SURE START
SUNDERLAND NORTH WEST

THE INVOLVEMENT OF FATHERS
IN SURE START NORTH WEST

Gillian Morrow
School of Health, Natural and Social Sciences
University of Sunderland

In collaboration with
Sharon Rutherford
Sure Start North West

December 2005
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all the fathers and male carers who took part in this evaluation, and the Sure Start staff for their contribution.

The support of Nigel Malin at the University of Sunderland is also acknowledged.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Engaging fathers has emerged onto the practice agenda in many child welfare agencies such as Sure Start. Government attempts to support involved fathering are evident in the Children Act 2004 and in its formation of a Child and Family Directorate. The National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004) specifically requires primary care trusts, local authority and children’s services to provide targeted information to all fathers and to gain skills, through training, to work with fathers. ‘Increasing the involvement of fathers’ has been written into the core offer for Children’s Centres, and is further reinforced in the Sure Start Children’s Centre Practice Guidance (2005). This notes the need to personalise services for fathers, male carers and other male relatives, and states that ‘All Sure Start Children’s Centre services should be responsive to the level of local need to support fathers in their relationship with their partner and in their role as a parent’. (Sure Start, 2005:53).

2. The purpose of the evaluation was to understand what contact Sure Start North West was currently having with fathers and how this could be extended. The research questions were:
   - What contact is Sure Start having with fathers and what is being offered to them?
   - What difference does the involvement of fathers in Sure Start make to them and their families?
   - How could the Programme work towards further engaging fathers in Sure Start North West?

3. The evaluation was planned by the University local evaluation team and staff representatives from Sure Start North West. The method used for the evaluation entailed interviews with members of the Dads’ Group (n=7); questionnaires completed face to face with other fathers/male carers (n=31); monitoring by Sure Start staff of their contact with fathers over a given four-week period, with a follow-up questionnaire; and collation and analysis of existing consultation forms.

4. Figures for a snapshot four-week period in 2005 showed that the programme was reaching a large number of fathers (52), either individually (the majority, 27), with their partner, with their child or with both, although only five staff reported any contact with fathers that month. As a result of the contact, fathers were receiving information and support (e.g. on employment services and rights, tax credits, budgeting, childcare), treatment for their health/well-being, knowledge regarding their baby’s development (weight), training (including football training) and self development. Some internal referrals were made as a result of the contact, e.g. to the Health team, and some fathers were referred or signposted to other agencies such as Job Linkage and childcare settings.
5. Data from staff and paternal questionnaires indicate that fathers are accessing services that relate to all five Sure Start objectives, particularly Objective Five, Strengthening families and communities, for example through capacity building and personal development, volunteer training, signposting to work-related training and support/signposting/referral with regard to allowances, budgeting, job hunting and employment rights. Data from the fathers’ questionnaire show that each of the 28 Sure Start services listed had been accessed by between one and fourteen of the 31 fathers.

6. Sure Start has been making a difference to fathers and hence their families in several key areas. For example, with regard to Support for Families and Parents, fathers reported opportunities for socialising and meeting new people; reduction in stress; help in finding a job/claiming tax credits; increase in confidence through participating in groups and courses; increased help and information on health, counselling and forthcoming events; and gaining skills e.g. through training to be a volunteer, Learn2Drive and Food Hygiene courses. With regard to Support for good quality play, learning and childcare experiences for children, fathers reported increased opportunities for undertaking activities with children (e.g. trips/events) and for children to interact with peers; their partner passing on knowledge and information from courses and both parents following up on activities at home to enhance developing skills; and gaining information on childcare provision. With regard to Primary and community health care, fathers reported ease of access to baby clinics and increasing awareness of men’s health issues through a Sure Start health visitor.

7. The dads’ group was reported to be having an impact on the father and child relationship, for example through worrying less about the reactions of others and feeling more confident in the father role. Most fathers reported greater involvement with their child as a result of the dads’ group and some reported that they did different activities with their child. Some fathers also reported that their involvement in the group had helped develop skills that could be important in the future, for example through being involved in the organisation and running of the group’s first birthday party including food preparation and risk assessment. In addition, for some it was having an impact on family life, for example through becoming able to handle their children’s behaviour or through a more equal sharing with their partner.

8. Sure Start North West has shown commitment to developing strategies to involve fathers, initially through the initiative and commitment of a small group of workers from different teams, subsequently through the appointment of a fathers’ worker, and with the support of programme management. Factors in the successful involvement of fathers have included:
   • An enabling organisational context. In Sure Start North West there was early identification of fathers as a priority, also cited by Lloyd et al
(2003) as one of five components found in programmes with high provision for fathers. This has been supported by commitment to working with fathers at programme management level, for example through funding a fathers’ worker. There are as yet no fathers on the Partnership board, although two fathers have trained as volunteers for the Programme.

- **Staffing.** The dedicated fathers’ worker provides father/male carer specific activities, building on the commitment and action of a group of staff across teams to work together to develop strategies for involving fathers. The fathers’ worker has done much to raise the profile of father involvement. At the same time, there is recognition that working with fathers is the responsibility of the whole team, who may in some cases need additional training and support. Staff are open and receptive to the idea of providing services to fathers and prepared to provide services to fathers. Evidence from this study shows that fathers are using services that are relevant to their child’s development and health, well-being and learning and to their own and their family’s welfare and development (e.g. training, financial advice and support). Staff from all teams are therefore taking fathers into consideration. The fathers’ worker meets regularly with a local expert voluntary agency (Fathers Plus, Children North East). This is important for enabling cross learning, for example about the most effective strategies for engaging fathers.

- **Family.** At family level, high paternal caring responsibilities have been seen as a factor promoting fathers’ participation in Sure Start local programmes (Lloyd et al., 2003), and this was evident in this evaluation. Female partner facilitation and support are important in promoting and supporting involvement, both with their children and in Sure Start. Research (Cook, 2005) has shown that the expectations of both parents are substantial predictors of fathers’ instrumental involvement in the care of their child. Mothers’ “gatekeeping” can hinder father involvement (Allen and Hawkins, 1999). As one father commented, for some parents-to-be, talking about these issues one-to-one with a health visitor before the birth could be beneficial. Working with both parents together can emphasise the collaborative nature of parenting (Lloyd et al., 2003), other than in situations where this would not be advisable or possible.

- **Strategies to get men involved and services specifically for fathers.** ‘Hook’ activities are important to gain men’s interest, and the introduction of five-a-side football has been important in this respect. Many of the fathers in this study were accessing Sure Start for practical help and support, e.g. regarding benefits, allowances, budgeting, job hunting, funding and employment rights. In some cases this led on to greater involvement with Sure Start, including the dads’ group. Attracting fathers through practical services, such as housing and benefits support was also found to be successful in Sure Start Plus work with teenage parents (Sawtell et al, 2005). The findings in Sure Start North West are also consistent with this work in that it can be important to establish a relationship through a one-to-one service
before inviting men to a fathers’ group or fatherhood programmes (ibid.). Using mothers as potentially important, initial sources of information about what services offer can also be important when attempting to access fathers.

- **Strategies to keep men involved.** The Programme undertakes on-going consultations with fathers. It is important that strategies are user led to promote and maintain involvement and build on men’s interests. Fathers have noted that things need to be directly relevant to their/family’s needs. Again, practical help and support are important.

9. The Programme could continue working towards further engagement with fathers in the following ways.

- **Staff training and support.** Six staff had not received any training on work with fathers. The National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (DH/DfES, 2004) specifically requires primary care trusts, local authority and children’s services to gain skills, through training, to work with fathers. Staff also suggested being invited to any groups where fathers are present (e.g. to promote services) and receiving guidance from the fathers’ worker and other staff who have worked with fathers through the sharing of expertise, advice and information. The Programme should re-examine the training needs of staff and ways in which the expertise of individual staff can be shared with the team to ensure ongoing programme wide commitment to father involvement (Lloyd et al., 2003) and to promote reflection on the extent to which fathers are being considered in all aspects of the child’s well-being (DH/DfES, 2004).

