the reduction of the proportion of children living in households where no one is working, by 2008 increasing the stock of Ofsted-registered childcare by 10%, increasing the take-up of formal childcare by lower income working families by 50% and introducing, by April 2005, a successful light-touch childcare approval scheme. Sure Start is also expected to contribute to the target for reducing conceptions among under 18 year olds by 50% by 2010 set out in the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and halting the year-on-year rise in obesity among children under 11 by 2010 in the context of a broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole⁸.

The Sure Start programme is managed centrally through an interdepartmental unit which is accountable to both the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions. Currently, 524 Sure Start Local Programmes, linked to central government through 9 regional centres, offer a range of early learning, health and family services to 400,000 children living in disadvantaged areas - including 30% of children under 4 years old officially designated as living in poverty⁹.

The Effects and Effectiveness of Sure Start Programmes

Sure Start is subject to ongoing evaluations seeking to assess the effects and effectiveness of both the programme as a whole and specific elements of it (for example the evaluation of the Sure Start Plus programme targeting teenage parents¹⁰). The best evidence available to date on the progress of the national programme has been brought together in a summary based on the work of the research team based at the Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues, Birkbeck College London and relates to assessment of the impact of the programme for the period between 2000 and 2002¹¹. This research shows some early signs of improved outcomes on a number of fronts including improvements in mother-child relationships which it is thought may have an impact on children's development and outcomes over time and, although Sure Start programme has little impact on employment opportunities for parents directly, it may be smoothing parental access to

services and support which will improve employment potential and access to work over time.

Success seems to be associated with a number of characteristics in the development, management, structure and implementation of local programmes including strong leadership, effective partnership working between agencies involved in service delivery forged around clarity of purpose, mutual trust between agencies and professionals and a sense of shared ownership. It was also noted that health visitors and midwives provided the most important first point of contact with families and provided the main vector of access for parents to other professionals and other professionals to parents. Where there was evidence of success in reaching groups designated as hard-to-reach, including fathers, it was found to be associated with employment of a designated worker. There was some evidence that the general adherence of service delivery to an office hours regimen meant that local programme mainly reached the unemployed and mothers rather than men and other parents in employment.

Working with Fathers in the context of Sure Start Programmes

In addition to the limited references to the effects and effectiveness of Sure Start programmes in terms of reaching and engaging men within this National Evaluation the engagement and involvement of fathers in Sure Start programmes has been the subject of a specific study¹². Using detailed data collected from 25 Sure Start programmes which covered a range from those identified as attaching little importance to involving fathers to those attaching a lot of importance to their involvement, researchers have concluded the following:

- Overall there was a low level of involvement of fathers in programme activities;
- Where fathers were involved in programmes their participation tended to be with fun outdoor, fun-type activities and alongside older rather than younger children;
- Fathers were more inclined to attend activities and events targeted solely at them and these often provided them with a route into Sure Start and other services;
- Fathers' involvement seemed to be associated with the presence of a designated worker charged with the specific task of engaging and supporting them;
- Sure Start programmes which successfully achieved engagement with fathers had shown, from their inception, corporate commitment to their involvement among participating agencies and sustained joined-up working.

In addition, this evaluation noted that:

- There were a range of obstacles to fathers' involvement in Sure Start programmes erected by the professionals delivering services,

including feeling over-stretched by the demands of women and children and perceiving the involvement of fathers as adding to these and wariness about producing conflicts of interest between the needs of mothers and fathers and increasing mothers vulnerability to domestic violence (although there was no evidence of this from mothers themselves);

- That mothers could equally expedite or obstruct men's engagement with Sure Start and other services by acting as gate-keepers;
- Men themselves were reluctant service users, poorly informed about what was on offer and cautious about using services mainly accessed by women and children;
- Fathers' workers tended to have to develop their practice on the basis of trial and error and often adopted methods of working quite different to those used by professionals targeting women and children including outreach, setting up men's groups and advertising in male environments.

Working With Fathers

The findings of the Sure Start evaluation of engagement and involvement with fathers exposed a range of structural, organisational, attitudinal and practical barriers which largely reflect what is already known about working with fathers and men more generally from other sources. From a range of research and consultations we know that^{13, 14}:

- Professionals can feel anxious, unskilled and unsupported in trying to approach and engage fathers;
- That working with fathers is often a marginal and low priority activity, especially for services which traditionally focus on working with mothers and children;
- That services can have practices and procedures that (unintentionally) exclude fathers;
- That services can be perceived as unwelcoming environments for fathers, operate at inappropriate times, in inappropriate locations and not be explicit about what they offer;
- And, that fathers can be reluctant service users, disbaring themselves by adopting negative views of services and perceiving themselves as insufficiently needy or the 'wrong type' of client;
- That men can be reluctant to talk (at least until trust and rapport have been built up).

From the same sources we also know what works. Research has consistently shown that successful engagement and work with fathers involves the following^{13, 15}:

- Approaching them positively, emphasising the benefits to children, the fathers themselves and mothers of paternal involvement in parenting and family life;
- Having a clarity of purpose to which the fathers can relate;
- Developing creative recruitment strategies and targeting using community settings, media with which men engage and supporting and encouraging their partners (who do tend to be in touch with agencies) to 'lean on' fathers to access them;
- Understanding fathers' needs and motives for engagement with projects particularly those which arise from social pressures and personal motivations to be more actively involved in parenting;
- Working in ways that appeal to men, being concrete, practical, clear about expectations and the anticipated outcomes of a piece of work for the men involved;
- Being flexible in working practices and methods and responding to needs and events and circumstances;
- Being solution rather than problem oriented;
- Staffing projects and services with a knowledgeable, well-trained, committed and motivated workforce. Evidence seems to suggest that although the presence of men in this workforce appears to have some benefits these characteristics are more important than gender;
- The robust support and commitment of management and across the organisation for working with men.

Working with Fathers in the Context of Sure Start in Wolverhampton

In addition to the findings of research on working with fathers adopting a broad, national perspective two relevant pieces of work have recently taken place in Wolverhampton which provide more local detail with regard both to identifying current levels of engagement with fathers and the direction of future practice to engage and involve fathers^{16,17}.

The Sure Start Wolverhampton East Parents and Carers Satisfaction Survey conducted in 2005 involved surveying via self-completion questionnaire and face-to-face interview all parents and carers registered with the programme aiming to look at overall customer satisfaction, feed into future planning of the Children's Centres and provide some measure of change through comparison with a previous survey conducted one year earlier. Although severely limited in terms of enabling the inference of anything specific about work with fathers because data were not disaggregated by sex, this survey produced two findings relevant to this evaluation.

- First, it suggested the low level of engagement of fathers compared to mothers in terms of the patterns of response to the survey; of the 120 contributors only 6 were men.
- Second, there were only two requests clearly and specifically relating to the needs of men in the context of responses to a question about 'What more could be offered to parents/carers and children in the future?' reported as, 'More things for Dads who are at work to do with their children'.

Notwithstanding that the design and implementation of the survey and the nature of data analysis may have militated against men's engagement and involvement and be concealing their views in the aggregation of data, this survey demonstrates low levels of engagement of men with SSWE.