- **Further development of activities and support for fathers.** For the future, it will be important to continue to develop activities for fathers according to their stated interests, and to take into account possible gaps identified by staff, i.e. men’s depression (also identified by Singh and Newburn, 2000). There are also key points at which it could be beneficial to engage fathers, such as pre-natally and in hospital at the birth of their child. The fathers’ worker has recently started attending antenatal Parentcraft classes, Health drop-ins and baby clinics. Fathers would welcome more activities for fathers and children together, e.g. dads’ and child’s sports, gymnastics and swimming and other physical activities such as soft play, Play with a Purpose and Messy Play; opportunities to learn about and increase men’s and family health and fitness (e.g. weight, diet, exercise; gym, training sessions); parenting support for fathers, including courses and support when ‘feeling down’ and after hours telephone contact; activities to enable fathers to socialise with each other, and opportunities for personal development and courses to develop work-related skills (e.g. driving, health and safety at work), and to enable them to support their children’s future learning (computer). There was also a high demand for employment information and advice, including help looking for work. The knowledge, ability and capacity to work with fathers on practical issues including financial and employment issues are important for the future, both in their own right and as a potential ‘hook’ into other services.
Clearly, fathers are not a homogeneous group, and these general suggestions do not reduce the need to be sensitive to different groups of fathers (e.g. lone fathers, sole carers) and fathers’ diversity of needs and circumstances. Continuing to use mothers as potentially important, initial sources of information about what services offer and encouraging maternal facilitation and support, for example discussing expectations before the birth, sharing their learning with their partners or joint attendance at groups and activities in some situations, could all further paternal involvement in Sure Start Children’s Centres.

- Publicity and Advertising. The NSF (DH/DFES, 2004) requires primary care trusts, local authority and children’s services to provide targeted information to all fathers. The Programme will need to maintain ongoing review of its information and publicity and how this is targeted at and provided to fathers. The fathers’ worker and dads’ group make efforts to encourage involvement in the dads’ group, and this is also promoted by other staff. Men’s suggestions for advertising activities for fathers included local shops, GP surgeries, the Jobcentre, Housing Office, Castletown Sport Centre, Backup North/Job Linkage, Winchester House, nurseries and libraries. It was also suggested that the dads’ club could promote a ‘cooler image’. Services should be marketed in a way that appeals to men and promotes fatherhood positively (as also noted in Sawtell et al, 2005) and celebrates becoming and being a father (Lloyd et al., 2003). Two men have trained as volunteers and could play an important role in peer support and as role models.

- Accessibility. The Programme has altered the time of the dads’ group but may still need to be more flexible in the timing of activities, possibly including evenings and weekends, and in the location of activities.

- Monitoring. Sure Start Sunderland monitoring forms have recently been amended to include data on numbers of fathers accessed. It is important that this information is collected rigorously and is reliable, as it will provide data for indicators of success with regard to increasing the involvement of fathers as required in the Children’s Centre core offer.

- Participation in service planning and decision-making in Sure Start. There have as yet been no fathers on the Sure Start North West Partnership board or subgroups. Some fathers have been prepared to play an active role in the delivery of Sure Start North West, e.g. having undertaken training developed by Sure Start to enable parents to volunteer for the Programme and this could be further encouraged. There has also been ongoing consultation of fathers, for example at Fun Days, and this should be continued. Greater participation at management level is still, however, an area for development.

- Father Friendliness. Finally, approximately one-third of the questionnaire respondents considered that Sure Start could be more welcoming to men. Therefore, in considering future developments and in light of the expectation that children’s centres will increase the involvement of fathers, the use of a tool for monitoring the ‘Father Friendliness’ of organisations, such as that contained in Appendix Five
of the full report, could be considered by this and other Sure Start local programmes and Children's Centres.
I. INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION

A. The Policy Context

Engaging fathers has emerged onto the practice agenda in many child welfare agencies such as Sure Start (Lloyd et al, 2003). Government attempts to support involved fathering through the Supporting Families Agenda (Home Office, 1998) and the formation of the cross-Government Ministerial Group on the Family have been continued in the Government’s child-centred family policy (Every Child Matters, 2003 and subsequent Children Act 2004) and its formation of a Child and Family Directorate. The National Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Statutory Guidance 2000) requires that fathers be included in assessments, as does the Common Assessment Framework. The Childcare Bill will require local authorities to provide relevant information to both parents, and the Equality Bill will require all public services to ensure access to services by both mothers and fathers, and the delivery of different services to each gender, when their needs are different.

The National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004) specifically requires primary care trusts, local authority and children’s services to provide targeted information to all fathers and to gain skills, through training, to work with fathers. The NSF states: ‘The National Service Framework supports a cultural shift in all service provision, to include fathers in all aspects of a child’s well-being’. A Fatherhood Quality Mark (developed by Fathers Direct) was launched in April 2005, to be awarded to services meeting the new standards in the NSF.

There is a strong emphasis on involving fathers in Children’s Centres, and ‘increasing the involvement of fathers’ has been written into the core offer for these centres. Further, the Sure Start Children’s Centre Practice Guidance (2005) notes the need to personalise services for fathers, male carers and other male relatives, and states that ‘All Sure Start Children’s Centre services should be responsive to the level of local need to support fathers in their relationship with their partner and in their role as a parent’. (Sure Start, 2005:53).

Such changes are being made within a context where ‘British fatherhood is . . . in the process of reconstruction and transformation’ (O’Brien, 2004:12) with changes in employment and family structure and the growing multi-ethnic and multi-faith character of contemporary Britain ‘creating new socio-economic and cultural contexts for negotiating what it means to be a father’ (ibid.).

There is general consensus that involving fathers in family support services is desirable, whilst also acknowledging potential damage in some situations (Burgess, 2002). However, fathers are traditionally considered to be a ‘hard
to reach’ group (DfES, 2002), and there has been a recognition that many services are not reaching fathers effectively (Ghate et al., 2000).

In addition to service use, there has also been an expectation for Sure Start local programmes to promote the participation of parents in the design and running of the programme. A National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) report, ‘Early Experiences of Implementing Sure Start’ (2002), based on a survey of 118 Round One and Two programme managers, noted that programmes found the involvement of fathers in management to be a challenging task. It did find, however, that programmes were taking some steps to actively involve fathers more generally in the programme, with a view to more substantial involvement.

B. Conceptualising Father Involvement

The evaluation adopts the overall approach used by NESS in its study of fathers in Sure Start (Lloyd et al., 2003). As they state, research on the involvement of fathers within families most often operates within the construct of father involvement developed in America in the 1980s (Pleck, 1997, drawing on Lamb et al., 1985, 1987). This typology includes:

- ‘Engagement’ – direct interaction with the child, in the form of caretaking, or play or leisure;
- ‘Accessibility’ or availability to the child – the father’s potential availability for interaction by being present or available;
- ‘Responsibility’ for the care of the child, as distinct from the performance of care – includes making sure the child is taken care of and arranging for resources to be available for the child.

As in the national evaluation, in this study ‘father involvement in Sure Start is operationally defined as fathers’ participation in Sure Start local programme activities such as attendance at group sessions, meetings with a professional or involvement in a management group. That is, father involvement is being explored in terms of service use and service planning. These themes map onto engagement/accessibility on the one hand (being a service user) and responsibility on the other (involvement in service planning’ (Lloyd et al., 2003:18).

C. Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to understand what contact Sure Start North West was currently having with fathers and how this could be extended. The specific research questions were:

1. What contact is Sure Start having with fathers and what is being offered to them?
2. What difference does the involvement of fathers in Sure Start make to them and their families?
3. How could the Programme work towards further engaging fathers in Sure Start North West?

II. BACKGROUND LITERATURE

A. Some impacts of fathers’ involvement in childcare and the family

There is growing evidence that promoting fathers’ greater involvement in childcare can enhance developmental outcomes for children (Ghate et. al., 2000). Flouri and Buchanan (2003) found that early father involvement with a child was associated with continuing involvement with that child throughout childhood and adolescence.

Lewis and Warin (2001) highlight the positive contribution that men make to families and give some indications of the importance of fathers’ involvement in the early years of parenthood. For example, mothers report that fathers are their main source of emotional support after the birth, and state that their ability to cope with a new baby is related to their partner’s ability to do likewise. When fathers have sufficient knowledge about the benefits of breastfeeding this can act to encourage mothers to breastfeed (Earle, 2000). One of the best predictors of a mother’s success at breastfeeding has been her perception of her partner’s support (Whelan and Lupton, 1998, in Lewis and Warin, 2001).

Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda (2004) state that:

’Sensitive fathering – responding to, talking to, . . . teaching and encouraging their children to learn – predicts children’s cognitive and linguistic achievements just as sensitive mothering does (Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda, 2004:4).

The modern family is changing, with fathers with young children in dual earner families doing eight times more childcare than thirty years ago, and the ways in which parents share childcare and earning roles are very diverse (O’Brien, 2005). Fathers’ involvement with their children under five is now two hours a day compared to fifteen minutes a day in the mid-1970s (ibid.). However, ‘How fathers spend their time with their young children is more important to the father-child relationship than how often they are with them’. (Lewis and Warin, 2001:5).

B. Fathers’ Use (or Non-Use) of Support Services

There is increasing awareness of the female-domination or mother-centredness of services and the need to engage fathers in service provision (e.g. Whalley, 1997; Ghate et al., 2000; O’Brien, 2004) and, indeed, of the potential problems of not including them (e.g. with regard to abusive behaviour) (Ryan, 2000; Collett, 2001; Burgess, 2002), whilst also still a juggling with constructions of father as ‘risk’ and father as ‘resource’
(Featherstone, 2001; Lloyd et al., 2003). The challenge for family support practitioners in general, O'Brien (2004) suggests, is ‘to provide a gender-collaborative framework which is sensitive to the preferences of mothers and fathers but also produces the best outcomes for children’ (O'Brien, 2004: 28).

It is widely acknowledged that it is much more difficult to encourage fathers to participate in parenting support than mothers, and that men are reluctant seekers of help (e.g. Singh and Newburn, 2000). A survey in the UK (NFPI/MORI, 1999) found that fathers were both less likely to admit to problems (43% compared with 54% of mothers) and less likely to have approached sources of help than were mothers. Quarterly monitoring of calls to the Parentline Plus helpline (July to September 2002) showed that only 12% of callers were fathers (O'Brien, 2004). It has been suggested that explanations for the low visibility of fathers in help-seeking settings include individual psychological characteristics and social and institutional factors (Moorman and Ball, 2001; O'Brien, 2004). The latter may include the attitude of staff and the suitability of activities (e.g. Ghate et al., 2000).

Lewis (2000) suggests that fathers feel under dual pressure, both to earn the major income to support the family and to contribute to the care of children. Fathers who work long hours and share childcare with their partners are more likely than others to feel dissatisfaction with their lives and report feeling stressed (ibid.).

Men’s own needs require greater recognition and support, as it has been found that around 10% of fathers experience problems such as depression in the postnatal period (Singh and Newburn, 2000). There is evidence that fathers want and need more information about the transition to fatherhood. They need to know more about what is happening to their partner and how they can help; about the impact that having a baby will have on their lives; and to have access to ideas about new roles in the family (ibid.). There is also a need for services, e.g. family centres, to engage with fathers as ‘men’ as well as ‘fathers’ (Ghate et al., 2000).

C. Impacts of Services and Interventions

O'Brien (2004:26) states that ‘the empirical base on which to judge the efficacy of father involvement in family support services is still small and in need of further development’.

It has been found that fathers who have participated in baby-care courses take on more care of their babies than fathers who have not. They keep closer to their babies, engage in more face-to-face interaction with them, smile and look at them more and talk to them more (Lewis and Warin, 2001).

Lloyd et al (2003) state that short term early interventions with fathers have provided little evidence that they increase paternal involvement with children or more skilled interventions by fathers (e.g. Belsky, 1985). However, longer term interventions show different results and the evidence suggests that once
they become involved with their babies men’s involvement shows considerable stability, at least over the first three years (e.g. Lamb et al., 1988) and, as they point out, ‘Sure Start provides possibilities for more sustained support for men as fathers’ (Lloyd et al., 2003:7).

In America, the Head Start early intervention programme has found that men have reported higher levels of confidence in their parenting skills and greater involvement in child care and interaction. Six months after the intervention men continued to be more supportive of their children’s educational development and their children seemed better prepared on education-readiness measures.

III. METHOD

The evaluation was planned by the University local evaluation team and staff representatives from North West Sure Start. The methods were as follows:

1. Interviews with current/past members of the Dads’ Group were carried out by a University evaluator and members of the Sure Start staff, with responses recorded in written note form on the interview schedule and coded to avoid identification.

2. Questionnaires devised by the evaluation working group were distributed by staff, mothers and members of the Dads’ Group to fathers/male carers in the community and were completed face-to-face. Sure Start staff approached fathers/male carers they came into contact with during the course of their work in a given month to inform them about the study and to ask whether they would like to take part. Thirty-one questionnaires were completed with fathers/male carers.

3. Sure Start staff monitored their contact with fathers over a given four-week period, and completed a follow-up questionnaire reflecting on this contact and ideas for future work with fathers and factors that would help their own professional development in this respect.

4. Collation and analysis of existing consultation forms.

All data were analysed by these staff and the local evaluators together. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the staff monitoring sheets on their contact with fathers and also the questionnaires carried out with fathers/male carers in the community to provide quantitative information on numbers of fathers accessing services and types of services used and qualitative information on the impact of Sure Start and ideas for the future. The dads’ group interviews and staff reflection forms were content analysed to identify themes and patterns in the data.

IV. FINDINGS
A. How Staff are Working with Fathers

1. How work with fathers has developed

The Programme had carried out consultations with fathers, organised outings and established a Dads’ Group, but wished to gain a fuller picture of ways in which Sure Start worked with fathers and how this could be extended.

Initially, engaging fathers in the Programme was approached through a regional Christmas outing to the Blue Reef Aquarium for fathers across the North-East, organised by Fathers Plus (Children North East) and arranged by the Community Development Worker for Sure Start North West. A sub-group was subsequently formed by the Programme comprising members of the Health team, Play and Learning team and Community team and two fathers. This led to a ‘Dads’ Launch’ in February 2004, attended by approximately 60 families, and the establishment of the Dads’ Group. In April-June 2004 two members of staff and a male volunteer attended a Fathers Direct National Conference and the two members of staff also undertook training with Fathers Plus and Children North-East. It was suggested as good practice that there was a dedicated full-time fathers’ worker in Sure Start local programmes. This was taken to a team meeting and taken on board by management.

In June 2004 eleven fathers (from four of the five Sure Start NW areas) attended a consultation event at the Stadium of Light, and for five of these fathers this was the first Sure Start activity or event they had attended. This consultation showed that there was a strong interest in attending courses, the most frequently mentioned being Family First Aid, and this was subsequently delivered to the Dads’ group. Fathers reported that they would be interested in attending courses that could be defined as capacity building and developing work related skills, such as Confidence and Motivation, CLAIT/computer courses, Interview Skills, Call Centre Awareness, Customer Service, First Aid (appointed persons) and Improve English and Maths. They were also interested in courses related to family health and well-being such as Common Childhood Illnesses, Food Hygiene, Family Nurturing and Baby Massage. Accessibility would be facilitated in some cases through the provision of transport and a crèche, and through the availability of courses after work hours or at weekends. They were also interested in activities and services through which they could be involved in their children’s learning (e.g. book/reading related activities and Toddler Splash), and in opportunities for themselves and their children to socialise with their peers. A summary of fathers’ suggestions is contained in Appendix One of this report. Following the consultation event Sure Start staff wrote to all participants providing them with specific information they had requested as well as more general information e.g. dates for outings, a newsletter, details of groups and courses, and information on ‘Men and Breastfeeding’, as the issue of breastfeeding support had arisen during the consultation.
In August 2004 an outing to Hall Hill Farm was organised and was attended by 20 fathers and 20 children, and there was also a bowling session in Washington attended by approximately 10 fathers and 15 children.

By mid-November 2004 there had been 23 sessions of the Dads’ Group, attended by between one and six dads and one and eight children. The Dads’ Group is a club for male carers and their children. It was initially held every Tuesday afternoon between 12.30pm and 2.30pm, and this was subsequently changed to Monday afternoon between 3.30pm and 5.00pm. The first hour (Dad’s choice and Creche) was time for male carers to get together and share experiences, gain information and plan activities. A First Aid course was run for members of the group. The second hour (Time with the Kids) allowed Dads to engage in activities with their children to promote parent/child interaction e.g. Messy Play.

The Group was initially run by the Family Community Development Worker, continued in her absence by the Employment Counsellor and Health Coordinator, and has more recently been run by the Fathers’ Worker and the Toddler Power Worker.

The Sure Start Involving Fathers’ Worker was appointed to work in this and one other local Programme in January 2005. The main purposes of the post were to develop and implement activities that would promote the inclusion of fathers within North West and Greater Southwick Sure Start Programmes; to promote and support the views of fathers within Sure Start; to contribute to the development of Sure Start as a father friendly programme and to develop and implement activities that would support parents in returning to work.