The results of the more detailed and focused work which took place in the Eight Village Sure Start programme district of Wolverhampton suggest that these findings relating to SSWE are not unique or specific to this locality and provide some elucidating explanations for this low level of engagement and involvement. In fact some of the findings may directly reflect the experiences of fathers living within the SSWE catchment area since at least 15 and possibly up to 24 of the 42 fathers participating in this needs assessment exercise lived outside the Eight Village locality.

This needs assessment showed the following:

- Fathers overwhelmingly wanted to see more male oriented activities being provided, including five-a-side football, gym training, day trips and outings for fathers and their children, DIY workshops and training opportunities;
- Three types of specific support and advice were identified most frequently (from a list of 9 options); first aid training, advice on children's development and advice on dealing with children's behaviour;
- Preferred service availability was focused around weekday evenings and weekend day times;
- That the most often cited barriers to accessing Sure Start services were lack of awareness of the services, perceptions that services were just for women, and inappropriate opening hours.
- There was consensus that Sure Start could aim to involve more fathers by a combination of better, wider and more accessible advertising including promoting the presence of the male worker.

The Development of Fathers' Support Worker in SSWE

As both national and local research on the participation of fathers in Sure Start programmes indicates, it is, therefore, in the context of a fairly female-oriented service characterised by low levels of engagement with fathers and some practices and structures that collude with their non-involvement that SSWE sought to develop fathers' support work.

SSWE invited tenders to undertake this work in April 2004 although a worker was not appointed until September 2004. SSWE commissions the Fathers Support Worker through *Base 25* a City-Centre based Youth Service offering information and advice to young people on health care, benefits, jobs, training, housing and leisure opportunities. Base 25 also offers specialist support to young fathers and hosts a network of Father's Support Workers from across the City. Base 25 offers access to this network for the SSWE Fathers' Support Worker and regular supervision with the Young Dads Project Co-ordinator. The responsibility for day-to-day management of the post rests with SSWE where the worker is situated.

The Fathers' Support Worker is employed on a part-time basis for a total of 18.5 hours a week. The principle tasks associated with post, as listed in the job description include the following:

- Contacting and engaging with fathers of young children;
- Identifying the needs of fathers relating to their role and supporting them to be active in this role;
- Registering families with the Sure Start programme;
- Supporting the development of parenting programmes in order to encourage fathers' participation and involvement with their partners and unborn babies in the antenatal period;
- Developing materials and approaches which promote the positive public image of fathers and educate the local community about positive male parenting;
- Supporting fathers through developing their confidence and self-esteem so that they can access education and training opportunities;
- Working with SSWE and other Wolverhampton Sure Start programmes to promote play opportunities for children and fathers together;
- Developing individual, group and community approaches to work with fathers of children under 4 years old so that cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds are responded to;
- Supporting fathers to access mainstream services for themselves and their young families and enabling fathers to have a voice in shaping existing and new services; this will be produced through evidence-based, practice and consultation reports.

Through these activities the post aims to:

- Support dads to explore and be confident in their role as father, reducing some of the feelings of exclusion and isolation;
- Empower and support dads to access mainstream services and help to influence the delivery of these services;
- Build stronger families by exploring issues around relationship development, e.g. with the mother, child, children and wider family;
- Support dads into employment, education or training;
- Empower dads to build support networks and encourage positive peer mentoring;

- Educate the community about the positive image of fatherhood and challenge some of the negative stereotyping often associated with young dads.

This makes a contribution to a range of Sure Start core targets including the following, ensuring that:

- All teenage parents have access to appropriate advice and support;
- Antenatal advice, support and information is available to all pregnant women and their families living in Sure Start areas;
- All teenage parents receive appropriate health related support and advice;
- Young people in Sure Start areas have access to appropriate advice and support on a range of health issues;
- By 2005/6 there is a 12% reduction in the proportion of 0-3 year old children living in households where no-one is working;
- 75% of families report personal evidence of an improvement in the equality of services providing family support;
- All Sure Start programmes have established effective links with jobcentre Plus, local training providers and further education institutions.

This will be achieved by specific work to:

- Integrate fathers into existing networks, including Sure Start and links made with jobcentre Plus and training providers;
- Offer the opportunity for fathers to gain support through case and group work;
- Develop action plans with individual fathers;
- Implement information interventions;
- Implement home visits and first contact opportunities;
- Support referrals to Sure Start, Base 25 and other external organisations;
- Offer training opportunities to fathers, including through training offered within Sure Start and Base 25;
- Engage fathers in volunteer opportunities within Base 25 and Sure Start.

Finally, supporting documentation associated with Fathers' Support Worker post identified two particular targets associated with the role:

- First, that the aim to is contact 50 young fathers in the first year of the project;
- And, second, that 25% of these contacts will be from Black ethnic groups.

Findings

Fathers' Support Worker Activities

The father's support worker was appointed in September 2004 and by the time of this evaluation had effectively been in post for around 12 months. The principle activities within this relatively short period of tenure reflect, as one might expect, periods of familiarisation with Sure Start, the role

and practice of Father Support Work and some initial contact and engagement with fathers. This activity is in line with and represents fulfilment of the primary objectives spelt out in the work plan agreed by Sure Start management, the post supervisor and the worker. This specified the following activity here summarised by quarter:

In the first quarter, familiarisation with the role and organisation including:

- Developing an understanding of Sure Start structures, policies, procedures and practices
- Forging links with the existing workers through personal contact, advertising and attendance at a variety of training events and meetings;
- And, planning the first piece of work – a fatherhood programme.

In the second quarter, initiating work including:

- Implementation of the fatherhood programme;
- Introducing the Father Support Work to a range of professionals in and connected to SSWE through presentations;
- And, active engagement with fathers.

In the third quarter, continuing to develop new work and supporting materials, including:

- Building further links with SSWE-connected professionals;
- Developing materials for fathers including to fathers-to-be;
- And, establishing a fathers' volunteer mentors scheme;

In the fourth quarter, sustaining the work in hand, developing community awareness and preparing for evaluation, including:

- Expanding the volunteer mentoring scheme;
- Addressing the community perception of fathers;
- And, addressing monitoring issues and evaluating work to date.

Based on an analysis of data incorporated in this work plan, recorded through supervision meetings, routine monitoring and evaluation of activities and events and supplemented by material derived from 'phone interviews with the worker, his supervisor and Sure Start management it is clear that the worker has achieved the following:

- Familiarisation with Sure Start, the policies, practices, procedures and structures of the organisation;
- Familiarisation with the Father's Support Worker role within Sure Start;
- Professional development involving taking up a range of in-service training opportunities;
- The forging of links and development of networks with personnel both within SSWE and other local Sure Start programmes, the local young dads workers' network, and, to some extent, other statutory sector public services;
- And, engagement with and the initiation of work with fathers.