In addition to her development of the Dad’s and Kid’s Group, work undertaken by the Fathers’ Worker so far has included:

- Visiting all toddler groups, community groups and nurseries on a termly basis to promote Sure Start and the Dad’s and Kid’s Group
- More recently, attending antenatal parentcraft classes, health drop-ins and baby clinics, again to promote Sure Start and the Dad’s and Kid’s Group
- Liasing with other agencies e.g. Fathers Plus and Families Need Fathers in order to develop her role and to enable appropriate support of individual fathers’ needs
- Co-ordinating Citywide work with Sunderland Sure Start staff who work with fathers, e.g. link organiser for Beamish event for fathers in the North-East; co-ordinating Citywide Sure Start fathers’ workers’ network meetings, held bi-monthly.
- Looking at promotional materials with the Dads’ group to ensure inclusivity, with comments taken on board re. their appropriateness to fathers; displaying positive images in the Sure Start building
- Joint home visits with Sure Start worker (Employment Counsellor) to provide support for an individual father and signpost to other agencies,
and to act as link worker once the Employment Counsellor has left the Programme

- Supporting 5-a-side football, with a decreasing role as the fathers are taking it over themselves
- Putting together a photo album as a record of Dad’s group activities and achievements.

In June 2005 a further consultation took place at the Sure Start North West Fun Day at Downhill. 14 participants (10 female and 4 male) filled in a questionnaire to help Sure Start plan services and activities for dads with young children. Of these, four had not previously attended any Sure Start activity. Relevant findings are presented in following sections of this report.

2. Staff contact with fathers/male carers

In order to gain a snapshot of staff contact with fathers/male carers, staff were asked to monitor their contact over a given four-week period and fill in a questionnaire reflecting on this or other contact with fathers. Five staff completed a monitoring form and 15 returned questionnaires, this reportedly reflecting that not all staff had had contact with fathers that month.

a) Monitoring forms

Information from the monitoring forms showed that in four weeks these five staff had seen 52 fathers: 27 individually, 11 with their partners, three with their child/children, and 11 with their partner and child.

Table 1: A snapshot of staff contact with fathers/male carers over a 4-week period in Spring 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact with fathers</th>
<th>Number seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father seen individually</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father + partner</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father + child</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father + partner + child</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. seen</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fathers had been seen in all five areas within the Sure Start North West catchment area, the majority at the Sure Start Cabin in Hylton Castle (e.g. dads’ group, baby clinic, bringing young parents to a group). There were very small numbers from both Hylton Redhouse and Castletown. Locations other than the Cabin included SNFZ, Swan Street, Castleview Sports Centre, Austin House, and the home. The main reasons for the contact had been for the Dads’ group and football training, volunteer training, group promotion, information on financial and work related issues, child health (baby clinic), male health advice (therapy, counselling, relaxation) and, in one case, behaviour management support. Of these contacts 17 had arisen through self referral (four via another Sure Start), 2 were referred by their partners, 2 were external referrals and 2 internal referrals, 12 were regular or routine
visits to a group or service (e.g. Dads’ group, football training, baby clinic), 4 were for specific training (volunteer training), 5 were undergoing review from previous work, and eight were through informal contact (e.g. through staff member attending groups, promotional events or drop-in). As a result of the contact, fathers were receiving information and support (e.g. on employment services and rights, tax credits, budgeting, childcare), treatment for their health/well-being, knowledge regarding their baby’s development (weight), training and self development, and one was involved in a consultation meeting regarding volunteers. Some internal referrals were made as a result of the contact, e.g. to the Health team, and some fathers were referred or signposted to other agencies such as Job Linkage and childcare settings.

b) Staff reflection

- Staff involvement with fathers

The main ways staff reported that they had been involved with fathers is through promoting Sure Start services, e.g. Dads’ group, 5-a-side football, to encourage participation. The Health team have had contact with fathers at the baby clinic where they receive health advice and also at appointments where specific health issues are addressed. This includes work with the paediatrician and the family therapist (CARE-Index). SNFZ staff have also provided complementary therapies such as massage, reiki, aromatherapy and Indian head massage for fathers, e.g. to relieve stress. Staff in the Play and Learn team have some (limited) contact with dads at local toddler groups in the area, and the Toddler Power worker also works with the dads’ group in the crèche to promote interaction and provide ideas for activities that they can do with their children at home. With regard to employment and training, staff work with fathers on an individual or group basis to look at personal development, confidence building, training opportunities and pathways to employment. The dads’ group also provides support to fathers on a regular basis.

The following table shows how the contact Sure Start staff reported that they had with fathers/male carers relates to the Sure Start objectives. The dads’ group is not included in this table as it will be considered separately in Section IV of this report.

Table 2: Staff contact with fathers in relation to Sure Start objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 1: Improving availability, accessibility, affordability &amp; quality of childcare</th>
<th>Objective 2: Improving learning</th>
<th>Objective 3: Improving social &amp; emotional development</th>
<th>Objective 4: Improving health</th>
<th>Objective 5: Strengthening families &amp; communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
This table relates only to direct contact. It is known that fathers are engaged in activities in the home provided or promoted by Sure Start, e.g. Talk Talk, or following up play ideas shared by partner following a Sure Start course.

- Ease of engaging fathers

The majority of staff felt that it was easy to engage and work with fathers, and one reported on benefits of their work e.g. therapies reducing stress levels and fathers having someone to ‘offload problems to’. Staff felt that their work was facilitated by a non-threatening environment and suitable provision of activities that fathers felt comfortable with e.g. coming along to the football where they can build up friendships and relationships with the Sure Start staff, and the dad’s and kid’s group where everyone was there for the same purpose so they did not feel out of place. Several staff members commented that the fathers were very approachable and forthcoming and expected to receive relevant information. This included information on a variety of topics including play activities, behaviour management and feeding. One staff member stated that the only difference between working with fathers than mothers was that fathers found it more difficult to access groups.

However it was observed that due to many fathers working, staff found it more difficult to engage this group and build up a relationship where the fathers were able to talk about issues relating to their child. Fathers who only attended sessions occasionally were sometimes seen as less confident to talk about issues and when they were not working they would rather do planned family activities with their children than attend a group. It was also found that for medical problems and advice it was generally the mother who would accompany the child to appointments rather than the father so for some staff contact with fathers was limited.

Problems encountered by staff included toddler groups being predominately female so there is little contact with fathers in this setting, and often staff have found that fathers bringing their children for health advice and check-ups have very little knowledge of their child’s medical/development history or cannot give a clear picture of any presenting problems. Other comments included that fathers were either often at work or absent.

One member of staff felt that some fathers experienced depression and this was not acknowledged or recognised therefore this was a barrier in engaging them to services, and, similarly, another felt that work on postnatal depression was directed more to mothers.
Increasing engagement

Staff suggestions included meetings with the wider team e.g. psychology department to look at ways to provide more help and work with fathers who are depressed. Some staff felt that they would like more opportunities to attend groups where fathers were present to introduce themselves and their area of expertise and services they provide.

It was also recognised that continuous promotion of activities and information about Sure Start was important e.g. flyers to nurseries in the area, promoting the dads’ group at toddler groups in the area, trying to encourage more fathers into these groups and making mothers at the groups (and other activities/clinics) aware of the need to include fathers in more activities and childcare.

Support for staff

Six staff reported that they had not received any training on work with fathers and some thought that this would be beneficial, five staff had received either a half or full day training session, one member of staff who worked more directly with fathers had received two days training and the fathers worker had been on various courses, one of which was accredited.

Individual members of staff reported that they would like to be invited to any groups where fathers are present, and more support from the fathers’ worker and other staff who have worked with fathers so they can share their expertise and share advice and information.

B. Fathers’ Experience of Sure Start

1. Experiences of Sure Start services

a) Introduction

This section reports on findings of the questionnaire for fathers/male carers of children aged under 4 in the Sure Start North West Area (31 respondents). Responses were received from fathers and male carers throughout the area, including 13 from Hylton Castle, six from Town End Farm, and three from each of Hylton Redhouse, Downhill and Castletown. All the respondents described their ethnic origin as ‘White British’.

Of the twenty-nine who responded regarding their age, the majority were aged between 26-35 years (48.4%), 29.0% were aged between 20-25 years, 12.9% were 36 and over and one respondent was under 19 years of age. The number of children of each respondent ranged from one to three. The age of the children ranged from 2½ weeks to 11 years. All respondents were fathers. Of the 29 who responded about their employment, 51.7% worked full-time, 6.9% worked part-time and 41.4% did not work. Of twenty-two respondents
81.8% shared the care of their child and 18.2% cared for their child/children full-time.

b) Knowledge of Sure Start

Fathers and male carers of children aged under four years old were asked whether they knew what Sure Start was about. Of the thirty-one respondents, twenty-two felt they knew what Sure Start was about, three knew 'a little bit' and six were unsure. Responses describing Sure Start included help and support for children and families in certain areas, somewhere to get your baby weighed and get advice if you have any problems; it provides safety equipment, training courses and help when you start work. One respondent described Sure Start as being a place where 'parents are brought closer together with their children'.

c) Use of Sure Start Services and other Community Groups or Activities

Respondents were asked which Sure Start services they had already used. The most frequently used services were those of the health visitor and nursery nurse and baby clinics, followed by community events and days out. Figures are shown in Chart 1 below:

Chart 1: Services used

This confirms staff reports that fathers are accessing services that relate to all five Sure Start objectives. Between one and fourteen fathers accessed the services in the month selected for the questionnaire to be distributed, a different month to that in which staff monitored their own contact with fathers.
Reasons given for not attending particular services/activities are shown in Appendix Two.

Other groups attended by fathers included Hylton Castle Boys Club, Hylton Castle Advantex, Chatterbox Community Group and Downhill Youth Club. Sports and leisure centres were also attended and some fathers participated in activities such as football and 5-a-side football. Other activities with children included swimming lessons, dancing, soft play and Toddlers at Town End Farm.

The main other activities fathers had participated in with their child included going to the park (14) and swimming (11). Other activities included playing football, going for walks and bike rides. Individual fathers also mentioned family outings (including the Wildfowl Park), trips to the supermarket, ballpool, Wacky Warehouse and McDonalds, home activities and gardening.

d) Impact of Sure Start on Fathers and their Families

The fathers noted that Sure Start was making a difference to them and their families in the following ways.

Support for Families and Parents

- opportunities for socialising, meeting new people
- reduction in stress (e.g. through massage, learning to relax and cope)
- help in finding a job/claiming tax credits
- increase in confidence through participating in groups and courses
- increased help and information on health, counselling and forthcoming events

Support for good quality play, learning and childcare experiences for children

- increased opportunities for undertaking activities with children (e.g. trips/events) and for children to interact with peers

Primary and community health care

- ease of access to baby clinics for weighing baby and raising any additional concerns

e) Suggestions for the Future

i. Accessibility

The most frequently mentioned way in which fathers felt Sure Start could change to meet fathers’ needs was by being more welcoming to men (12 fathers, 38.7%). Six fathers suggested activities/classes at different times, mainly evenings (e.g. after 5.00p.m.) and weekends, with one also suggesting
Wednesdays and Thursdays as suitable days. Two fathers would welcome activities/classes at different venues i.e. Town End Farm and Hylton Castle (the suggestion here being soft play). One father suggested more invitations to mothers and fathers to attend things together. These findings were reinforced by the Downhill Fun Day consultation, where fathers and mothers suggested that evening or weekend sessions, transport, crèche and varied locations would make it easier for fathers to attend activities and courses.

ii. Suggestions for Activities for Fathers and Children to Take Part in with their Children

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents stated that they would be interested in sports activities for fathers and children and swimming, and approximately one-third would be interested in messy play sessions and Play with a Purpose. Other activities fathers would like to attend with their child included local soft play activities. Fathers and mothers participating in the Downhill Fun Day consultation also emphasised sports activities such as football, swimming and gym activities, and also suggested away days and craft activities, painting and model making.

iii. Fathers’ Lives

In order to gain a picture of the men’s experiences and aspirations, respondents were asked about their previous/current interests, and about what they would like to do in the future if they had all the skills and knowledge they needed. These men had participated in a wide range of sporting activities themselves and two had helped run clubs (football) or train children ( athletics). Three mentioned training they had undertaken, e.g. driving courses, first aid course, bricklaying, nursing, and one had been a Sure Start volunteer. Approximately one-third reported on their aspirations for work, one was already working for himself, one was due to return to full-time employment soon, and one was prevented from working by ill-health. Individuals were interested in becoming a Class C LGV driver, working in sport, sports coaching and training, plastering, working in health and safety, working with young people (teenagers) and undertaking training to become a fathers’ worker. Four men stated that they wished to gain any job (or a better job), with one also mentioning that he also wanted to be able to spend time with his children. Fathers were asked what opportunities they would like Sure Start to provide for themselves. Results are displayed in Table Three below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Opportunity</th>
<th>Number Interested (n=31)</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialising with other dads e.g. trips</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>E.g. Paintball, go-karting, nights out (meal), zoo. It was felt that such activities might encourage more dads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s health/fitness</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>E.g. Gym/training sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting/family support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fathers and mothers at the Downhill Fun Day consultation also suggested training, such as ‘a computer course to help pass knowledge on to my son’ and courses such as Positive Parenting and First Aid.

iv. Advertising

Respondents were asked where would be a good place to advertise Sure Start activities for dads. The most common suggestions were local shops and GP surgeries, also the Job Centre, Housing Office, Castletown Sports Centre and Backup North/Job Linkage. The full figures are shown in Chart Two below.

Chart 2: Where to Advertise Sure Start Activities for Dads.

The ‘other’ suggestions made by one or more fathers were buses, radio, local newspaper, pubs/clubs, local colleges, the Downhill Centre and postal drops.

2. The Dads’ Group

a) Introduction

The Dads’ Group is a club for male carers and their children. It was initially held every Tuesday afternoon between 12.30pm and 2.30pm, and this was
subsequently changed to Monday afternoon between 3.30pm and 5.00pm. Initially, the first hour (Dad’s choice and Crèche) was time for male carers to get together and share experiences, gain information and plan activities. A First Aid course was run for members of the group. The second hour (Time with the Kids) allowed Dads to engage in activities with their children to promote parent/child interaction e.g. Messy Play. When the Fathers’ Worker came into post in January 2005 the Group was run as it stood for six months as events had already been organised. Since then, following consultation, the group is no longer split into two sessions but is run as Dad’s and Kid’s session, with crèche workers available so that fathers have the option of time out to talk to other staff or participate in training or planning events. Chatterbox Bags are loaned to fathers in the group to encourage parental involvement in their children’s learning. Information on courses is provided and these have been taken up by one or more fathers, e.g. Basic Food Hygiene, Common Childhood Illnesses, Learn2Drive, Community Sports Leader.

Data regarding the dads’ group were gathered using a combination of initial interviews/questionnaires (7) and follow-up interviews with 4 group participants. The questions were designed to gather information on their experiences of the dads’ group and its impact on their lives, and to gain an insight into their experiences as fathers in relation to the Sure Start objectives.

b) Experiences of the group

Six fathers were attending the dads’ group regularly and one was now only able to attend occasionally as he had gained employment, although he still attended ‘out of hours’ activities such as weekend outings and playing football. They had heard about the group in a variety of ways – through friends and relatives, through working closely with a member of the Sure Start staff (Employment Counsellor) or through their partner’s involvement in Sure Start activities and her acquaintance with staff, through their child’s nursery, and through an advertisement at Hylton Castle clinic. Their motivation for attending included to meet other dads, to spend more time with their children and on a wider variety of activities than was possible in the home, and to provide opportunities for their children to mix with others. For one it arose from unsatisfactory experiences at toddler group where he was the only man and felt that he and his child were both ignored. For one dad, it would be ‘a great way to interact with my kids without the worry of what people thought’ and, for another, ‘I decided that it would bring me and my daughter closer together as I don’t get much time with her’. They saw the group as being about dads (and male carers/grandfathers) spending time with their children, getting to know their children better and getting closer to them, ‘a chance to bond with each other and not just sit at home and watch TV’, also meeting other dads and having new opportunities such as trips and being involved in new projects such as 5-a-side football and learning about relevant issues such as hazards in the home. The fathers’ worker was regarded as approachable, helpful and supportive, a good organiser, who also relates well to their children and is very popular with them.
Anything you need, she’ll help you, as a group and as an individual.

You can talk to her about anything, she’s very easy to talk to;

c) Impact of the group

i. On father and child

Two fathers reported that coming to the group had brought about a change in how they felt about their relationship with their child, in one case through worrying less about the reactions of others:

I have a brilliant relationship with my kids and now I don’t fear what I do or how I do it or even where I do it, like playing in parks and carrying on at kids’ parties.

It does [change what I do with my child] because she now understands she can come to me and I will play with her toys with her, she also will understand that if she does not understand something, dad will help her to understand.

One father reported that he did different activities with his child, such as painting, one that he knew more about his child’s preferences in play:

I didn’t really do anything before – I used to kick a football, but I didn’t really know what he liked himself, now we do painting, gluing and all sorts of messy play.