Within this broad trajectory of activity it is possible to highlight the following activities:

By the end of the first quarter:

- The worker had familiarised himself with SSWE policies and office procedures and processes;
- He had raised his knowledge base about local practice with fathers through other Sure Start programmes by linking into the young dads workers' network and reading relevant literature including the National Evaluation of Sure Start report on working with fathers¹²;
- He had linked into some existing SSWE activities and programmes which provided access to a small number of fathers, particularly the 'play and stay' programme based at Eastfield nursery;
- He had also used this opportunity to promote the work with fathers with mothers accessing this programme;

By the end of the second quarter:

- The worker had taken on an additional group of contacts with 3 fathers acquired from the case-load of his supervisor;
- He had begun to promote the Father Support Work and his role through the production and dissemination of advertising/information within SSWE;
- He had begun to explore the potential for promoting the work through non-Sure Start settings and organisations where it was anticipated that fathers would be accessible including local boxing and football clubs;
- He had developed monitoring and evaluation tools;
- He had engaged in a variety of training and awareness raising activities provided through Sure Start and the Dad's Workers Network covering issues like Sure Start home visiting policy and practices, condom training, post-natal depression in fathers, and working with disability issues.

And, by the end of the third quarter:

- He had developed and begun to implement a planned programme of activities with fathers including a series of 'Dads & kids story time' activities at East Park library in collaboration with the Sure Start library link worker;
- Published and disseminated a variety of promotional and informational literature targeting fathers;
- Scaled back his participation in some activities like the 'play and stay' to focus on others;
- Planned and implemented or been in the process of implementing one-off events targeting fathers including a Caribbean event and DIY workshop;
- Made contact with around 30 fathers and engaged in some one-to-one support.

Subsequently, into this the last quarter of the period covered by the action plan, he has:

- Continued the core activities within this programme of work with fathers;

- Engaged in activities associated with mounting an evaluation of the work including providing relevant paperwork and facilitating access to fathers;
- Organised and facilitated the production of a video show-casing his work with fathers;
- And, heavily contributed to the organisation of a City-wide conference of working with fathers planned for the end of November 2005.

Using monitoring data collected by the Father's Support Worker it is possible to construct a more detailed record of the specific activities undertaken in the period and to calculate the numbers of fathers engaged.

These monitoring data identify the five main activities as part of the programme of work. The following three pieces of work seem to have sustained over a period of time since their initiation in the late spring of 2005:

- 'Meet and greet' activity at the 'play and stay' events held at East Park nursery. Monitoring records compiled in accordance with SSWE reporting practice (summarising contacts for monthly periods) show that in May, June and July 2005 attendance at these events yielded contacts with 14 individual fathers, one grandfather and 5 mothers. A number of fathers and mothers were contacted on more than one occasion (in all there were 21 contacts with fathers and 6 with mothers).
- Dads and kids story time events at East Park library. Six events were held between May and early November 2005 on either Monday evenings, or more frequently, Saturday afternoons. These events were organised in collaboration with the Sure Start Library Link Worker and comprised a story reading and some associated craft activity. Each of these events was generally attended by between 4 and 8 fathers and some mothers.
- Individual support activities with fathers. The Father's Support Worker's records provide detailed information on packages of individual support provided to three fathers (see appendix 4). In one case the Fathers' Support Worker was able to provide support to a young father to help him negotiate access to his son, in a second he supported a father in identifying training and education to help him change career, and in third signposted and supported a young couple towards housing support and signposted and supported the father with smoking cessation.

In addition, there have been two one-off events designed to promote awareness of the provision of Fathers' Support Work within SSWE and to promote positive views of fathers and fathering within the locality community.

- A DIY workshop held at East Park Methodist Church on 2nd July 2005. This event comprised an afternoon workshop on basic DIY

skills including electrical work, plumbing, tiling and DIY safety primarily targeting dads (it was advertised as DIY dads) but also attended by some mothers. A crèche facility was provided for children. The Fathers' Support Worker's monitoring data reports that 10 fathers and 2 mothers attended this event. All the attendees are also listed as contacts at the 'meet and greet' described above.

- A Caribbean event, held at Deansfield Family centre on 13th August 2005. This event comprised a range of events, games, activities, music and food targeting families in general and 'male carers' in particular. Evaluative data collected by the Fathers' Support Worker suggests that this event was attended by at least 30 people (the number that signed in at the event) at least half of whom were fathers.

Recruiting and engaging fathers

Adopting appropriate strategies for the recruitment and engagement of fathers is both a crucial element in the initial development of practice, and contributes towards setting the tenor of a piece of work and laying the foundations for future intervention which, it has been noted, can take a long period of sustained activity at the start of the project. Good practice in recruiting fathers has been shown to involve targeting them with appropriate information in settings where they will be exposed to it, including using outreach into community and social settings, pitching activities at an appropriate level and organising events and activities at times when men in the target group are likely to be available¹³.

This evaluation has produced evidence that the Father's Support Worker has worked through a variety of channels, predominantly those presented by SSWE structures and existing staff networks of contact with families registered with SSWE and Base 25 Dads' Workers' Network, using direct mailing, supported by personal presence at SSWE services, and community-based advertising to generate awareness of his work and provide points of access and engagement with fathers in the locality. By remaining flexible, especially about offering activities and events in the evening and at the weekends as well as during normal office hours, he has created opportunities for engagement with working men which might not otherwise have existed. It is also notable, as monitoring information routinely collected at each event and activity undertaken by the Fathers' Support Worker shows that he has not excluded women from the processes of recruitment and engagement of fathers but seen them as advocates for the work and conduits for the flow of information to men. He has expedited the engagement of fathers by allowing them to bring children over 4 years old (the official Sure Start target age range) as long as they also bring at least one child under 4 which is normal Sure Start procedure.

SSWE holds a database of contact information for at least 441 eligible families within the locality¹⁶ and direct mailing to fathers via lists

generated from this resource has been a major element of the recruitment strategy for fathers' support work. Although it is difficult to make an accurate assessment of the impact of this activity on recruitment to the programmes and events through a *post hoc* evaluation there is some limited evidence, derived from consultation with fathers attending a dads and kids story time event on November 2nd 2005, that direct mailings are an important mechanism for appraising fathers (and families) of targeted events and activities, raising awareness of SSWE services and the father support worker in particular, and, to some extent stimulating discussion within families about fathering and parental roles.

Targeted mailings are supported with advertising through posters and flyers which are placed in community venues accessed by fathers like the nurseries and local library. In addition, word of mouth seems to have become an increasingly important means of promoting both programmes and one-off events and consultation with fathers as part of this evaluation suggests that, in particular, the promotional activity by one family who run a shop is an important means by which a fairly wide segment of the East Park community get to hear about activities targeting fathers and SSWE in general. In addition to advocacy for SSWE services and promotion of activities for fathers through members of the local community, with the development of a growing network of contacts, the Fathers' Support Worker has also been able to spread information and solicit support for activities and events through placing 'phone calls to individual fathers.

There is also evidence, from interviews with some other SSWE workers that some limited, but enthusiastic promotion of work with fathers takes place through routine contact with families connected to the Sure Start Programme. For example, personnel working in Child Development, Home Start and Healthy Start programmes within SSWE all reported that they have raised awareness of services for fathers offered by SSWE either directly with fathers, or more commonly with mothers. In two cases this promotion involved referral of men to the Fathers' Support Worker for support. It is unfortunately not possible to assess in the remaining cases the extent to which these processes of awareness raising have led to the active engagement of fathers in activities and events organised by the Fathers' Support Workers as no detailed monitoring has taken place of the impact of referrals.

In addition, it has not been possible to ascertain whether contacts with non Sure Start community-based organisations like the local football and boxing clubs ever yielded any contact with fathers or promotion by proxy of SSWE services including the Fathers' Support Work.