One commented that he had learned from the other fathers:

I’ve found that getting to know the dads and getting to know how they get closer to their children helps me in ways to get closer to my daughter (such as kicking a ball with her, playing cookery with her).

Five fathers reported greater involvement with their child as a result of the dads’ group. One commented that, although he had always played an active part in his child’s life, he now felt more confident as a dad and it had helped him develop the relationship he wanted with his child, whereby he was able to spend quality time with him, which had been difficult for his own father due to long working hours. Other comments included:

The difference has been unreal. For so long I’ve done nothing with my children and now it’s like letting the kid out in me around my children. Every time my kids learn something new I feel so proud.
'Well, I never got to spend as much time with my daughter as I would like to as she is always with her mum, so going to the dads' group is my time with her. It helps her to understand that dad is there too.'

'I am getting to know and understand my girls.'

ii. On fathers' own life

Some fathers also reported that their involvement in the group had helped develop skills that could be important in the future. For example, all members of the group had been involved in the organisation and running of the group's first birthday party including food preparation and risk assessment, and this had contributed to a record of achievement. Five-a-side football training was also potentially helping provide a pathway into a related job in sport. For one father, regular attendance at the group and joining in with activities had 'given me the confidence to meet and talk with other people'. The group had provided an opportunity to 'talk to other men about anything – football, our kids'. Some fathers met outside the group and took their children out together e.g. to the park. One felt that he fitted in more as a father.

iii. On family life

For some it had made a difference to family life, for example through becoming able to handle their children's behaviour or through a more equal sharing with their partner.

'[Before] I done nothing with my kids, which meant my wife done everything. Now I do a lot so she has time to herself, making it an all-round better atmosphere'.

In one case where the father reported already shared roles and responsibilities with his partner and mutual support in their handling of their child, he still felt that the group had increased his confidence and made him really value the part he played in his child's life. One considered that 'these sorts of places will help relationships between parents and children and help people see dads and kids playing together as normal'.

For individual fathers, the most important aspects of the group were reported to be the social aspect and opportunity to relax and 'just be a dad', the opportunity for going on trips, talking to and learning from other fathers and engaging in activities with their child, gaining ideas for activities to carry out at home and seeing what their children 'were into', increasing their fitness and doing something they enjoyed doing through the 5-a-side, and involvement in the organisation of the group's first birthday event.
Sure Start had also impacted on these fathers’ lives in other ways, outside the dads’ group. This related to play and learning (e.g. partner passing on knowledge and information from courses and both parents following up on activities at home to enhance developing skills, e.g. threading, colour recognition), to health (through accessing the safety scheme, taking up massage sessions for health reasons, and increasing awareness of men’s health issues through a Sure Start health visitor) and to strengthening families and communities (e.g. through training to be a volunteer, through Learn2Drive and Food Hygiene courses, through support with paperwork, claim forms and tax credits, and through staff encouraging friendships in their local area).

Summary tables of the provision for fathers in the dads’ group and their perceptions of the group’s impact as they relate to Sure Start objectives are presented in Appendix Three of this report.

d) Further development of the Dads’ group

Fathers had come across different reasons why some other fathers had not become involved in the group. These included working hours, living on a different estate, self-consciousness and lack of confidence, with one father reported to feel unsure how to handle his child on his own. Some ‘can’t be bothered’ and some ‘always make up excuses’. For some young dads, it was considered ‘weird’ or ‘not cool’ to be seen at such groups. They suggested that more fathers could perhaps be encouraged by a different start time for the group (e.g. 5.30p.m.), by going out into the community more (e.g. to nurseries), through promoting activities such as sport and go-karting and the existing 5-a-side football and regularly introducing new activities to maintain interest (e.g. more outdoor activities for father and child). It could also be helpful to highlight the benefits they had themselves noted, e.g. quality time with your child, bringing you and your child closer together, meeting other dads, getting involved in activities and outings with your child, helping them to learn and understand new things, and opportunities for your child to make new friends and learn a lot from them. It was also suggested that the group could promote a ‘cooler image’ and increase its publicity and regular attendance at ‘gyms, sports clubs and places where men hang out’. Pictures and posters should be realistic with men shown as ‘more like normal people, so you don’t feel you’ve got to be a superdad or something you’re not and people accept you as you are’. More attention could be given to providing mothers/female carers with leaflets and verbal information about the dads’ group and to their encouragement to partners.

V. SUMMARY

This section summarises findings relating to the first two research questions of this study:

- What contact is Sure Start having with fathers and what is being offered to them?
What difference does the involvement of fathers in Sure Start make to them and their families?

The final research question: ‘How could the Programme work towards further engaging fathers in Sure Start North West?’ is discussed in Section VI.

A. How Staff are Working with Fathers

There was early commitment from team members to working with fathers, involving consultation and events and leading to the establishment of the dads’ group. Subsequently a fathers’ worker was appointed and took over leadership of the group, supported by the Toddler Power worker and crèche workers, and has worked to further develop the group and support individuals within it, and to promote the further involvement of fathers.

Figures for a snapshot four-week period in 2005 showed that the programme was reaching a large number of fathers (52), either individually (the majority, 27), with their partner, with their child or with both, although only five staff reported any contact with fathers that month. As a result of the contact, fathers were receiving information and support (e.g. on employment services and rights, tax credits, budgeting, childcare), treatment for their health/well-being, knowledge regarding their baby’s development (weight), training (including football training) and self development, and one was involved in a consultation meeting regarding volunteers. Some internal referrals were made as a result of the contact, e.g. to the Health team, and some fathers were referred or signposted to other agencies such as Job Linkage and childcare settings.

Data from staff and paternal questionnaires indicate that fathers are accessing services that relate to all five Sure Start objectives, particularly Objective Five, Strengthening families and communities, for example through capacity building and personal development, volunteer training, signposting to work-related training and support/signposting/referral with regard to allowances, budgeting, job hunting and employment rights. Work related to Objective One consisted of providing information on local childcare provision, Objective Two some contact at toddler groups and crèche, Objective Three, behaviour management support, complementary therapies and family therapy, Objective Four, children’s health and development (baby clinic, HV visits, Paediatrician, 1st Aid course) and men’s health and fitness. Data from the fathers’ questionnaire show that each of the 28 Sure Start services listed had been accessed by between one and fourteen of the 31 fathers.

B. The impact of fathers’ involvement on themselves and their families

The fathers using Sure Start services noted that Sure Start was making a difference to them and hence their families in the following ways:

Support for Families and Parents
• opportunities for socialising, meeting new people
• reduction in stress (e.g. through massage, learning to relax and cope)
• help in finding a job/claiming tax credits
• support with paperwork e.g. claim forms
• increase in confidence through participating in groups and courses
• increased help and information on health, counselling and forthcoming events
• gaining skills e.g. through training to be a volunteer, Learn2Drive and Food Hygiene courses

Support for good quality play, learning and childcare experiences for children

• increased opportunities for undertaking activities with children (e.g. trips/events) and for children to interact with peers
• partner passing on knowledge and information from courses and both parents following up on activities at home to enhance developing skills, e.g. threading, colour recognition
• gaining information on childcare provision

Primary and community health care

• ease of access to baby clinics for weighing baby and raising any additional concerns
• access to the safety loan scheme
• increasing awareness of men’s health issues through a Sure Start health visitor

The dads’ group was reported to be having an impact on the father and child relationship. Two fathers reported that coming to the group had brought about a change in how they felt about their relationship with their child, in one case through worrying less about the reactions of others, and in another feeling more confident in his role. Some fathers reported that they did different activities with their child, such as painting, and one that he had learned from the other fathers. Five fathers reported greater involvement with their child as a result of the dads’ group. It was also having an impact on fathers’ own life. Some fathers also reported that their involvement in the group had helped develop skills that could be important in the future. For example, all members of the group had been involved in the organisation and running of the group’s first birthday party including food preparation and risk assessment, and this had contributed to a record of achievement. Five-a-side football training was also potentially helping provide a pathway into a related job in sport. Regular attendance had also led to an increase in confidence. In addition, for some it was having an impact on family life, for example through becoming able to handle their children’s behaviour or through a more equal sharing with their partner.
VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Factors that have Promoted the Involvement of Fathers

Sure Start North West has shown commitment to developing strategies to involve fathers, initially through the initiative and commitment of a small group of workers and subsequently through the appointment of a fathers’ worker, and with the support of programme management. Findings of this evaluation, linked to findings of other research, provide indications of what works in increasing the involvement of fathers.

The findings of this evaluation show that factors in the successful involvement of fathers have included:

a) An enabling organisational context

In Sure Start North West there was early identification of fathers as a priority, also cited by Lloyd et al (2003) as one of five components found in programmes with high provision for fathers. This has been supported by commitment to working with fathers at programme management level. Organisational support, i.e. how much support there is in the organisation for providing services to fathers/father figures is one indicator of father-friendliness in organisations (NPCL/NHSA, 2000, see Appendix Five for a copy of this tool). Sure Start North West management has provided organisational support through funding a fathers’ worker to develop and implement activities that would promote the inclusion of fathers within this and one other Sure Start Programmes; to promote and support the views of fathers within Sure Start; to contribute to the development of Sure Start as a father friendly programme and to develop and implement activities that would support parents in returning to work. There are as yet no fathers on the Partnership board, although two fathers have trained as volunteers for the Programme.

b) Staffing

A dedicated fathers’ worker provides father/male carer specific activities, building on the commitment and action of a group of staff across teams to work together to develop strategies for involving fathers. The fathers’ worker has done much to raise the profile of father involvement. The local media has acknowledged the success of the programme and reported on two occasions about events organised for fathers in the area. One father has been interviewed by local radio on his experiences and involvement in Sure Start. At the same time, there is recognition that working with fathers is the responsibility of the whole team, who may in some cases need additional training and support. Staff are open and receptive to the idea of providing services to fathers and prepared to provide services to fathers.

Evidence from this study shows that fathers are using services that are relevant to their child’s development and health, well-being and learning and
to their own and their family’s welfare and development (e.g. training, financial advice and support). Staff from all teams are therefore taking fathers into consideration.

The fathers’ worker meets regularly with a local expert voluntary agency (Fathers Plus, Children North East). This is important for enabling cross learning, for example about the most effective strategies for engaging fathers.

c) Family

At family level, high paternal caring responsibilities have been seen as a factor promoting fathers’ participation in Sure Start local programmes (Lloyd et al., 2003). All the fathers in the dads’ group took a sharing role in the care of their child, most felt well prepared and all were involved in the birth of their child. They felt included and well supported by midwifery and health visiting services, and reported being involved with and supporting their partners in the decision about how to feed the baby, in the general care of their child and in playing together, although this was an area in which some of them felt less confident before they attended the dads’ group.

Female partner facilitation and support are important in promoting and supporting involvement, both with their children and in Sure Start. Research (Cook, 2005) has shown that the expectations of both parents are substantial predictors of fathers’ instrumental involvement in the care of their child (e.g. feeding, bathing, changing). Mothers’ “gatekeeping” can hinder father involvement (Allen and Hawkins, 1999). The four fathers interviewed for this study all reported that they and their partner had talked about how they would cope with a new baby, the roles they would both have and the way their lives would change. In some cases this had been facilitated by their attendance at antenatal classes. As one commented, for some parents-to-be, talking about these issues one-to-one with a health visitor before the birth could be beneficial. These fathers’ partners were all involved in Sure Start in one or more ways and, as the National Evaluation report on Involving Fathers in Sure Start states, ‘Maternal facilitation can act to promote father involvement in Sure Start by reinterpreting or communicating its relevance to partners’ (Lloyd et al., 2003:48). Working with both parents together can emphasise the collaborative nature of parenting (ibid.), other than in situations where this would not be advisable or possible.

d) Strategies to get men involved

‘Hook’ activities are important to gain men’s interest, and the introduction of five-a-side football training and matches has been important in this respect. Fathers have noted the importance of activities that appeal to men and introducing more such hook activities to encourage the involvement of new fathers.
Many of the fathers in this study were accessing Sure Start for practical help and support, e.g. regarding benefits, allowances, budgeting, job hunting, funding and employment rights. In some cases this led on to greater involvement with Sure Start, including the dads’ group. Attracting fathers through practical services, such as housing and benefits support was also found to be successful in Sure Start Plus work with teenage parents (Sawtell et al, 2005). The findings in Sure Start North West are also consistent with this work in that it can be important to establish a relationship through a one-to-one service before inviting men to a fathers group or fatherhood programmes (ibid.). Using mothers as potentially important, initial sources of information about what services offer can also be important when attempting to access fathers (as also found in Lloyd et al, 2003; Sawtell et al, 2005).

e) Strategies to keep men involved

The Programme undertakes on-going consultations with fathers. It is important that strategies are user led to promote and maintain involvement and build on men’s interests.

Fathers have noted that things need to be directly relevant to their/their family’s needs – ‘I won’t use a service if it doesn’t directly benefit me or my child’. Again, practical help and support are important.

B. Working towards Further Engagement with Fathers

The Programme could continue working towards further engagement with fathers in the following ways.

1. Staff training and support

Six staff had not received any training on work with fathers. The National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004) specifically requires primary care trusts, local authority and children’s services to gain skills, through training, to work with fathers. Staff also suggested being invited to any groups where fathers are present (e.g. to promote services) and receiving guidance from the fathers’ worker and other staff who have worked with fathers through the sharing of expertise, advice and information.

The Programme should re-examine the training needs of staff and ways in which the expertise of individual staff can be shared with the team to ensure ongoing programme wide commitment to father involvement (Lloyd et al., 2003) and to promote reflection on the extent to which fathers are being considered in all aspects of the child’s well-being (DH/DfES, 2004).

2. Further development of activities and support for fathers
For the future, it will be important to continue to develop activities for fathers according to their stated interests, and to take into account possible gaps identified by staff, i.e. men’s depression (also identified by Singh and Newburn, 2000). There are also key points at which it could be beneficial to engage fathers, such as pre-natally and in hospital at the birth of their child. The fathers’ worker has recently started attending antenatal Parentcraft classes, Health drop-ins and baby clinics. Fathers would welcome:

- more activities for fathers and children together. Fathers showed a particular interest in dads’ and child’s sports, gymnastics and swimming and other physical activities such as soft play, also Play with a Purpose and Messy Play.
- opportunities to learn about and increase men’s and family health and fitness (e.g. weight, diet, exercise; gym, training sessions)
- parenting support for fathers, including courses and support when ‘feeling down’ and after hours telephone contact.
- activities to enable fathers to socialise with each other e.g. paintball, go-karting, nights out, trips
- opportunities for personal development and courses to develop work-related skills (e.g. driving, health and safety at work), and to enable them to support their children’s future learning (computer).

There was also a high demand for employment information and advice, including help looking for work. The knowledge, ability and capacity to work with fathers on practical issues including financial and employment issues are important for the future, both in their own right and as a potential ‘hook’ into other services.

Clearly, fathers are not a homogeneous group, and these general suggestions do not reduce the need to be sensitive to different groups of fathers (e.g. lone fathers, sole carers) and fathers’ diversity of needs and circumstances.

Continuing to use mothers as potentially important, initial sources of information about what services offer and encouraging maternal facilitation and support, for example discussing expectations before the birth, sharing their learning with their partners or joint attendance at groups and activities in some situations, could all further paternal involvement in Sure Start.

3. Publicity and Advertising

The NSF (2004) requires primary care trusts, local authority and children’s services to provide targeted information to all fathers. The Programme will need to maintain ongoing review of its information and publicity and how this is targeted at and provided to fathers. The fathers’ worker and dads’ group make efforts to encourage involvement in the dads’ group, and this is also
promoted by other staff. Men’s suggestions for advertising activities for fathers included local shops, GP surgeries, the Jobcentre, Housing Office, Castletown Sport Centre, Backup North/Job Linkage, Winchester House, nurseries and libraries. It was also suggested that the dads’ club could promote a ‘cooler image’. Services should be marketed in a way that appeals to men and promotes fatherhood positively (as also noted in Sawtell et al, 2005) and celebrate becoming and being a father (Lloyd et al., 2003). Two men have trained as volunteers and could play an important role in peer support and as role models.

4. Accessibility

The Programme has altered the time of the dads’ group but may still need to be more flexible in the timing of activities, possibly including evenings and weekends, and in the location of activities.

5. Monitoring

Sure Start Sunderland monitoring forms have recently been amended to include data on numbers of fathers accessed. It is important that this information is collected rigorously and is reliable, as it will provide data for indicators of success with regard to increasing the involvement of fathers as required in the Children’s Centre core offer.