There is some evidence, gathered from 'phone interviews with local school management that the Fathers' Support Worker's presence at 'meet and greet' and 'play and stay' activities has raised the profile of services for fathers available through SSWE although none of the schools involved could identify whether any fathers had taken up any services or engaged with any activities offered by the Fathers' Support Worker.

Three fathers were also recruited through the handing over a case load of contacts handled through Base 25. Continued membership of the Dads' Workers Network convened through Base 25 provides a means by which other contacts may be made over time.

Working with other professionals and inter-agency liaison

The ability to work effectively and collaboratively in inter-agency and cross-sectoral environments is essential in the context of Sure Start programmes which bring together staff from health, education, welfare and other advice and support services. Characteristically this has not been easy, and the ambitious plan to assemble comprehensive programmes of support to young families by bringing agencies under one umbrella has, in many local programmes, produced instances of tension between staff from different professional backgrounds and generated conflicting loyalties for those who are located partly in Sure Start and partly in other organisations either because of particular management structures or through secondment¹⁸.

Given the structuring of managerial responsibilities for the post of Fathers' Support Worker between SSWE and Base 25 and the recency of the appointment of the worker compounded by the challenge to the traditional focus and character of the work of many other SSWE partners posed by targeting men it is no surprise that this evaluation identified significant tensions around Fathers' Support Work and the post of the worker within SSWE, especially in the period immediately after the work beganⁱⁱ.

Both the worker's supervisor at Base 25, SSWE management and the Fathers' Support Worker himself provided fairly detailed accounts of the nature of some the problems with intra-agency tensions during the initial stages of the work and the strategies which have led to their resolution. Accounts collected from all three of these contributors to this evaluation identified the following explanations for difficulties with embedding the work:

- There was a fairly low level of understanding and little experience of work with fathers among other SSWE staff leading to both uncertainty and a lack of clarity about the Fathers' Support Worker's role and the nature of his work;
- This reflected the preponderance of staffing by women experienced in health, education and social care work targeting women and children in their early years but with little experience or confidence in targeting men;
- And, staff made assumptions about what the work involved which conflicted with the practice of worker. For example, assuming that it would focus on stereotypically masculine activities like football

ⁱⁱ It has been noted that Sure Start programmes are characteristically predominantly staffed by women and tend to have experience and confidence about targeting women and children rather than men with services^{14,12}.

rather than involve accessing fathers through their partners and their children;

- The relative inexperience of the Fathers' Support Worker in both his specific field and working in inter-agency and sectoral contexts.

Difficulties with achieving personal and professional credibility resulted in at least two potentially problematic situations which could perhaps have been avoided if inter-collegiate trust and communication had been greater. These relatively minor difficulties seem, however, to have been quickly resolved and steps taken to achieve a level of engagement and understanding between the Fathers' Support Worker and other SSWE staff which have prevented any reoccurrence and improved mutual clarity about working practices. These have included:

- The Fathers' Support Worker working with SSWE management and his supervisor to identify appropriate ways of describing his practice suited to an inter-agency environment where many staff are unfamiliar with working with men;
- A presentation made in June 2005 by the Fathers' Support Worker as part of a series of presentations by SSWE team members, through which he explained the rationale for his work, described an outline of the planned programme of activities and his perception of his role within the team;
- Achieving credibility for himself and work with fathers by demonstrating that men can be engaged in SSWE activities in positive ways;
- Raising the profile of work through 'high impact' activities like the Caribbean event and DIY workshop.

These activities seem to have levered up awareness of the Fathers' Support Work and facilitated the forging of links between the worker and colleagues within the team. As a result a number of SSWE staff interviewed through this evaluation reported high levels of engagement with the work with fathers including the following:

- Members of the Healthy Start team, which now signpost fathers to Father Support Work and associated activities when they make home visits;
- Home Start has referred three fathers to worker for individual support;
- Child Development at Deansfield SS has referred fathers to the worker and also involved the Fathers' Support Worker in the provision of support of workers.

The piece of work which seems to have been the most successful in terms of inter-agency working within SSWE is the series of 'Dads & kids story time' events. Both the Fathers' Support Worker and Sure Start Library Link Worker, who are responsible for it, were enthusiastic about this activity both in terms of its ability to engage fathers and have an impact on their relationship with their children. In addition, the work was positively referred to by several other professionals associated with SSWE. Interviews with the Library Link Worker and the Fathers' Support Worker

suggest that several factors have had an impact on the quality of this piece of work include the following:

- It was developed jointly between the Fathers' Support Worker and Library Link Worker ensuring joint ownership, clarity of aims and roles and effective planning and implementation;
- The Fathers' Support Worker had been in post before the Library Link Worker enabling this project to be developed as part of the Library Link Worker's core activities rather than an additional activity added to a pre-existing workload;
- The Library Link Worker's openness to working with men and acquiring and deploying new skills relevant to the work, for example, preparedness to develop practical activities which appeal fathers as part of the story time events;
- Clear roles in delivering the work – the Library Link Worker focusing on reading the stories and the fathers' Support Worker on engaging and supporting fathers;
- And, clarity about project development – especially agreeing the need for a focus in future on trying to reach fathers not living with the mothers of their children.

In addition, equally important but slightly less robust links have been forged in settings where SSWE already has a presence. For example, there have been positive responses to the worker's contribution to 'meet and greet' and 'play and stay' activities at both the nursery and infants schools in East Park.

However, interviews with other professionals within SSWE also suggest that there are contexts in which awareness of Fathers' Support Work is low or non-existent. For example, it is impossible to identify any midwifery services through New Cross Hospital which have had no contact with the worker and management claim little engagement with fathers which presents a significant obstacle to reaching men ante-natally.

The impact of Father's Support Work on SSWE and other professionals

A range of professionals within SSWE and working in contexts where SSWE has a presence or connection were also asked to identify any impact that the work had had on their practice, report any perceptions of impact of the work on fathers with whom they work and for their views of the direction of development of the work in future.

In relation to impact on their practice, interview data suggest that where practitioners within SSWE (Healthy Start, Home Start, Library Link Work and Child Development) have embraced the work, based on the development of a trusting relationship with the worker, they have benefited from:

- Having an identified point of referral to which to signpost fathers;

- Feeling that their service is more inclusive because they now have something which they can point to which is explicitly and exclusively on offer to fathers;
- Support from the Fathers' Support Worker around developing their confidence and skills around working with men.

However, in some other cases, despite positive engagement and support for with the work there is little evidence of the translation of this into impact on fathers. In particular, while noting the positive reports they had had of the 'Dads & Kids story time' activities, the two schools involved in the evaluation felt that the impact on their practice had not been significant. In one case this seems to be associated with the fact that the school has had long standing commitment to engaging fathers and hence considerable experience of working with them, and that the worker's attendance at the other had been fairly limited after a period of intense activity as part of his recruitment strategy. However, it should be noted that the Infants School reported that there did seem to be signs of a more widely based positive change in fathers' attitudes towards engagement with school which might be associated with the work of Sure Start helping to gear up paternal expectations of involvement with services for their children.