6. Participation in service planning and decision-making in Sure Start

There have as yet been no fathers on the Sure Start North West Partnership board or subgroups. Whilst the NESS study on father involvement in Sure Start (Lloyd et al., 2003) found some involvement of fathers in management, all staff in the Rounds One and Two programmes involved agreed that mothers far outnumbered fathers and the most frequent score was zero.

Some fathers have been prepared to play an active role in the delivery of Sure Start North West, e.g. having undertaken training developed by Sure Start to enable parents to volunteer for the Programme and this could be further encouraged. For example, one father’s volunteering involved promotion of the dads’ group, community driving and general support and this should be further encouraged. There has also been ongoing consultation of fathers, for example at Fun Days, and this should be continued. Greater participation at management level is still, however, an area for development.

7. Father Friendliness

Finally, approximately one-third of the questionnaire respondents considered that Sure Start could be more welcoming to men. Therefore, in considering future developments and in light of the expectation that children’s centres will increase the involvement of fathers, the use of a tool for monitoring the ‘Father
Friendliness’ of organisations, such as that contained in Appendix Five, which has also been used in training sessions in the UK through the organisational framework of Fathers Direct and Working With Men, could be considered by this and other Sure Start local programmes and children’s centres.

References


## APPENDIX ONE

**Fathers’ Expressed Areas of Interest and Suggestions for the Future in relation to Sure Start Objectives: Fathers and Children Together**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source, number of participants and dates</th>
<th>Objective 1: Improving the availability, accessibility, affordability &amp; quality of childcare</th>
<th>Objective 2: Improving learning</th>
<th>Objective 3: Improving social and emotional development</th>
<th>Objective 4: Improving health</th>
<th>Objective 5: Strengthening families and communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation Event (June 04, n=11)</td>
<td>Games and activities for fathers and children to develop ideas to take into the home (incl. help with speech and language).</td>
<td>Baby massage. Day trips.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trip to leisure centres. Swimming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downhill Fun Day Consultation (June 05, n=14)</td>
<td>Craft, painting, model making.</td>
<td>Day trips.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sports activities and events, football, swimming, gym.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Questionnaire (March 05, n=31)</td>
<td>Soft play. Messy play sessions. Play with a Purpose.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dads’ and child’s sports. Swimming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dads’ group questionnaires/interviews (April, June 05, n=7)</td>
<td>Continue activities for dads and children together.</td>
<td>More days out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Promote dads group e.g. through advertising, word of mouth, encouraging through mothers,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued ...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source, number of participants and dates</th>
<th>Objective 1: Improving the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare</th>
<th>Objective 2: Improving learning</th>
<th>Objective 3: Improving social and emotional development</th>
<th>Objective 4: Improving health</th>
<th>Objective 5: Strengthening families and communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Questionnaire (March 05, n=31)</td>
<td>Parenting support. Family Nurturing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gym / training sessions. 1st Aid. Information on family health e.g. weight, diet, exercise.</td>
<td>Opportunities to socialise e.g. zoo, paintball, go-karting, nights out (meal). Training re. fathers’ worker’s role. Driving course. Health &amp; safety at work. More help looking for work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dads’ group questionnaires / interviews (April, June 05, n=4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue 5-a-side, also provide more sports activities for dads. 1st Aid. Food Hygiene course.</td>
<td>Promote dads group. Provide activities to attract more dads e.g. go-karting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX TWO

Reasons given by fathers/male carers for not using particular Sure Start services/attending activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/activity</th>
<th>Would like to</th>
<th>Not heard of it</th>
<th>Not enough information</th>
<th>Not for my child's age</th>
<th>Unsuitable times</th>
<th>Unsuitable location</th>
<th>Too many women</th>
<th>Don't feel comfortable</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toddler Groups</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Play</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Stars Reading Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Start Babies 9 months</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Start plus Child 2 yrs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk Talk Bags Child 3-4 yrs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toy Library</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday Morning Group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft Activities/ (Holidays)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dads Group</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Events</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days Out</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowdrops Group For new parents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking Cessation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(5 don't smoke)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Friends Home visiting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Scented Complementary therapies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Adult Training Course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Counselling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Visiting &amp; Nursery Nurses</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Clinics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech &amp; Language Therapy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay &amp; Play</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crèche facilities for Courses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent &amp; Infant Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Doctor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocking Robins Child 18mths – 3yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move &amp; Groove Babies 6–18mths</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Dad’s and Kid’s Group Provision as it Relates to Sure Start Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 1: Improving the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare</th>
<th>Objective 2: Improving learning</th>
<th>Objective 3: Improving social and emotional development</th>
<th>Objective 4: Improving health</th>
<th>Objective 5: Strengthening families and communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate childcare provision for courses.</td>
<td>Activities provided to promote learning and father-child interaction.</td>
<td>Children socialise at Dad’s and Kid’s sessions and on outings.</td>
<td>Family First Aid course delivered to group.</td>
<td>Opportunities for fathers to socialise, support and learn from each other, and to spend time with their children outside the home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
||| Increasing men’s fitness through 5-a-side football. | Promotion of men’s health week. | Provi
<p>| Chatterbox bags loaned to fathers to promote involvement in children’s learning. | Early links established with EAZ to help source activities for fathers and children, e.g. Beamish. | Healthy snacks provided at group for dads and children to link with 5-a-day programme. | Safety Matters worker had informal consultation with group re. safety in the home and possibility of delivering a course in New Year. Course currently being developed according to group’s expressed needs. | Provision of crèche supports training opportunities within group. |
| Participation in events organised by Fathers Plus e.g. visit to Blue Reef Aquarium. | Dads and children participated in ‘Me and My World’ project, which involved learning about ‘Myself’ and ‘The world around us’. To reinforce learning in group, attended trip to Hall Hill Farm as a family. | Through the group, fathers have been offered access to courses e.g. Basic Food Hygiene, Common Childhood Illnesses, which have been taken up by 1 or more fathers. | Through the group, fathers have been offered access to courses e.g. Community Sports Leader, Learn2Drive, MIDAS minibus driver training, which have been taken up by 1 or more fathers. | Through the group, fathers have been offered access to courses e.g. Community Sports Leader, Learn2Drive, MIDAS minibus driver training, which have been taken up by 1 or more fathers. |
| | | | Supporting local father in ambition to become a Father’s Worker through nominating him to act as spokesperson for group and report on his experiences and involvement. | | |
| | | | Involvement in organisation and running of group’s 1st birthday party incl. food preparation and risk assessment has contributed to record of achievement. | | |
| | | | Working in partnership with Fathers Plus &amp; other agencies, group attended event at Beamish to involve fathers/male carers in their children’s lives. | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Impact</th>
<th>Objective 1: Improving availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare</th>
<th>Objective 2: Improving learning</th>
<th>Objective 3: Improving social and emotional development</th>
<th>Objective 4: Improving health</th>
<th>Objective 5: Strengthening families and communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Through the Dad’s and Kid’s Group</td>
<td>Fathers are learning about play and about other fathers' relationship to their children through observing and listening to other dads. Fathers reported undertaking a wider variety of activities with their children e.g. painting, play cooking, and some had gained more insight into what their children enjoyed doing. Child is aware of dad’s increased involvement in play (e.g. bringing toys to him)</td>
<td>Improved relationship with child. Increased confidence to play with child. Increased self-esteem regarding role as father. Knowing and understanding children better. Increased ability to ‘handle’ children. Helping child ‘to understand that dad is there too’. Group provides a social setting for children to eat together – ‘[child] eats better because all the kids sit together and [child] sees others eating’. Satisfaction at seeing child’s enjoyment and ‘being happy together’.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement in 5-a-side training may contribute to goal of working in sport. Involvement in organisation and running of group’s 1st birthday party incl. food preparation and risk assessment has contributed to record of achievement. Introduction to WorkAble and subsequent appointment at College Greater contribution to family life (partner has time to herself, all-round better atmosphere).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. Through their other involvement in Sure Start | Family involved in Hannen course.  
Father uses Toy Library.  
Informal engagement with staff at Sure Start through attending Dad's Group, e.g. speech and language nursery nurse.  
Partner passes on knowledge and information from courses; follow up on activities at home to enhance developing skills | Increasing awareness of men's health issues through Sure Start Health Visitor.  
Use of safety scheme.  
Use of massage sessions for health reasons. | Qualified as Sure Start volunteer through Sure Start training (Community Development Worker).  
Training through CDW e.g. Learn 2 Drive, Food Hygiene  
Employment Counsellor support e.g. paperwork, claim forms, tax credits. |
APPENDIX FIVE

FATHER-FRIENDLINESS ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING TOOL