In relation to professionals' perceptions of the impact of the Fathers' Support Work on fathers themselves interview data suggest the following, that:

- In the few cases where referrals have been made by SSWE services to the Fathers' Support Worker and there has been feedback on outcomes, these have been positive for fathers who have supported with appropriate advice and support to access other specialist services;
- The library-based 'Dads & kids story time' sessions have resulted in more fathers using the library at other times;
- More men have accessed SSWE services as a whole;
- A few men engaged by the Fathers' Support Worker have promoted the service to other men;
- At least one father has volunteered to help with other SSWE events for fathers;
- SSWE services have had positive feedback from fathers about engagement with Fathers' Support Work activities;
- Some fathers engaged by the worker no longer see SSWE as exclusively providing services for women and children.

In relation to professionals' views about potential directions for development of the work, a summary of interview data suggest that they would like to see the following:

- A deepening of work both in terms of quality of relationships built with fathers on the basis of this initial period of recruitment and engagement and focus of the work on enhancing parenting;
- The embedding of Fathers' Support Work across SSWE service and its mainstreaming;

- Greater involvement of fathers in initiating, directing, planning and implementing the work;
- Greater engagement with schools and other settings within the community;
- The provision of more one-to-one support to fathers;
- And, the post of Father's Support Worker growing to a full-time appointment to increase accessibility to other services and more fathers.

Many of the individual contributions compiled into this summary had a particular focus relating to the field of work that the contributor was in, and as such it is possible to provide some additional level of specification about their relevance in some contexts. For example:

- The deepening of the work was a particular area for development identified by both the Fathers' Support Worker supervisor and SSWE manager who evidently see the initial period of work, comprising primarily engagement and recruitment of fathers, as progressing to more in-depth and focused support of individual fathers and more targeting of father as yet not reached by the work;
- The suggestion that future development would involve mainstreaming Fathers' Support Work was a particular point of attention for SSWE management relating to the incorporation of the work under the aegis of Children's Centre following the imminent restructuring of Sure Start;
- The suggestion to increase fathers' involvement in initiating, directing, planning and implementing work has particular resonance in the context of the 'Dads & kids story time' activities which will need to be more independent of the Library Link Worker with the expiration of funding for the post early in 2006;
- Greater engagement with schools was suggested by both the East Park Nursery and Infants schools which have been used, up to now, by the Fathers' Support Worker primarily as points of contact with fathers. This suggestion was linked to the schools' involvement in community development activity seeking to enhance fathers' involvement in their children's education and a perception that many children are without a full-time father or have limited contact with their father;
- The suggestion to increase one-to-one support reflected, in particular, the desire of the Home Start team to be able to engage the Fathers' Support Worker in home visits to fathers and families perceived as vulnerable;
- This suggestion was allied to suggestions from the Healthy Start team that more groupwork opportunities are developed so that men can access support from each other as well as the on a one-to-one basis.

The views of fathers

The views of fathers who have participated in SSWE Father's Support Work activities represent an important source of information for the

assessment of the impact of the work. However, the capacity of this evaluation to reach any objective conclusion about this is severely limited both by structure of the evaluation (it is entirely *post hoc* and therefore there is no baseline against which measure change in fathers' attitudes, values or behaviours) and the limited access to fathers which was achievable within the temporal and financial constraints imposed on it.

These findings therefore represent a collation of data collected by the Fathers' Support Worker after the Caribbean and DIY workshops events and two story time sessions supplemented with data derived from informal consultation with 5 fathers and 2 mothers attending a 'Dads & Kids story time' session on the evening of Wednesday 2nd November. In this last instance these data provide a much stronger guide to the appeal of the work than to its impact since 2 of the fathers attending were engaging with SSWE activities for fathers for the first time. In addition the Fathers' Support Worker's summaries of case work (see appendix 4) provide some descriptive accounts of the short-term outcomes of these interventions.

Notwithstanding these limitations, scrutiny of the data collated by the Fathers' Support Worker suggests the following, that:

- All the events organised and implemented by the Fathers' Support Worker (the Caribbean day, the DIY workshop and 'Dads & kids story times') have been well-received and enjoyed by fathers (and the mothers that have contributed to the evaluations);
- They have provided opportunities for fathers to spend time with the children, especially without the presence of their mother. As one father noted, for example,

'Today's session I enjoyed as it meant I did things with the children on my own'

- Fathers valued the opportunity to engage with their children in activities which might otherwise be undertaken with their mothers. As one father noted referring to a gardening activity associated with a story time session;

'The children loved getting messy potting the plants. Something I'd never do with them (normally mum's job). An enjoyable afternoon'

- The activities provided opportunities for fathers to develop useful skills. For example, as these fathers commented in relation to the gardening activity and the DIY workshop, respectively.

'Today's session was experience for dads, to get their hands dirty and to learn skills that you might need in the future'

'[It was] very good for dads to learn how to do jobs in the house i.e. electrical & plumbing work. Very good over all'

- Activities also provided valuable opportunities for mothers to assure themselves about fathers' competency with their children and to find out what Fathers' Support Work entails. As one mother wrote in response to an evaluative questionnaire,

'As a mother I came along to today's session to see how my husband would cope on his own with the two children. He enjoyed himself with the activities that were laid on for the children'

In terms of one-to-one support, the Fathers' Support Worker's accounts of case-work suggest that, in the short-term, he has been able to provide appropriate support to at least three fathers.

Data collected through the consultation undertaken by the evaluator and attached to the 'Dads and kids story time' event of 2nd November both elaborate the findings of the Fathers' Support Worker's own evaluative activities and suggest that in addition, that:

- Mass mailing of fathers with targeted promotional material advertising events works as a recruitment strategy. As this father, attending a story time session for the first time explained,

'Where did I hear about this? We got a letter about it and I just thought it looked interesting and it said it was for dads so I came to see what it was about.'

- Some fathers like the opportunity provided by Fathers' Support work to socialise with other fathers. For example, as a father said at a storyline event,

'I just like to come and be with other dads and parents. You don't get out much when your child's young – it's all work or looking after them or feeling knackered – and this seems like a good way to spend time out of the house and meet people.'

- Some fathers like the opportunity provided by Fathers' Support work for their children to socialise with other children. As this commented on an evaluative questionnaire,

'For the first time that I came to a group like this I felt welcomed and enjoyed every minute. James loved being around the other children and

especially loved the activities. Will definitely attend another evening. Thanks very much.'

- Some fathers enjoy the opportunity to spend time with their children on what they perceive to be useful educational activities. For example, one father commented,

'It's nice to come. The kids really love it and it's good for them too, for their reading and development and that. She [my daughter] loves it and loves books and loves coming to the library because of this. She always wants to know if I've brought her a newspaper home when I get from work now.'

- Some fathers value the opportunity to give their partner a break from childcare. As one father said,

'My wife is really tired, being up at night and just going back to work and it gives her a break if we come out like this. It's our first time alone too, she's bit protective of course, and that's a bonus.'

- Finally, the consultation with father at the story time event on 2nd November showed that some fathers like to come to Fathers' Support events because they want to show support the Sure Start enterprise. As one father said,

'It's great isn't it? We always come because Sure Start is really good and has really helped us and we always want to show our support for it. It's a really good programme and people should support it.'

These evaluative activities also provide some indication of fathers' views about the future direction of activities targeted on them. This generally take the form of 'more of the same' although it is notable that some fathers would like more access to additional activities including day trips and more sporting and 'fun' activities.

The Fathers' Support Worker's experiences

Clearly, the effects and effectiveness of any social intervention programme are determined to some degree by the personal qualities, characteristics, attitudes, values and vision of the person or persons responsible for their implementation. For example, there is some evidence, albeit with an heavy emphasis on sexual health promotion, to suggest that intervention target groups find it easier to engage with

programmes and activities delivered by people with whom they share some sense of affinity, be that in terms of cultural background, gender, age or experience and it is fairly common characteristic within programmes and projects targeting fathers that fathers themselves are represented among workers^{19,20,1.}

Data collected through interviews with the Fathers' Support Worker both supports this hypothesis and suggests that the level of personal investment and understanding of the work acquired through his experiences as a young single father have enabled the Fathers' Support Worker to empathise with the target group and may have led him to have some additional credibility in their eyes.

While such rich life experiences are clearly an asset in these respects, they did not immunise the worker against some initial difficulties with establishing his role within SSWE and forging positive relationships with other staff based there. The few, initial problems with appropriately implementing activity clearly arose both because of a lack of recognition and understanding of his work because of its newness to the organisation and because he himself had a relatively low level of knowledge and skills about working in inter-agency settings.

The support of SSWE management and his supervisor were clearly instrumental in resolving these specific instances and also ensuring that the Fathers' Support Worker accessed appropriate training and support to enhance his knowledge and awareness of practices and procedures with the SSWE team. As a consequence his confidence and professionalism have increased.

After a necessary period of adjustment in establishing himself within the organisation the Fathers' Support Worker has seen forging working relationships with SSWE colleagues and encouraging, supporting and simulating activity around fathers within their remits and activities as an important part of his work.

The worker's sense of his experiences over the relatively short period that he has been in post is that he has brought to SSWE a perspective previously absent in relation to targeting and working with fathers, including demonstrating that alternative ways of working can be successful in recruiting and engaging men, and, in return, acquired a thorough knowledge of the demands of working in a complex inter-agency environment.

While the worker finds his current workload manageable there has been a need to manage his activity and reduce commitment to some activities and increase commitment to others as specific events and circumstances have placed a greater demand on his time.

The worker is keen to continue the work under the aegis of Children's Centres and sees scope for recruiting more fathers, continuing to develop relationships with those already engaged and progressing both the depth and breadth of the work.

Management and supervision structures

The commitment and support of management to the work has been identified as an important component in good practice in working with fathers¹³. Effective management and leadership may be particularly important in a structure as complex as Sure Start which comprises a diverse multi-agency team in order to ensure coordinated and complementary activity takes place between professionals from different organisations and specialisms represented within the team¹¹. Using data collected from the Fathers' Support Worker, his supervisor at Base 25, and the Sure Start Programme Management via interviews and scrutiny of documentation relating to supervision and management it is possible to conclude the following about the structures, sufficiency and appropriateness of management and supervision structures within which the work has taken place:

- The arrangement of management through SSWE and supervision through Base 25 has provided the worker with a satisfactory level of support, access to both particular expertise in working with fathers and strategic level support for his work within SSWE;
- Commitment to the work from both management and supervisor and a good working relationship between them has ensured that channels of communication have remained open and enabled any minor difficulties over the development of the post and work to be resolved.

This summarisation is based on evidence of the following:

- SSWE management has a clear rationale and provides leadership on fathers support work. Commitment to working with fathers is based on evidence of local needs for targeted work on teenage pregnancy prevention and supporting young men in pursuing education/training and work. These needs inform the local delivery plan which identifies both young men and young fathers as important target groups for Sure Start activities. The identification of young men and fathers as target groups through a strategic plan which cross-cuts and under-pins the agency also helps to ensure that the rationale and responsibility for work with young men and fathers is understood to fall across all SSWE activities and projects. The fathers' support work is particularly complemented by the commissioning of school-based teenage prevention activity which are delivered through School Nursing Services;
- It has been a benefit to the worker that Father's Support Work within SSWE was developed in collaboration with between the provider agency (Base 25) and commissioning at SSWE and that he had some input into the development of the specification for the work. This has helped to ensure that the specification itself, the targets and activities spelt out in the commissioning agreement are realistic, agreed and based on agency capacity and expertise;

- The splitting of supervisor and management responsibility between Base 25 and SSWE has worked well in the view of all involved (the worker, SSWE management and Base 25 supervision). Supervision seems to have been available to the worker on a regular monthly basis (with a small gap in the records for February and March 2005) and through the use of a *pro forma* been conducted with a consistent focus on checking on progress of the work with regard to agreed short and long term objectives, reviewing work and workload, reviewing learning and agreeing on future activities and planning. As the supervision records show the worker had been provided with access to expertise in working with fathers, close management and support through Base 25. This has left SSWE with responsibility for primarily strategic management of the worker and facilitation of access to fathers through existing Sure Start programme activities and networks;
- The worker's supervisor is able to contribute to this level of management through membership of the SSWE Strategic Projects Group which is also a vehicle for raising awareness across SSWE of the work and promoting specific activities with fathers;
- The provision of supervision outside SSWE has also been instrumental in enabling the raising and mediation of any difficulties that have arisen for the worker. For example, the supervisor has been able to intervene with SSWE management to ensure that relationships between the Father's Support Worker and other SSWE staff were smoothed when minor issues arose;

Discussion and recommendations

The primary purposes of this evaluation are to:

- Assess the effectiveness, including the cost effectiveness of the work in relation to its stated objectives;
- Assess the potential for sustaining areas of good practice, including ensuring mechanisms are in place to ensure that activities continue effectively monitored and data are available which can be used to demonstrate whether future targets are being achieved;
- And, provide evidence of a model of working which can influence the mainstream agenda for the Children's Centre which will shortly replace the existing structures within the provision takes place.

The implementation of this evaluation in a relatively short timescale, and at a relatively early stage in the work reflects the pressures placed on the commissioning agency by imminent changes in the structuring of services under the aegis of Children's Centres. Working to a short timescale makes it difficult to achieve access to potentially valuable contacts, including fathers, who may be on leave or for other reasons uncontactable and implementing an evaluation *post hoc* severely constraints any attempts to make an assessment of the impact of the work through, for example, monitoring change over time. However, within these constraints it has been possible to collate sufficient data, from a combination of administrative sources and through interviews with a range of

professionals working within and connected to SSWE and a consultation with a small group of fathers and mothers, to be able to draw some conclusions about the effects and effectiveness of Fathers' Support Work in SSWE and thereby provide a basis on which to present some recommendations drawn from the views of contributors to this evaluation, about the direction that future developments of the work might take.

On this basis it is evident that the Fathers' Support Worker has achieved the following:

- Has made good progress towards meeting the target of contacting 50 fathers in the first twelve months of work having contacted around 30 in a period of 9 months of which at least 25% would seem to be from ethnic minorities;
- Implemented a range of strategies for meeting, engaging and recruiting fathers to Father Support activities;
- Planned and implemented two major one-off social events for fathers and families;
- Planned and implemented a programme of 'dads and kids story time' sessions in collaboration with the SSWE Library Link Worker;
- Provided a small number of fathers with individual support work across a range of education, legal and welfare issues including signposting and referral to appropriate agencies;
- Undertaken a range of promotional activities, including producing posters, flyers, issuing mass mailing to families registered with SSWE and organising high-profile community-based event and activity days all of which will have contributed to raising public awareness of SSWE services and role of fathers;
- Engaged at least one father in volunteer opportunities;
- Stimulated some other groups and individuals within SSWE to promote work with fathers and refer fathers for individual support.

Collectively these achievements would seem to represent a good solid start to working with fathers and a reasonable and appropriate level of progress in the context of an agency which prior to the development of the post of Fathers' Support Worker, had very little engagement with fathers and within which some partner organisations seem to lack confidence, skills and enthusiasm for working with them.

However, evidence collected through this evaluation suggest that some other objectives of the Father's Support Work have only either been partly achieved or remain to be achieved.

- There has only been a very limited level of engagement of fathers in volunteering activities, notably in relation to the implementation of one-off events;
- There is no evidence that any substantive groupwork for fathers has been undertaken although the 'Dads & kids story time' sessions represent a forum in which this might take place;
- There is no evidence that a parenting programme for fathers-to-be has been developed.

Lack of progress in relation to these objectives is likely to be the an effect of a number of factors, not all within the direct control of the Fathers' Support Worker and, as such, failure to achieve fulfillment of them either in part or wholly may implicate activity involving other professionals under the aegis off SSWE and in allied agencies. In particular, the implementation of a programme for fathers-to-be would seem to be implicate midwifery and other ante-natal services whose commitment it is impossible to accurately gauge on the evidence of the limited contact achieved through this evaluation.

In addition, closer examination of work which has fulfilled objectives for the post warrants closer examination which reveals the following:

- That although around 30 fathers have been contacted though the work over the period, only around half of these seem, according to monitoring information collated by the Fathers' Support Worker, to have had any degree of sustained engagement in activities. It should be noted that of the others, a number are relatively new contacts and therefore engagement may follow. In addition, no detailed and robust data on ethnicity were available to the evaluation and estimates of the proportion of the black fathers have been made on the basis of the Fathers' Support Worker's own assessment.
- Most of the fathers contacted and engaged with the work seem to be positively inclined towards engagement with services (both provided by SSWE and other providers) and to be confident in the role that they play in the children's lives and therefore are unlikely to be representative of harder-to-reach fathers who either do not have similarly high levels of access and engagement with their children including fathers who are separated from the mothers of their children, stepfathers and love fathers;
- The small number of fathers who have accessed individual support seem to have been referred to the worker rather than recruited by him;
- While advertising and promotional strategies and mechanisms used by the Fathers' Support Worker have clearly had an impact on some fathers many seem to be either unaware of the services on offer or reluctant or unable to engage with them as the SSWE customer satisfaction survey shows.

It is on this basis therefore, and in light of an expectation that Children's Centres, as the agency which will mainstream Sure Start Programmes will adopt a target around engaging with fathers, that the following recommendations, based on the contributions of professionals and fathers to this evaluation process, are proposed for consideration. Working With Men suggests that these should be considered in the light of some basic principles which should guide the work in the future:

- That the primary aim of Father's Support Work in the future should be to build on the provision that already exists;

- That work with fathers is oriented around consideration of the entitlement that children have to access the benefits which can come from paternal involvement in their care and upbringing;
- The focus should, wherever possible be on co-ordinating and developing what provision already exists, and mainstreaming successful approaches, methods and ways of working;
- The acknowledgement that some fathers are reluctant users of services, and that services are inexperienced at targeting and engaging them.

The recommendations based on the contributions of professionals and fathers to this evaluation process are as follows:

- The development of proper planned programme of work for the Father Support Worker for at least the next year. In the period under review the work has necessarily been diverse, exploratory and developmental with a focus on developing networks of contacts with fathers, families and other professionals. While this provided evidence of need and a basis on which development can take place the work needs better structuring and more focus in order to avoid dissipation into the provision of support for a small number of fathers who seem already to be in contact with services and engaged with their children coupled with the provision of one-off events and some small amount of individual support provided in response to inter-agency referrals. The work has built some momentum and presence, especially where it has been sustained through activities like the 'Dads and kids story time' sessions but needs to deepen, be further embraced and embedded within other Sure Start and allied initiatives and move towards engaging with harder-to-reach fathers through the implementation of activities which go beyond appealing to those fathers who are confident about their role in relation to their children.

This process of planning should be informed by the following:

- The need to contact, engage and recruit more fathers and especially more socially marginalised fathers to the work. Currently the focus has fallen, as is appropriate for a new piece of work, on working with fathers who appear to be confident and clear about their role in relation to the children, positively engaged with their families and with services and therefore likely to be positively inclined towards engagement with the work. Although providing for these men is important, in terms of meeting the broader objectives of the Sure Start programme and a range of Governmental targets for addressing socially marginalised and hence vulnerable groups, there is a need to shift the focus in future to targeting men who are currently not accessing services. The focus of this work should fall on building pathways into service use.
- Recognition that the current range of activities on offer to fathers are most likely to appeal those who are confident and clear about their role in relation to their children because they

focus on children's needs. While this is laudable and appropriate to the aims of a child-focused organisation pitching activities in this way is less likely to appeal to fathers who see their involvement less clearly – lone fathers, stepfathers and those separated from the mothers of their children, for example. Targeting these fathers will require more issue-based provision and new approaches to recruiting and engaging fathers.

- The challenge of facilitating work at a deeper level, so that it moves beyond contacting and engaging fathers to supporting them in parenting skills and improving engagement with their children.
- Coupled to this it is recommended that work is undertaken to ensure that services consider to what extent they are providing appropriate, accessible and relevant opportunities for fathers and where they are not, that they take steps to do so. Work to achieve this may be required at a more strategic, managerial and commissioning level than that at which the Father's Support Worker operates.
- Further work should also be undertaken with Sure Start initiatives not yet fully engaged with Fathers' Support Work to ensure that engaging and the supporting the engagement of fathers with specialist provision becomes common practice in order to avoid existing work remaining discrete with a concomitant limitation of its appeal to fathers. Where these links have been successfully forged thus far would seem to be where a level of trust has been developed between the Fathers' Support Worker and SSWE colleagues and establishing similar levels of trust with other colleagues should be priority. Particular attention should be given to building these relationships with agencies involved in ante-natal care in order to achieve the target of early engagement with fathers.
- Those activities which seem to be the most successful in terms of sustained pieces of work with the clearest positive outcomes for fathers, families and their children should be maintained and mainstreamed. In particular the 'Dads & kids story time' sessions would seem to warrant support to achieve this. There may also be opportunities here to increase the involvement of fathers themselves in running these sessions so as both to meet the objective of empowerment through the provision of opportunities to undertake voluntary work and reduce the workload of the Father's Support Worker such that he can direct more of time into other activities like recruitment.
- Consideration should be given to how best to continue to promote Father Support Work. Promotional activity, particularly work advertising events targeting fathers is clearly important both in terms of raising community awareness of the work and generating positive views of fathers and fathering but while they

have been successful thus far as a recruitment method they are a relatively blunt and potentially expensive tool to continue to use. The capacity of other agencies and community access points to promote the work in a more targeted way should be further explored and exploited. In particular it is not clear what the outcomes of overtures to local sporting clubs has been and these might usefully be picked up.

- Consideration needs to be given to the balance in the Fathers' Support Worker's workload between specific pieces of work and general recruitment and promotional activity. If, as is recommended by the worker, his supervisor and SSWE management, the aim is to deepen the work with fathers in future then clarification is required about the extent to which the worker must continue to engage in other activities.
- Ensuring that monitoring systems used by the Fathers' Support Worker are improved so that more detail is recorded and greater clarity is possible about which fathers have been worked with on which occasions and what the outcomes of the work were. Currently data have been collected in a way which is sufficient to Sure Start requirements but they do not provide, as will be required in order to better focus the work and assess its reach, detailed information about the relationship of the father to their children and their ethnicity. This has largely not been necessary during this period when most of the work has focused on contact and engagement, but as the work deepens there will be a need for more systematic and detailed information both for reporting purposes and in order to ensure that fathers and the worker can and do access appropriate levels of support.
- Continuing to provide the Fathers' Support Worker with supervision through Base 25 as the local provider of expertise in working with fathers.

Appendix 1

Interview schedule: Professionals

My name is Simon Forrest, I am working for an organisation called *Working With Men* which is undertaking an evaluation of the Fathers' Support Project based at Sure Start Wolverhampton East. I am trying to gather the views of a variety of people who have had contact with this project so that we can put together a picture of its achievements and future potential. I wondered if you can give me about fifteen minutes of your time now or at a date in the near future to help us with this.

1. Tell me about your organisation and your role in it.
2. Tell me about your involvement/engagement with fathers' support work?
4. Can you identify for me any concrete ways that you think involvement with the project has impacted on your service?
(prompt here for changing in attitudes of staff; altering/raising the profile of work with fathers; caused friction with other service users etc.)
5. Can you identify for me some concrete ways that you think involvement with the project has impacted on fathers using your service?
6. Can you think of a specific example of place or situation where the fathers' support work made a difference to a family? Can you tell me about this?
7. Can you tell me about the demands it has placed on you and your organisation?
(Prompt here for time; labour; administrative support; changes to procedures etc.)
8. Can you think of some ways that the project might improve or develop?
9. Can you tell me what you think would happen if the work stopped?

Appendix 2:

Interview schedule: Fathers

Preamble:

My name is Simon Forrest; I am working for an organisation called *Working With Men* which is undertaking an evaluation of the Fathers' Support Project based at Sure Start Wolverhampton East. I am asking for the views of a variety of people who have had contact with this project so that we can put together a picture of its achievements and future potential. As a father who has been involved with the project I want you to help us with this by telling me about your views and experiences of it?

1. Tell me how you got involved with SSWE.
(prompt around recruitment, engagement, what appealed, what need they were looking to meet)
2. Tell me about what you knew about SSWE before you got involved
3. Tell me about any doubts or concerns about getting involved?
4. Tell me about what activities and events you've taken part in?
(prompt around motives as well as experiences and assessment of each)
5. Tell me about any ways that being involved with the project changed the way you think or what you do as a father
(prompt around relationships with child(ren), partner(s) as well as self)
6. Tell me about any ways that being involved with the project has helped or supported you in any other way.
7. Tell me about any other help or advice you have sought from the project?
8. What, if any help or advice might you want in the future?
9. Do you think that the project has changed the way that people see you?
10. Do you think it has made any difference to the way people see fathers in general?
(prompt around community visibility issues and also other services access issues)
11. Have you or are you involved in other community activities or with other services? How do they compare to this project?
(prompt around what they provide, but also accessibility, how they treat fathers, what appeal to them, what needs are being met by them)
12. Tell me what kinds of fathers wouldn't know about the project and wouldn't use it – how should it reach them?
13. Tell me three things that the project should do in the future to improve the support that it gives to you?

Appendix 3:

Working With Men

Working With Men is a registered charity (No: 1102451) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (No: 3443520). While most of our project work is in South East London, our training, evaluation and consultancy work is carried out in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Our primary purpose is to develop (and support the development) of innovative work with boys, young men and fathers, based on an understanding of masculinities.

Working With Men has three objectives:

1. to provide a range of educational services to men (particularly young men) around a range of issues that are of concerns to them and others (such as crime, underachievement, violence and sexual health).
2. to provide support and resources services to both statutory and voluntary agencies providing services to young men and fathers.
3. To further our general understanding of boys and young men's lives, aspirations and development.

WWM's evaluation and investigative work

We have over the last few years regularly carried out reviews, investigations, evaluations and pieces of research. Examples of work relevant work in 2005 include:

- Camden & Islington mapping exercise and review of boys', young men's and young fathers' support and sexual health work for both Teenage Pregnancy Teams.
- Evaluation of young men and violence programmes for YouthAction Northern Ireland.
- Evaluation of young men's leadership programmes for Old Warren Community Association, Northern Ireland.
- Sheffield mapping exercise and review sexual health and teenage pregnancy prevention work with boys, young men and young fathers.
- Evaluation of fathers work within Barnados Cherry Orchard Family Support Centre, Dublin.

Local evaluations include:

- Twilight and Midnight Football, Wolverhampton Teenage Pregnancy Team.
- Base 25 young fathers project, Wolverhampton.

Working With Men can be contacted at 320 Commercial Way, Peckham, London SE15 1QN. www.workingwithmen.org.

Appendix 4:

Fathers' Support Worker descriptions of individual case work activity

Descriptions composed by Adrian Amos, Fathers' Support Worker, SSWE. The names of clients used within this case study have been changed to protect their identities.

Case Study 1

Scott is a white British young father living in Wolverhampton. Scott is separated from his son's mother and had no contact. Scott became involved with Sure Start through links with a supported housing group.

Scott wanted to be a part of his son's upbringing and was seeking support in his rights as a father. Through the role of the Father Support Worker, Scott found mediation a valuable tool in negotiating contact with his son. Scott was able to improve his self esteem and confidence through information and understanding his role as a father. Scott has learnt new skills associated with being a parent and accepted the role of being a father with great enthusiasm and enjoyment.

Scott has expressed an interest in activities available through Sure Start. In attending these it is hoped his confidence and skills as a parent will continue to develop.

Case Study 2

Dev is an Asian father whose child attends a local nursery. Dev was interested in a change of employment towards an education setting. I supported Dev in identifying appropriate courses through links with education authority and local University.

Through encouragement and support Dev attended open days for interested courses. Dev enrolled on a teacher-training course and is currently enjoying the challenge of further education with a view to employment in teaching in the future. Dev comments that his confidence has increased and he feels unlikely to have pursued this interest without support through Sure Start.

Case Study 3

A young couple referred to Sure Start via Base 25 were expecting their first child. Following registration with Sure Start we completed a baseline assessment which highlighted immediate needs of identifying housing and support with budgeting. At the time the couple were homeless following a breakdown in family relationships. With support the couple secured temporary accommodation in a local hostel, where further support could be offered in identifying permanent accommodation.

Through support the couple managed to address financial difficulties and obtained appropriate benefits.

The prospective father was eager to stop smoking and directing him to appropriate health agencies enabled him to obtain information and support.

The couple have successfully been awarded a council property and are looking forward to the birth of their child. The couple welcome ongoing support from Sure Start.

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